



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 February 2022

by Mike Hayden BSc DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y0435/Y/21/3279225

The Barn, 29 Little Stocking, Shenley Brook End, Milton Keynes MK5 7BG

- 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 Martin Caley against the decision of Milton Keynes Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00138/LBC, dated 18 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 25 March 2021.
 - The works proposed are described as '*single storey rear extension*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application form and decision notice describe the proposed works to the listed building as a single storey rear extension. However, the submitted plans and heritage statement also propose internal alterations to an existing bedroom to form a new corridor providing access to the extension, and the installation of two roof lights to give light into the existing bedroom and the new corridor. Accordingly, I have considered these as part of the proposed works to the listed building in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed works on the special interest of The Barn, 29 Little Stocking, as a Grade II listed building.

Reasons

4. The Barn/29 Little Stocking is part of a cluster of Grade II listed, converted former farm buildings, dating from the C18 and early C19, which previously comprised the Valley Farm complex. The farm was originally located on the edge of a rural village at Shenley Brook End, which is now surrounded by modern residential development built as part of the westward expansion of Milton Keynes. However, part of the special interest of this group of listed buildings is that, as a former farm complex it has remained largely intact, and as such, although set within modern development, it contributes to an understanding of the economic and social history of the area.
5. No. 29 is composed of three interconnected, Grade II listed buildings on the south side of the cluster. The dominant building is a two storey, timber framed and weatherboarded barn, orientated north-south in the centre of the three. A former shelter shed, in the form of a long, low range, runs east to west along

the southern boundary of the site, with its rear wall in decorative brickwork backing onto the lane, Little stocking, and its original openings, now infilled, facing into the former farmyard. Projecting northwards from the eastern end of the shelter shed, is a former cart shed, built in rubble stone and brick, which was originally open fronted on its east side. These buildings would originally have provided storage for machinery, animals and fodder, in association with the main farmhouse, which is situated on the northern side of the complex.

6. All three buildings were converted in 2009 to form a single residential property. The conversion has been carried out in manner that has preserved much of their architectural and historic value. While the buildings have been altered for domestic use, externally they retain their traditional agricultural form and character. Amongst other elements, this can be seen in the retention and reuse of the historic pattern of openings, which are still evident in the glazed entrances installed in place of the original full height doors to the main barn, and the weatherboarding or brickwork infills between the original brick piers to the former stall openings in the north facing elevation of the shelter shed.
7. The original proportions of the buildings have also been preserved, providing evidence of their historical use. This includes the modest and subservient scale of the shelter shed, the narrow depth of which reflects the dimensions of the stalls which it would originally have housed. Internally within the shelter shed, the narrower width of rooms created within the historic stall divisions, also provides an important clue to the previous use of the building, and the exposed roof trusses preserve original architectural and structural detailing.
8. As such, no. 29, and the wing which is affected by the proposed works, continues to make a useful and important contribution to the heritage significance and special interest of this cluster of former farm buildings.
9. The proposed works involve the addition of a single storey extension at the western end of the former shelter shed, projecting northwards into the inner courtyard garden. It would extend across the weatherboarded infill, brick piers and French windows at this end of the building. I note that the north and east facing elevations of the extension are designed to replicate the appearance of the existing elevation. However, the effect of the extension would be to permanently obscure one of the infilled, but clearly discernible, original stall openings in the shelter shed, altering the historic legibility of the listed building and failing to preserve its special interest.
10. The extension would also be bulkier than the existing building, measuring 5.15 metres (m) wide by 4.8m deep, compared with the 4.3m depth of the former shelter shed. As a result, the roof to the extension would be of a shallower pitch than that of the existing building, which is evident from the submitted plans. The extension would also appear as a projection from rather than a continuation of the linear form of the existing building. In addition, the insertion of two rooflights of unequal size, proportion and alignment either side of the extension, would visually disrupt the tiled roofscape of the building. In these respects, the proposal would be inconsistent with the historic plan form and modest agricultural scale of the former shelter shed, and would fail to preserve features of special architectural interest. It would also be contrary to Policy HE1 of the local plan for Milton Keynes, Plan:MK (2019), which expects proposals for listed buildings to respect their historic plan form.

11. Internally, a new stud wall and section of ceiling would be inserted into the existing bedroom to create a corridor providing access to the extension and partition off the bedroom. The ceiling boards would be butted up to the bottom chord of the exposed roof truss, obscuring it from view from the corridor, and hence concealing part of the historic fabric of the building. Whilst reversible, this alteration would diminish appreciation of the special architectural interest of the listed building.
12. I recognise that the extension would be within the private, rear courtyard and garden of the property, and unseen from surrounding public viewpoints. However, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest, irrespective of whether or not public views can be gained.
13. Therefore, I find that the proposed works would cause harm to the special architectural and historic interest of 29 Little Stocking and its heritage significance as a set of former agricultural buildings within a former village farm. 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.
14. 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 duty¹ 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.
15. With regard to public benefits, the Planning Practice Guidance² (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 would have a positive impact on the long term use and function of the building, by improving the amount of bedroom accommodation in comparison to the large open plan living space, thereby enhancing the enjoyment and functionality of the building. However, I have little evidence before me to demonstrate that the existing accommodation is inadequate. 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.
16. Accordingly, 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 Policy HE1 of the local plan for Milton Keynes, Plan:MK, adopted in 2019, which states that permission will only be granted for

¹ Under section 16(2) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

² PPG Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723

proposals that cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, where the harm is demonstrably outweighed by public benefits.

Conclusion

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

M Hayden

INSPECTOR