



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 22 December 2020

by S Edwards MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 February 2021

Appeal A Ref: APP/Q3115/W/20/3258303

**Hunts Farm House, Harpsden Bottom, Harpsden, Henley-on-Thames
RG9 4HY**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr William Harrison against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P20/S1623/HH, dated 6 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'installation of 4 number conservation style rooflights in roof of Dairy Rear South West Elevation'.
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/Q3115/Y/20/3258342

**Hunts Farm House, Harpsden Bottom, Harpsden, Henley-on-Thames
RG9 4HY**

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr William Harrison against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P/20/S1624/LB, dated 6 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2020.
 - The works proposed are described as 'installation of 4 number conservation style rooflights in roof of Dairy Rear South West Elevation'.
-

Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. In December 2020, the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 (LP) has been adopted by the Council. This document replaces policies contained within the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy and saved policies contained within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. Accordingly, I shall determine the appeals in accordance with the most up-to-date policies, on which the parties have had the opportunity to comment during the course of the appeals.
4. The former Dairy subject to this appeal is classified as a curtilage listed building under Section 1(5) (b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), and as such is treated as part of the Grade II listed farmhouse. I have therefore had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of

the Act. Both appeals relate to the same site and raise similar issues, and I shall therefore consider them in a single document, in the interests of brevity.

5. The appellant has confirmed that the roof structure has been entirely replaced, and a number of tiles have been left off where the rooflights would be installed. This is consistent with my observations on site, and I shall determine the appeals in accordance with the proposed plans.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the curtilage listed former dairy building, but also the Grade II listed building known as Hunts Farm Cottage and Grade II listed barn, as derived notably from their setting.

Reasons

7. Located within an area of rural character, the appeal site comprises a farmhouse and a barn, which are both listed at Grade II, and a former dairy. The significance of Hunts Farm Cottage notably resides in its vernacular design and materials, which contribute to its architectural and historic interest as an attractive example of a farmhouse dating from the 15th or 16th century.
8. Whilst the farmhouse may no longer be in agricultural use and has now been converted into two cottages, the significance of this Grade II listed building also lies in its historic role as a farmhouse which, together with the listed Barn and former dairy, would have originally constituted a traditional farmstead arranged around a central courtyard. This is also illustrated by the group value which the listed buildings and former dairy hold collectively. By reason of their characteristic form and simple functional appearance, the barn and dairy buildings contrast with the farmhouse, which is characterised by its vernacular detailing. As a result, they retain a subservient relationship to the main farmhouse.
9. Planning permission¹ and listed building consent² have previously been granted by the Council to refurbish and extend the farmhouse, and convert the outbuildings and yard to residential use. The proposed development and works would affect the former dairy, which is listed by virtue of being within the setting of the farmhouse. The preservation of this curtilage listed building therefore carries the same considerable importance and weight, and contribution to significance, either in its own right or as part of the listed group.
10. Despite the works required to enable its conversion to residential use, the characteristic form, detailing and layout of the dairy as a former agricultural structure subservient to the farmhouse remains legible. However, and whilst the proposal would not lead to the loss of historic fabric, the provision of four rooflights would give the former dairy an overtly domestic appearance, regardless of their conservation style.
11. The proposed development and works would as a result dilute its original character as a functional, agricultural building, to the detriment of its significance. As an important part of the setting of the former farmstead, it would also be detrimental to the overall significance of the listed buildings.

¹ Local Planning Authority Reference P16/S2359/FUL, approved 3 March 2017.

² Local Planning Authority Reference P16/S2360/LB, approved 3 March 2017.

12. By reason of the building's position in relation to the road, the proposed rooflights would be clearly visible within the street scene, despite being installed to the rear elevation of the former dairy, notably because the mature trees would only provide partial screening, especially during the winter months.
13. My attention has been drawn to a number of rooflights found on other buildings located within proximity to the appeal site and further afield. However, I do not know the circumstances in which these rooflights were installed, and so cannot be certain that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal scheme. As a result, very limited weight can be afforded to these considerations.
14. The appeal scheme would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets, to which I nevertheless ascribe considerable importance and weight. In such circumstances, paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
15. I have no reason to doubt that the proposed rooflights would improve levels of natural daylight, particularly as the majority of the openings are located to the front elevation of the building, and would also assist with improving emerging efficiency. However, these would essentially constitute private benefits and carry limited weight. Overall, there would be no public benefits which would outweigh the identified harm.
16. Given the above, the proposed development and works would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the curtilage listed former dairy building, but also the Grade II listed Farmhouse and barn, including their setting, and would therefore be contrary to Section 66 of the Act. The appeal scheme would also conflict with LP Policies DES1, DES2, ENV1 and ENV6, Policy DQS1 of the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan and Section 16 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure that development proposals protect, conserve and/or enhance the District's historic environment, and complement their surroundings.

Other Matters

17. No concerns have been raised by the Council regarding the effect of the proposal on the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and there are no reasons for me to come to an alternative view. The proposal affects an existing building, and I am satisfied that the scheme would preserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns AONB.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons detailed above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

S Edwards

INSPECTOR