

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 17 November 2020

by C Jack BSc(Hons) MA MATP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th April 2021

APPEAL A - Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/W/20/3249478

Aldworth Farm, Jobsons Lane, Lurgashall GU27 3BY

- 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 and Mrs Sheppard against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/19/05938/HOUS, dated 10 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as "two storey rear extension to northern wing. Minor internal alterations and replacement fenestration to south west extended section and north east extended section. Amendments to planning permission SDNP/16/03556/FUL and listed building consent SDNP/16/03567/LIS".
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APPEAL B - Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/Y/20/3249490

Aldworth Farm, Jobsons Lane, Lurgashall GU27 3BY

- 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 and Mrs Sheppard against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/19/05939/LIS, dated 10 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2020.
 - The works proposed are described as "two storey rear extension to northern wing. Minor internal alterations and replacement fenestration to south west extended section and north east extended section. Amendments to planning permission SDNP/16/03556/FUL and listed building consent SDNP/16/03567/LIS".
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Decision – Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Decision – Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

3. As the appeals relate to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). The site lies within the South Downs National Park thus I have also had regard to the statutory purposes of the national park designation.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, Aldworth Farm, and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

5. Aldworth Farm, formerly Beards Cottage, was first listed in 2016 and probably dates from the late 16th century, and more certainly the 17th century, according to the list description. The detailed list entry also describes alterations and extensions in the 18th and 20th centuries, and architectural interest deriving from its demonstration of the evolving plan and structure of a late 16th century and 17th century timber framed house, reflecting changing technology, domestic planning and function. Despite alterations and some loss of fabric, a demonstrable proportion of the timber frame, the brick stack and probably the roof structure survive. Given the above and informed by my site visit and other information before me, I find that the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to be primarily associated with this architectural interest.
6. Whilst the ridge height of the proposed two-storey extension would be lower than both that of the 1970s extension and the historic core of the building, and the eaves would be commensurate with those of the historic core, the proposal would represent a significant addition to the overall size of the section of the listed building described as the northern wing. The resultant northern wing would be substantial in scale, particularly due to its additional length, relative to the modest proportions of the historic core, making it unduly dominant to the most historic and architecturally significant section of the building. Additionally, and whilst the valley roof would facilitate the lower ridge and eaves height and be less physically intrusive to the 1970s roof, its design would have an incongruous relationship with the 1970s wing in its backdrop, as well as with the adjacent historic core.
7. The appellant has suggested that the proposal would not harm the listed building because it would not affect the front elevation or be more widely visible, other than in glimpses from public paths some distance away. However, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest as a whole and irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained. It is their special interest that warrants national designation. This remains the case even though the proposal relates principally to the part of the building extended in the 1970s rather than its historic core. Whilst, as the listing specifies, the 1970s extension does not contribute to the special interest of the listed building, the proposed addition would have a negative effect on the character and appearance of the building taken as a whole and therefore would not preserve the listed building.
8. I am advised of consents¹ relating to a two-storey, catslide-roofed extension with essentially the same footprint as the extension proposed here. I saw that some apparently associated ground works have been carried out, and there is no dispute in the evidence before me that these consents remain extant, nor any suggestion that there would be little prospect of the consented works taking place. As such, the extension and alterations subject to those consents would represent a valid fallback position. The ridge height in the fallback scheme would, in part, be higher than that proposed, but would nevertheless be approximately consistent with the main ridge of the house and the 1970s wing. Furthermore, the length and width of the proposed extension would be similar to the fallback.

¹ SDNP/16/03556/HOUS and SDNP/16/03557/LIS

9. However, the flat valley roof form, rather than the catslide, would result in an extension of greater length at first floor and roof level. While, as the appellants' overlay plans show, the difference would be relatively modest, it would be sufficient to make the extended northern wing appear bulkier and more dominant in relation to the historic core than the fallback. In addition, given that the design would be incongruous, including in comparison to the sweeping catslide, and albeit there is no specific precedent for a catslide in relation to this building, the proposal would be more harmful to the significance of the listed building than the fallback. As such, the weight in favour of the appeals arising from the fallback is significantly limited.
10. A number of Slimlite double-glazed windows and doors are present in the building, mainly in the later extensions, and I am advised that these were principally considered a benefit through the replacement of uPVC windows and doors. Single-glazed timber casement windows remain predominant in the historic core, including in the rear elevation adjacent to the 1970s northern wing. The uniformity, including in the texture of the glass, of the double-glazed units is clearly discernible compared with the more traditional single glazed windows albeit the overall style and general proportions are similar. However, the further use of Slimlite double glazed units as proposed would be limited to within the new extension and the 1970s addition rather than the historic core. Accordingly, in this instance, there would be no additional harm arising to the special architectural interest of the listed building in this respect.
11. It is common ground that the various other elements of the proposal, including minor internal works in the vicinity of the staircase, which is not a historic feature, would have no significant effects on the special interest of the listed building. I see no reason to find otherwise.
12. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Paragraph 194 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets or from development within their setting and that this should have a clear and convincing justification. Given the limited works to the fabric of the historic core, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
13. Under such circumstances, paragraph 196 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of optimal viable use of listed buildings. The appellants consider that the proposal would be beneficial including because it would result in improved habitable space for 21st century family living, the related investment would secure the longevity of the site and the building, thermal efficiency would be improved, and a remaining uPVC door would be removed. However, these are mainly private benefits and the thermal improvements and the limited conservation benefit which lies mainly in the uPVC removal, could be achieved without the proposed extension. Therefore, any public benefits of the proposal are very limited and insufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified. In any event, the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence.

14. Given the above and in the absence of any significant public benefit, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the Grade II listed building. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 192 of the Framework, and policies SD12 and SD13 of the South Downs Local Plan 2019 which together seek, among other things, to ensure that development proposals would conserve and enhance the historic environment, including the significance of a listed building and its setting. Accordingly, it would also be inconsistent with the first purpose of the national park designation.
15. It would also fail to satisfy policies SD5 and SD31, which respectively and among other things seek appropriate and sympathetic design and extensions to respect local established character, and policy SD1 which relates to sustainable development including the conservation of cultural heritage. As a result, the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan. My attention has also been drawn to Local Plan policies SD7 and SD48, which relate to tranquillity and climate change and, on the evidence, I find no specific conflict with either. However, this does not alter my findings in relation to the main issue or my conclusion that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole, and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to otherwise justify the proposal.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons above, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

Catherine Jack

INSPECTOR