



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 5 December 2022

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 December 2022

Appeal A Ref: APP/C1570/W/21/3283855

Watts Folly, Wenden Road, Arkesden CB11 4HB

- 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 & Mrs Hawkins against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref UTT/21/1811/HHF, dated 28 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is proposed extensions and alterations to rear.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/C1570/Y/21/3283859

Watts Folly, Wenden Road, Arkesden CB11 4HB

- 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 Hawkins against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref UTT/21/1812/LB, dated 28 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 August 2021.
 - The works proposed are proposed extensions and alterations to rear.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed, and Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. These decisions address both planning and listed building consent appeals for the same site and the same scheme. Whilst the remit of each regime is different, the main issues set out below relate to both appeals. Indeed, to reduce repetition and for the avoidance of doubt, I have dealt with both appeals together within a single decision letter whilst having regard to the statutory duties that apply under Sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

3. The main issues, common to both appeals, are whether the proposed works and development would preserve the Grade II listed building known as 'Watts Folly' (the listed building) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and the proposal's effect upon the character or appearance of the Arkesden Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

4. The listed building is of 17th-century origin and comprises a timber-framed and plastered cottage with a thatched roof, on an L-shaped plan. It was once used

as two dwellings. The significance and special interest of the listed building is drawn, in part, from its age, form, traditional materials, architectural detailing, and its relevance to the historic evolution and rural history of Arkesden. This significance and special interest is not limited to specific elevations and is apparent despite 20th-century renovations.

5. Following permissions granted in 2002, an oak-framed garden room with clay tiled roof has been added to the listed building's eastern cross-wing (the cross-wing). As of single storey and simple linear form, the garden room reads as a subordinate and non-obtrusive element set to the rear of the designated asset. Moreover, whilst of no heritage value per se, the garden room has not undermined the listed building's historic L-shaped plan form or removed the ability for its significance and special interest to be readily interpreted and easily appreciated.
6. The CA covers most of Arkesden, a small rural settlement. The significance and special interest of the CA is drawn, in-part, from its array of historic buildings and traditional materials, its abundance of green features, and the verdant ruralness of its wider surroundings. The listed building, being of special historic interest and prominently sited at the heart of the CA, makes a valuable contribution to the character and appearance of the CA taken as a whole.
7. The proposal is centred upon the construction of an extension to the western side of the garden room, which would replicate its pitched roof design and be constructed from matching materials. Via the introduction of a flat-roofed boot room element, the intended extension would link to an existing lean-to that adjoins the rear of the historic core of the property. Whilst a short stretch of the cross-wing's western flank wall would be internalised, no loss of historic fabric would be necessitated by the scheme.
8. The proposal would introduce built form to the side of the cross-wing and adjacent to a retained inner courtyard. As such, an L-shaped overall footprint would be retained. Nevertheless, a convoluted amalgamation of differing roof forms is proposed at odds with the typically uncomplicated and linear roof formations that are currently in existence. For example, the flat roof to the boot room, whilst designed in this way to avoid conflict with a thatched eaves situated immediately above, would be unsympathetic to the traditional pitched roofscape of the listed building.
9. Moreover, the newly proposed pitched roof element would be orientated at right angles to both the existing garden room and the cross-wing taken as a whole. Notwithstanding any suggestions made to the contrary, it would not read as a parallel addition to the cross-wing or follow the pattern of development presented by past lean-to extensions to the rear of the listed building. As such, especially as the remaining exposed section of west-facing wall to the historic part of the cross-wing would be internalised, the proposed extension would detract from the listed building's historic plan form and from its legibility as a modest rural cottage reflective of the local vernacular.
10. I also concur with concerns raised that, despite the effect of past extensions upon the property's internal layout, the proposal would complicate the listed building's circulation pattern and promote that the historic part of the cross-wing be bypassed so as to reduce its importance and disrupt the hierarchy that is legible between historic and extended parts of the building to the detriment

of the designated asset's special historic interest. This is notwithstanding that the relevant room effected would continue to function as a sitting room.

11. In the context of the CA's character and appearance, I accept that the proposed extension would occupy a discreet location and be largely concealed behind the main thatched historic part of the property. Nevertheless, it would still be visible, at least in part, from a range of publicly accessible vantage points situated to the west and northwest of the site. Whilst the extension would be subordinate in scale and not visually domineering, it would fail to preserve the character and authenticity of an important listed building within the CA. In this sense, there would inevitably be some harm caused to the character and appearance of the CA when taken as a whole.
12. For the above reasons, the proposal would fail to preserve the listed building and features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses. The scheme would also fail to preserve the character or appearance of the CA and thus cause harm to its heritage significance. It follows that conflict arises with Sections 16(2) and 66(1) and 72(1) of the Act. The degree of harm that would be caused to the significance of the listed building and the CA, each as designated heritage assets, would, in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (the Framework), be less than substantial. For the avoidance of doubt, in my judgement, the degree of less than substantial harm that would be caused to the significance of either asset would not be at the very low end of the spectrum.
13. Paragraph 202 of the Framework requires less than substantial harm to be outweighed by public benefits. Although the proposal would provide increased living space at the property, offer enhanced accessibility, and promote the attainment of modern-day living requirements, such improvements would ultimately satisfy the private needs and wishes of the appellants and offer no clear or substantive public benefit. This is even when acknowledging the constraints that would be associated with alternatively seeking to further extend the cross-wing in a northward direction. On a separate note, whilst I do not doubt that the appellants have made substantial past investments in the interests of the listed building's conservation, this is of limited relevance to my determination of these appeals which relate to newly proposed development and works.
14. This leads me to conclude that, in the circumstances of this case, any public benefits of the proposal would be very modest and would not outweigh the less than substantial harm that I have identified would be caused to either the significance of the listed building or the significance of the CA. It must be noted that even less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset carries considerable importance and weight.
15. The proposal fails to accord with the historic environment conservation and enhancement policies contained within the Framework and conflict also arises with saved Policies ENV1, ENV2 and GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted January 2005) in so far as these policies set out that alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted and indicate that development should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the essential features of a conservation area. In respect of Appeal A, there is conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons, I conclude that both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR