
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 10 May 2022

by David Cliff BA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 July 2022

Appeal A: APP/D3830/W/21/3284822

Whitehouse Farm, Staplefield Lane, Staplefield RH17 5SR

- 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 Ms Suzanne Readwin against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref: DM/21/2070, dated 26 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of single-storey rear extension.
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Appeal B: APP/D3830/W/21/3284825

Whitehouse Farm, Staplefield Lane, Staplefield RH17 5SR

- 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 Ms Suzanne Readwin against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref: DM/21/2077, dated 26 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 July 2021.
 - The works proposed is erection of single-storey rear extension.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Application for Costs

3. An application for costs was made by Ms Suzanne Readwin against Mid Sussex District Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matter

4. As the appeal relates 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').

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, 'Whitehouse Farm, Staplefield Road' (Ref: 1194177), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses.

Reasons

6. Whitehouse Farm was listed in 1983. It is a timber framed, two and a half storey, former farmhouse building dating from the 16th century, with later additions and alterations including refacing with red brick at ground floor level and tiles above.
7. The 16th century core of the building is of both historic illustrative and architectural value as an early example of a residential layout consisting of closed rooms and private chambers over several levels as opposed to a more traditional medieval, open hall arrangement. In spite of the 18th century brick underbuilding, the remaining timber structure remains predominantly intact, showing the original room divisions.
8. The previous alterations include significant alterations and extensions, including to the northeast end of the building, a two storey extension to the southern end of the house and the existing single storey lean-to kitchen extension that is proposed to be removed as part of the current proposals. There is good survival of partitions, doors and other fixtures relating to successive phases of the building's development which are illustrative of the materials, building methods and architectural detail of the 18th and 19th centuries which includes the arts and crafts period. As such they have evidential value in their own right as well as signifiers of changing patterns of use.
9. Given the above, I find the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to be primarily associated with the architectural and historic interest of a 16th century traditional farmhouse with later alterations and extensions evidencing the historic phasing of the building and the use of different materials and building methods to meet the changing needs and aspirations of its occupants.
10. A single storey extension to replace the existing lean-to along with further alterations to the building along with an outbuilding were approved/consented in 2016 though not implemented and have now consequently lapsed. The extension currently proposed is 3 metres greater in depth than the previous proposal.
11. The removal of the later lean-to kitchen extension has been previously accepted by the Council when it approved the smaller extension. Although it signifies a later phase of the building's historic development, it has been previously remodelled and has limited architectural value. The harm to the special interest of the building from its removal would therefore only be modest.
12. The contemporary glazed design of the proposed extension would distinguish it from the existing building. Furthermore, whilst involving the loss of the existing extension noted above, it would not result in the loss of the original historic core or fabric of the building. However, the proposed extension would be of a considerable size in terms of its width, length, area and height and would project beyond the existing rear wing of the building. Whilst the original 16th century building has been previously extended, the proposal would not respect the scale and proportions of the existing building and would not be subordinate to it. The flat roof of the extension would be at a similar height to the level of the existing first floor window cills. Although the design of the extension as a glazed structure has sought to present a construction of light appearance, it

would nonetheless be apparent as an extension of very considerable size and massing. It would be a disproportionate, incongruent addition that would unacceptably dominate the overall east elevation and distract from the modest proportions of the historic core of this building. Taking account of its size, it would be so distracting that it would also erode the legibility of the earlier phases of the building as well as appearing as distinctly out of keeping with the vernacular building forms.

13. Although the 16th century core and associated historic fabric of the building would not be directly affected, the disproportionate size and the appearance of the extension would adversely affect the way the building is experienced as a whole and would detract from its special interest as a former traditional farmhouse.
14. Despite there being no public views, the building is listed for its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and the visibility of the proposed works is not a determining factor in considering whether they would preserve its special interest.
15. Notwithstanding the harm to the listed building, the re-profiling of the ground to the rear and alterations to the existing retaining wall would be unlikely to be so significant to lead to harm to the listed building.
16. The appellant draws attention to a number of cases where the Council has approved extensions to listed buildings, including where cumulative impacts have arisen from successive alterations to their respective building footprints. Each building is different and the respective effects of proposals upon them will inevitably vary from case to case. I also do not have the full circumstances of those consents before me to determine whether they are the same in all respects to the current scheme. Although these buildings appear to have had considerable cumulative increases in their floor space, each case must be considered on its individual merits. I have considered the proposal on the basis of the evidence before me and taking account my statutory duties under the Act. In any event, these are not of such weight to alter my conclusion on the current proposal at Whitehouse Farm.
17. Given all the above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building. Consequently, I give this harm considerable importance and weight.

Other Matter

18. The extension would not be prominent in wider views from the surrounding rural area and would therefore conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Planning Balance

19. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') advises that when considering the impact on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 200 goes on to advise that the significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that this should have clear and convincing justification. Given that the proposal would not harm the original historic fabric of the building and would not alter its front elevation I

find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.

20. Under such circumstances, paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of the optimal viable use of listed buildings. The appellant considers that the proposal would be beneficial as it would enhance the living accommodation for existing and future residents including the provision of a larger kitchen. However, this is a private benefit and would be outweighed by the harm 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.
21. Given the above and in the absence of any defined public benefit, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and would be contrary to the heritage aims of Policy DP34 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014–2031 (March 2018) and paragraph 197 of the Framework. As a result the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

22. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

David Cliff

INSPECTOR