



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 12 December 2022

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 December 2022

Appeal A Ref: APP/Z1510/W/22/3293154

Old Applecroft Farm, Applecroft Farm Road, Great Henny CO10 7NP

- 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 Gallagher against the decision of Braintree District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03124/HH, dated 14 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "This project involves the remodelling, refurbishment and extensions to the group of buildings that comprise Old Applecroft Farm, Great Henny. The works include the demolition of a conservatory and associated terrace, single-storey link building and lean-to extensions connected to the original farmhouse of Old Applecroft Farm which is a listed structure. The proposed works include a single-storey link extension, reinstatement of the southern facade of the listed farmhouse, minor internal alterations to the listed farmhouse, replacement windows to the listed farmhouse, two-storey extension and re-cladding to the north block, internal alterations to the north block and all associated site works."
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Z1510/Y/22/3293159

Old Applecroft Farm, Applecroft Farm Road, Great Henny CO10 7NP

- 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 Gallagher against the decision of Braintree District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/03125/LBC, dated 14 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 February 2022.
 - The works proposed are the same as Appeal A
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Decision Appeal A

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of existing conservatory and associated terrace, single-storey link building and lean-to extensions connected to the original farmhouse of Old Applecroft Farm and the erection of single-storey link extension, reinstatement of the southern facade of the listed farmhouse, minor internal alterations to the listed farmhouse, replacement windows to the listed farmhouse, two-storey extension and re-cladding to the north block, internal alterations to the north block and all associated site works at Old Applecroft Farm, Applecroft Farm Road, Great Henny CO10 7NP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/03124/HH, dated 14 October 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: P001, P002A, P003, P004A, P005A, P006A, P007A, P010A, P011A, P012A, P013, P100A, P101A, P102A, P103A, P104A, P105A, P110A, P111A, P112A, P113A.

Decision Appeal B

2. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for the demolition of existing conservatory and associated terrace, single-storey link building and lean-to extensions connected to the original farmhouse of Old Applecroft Farm and the erection of single-storey link extension, reinstatement of the southern facade of the listed farmhouse, minor internal alterations to the listed farmhouse, replacement windows to the listed farmhouse, two-storey extension and re-cladding to the north block, internal alterations to the north block and all associated site works at Old Applecroft Farm, Applecroft Farm Road, Great Henny CO10 7NP in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 21/03125/LBC dated 14 October 2021 and the plans submitted with it subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
 - 2) No above ground construction shall commence until samples of the materials to be used on the external surfaces have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved samples and retained as such thereafter.
 - 3) No works shall commence until additional drawings that show details of proposed new windows, doors, eaves, verges and cills to be used by section and elevation at scales between 1:20 and 1:1 as appropriate have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and retained as such thereafter.

Preliminary Matters

3. The description of the proposal in the formal decisions above is taken from the decision notice and appeal form as it is more concise than the application form.
4. Since the decisions on the original applications, the Council has adopted the Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2033 (BDLP) which supersedes the Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005 and the Braintree Core Strategy 2011. The Council has clarified which policies are now extant and the appellant has been afforded the opportunity to provide comments.

Main Issues

5. The main issue for both appeals is the effect of the proposal on the special interest of the Grade II listed building known as Applecroft Farmhouse.
6. The main issue for Appeal A only is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area.

Reasons

Listed building

7. The appeal site at Old Applecroft Farm comprises a collection of buildings at the end of a narrow lane that leads up from Henny Street. Amongst them is the Grade II listed building known as Applecroft Farmhouse in the list description but referred to as the farmhouse for the purposes of these decisions. The farmhouse dates from the 16th century or earlier as a timber framed two-storey

property with attic space. In the mid-19th century the farmhouse was clad in flintwork with quoins and gault brick dressings. It has a red clay tile roof while internally there are numerous exposed timber beams.

8. Historically, the farmhouse was part of a farmstead at Applecroft Farm that first appears in map records in the 18th century. The farmstead contained a series of buildings built around a central yard with the farmhouse on the western side. Many of the buildings have been demolished but others remain around the yard. The north range dates from the mid-19th century as a single storey cow house that was converted to residential use and had a second floor added towards the end of the 20th century. The ground floor is red brick and the upper floor is clad in modern black weatherboarding. The east range dates from a similar period to the north range and is single storey with a modern extension. A small two-storey cottage is located to the south of the farmhouse.
9. The farmhouse has single storey lean-to structures on the north and south elevations that were added in the 20th century. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a large conservatory was added to the south elevation along with a brick terrace, while to the north a single storey weatherboarded link building was created between the farmhouse and the north range. To the west of the link and the north range is a small courtyard previously enclosed by buildings up until at least the 1920s but now enclosed by a wall.
10. The special interest and significance of the farmhouse is greatly informed by its architectural and historic qualities including the surviving timber frame and the Victorian remodelling of the exterior. The building also played a key role in the historic farmstead. It occupies a prominent position in the yard due to its height and detailed appearance. As such, it is a significant heritage asset with an attractive setting and countryside location.
11. The large conservatory on the south side obscures views of the farmhouse. It greatly unbalances the composition of the listed building on this side and detracts from its special interest and significance. The link building has a plain appearance but is less obtrusive given its modest size, height and discrete location on the north side of the farmhouse. The lean-tos to the north and south are not visible from the yard but they obscure parts of the farmhouse.
12. The north range has a barn-like appearance which is not out of keeping with the character of the yard. However, its design and materials, including its weatherboarding, windows and garage doors, are utilitarian. Thus, it only makes a moderate contribution to the significance and special interest of the listed building. The courtyard walls are similarly utilitarian and the space within has a domestic character making it hard to discern the historic courtyard that once existed. Thus, the courtyard only makes a modest contribution to the listed building. No changes are proposed to the cottage and east range and so I have not assessed their contribution to the listed building.
13. The link building and northern lean-to would be replaced with a new single storey link building. It would be much wider than the existing link building but it would be the same height and would be set back from the west elevation of the farmhouse. The link would be glazed along east and west sides with a simple zinc standing seam roof. Thus, it would be subservient to the farmhouse and not detract from the significance of the listed building.

14. The north range would extend westwards roughly in line with the west elevation of the farmhouse. As a consequence, it would have a footprint and volume noticeably larger than the farmhouse. However, it would not be as tall as the farmhouse and would be located to the rear of the yard. There would be an increased area of timber weatherboarding along with large barn doors and full height glazed openings and covered walkway through to the garden. This would reduce the utilitarian appearance of the existing north range and create visual interest. The inglenook on the north side of the range is a minor feature that would not greatly affect the linearity of the range.
15. There are already a number of buildings and extensions on site besides the farmhouse which is part of the legacy of the historic farmstead. The large conservatory footprint would be removed. Therefore, the scale of the new extensions at the north range and the new link building would not result in a composition of buildings that would overwhelm the visual prominence of the farmhouse or harm its setting.
16. The proposed floorplans indicate that the new link building would house the kitchen which is currently located within the farmhouse. The extension to the north range would provide a family room which could further draw attention away from the farmhouse in terms of internal use. However, the plans show a dining room in the farmhouse directly adjacent to the kitchen along with a living room and two bedrooms upstairs. The existing north range has a large amount of useable floorspace, particularly upstairs, which could already be used in preference to the farmhouse. Furthermore, the exact internal arrangement is not fixed and would not necessarily require planning permission or listed building consent to be altered. Therefore, the proposal would not lead to the decreased use or importance of the farmhouse but instead enable it to remain a key part of the overall property.
17. The farmstead character of the site would continue with the farmhouse at the centre and a number of supporting structures and buildings around the yard. The farmstead has long ceased to be in an agricultural use, but the proposal would not affect one's ability to understand its evolution. The site would remain as a group of buildings rather than one large residential dwelling and so the attractiveness of the farmhouse's setting would be maintained.
18. The courtyard and its wall would be lost to the new link building and extended north range. However, it is difficult to discern the historical associations from its utilitarian and domestic appearance today. Therefore, any harm to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial and limited.
19. Weighing that harm against the public benefits of the proposal, the proposed removal of the large conservatory, terrace and southern lean-to would have a beneficial effect on the listed building as it would restore views of the farmhouse from the south side. It would also allow for the reinstatement of openings and flintwork. Moreover, the proposal seeks to improve the appearance and detailing of the farmhouse elsewhere in terms of windows, doors and flintwork, as well as take out modern internal partitions. Modern oil tanks in the yard and garden would also be removed. All of these works would enhance the significance and setting of the listed building and taken together can be afforded significant weight as public benefits.
20. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets

irrespective of the amount of harm to its significance. NPPF paragraph 200 requires clear and convincing justification for any harm, while NPPF paragraph 202 requires less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits. I consider that the limited harm described above would be outweighed by the public benefits and that clear and convincing justification would be demonstrated. Therefore, the proposal would accord with the NPPF.

21. Concluding on this main issue, the proposal would preserve the special interest of the listed building and any harm to its significance would be clearly outweighed by the public benefits. Therefore, it would accord with BDLP Policies SP7, LPP36, LPP47, LPP52 and LPP57 which, amongst other things, seek to protect and enhance heritage assets and ensure that residential alterations and extensions have no unacceptable adverse impacts, with development that meets the heritage tests set out in national policy.

Character and appearance

22. The appeal site is situated within the countryside between Great Henny and Henny Street. There are a few scattered buildings that can be seen from the site, including the church spire at Great Henny and isolated properties and farm buildings. The landscape gently undulates as part of the Stour River Valley Landscape Character Area and affords long distance views in all directions from the site. There are public footpaths to the north and west of the site. Thus, the character and appearance of the surrounding area is very rural and picturesque.
23. The collection of buildings within the site retain a farmstead character and appearance notwithstanding the lack of any agricultural function. The farmhouse is a prominent and attractive feature within this group. The buildings can be seen from the public footpaths albeit filtered by vegetation along field boundaries. The existing north range largely screens views of the farmhouse from the north. Nevertheless, the farmhouse and overall site make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
24. The proposal would increase the amount of built form to the north of the farmhouse but the new link building and extended north range would be designed to be subordinate and sympathetic to the host dwelling in terms of scale, materials and detailing. The unsightly conservatory and lean-tos would be removed and the southern elevation of the farmhouse would be greatly enhanced, while traditional windows, doors and flintwork would be reinstated to improve the overall appearance of the dwelling. Thus, the character and appearance of the host dwelling would be conserved and enhanced.
25. The character and appearance of the farmstead would be maintained as a group of buildings around a yard with the farmhouse retaining its prominence. The north range would continue to screen views of the farmhouse from the north while vegetation along field boundaries would continue to filter views from the public footpaths to the site. Even where visible, the overall composition of buildings as altered and extended would have a pleasing effect due to the quality of design and materials. As a consequence, the proposal would not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
26. Concluding on this main issue, the proposal in Appeal A would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area. Therefore, it would accord with BDLP Policies SP7, LPP1,

LPP36, LPP52 and LPP67 which, amongst other things, seek high standards of design and development that responds positively to local character and context while protecting landscapes and the countryside with extensions and alterations that avoid overdevelopment and are compatible with and subordinate to the original dwelling. The proposal would also comply with the NPPF's aims to achieve well-designed places and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Conditions

27. In addition to the standard time limit conditions for both appeals, I have specified the approved plans in Appeal A for clarity and compliance. Conditions 2 and 3 for Appeal B are necessary to ensure that the proposed works have an acceptable effect on the listed building.

Conclusions

28. For the above reasons, I conclude that both appeals should be allowed.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR