



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 February 2022

by Mike Hayden BSc DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 17 March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/Y/21/3277167

Church Hall Farmhouse, Church End, Broxted, Essex CM6 2BZ

- 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 & Mrs P Beaufils against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref UTT/21/0059/LB, dated 6 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 26 February 2021.
 - The proposed works are described as '*replacement of all existing timber framed single glazed windows with similar style double glazed timber framed windows*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of the proposed works on the application form and decision notice refers to the existing windows as timber framed. However, at my site visit, I observed that they are in fact a combination of metal and wood. The outer frames and mullions are timber, but, other than the windows either side of the front door, the casements are Crittall steel frames. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed replacement windows on the special architectural and historic interest of Church Hall Farm House, as a listed building attached to and within the curtilage of Church Hall Farm, a Grade II* listed building.

Reasons

4. Church Hall Farmhouse is part of a group of former farm buildings, which comprise the historic Church Hall complex, located at Church End, on the northern side of the village of Broxted. The group contains a number of listed buildings described on the statutory list, which are relevant to this appeal. Church Hall, located south-west of the appeal property, is a Grade II* listed, late C16 timber framed and plastered house, which is historically the principal residential building in the complex. Church Hall Farm, named on the statutory list as Barn to the east of Church Hall, is a Grade II* listed, early C15 aisled, timber framed barn, to which Church Hall Farm House is attached via a curved, low range of former barn buildings, now in use as a bed and breakfast. The Barn House, a Grade II listed, C17 timber framed and weatherboarded barn, is

- adjacent to the appeal property to the west. Both barns have been converted to residential use, with modern glazing installed in their original barn openings.
5. Although not mentioned in the statutory list descriptions for these buildings, Church Hall Farmhouse is listed¹ by virtue of being attached to and within the curtilage of Church Hall Farm. Whilst historical records for the building are sparse, it is clear from the information provided and from my site inspection, that Church Hall Farmhouse is of historic and architectural value in its own right and contributes to the heritage significance of the Church Hall group.
 6. The current Farmhouse is considered to have been rebuilt in 1920², as a conversion of the barn³ which originally stood on the site. The internally exposed timber framing provides evidence of the reconstruction, with a mix of original and reused historic structural timbers, built off what appear to be the brick plinths and base plate timbers of the original barn. The timber framing is characteristic of the vernacular architecture of historic farm buildings in this part of Essex, and gives the interior of the building a striking and traditional appearance.
 7. The existing windows form part of the historic fabric of the rebuilt Farmhouse. Their outer timber frames comprise substantial timber mullions with a simple rectangular profile, which complement the character and integrity of the exposed timber framing that forms each opening. Within the outer timber frames are Crittall 'cottage style', metal casement windows with decorative period metal stays, which are consistent with a reconstruction date of 1920, when steel 'cottage windows', developed by the Crittall company shortly before that date, were in popular use in new dwellings. The slender metal frames contribute to the overall aesthetic value and traditional appearance of the building, and are similar in style to the metal casement windows at Church Hall.
 8. The use of leaded lights is and was a consistent and unifying window design in the Church Hall group of buildings, and is a characteristic feature of dwellings in the surrounding area. They are still seen in the refurbished Church Hall and low range of former barn buildings, which link Church Hall Farmhouse to Church Hall Farm, and they originally existed in The Barn House, before its recent conversion. The windows are single glazed, providing the reflective quality of traditional windows, and mostly benefit from sliding casement secondary glazing, offering some draught and noise proofing, without disrupting the aesthetics of the leaded lights from the outside.
 9. On this basis, I find that the existing windows in Church Hall Farmhouse make an important contribution to its architectural and historic value, as a curtilage listed building within the Church Hall complex. They are historically authentic, helping to tell the story of the building's development, their materials, proportions and design are sympathetic to the timber frame construction of the Farmhouse, and they are consistent with the traditional architecture and character of the Farmhouse and the wider group of buildings at Church Hall.
 10. The proposed works would involve replacing all of the existing windows with timber framed, double glazed windows, with applied lead strips to mimic the appearance of the existing leaded lights. The appellant states that these would replicate the existing style of the windows in the appeal property and those which originally existed in the adjacent Barn House.

¹ Under Section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990

² Design and Heritage Statement, October 2020

³ Delegated Officer Report, February 2021

11. However only one plan has been provided to show the external appearance, dimensions and specifications for two of the 4-light window openings. This is insufficient to understand the visual effect of the proposals on each window opening and on the overall appearance and proportions of the two principal elevations. Without cross-sectional drawings of the window units, it is also unclear to what extent the proposed replacement windows would replicate the dimensions and profile of the existing windows, including the original timber mullions and outer frames, and the slender framework of the Crittall metal casements.
12. Based on the plan that has been submitted, it appears that the existing timber mullions and framework would be replaced entirely, which would result in the loss of historic fabric that complements the timber framed interior. Whilst the replacement windows would be in timber to reflect the style of the windows originally installed in the adjacent Barn House, the plan appears to show their frames would be thicker, which is likely to be necessary to accommodate the increased depth and weight of the double glazed units. This would alter the proportion of glass to frame and result in a less elegant, less slender appearance than the existing window frames. In addition, the reflective characteristics of double glazed units and the visibility of the sealed units within their frames often detracts from the traditional appearance of windows in historic buildings, compared to the more matt, thin and uneven finish of the glass in the existing single glazed windows in the principal elevations.
13. I recognise that the windows installed in Church Hall Farm and The Barn House are of a different style to their originals. However, it is a core principle of the planning system that each application is determined on its own merits. The character and appearance of the two barns is different to the Farmhouse, with fewer casement windows due to the historic need for less natural light in storage barns. Whereas the fenestration to the Farmhouse is a more important element in its domestic function, and in its overall design and appearance.
14. As such, based on the information that has been submitted, I consider that the proposed replacement windows would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of Church Hall Farmhouse and its heritage significance. In terms of the scales of harm identified in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I consider that the harm caused to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial, but that is not to say that the harm is not significant.
15. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires that less than substantial harm to a heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In terms of the weight to be attached to the harm, paragraph 199 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial or less than substantial harm. In light of this and the statutory duty⁴ to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, I give considerable weight to the harm the proposed works would cause to its heritage significance.

⁴ Under section 16(2) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

16. With regard to public benefits, the Planning Practice Guidance⁵ (PPG) states that they should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit, but that works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset would be a public benefit. The appellant contends that the proposed works are necessary to improve the thermal performance and energy efficiency of the dwelling and reduce the effect of aircraft noise from Stansted Airport and its flightpath. Whilst these can be regarded as public benefits, better draft proofing and secondary glazing can also be effective in reducing heat loss and noise. Moreover, when choosing to occupy a historic building, acceptance of the limitations of the existing building structure is often a compromise when compared with modern types of accommodation.
17. I noted that in places the existing windows are in need of repair. But the advice of Historic England (HE)⁶ explains the important contribution that traditional windows and their glazing make to the significance of historic buildings. They are an integral part of the design of older buildings, as is the case here, and often made with materials of a higher quality than are generally available today. For these reasons, therefore, HE's advice emphasises the need for repair rather than replacement of traditional windows.
18. Accordingly, based on the evidence before me, I conclude that there would be insufficient public benefit to outweigh the identified harm or the special regard to be had to the preservation of the listed building under the Act. As such, the proposed works would also fail to comply with saved Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005), which requires development affecting a listed building to be in keeping with its character and surroundings and seeks to resist alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

M Hayden

INSPECTOR

⁵ PPG Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723

⁶ Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading, Historic England, February 2017