



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2020

by William Cooper BA (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/Y/20/3247177

Ovington Hall, Church Lane, Ovington CO10 8LD

- 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 JR & EH Nott against the decision of Braintree District Council.
 - The application Ref: 19/01370/LBC, dated 29 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 October 2019.
 - The works proposed are extension and alterations to farmhouse and ancillary outbuilding to provide additional/reconfigured accommodation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for extension and alterations to farmhouse and ancillary outbuilding to provide additional/reconfigured accommodation at Ovington Hall, Church Lane, Ovington CO10 8LD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 19/01370/LBC, dated 29 July 2019, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works hereby consented shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The works hereby consented relate solely to the plans, drawings, notes and written details submitted with the application or as subsequently amended and approved in writing by the following conditions.
 - 3) No works shall commence until section and elevation drawings of details of proposed new windows, doors, eaves, verges and cills have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plans and maintained thereafter.
 - 4) No works shall commence until details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of external surfaces hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and samples.
 - 5) The materials to be used for making good disturbed internal or external surfaces shall be of matching composition, form and finish to those of any adjoining, original fabric.

Preliminary Matter

2. As the proposal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building, 'Ovington Hall' (Ref: 1232241), or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

4. The building is a large two-storey farmhouse. At its core is a timber-framed three-cell hall with mullion windows, which dates from the sixteenth century. Though much plastered over, visible parts of the frame inside the building point to these older origins.
5. The building sits at the head of an entrance driveway, on the front corner of an approximately square shaped 'main frame' of farm buildings. This location, in combination with the length of the farmhouse, gives the building's main facade particular prominence. Variation in window spacing and chimney profiles adds a subtly eye-catching eclecticism to this elevation. These elements combine to give the building's front facade a gently authoritative presence.
6. A range of additions and alterations illustrates the building's evolution between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. There is a seventeenth century two-storey timber framed extension on one of the rear corners of the building. Late Georgian intervention is indicated by the prominent staircase which ascends from the front entrance hall.
7. The frame of farm buildings illustrates a late nineteenth century 'model farmstead' redevelopment phase after a fire. This phase is evident in two substantial Grade II listed nineteenth century farm buildings¹ located approximately 35m south-west of the farmhouse. One is a timber framed and weatherboarded barn with crosswing granary. The other is a red brick building with timber boarded doors and louvres, comprising stable/cattle outbuildings that are attached to a barn and granary. The 'model farmstead' redevelopment phase also included a two-storey extension of the rear of the farmhouse.
8. Twentieth century elements of the appeal building include a four window range of leaded casements with transoms, a clay pantile re-roof and replacement studwork in part of the seventeenth century rear corner extension.
9. Furthermore, during the later part of the twentieth century a noticeable outdoor domestic zone has evolved and established to the rear of the farmhouse. This zone is visually contained by the following combination of elements: a high courtyard brick wall; agricultural outbuildings to the south and south-west of the farmhouse, one of which has been converted to a residential annexe; and the farmhouse. The high perimeter wall and lower inner wall of the zone date from the 'model farmstead' redevelopment phase and possibly demarcated livestock shelter or kitchen garden areas. However, this zone now contains rear courtyard space for the farmhouse and residential

¹ List entry numbers 1232242 and 1232242.

- annexe, and an open air swimming pool. The outbuilding to which the proposed rear extension would link has been converted from a farm office to ancillary accommodation for the farmhouse and its swimming pool.
10. The larger farmyard gap to the north-west of the farmhouse contrasts with the proximity of the appeal building and the outbuilding to which it would be linked. This accentuates the distinction between the evolved outdoor domestic zone and the functioning agricultural zone of the farmstead.
 11. As such, the building has evidential and historical value as an example of a large Essex farmhouse that has evolved from vernacular origins, through phases of 'polite' Georgian architectural intervention, late nineteenth century remodelling and twentieth century adaptation. Given the above, I consider the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the legibility of its sixteenth century core and its historically layered architectural evolution.
 12. The proposal would entail removal of some internal walling in the rear nineteenth century part of the building to enlarge and open up access to the 'snug' and a larger, repositioned rear hall. Also, the gable wall of the seventeenth century extension would be breached to open up a relocated and enlarged 'kitchen/breakfast' area that would include the new link extension.
 13. Nevertheless, as indicated by the heritage assessment submitted by the appellant, the opening in the gable wall would result in removal of modern fabric. The internal walling to be removed in the rear part of the building is of uncertain age and authenticity. Some of the partition wall between the proposed study and enlarged snug would be retained to inform of the earlier layout of the ground floor. Furthermore, the sense of a relationship between the main front hall and a rear hall would endure. So would the prevailing impression of eclectic variety of room shape and size, and the dominance of the front rooms and front hallway. There is no substantive evidence to indicate that the proposal would harm the structural stability of the building.
 14. The replacement of twentieth century leaded glass windows with tripartite vertical sliding sash windows in the building's front elevation would reflect the late Georgian phase of the house, subject to appropriate detailing to be secured by condition. The outbuilding's remaining Georgian sash window would be retained. Furthermore, the reconfiguration of the outbuilding's fenestration would appear as suitable functional alterations to a subordinate structure to the main core of the farmhouse, within the evolved domestic zone to the rear of the farmhouse.
 15. I observe from the plans and my site visit that the following combination of proposed elements would help the link extension to assimilate into the evolved domestic zone of the farmstead. The single-storey scale and substantial proportion of glazing within the extension would limit its bulk and solidity of appearance. Its pitched roof profile would echo the gable roof profiles at the rear of the building, while the modernity of the zinc roof material and proportion of glazing would differentiate it from the farmhouse. Significant historic exterior detailing would not be obscured by the proposal. Moreover, an appreciation of key character elements in the form of the building's chimneys, rustic hipped tiled roofing, fenestration pattern and authoritative front elevation would not be diminished by the proposal.

16. 'On the ground', the configuration of the main frame of farm buildings would limit the prominence of the rear extension. This would prevent the latter competing with the authoritative front elevation of the farmhouse, viewed on the main approach along the front driveway.
17. Consequently, the proposed rear extension would be a subordinate addition that would modestly reinforce the perimeter of the evolved domestic zone, while allowing some visual permeability through the glazing between farmstead zones. It would strike an acceptable balance between being subordinate to and differentiated from the listed building. As such, the extension would represent an honest addition that would not visually compete with the pre-eminence of the historic farmhouse.
18. It is proposed to remove a stretch of approximately elbow height, late nineteenth century yard wall that is located south-west of the farmhouse. The more dominant, high perimeter red brick wall around the rear courtyard space would be retained, thus preserving the separation of the evolved domestic zone from the farming function beyond. Furthermore, the main frame of remodelled farmstead buildings would continue to 'hold its own' in terms of architectural presence and legibility of historical layering.
19. Given the above, this leads me to find that the proposed works would fit in acceptably with the listed building and its evolved farmstead. The proposal would read as part of the historically layered evolution of the building. The sixteenth century core of the building, including its authoritative front elevation and front rooms, would remain dominant. Furthermore, the legibility of main phases of the building's architectural evolution - in the form of 'polite' Georgian and nineteenth century model farmstead remodelling, and twentieth century outdoor domestic adaptation - would endure.
20. Given the above, I conclude that the proposal would preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building. This would satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework. Also, while of limited relevance to an appeal made under section 20 of the Act, it would accord with saved Policy RLP100 of the Braintree District Local Plan Review (2005) and Policy CS9 of the Braintree District Core Strategy (2011) which seek to ensure that proposals conserve designated heritage assets and the historic environment.

Conclusion and Conditions

21. For the reasons given above I conclude that, subject to conditions, the appeal should be allowed. The attached conditions are reasonable and necessary in the circumstances of this case, in accordance with the tests set out in paragraph 56 of the Framework.
22. In addition to the standard time limit condition, a condition requiring the works to be carried out in accordance with the submitted details is necessary to ensure that they are implemented as approved. Conditions covering architectural detailing, submission of samples and the use of specified materials are necessary to ensure that the appearance and construction of the extension is of a suitably high standard. In order to preserve historic architectural detail a condition requiring the making good of any disturbed surfaces is also necessary.

William Cooper INSPECTOR