



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 19 January 2023

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 February 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/Y3940/W/22/3300408

Barn At Pool Farm, The Green, Biddestone SN14 7DG

- 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 Dan Perrett against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/2021/08215, dated 21 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is 1. Reinstate and convert the barn within the ownership of the listed farmhouse, including works walls to overcome their delaminating condition, and re-build the walls at the upper levels, re-using the stone set aside from the remains of the older barn. 2. Re-roof the collapsed roof to the barn. 3. Take down the remains of the cart shed, and attached older barn remains, that are in a danger of collapse. 4. Change of use of the barn to a holiday let, and extension to the side and rear of the barn where the cart shed and older barn stood.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Y3940/Y/22/3300409

Barn At Pool Farm, The Green, Biddestone SN14 7DG

- 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 Dan Perrett against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/2021/08751, dated 21 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2021.
 - The works proposed are 1. Reinstate and convert the barn within the ownership of the listed farmhouse, including works walls to overcome their delaminating condition, and re-build the walls at the upper levels, re-using the stone set aside from the remains of the older barn. 2. Re-roof the collapsed roof to the barn. 3. Take down the remains of the cart shed, and attached older barn remains, that are in a danger of collapse. 4. Change of use of the barn to a holiday let, and extension to the side and rear of the barn where the cart shed and older barn stood.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The appeals relate to a derelict barn (hereafter the Barn) to the south west of the Grade II listed building 'Pool Farmhouse and Attached Outbuildings' (hereafter Pool Farm) and within the Biddestone Conservation Area (the BCA).
3. It is suggested that the Barn does not fall within the curtilage of Pool Farm and thus under the auspices of its Grade II listing. This is ultimately a matter for the Courts not me, but I must have regard to it insofar as it is material to my assessment of these appeals. Reference has been made to case law and the Historic England guidance as to curtilage listed buildings, specifically paragraph 2.1 which addresses the scenario of a listed farmhouse with unlisted barns.

4. However, at Pool Farm the listed building explicitly incorporates the house and the attached farm outbuildings to the south. The Barn is directly accessed from a yard/driveway that it closely shares with these outbuildings and the house. It straddles the, albeit modified, farmstead wall. Its surviving fabric is largely pre-1948. It thus logically falls within the historic curtilage of the listed building and is therefore likely curtilage listed. It is not uncommon for multiple buildings within a single curtilage to be individually listed and so the presence of a Grade II listed gazebo at the other end of Pool Farm's curtilage does not infer anything significant in relation to the status of the Barn.

Main Issue

5. In that context, the main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of Pool Farm and, linked to that, whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the BCA.

Reasons

6. The significance of Pool Farm is in its 17th Century origins and the quality of its composition as a fine, evidently prosperous, vernacular farmhouse. The range of outbuildings to its rear have a varied appearance which illustrates the historic functionality of the farmstead and the lifestyles of the household. A Public Right of Way (PROW) crosses the adjacent field to the west and allows extensive views of the farmhouse, its outbuildings and the Barn. The house has pride of place in Biddestone, facing the village green and duck pond, and is built in materials which are ubiquitous across the village. The listed building therefore makes a considerable contribution to the character and appearance of the BCA.
7. The Barn contributes to the significance of Pool Farm and the BCA in a similar way to the other outbuildings. Despite its deterioration, it is a redolent utilitarian farm building stoutly constructed in rubblestone. To its north flank a more recent, perhaps 1950s or earlier, tractor shed has been built in stone; it is attractive in its own right and offers an interesting insight into a change in technology and farming practices. The tractor shed leans off the surviving east wall of an older barn which once extended west into the adjacent field, as did a modest, now ruinous lean-to off the Barn's west elevation.
8. The proposal would be a substantial intervention, removing the tractor shed and introducing a large extension to the Barn's north side and back. The Barn would be subject to a new opening, the blocking up of a likely historic pig hole, and domestic alterations such as a flue and a rooflight. The extension would compromise the historic plan form and would be set under a busy amalgam of pitched roofs which belies the simple functional heritage of the Barn. It would contain obvious domestic fenestration; a pair of doors would open to a garden patio in a subdivided part of the field to the west of the barn. This space would likely introduce domestic clutter into the hitherto open field close to the PROW.
9. The rationale for the extension is the historic mapping showing the older barn. Yet, this barn is all but gone and, beyond the recollections of local people, there is little to help us understand how it actually looked or functioned. The remnant fabric of this barn would be removed in any event, and what we do know of its long, narrow plan would not be faithfully reinstated. I see that modern designs have been successfully introduced nearby. However, the limited evidence of the older barn offers insufficient justification for the design of the extension, which is more liable to confuse rather than tell the story of the previous structure.

10. I recognise that the Barn is in a perilous, deleterious state and must be made good and found a use as soon as possible. It is understandable that there is support locally for the scheme. However, the proposal would recast the Barn in an overtly residential guise and an extended format that would denude it of its authentic agrarian character to an extent I am unable to rationalise on the evidence before me. The Barn would be retained but at the expense of the historic interest it bears to the significance of Pool Farm and the BCA. As such, less than substantial harm would arise to these designated heritage assets.
11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) explains that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 202 requires decision makers to weigh any less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the scheme, including securing its optimum viable use. That exercise must take place in the context of s.16(2), s.66(1), and s.72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which set a strong presumption against a grant of planning permission or listed building consent for development or works that would cause harm to the special interest of a listed building and/or fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area.
12. The proposal would secure the future of the Barn but given my findings above this is a benefit of little value. It is suggested that the level of intervention is necessary to ensure that the project is viable. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to that effect. There would be economic benefits in the use of the Barn as a holiday let, as occupants would invariably frequent local facilities and services. The weight I attach to these benefits falls decisively short of justifying the harm that would be caused; harm that must be given considerable importance and weight in the balancing exercise.
13. That conclusion also brings the proposal into conflict with the heritage and design objective of Core Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted 2015).

Other Matters

14. The site is in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB). I am mindful of my duty to have regard to the statutory purpose of the AONB to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. Given the modest scale of the scheme and its setting at the fringe of the village and against the backdrop of built form, the natural beauty of the AONB would be unharmed.

Conclusion

15. In relation to Appeal A, the proposal would conflict with the development plan read a whole. There are no other considerations which direct me to make my decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
16. For these given reasons, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones
INSPECTOR