



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 9 December 2021

by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 December 2021

Appeal A Ref: APP/W0530/W/21/3272042

19 Main Street, Stow-cum-Quy, Cambridgeshire, CB25 9AB

- 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 Gilbert Holmes against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02250/FUL, dated 4 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 12 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Conversion of a timber-framed barn into a 2-bedroom dwelling. The proposed works to be carried out without:
 - *demolition of any part of, or extension to, the existing building
 - *alteration to the existing structure of the building.To convert the barn into a habitable dwelling, the proposed works include the construction of internal walls, floors, ceilings, etc.'
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W0530/Y/21/3272062

19 Main Street, Stow-cum-Quy, Cambridgeshire, CB25 9AB

- 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 Gilbert Holmes against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02251/LBC, dated 4 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 January 2021.
 - The works proposed are described as 'Conversion of a timber-framed barn into a 2-bedroom dwelling. The proposed works to be carried out without:
 - *demolition of any part of, or extension to, the existing building
 - *alteration to the existing structure of the building.To convert the barn into a habitable dwelling, the proposed works include the construction of internal walls, floors, ceilings, etc.'
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have considered the two appeals concurrently, but on their own merits, because there are common matters between them. I observed that the appeal building has been subdivided from 19 Main Street by a close boarded fence. Works have also commenced on its conversion to a dwelling.
3. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') has been published since the Council issued its decision. In this instance the relevant changes only relate to paragraph numbering.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in these appeals are:

- Whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building known as 19 Main Street or its setting, or any features of special architectural interest that it possesses; and
- The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area (Appeal A only).

Reasons

5. 19 Main Street (No 19) was listed in 1984 and is a fine example of a traditional timber framed cottage that possibly dates from the 18th Century. The roof is part thatched and part tiled. And the elevations are generally simple, being plasterwork over a brick plinth with modest sized windows. The building tells us much about historic construction methods and the building traditions of the area. It also has a quaint charm that adds to local distinctiveness. The building therefore has evidential, historic, and aesthetic value and significance.
6. The appeal building is an extended timber framed barn that may have origins in the 18th Century. It is subserviently located to the rear and side of No 19. It is conceivable that it was once been a dwelling. That said, it has previously been a workshop, including use as a wainwright's. A more recent use as a builder's yard ceased in c1993. Photographic evidence from 1966 demonstrates that the barn formed one side of a yard area to the immediate rear of No 19. The appeal building therefore has a close historic association with No 19 and is considered by the appellant and Council to be curtilage listed¹. That said, it is much altered and therefore the extent of its evidential and historic value is unclear from the evidence before me.
7. The works proposed in the appellant's submissions include new windows and roof lights, a glazed panel, internal subdivision, construction of a new first floor and staircase and internal fitting out to include insulation, a solid concrete floor and plaster boarded partitions. The Council has not provided any detailed critique of these works. Instead, it has focussed on articulating, albeit briefly, the concerns it has with the works that have already taken place.
8. The description of development states that the conversion works are to be carried out without demolition of any part of the building and without alterations to the existing structure. However, that is because the barn has already been subject to extensive works in recent times, and this has resulted in the loss of historic fabric. It is evident that much of the timber frame has been replaced, including large sections of the sole plate. The brick plinth has been rebuilt on concrete footings and a collapsed internal mezzanine removed. Externally the building has been reclad, reroofed and new windows and doors inserted. I share the view of the Council that at least some of the works have probably gone beyond a like for like repair. None appear to have been authorised though.
9. The previous works have formed a baseline for the conversion now proposed. Thus, the likely unauthorised works are integral to the scheme before me. For example, the proposed first floor would sit on what appears to be new and

¹ It being present in 1948 and ancillary at the time of listing

unauthorised timbers. Accordingly, it is not possible to artificially separate the previous works from what is now proposed, because the latter are reliant on the former being acceptable. Consequently, the proposal before me is lacking adequate detail to determine the acceptability of the conversion as a whole. Thus, I cannot conclude that the conversion has not, and would not, adversely affect the significance of the barn.

10. Paragraph 194 of the Framework requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage asset. As the previous works and their impact on the significance of the barn have not been adequately described and assessed, the appellant has not sufficiently addressed this requirement. A schedule of works (undertaken and proposed), alongside a more detailed analysis of the building prior to the unauthorised works taking place, would have been advantageous. As a result, I cannot make an informed judgement as to whether the conversion to a dwelling would preserve² the curtilage listed barn, including any features of special architectural interest it may have possessed.
11. The listed building sits slightly back from Main Street behind a front garden delineated by a hedge. Main Street narrows on passing Wheelwright Way and entering the historic village centre. The narrow width of the street and the hedges either side hint at a bygone rural character, which reinforces the vernacular style of the listed building. Moreover, the space around the front and sides of No 19 permits the architectural quality and aesthetic value of the building to be appreciated. Consequently, the setting of No 19, although much altered by modern housing, still positively contributes to the experience and understanding of the building's values.
12. The conversion and ancillary work, especially the enlarged access, would accentuate the prominence of the barn. However, it would not result in a dominating effect on No 19. This is because the barn is smaller than No 19 and has a recessive position and appearance, especially the use of black boarding. The brown windows stand out, but an appropriate colour scheme could have been secured through a condition had the scheme been otherwise acceptable.
13. Nevertheless, the provision of off-street parking to the south west of No 19 would require the pedestrian access to be widened with the subsequent removal of a section of hedging. In addition, a hard standing would be constructed, and the roadside bank altered. The engineered highway access, hardstanding, and presence of parked vehicles in a car dominated frontage, would harmfully erode the setting of No 19 by interrupting the view/experience of both its front and side elevations. A discordant close boarded fence has been erected between the barn and No 19. It is a hard feature with an odd alignment and this affords it a contrived appearance. The subdivision of the yard has visually and spatially eroded the close functional relationship between the thatched cottage and the barn workshop. The conversion would therefore moderately harm the setting of No 19.
14. The harm that would occur to the setting of the listed building would not be severe and therefore it would be 'less than substantial' within the meaning of the Framework. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

² Preserve in this context means to do no harm

15. The proposal would find a new use for the barn, which has previously been in a poor state of repair. It may be that its use as a dwelling would be the building's optimal viable use. However, it has not been demonstrated that the setting of No 19 must be harmed for the future of the barn to be secured. It may, for example, be possible to subdivide the site in a more sensitive way and to accommodate parking elsewhere in the red line site or on street. In respect of the latter, on street parking by residents and office workers already occurs in the wider parts of Main Street without any apparent harm to highway safety, the street scene or living conditions. Parking associated with a small two-bedroom dwelling may not alter this situation. Moreover, given the extensive works that have taken place to the barn, it is unclear whether it is worth harming the setting of No 19 to retain this much altered structure.
16. The proposal would result in a new home within the development framework of the village. This would support the vitality of the community. It would also increase housing land supply and future occupants would support services and facilities. However, the contribution in respect of these matters would be modest. The proposal would also provide some support to the construction industry, but this would be time limited and minor in scale. Overall, the benefits of the scheme carry limited weight.
17. Thus, when giving considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the listed building's setting³, I find that the less than substantial harm that would arise from the proposal would not be outweighed by its public benefits. Accordingly, there would be a conflict with Paragraph 200 of the Framework as harm to a designated heritage asset would not have clear and convincing justification.
18. In conclusion, insufficient information has been submitted to judge the acceptability of the conversion. The proposal would also harm the setting of No 19 and this harm would not be outweighed by public benefits. The proposal is therefore at odds with Policy NH/14, H/16 and HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (LP), which seeks to secure development that sustains and enhances the significance and setting of heritage assets. In so doing it would fail to preserve the listed building contrary to the expectations of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the 'Act').

The effect on the character and appearance of the area

19. The hedge along the site frontage and the garden to the front of the barn provide a pleasant soft relief to the street scene at the entrance to what appears to be the historic core of the village.
20. The area proposed for off street parking would be cramped, located prominently in front of the barn, and require the removal of a section of a pleasant hedgerow and garden. The parked cars would also diminish views of the listed building, which is a pleasing feature in the street scene. The street scene would therefore be harmed. There is frontage parking at 21 Main Street, but this is mostly screened by a large hedge and is not as cramped as the appeal scheme would be.
21. The Council have suggested that comings and goings from the barn would be problematic, but there appears to have been a long-standing pedestrian

³ See Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

entrance from Main Road to the barn. It is therefore unclear what the Council's concerns are in this respect. Nevertheless, the proposal would moderately harm the street scene and thus the character and appearance of the area. This would be at odds with Policies TI/3, H/16 and HQ/1 of the LP. These policies seek to secure development that preserves or enhances the character of the area and appropriately respond to the context.

Conclusion

22. The proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the listed building and would harm the character and appearance of the area. There are no other considerations or public benefits that would outweigh this harm. In addition, insufficient information has been submitted to enable a proper assessment of the conversion works as a whole on the significance of the building. Thus, the proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, the Framework and development plan policies insofar as relevant. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeals have been dismissed.

Graham Chamberlain
INSPECTOR