



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 June 2023

by G Bayliss BA (Hons) MA MA MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 June 2023

Appeal A: Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/22/3308802

1A Top End Farm Cottage, Top End, Renhold MK41 0LR

- 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 Higham against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02713/FUL, dated 10 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is rear & side extension and internal alterations to the cottage, adaptation of the adjacent barn to create additional ensuite bedroom and connection to the cottage.
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Appeal B: Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/Y/22/3308805

1A Top End Farm Cottage, Top End, Renhold MK41 0LR

- 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 Higham against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02714/LBC, dated 10 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 August 2022.
 - The works proposed are rear & side extension and internal alterations to the cottage, adaptation of the adjacent barn to create additional ensuite bedroom and connection to the cottage.
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Decisions

1. Both appeals are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development and works in the headings above have been taken from the application form. However, in Part E of the appeal forms it is stated that the description of development/works has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties have provided written confirmation that a revised description of development/works has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the one given in the original application.
3. As set out above, there are two appeals on this site. They relate to the planning application and listed building consent for the same scheme. To avoid duplication, I have dealt with them together, except where otherwise indicated.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in both appeals is whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building (listed as 1A, Top End) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

5. The building was listed in 1983 (Ref:1114913) and dates from the 17th century. The list description states, amongst other things, that the building is a timber framed cottage with colour-washed, rough cast walling, a thatched roof and brick ridge stack. It is of one storey with attic above and has a three-room plan. The building retains many internal historic features, including its main fireplace and chimney breast, together with the retention of the staircase position alongside. There are exposed timber ceiling joists and beams on the ground floor and evidence of timber framing in some of the room partitions. The building has been extended to the western side with a lean-to addition, and more recently extended to the rear with a single storey pitched roof addition. Both are faced in render with a tiled roof. The historic mapping indicates that the rear extension may be part of an earlier detached structure, although the appeal documents and the evidence on site are unable to confirm this.
6. A single storey detached barn stands between the cottage and the road, located at right angles and partly in front of it. The appellant's heritage statement suggests that it may date from the 18th century. It is clad in weatherboarding with a tiled roof. The siting, form and appearance of this building provides a clear indication of its functional relationship with the cottage.
7. For the purposes of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), a listed building includes any structure that is within its curtilage which has existed since before 1st July 1948. Within the evidence before me the Council has stated that the barn to the frontage would be considered as curtilage listed by virtue of its historic and continued ancillary association with the cottage. This has not been specifically contested by the appellant and I have no reason to dispute it. I have dealt with the appeals on this basis.
8. From the details available to me, including the list description, I consider that the significance and special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to these appeals, is predominantly derived from its age, form including the relationship between the cottage and the detached barn, its fabric and architectural features. Both the cottage and barn are clearly viewed from the road and the positive contribution that they make to the streetscene is important to the significance of the heritage asset. To the rear is a long garden and agricultural fields beyond which reflect the historic rural setting and function of the building and provide a context for how it is appreciated and understood.
9. Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act require special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that heritage

assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

10. The proposal comprises four elements. First, is the proposed extension of the rear addition in a largely linear fashion, together with the cladding of most of the walling in weatherboarding and the enlarging and unifying of glazed openings facing the garden. Although parts of the rear addition are relatively modern, its current size, form and the arrangement of its openings are reflective of a subordinate and ancillary structure to the cottage. The proposed extension would make this part of the building considerably longer than the historic cottage and the historic mapping provides no justification for a structure of this size. In my view, it would be disproportionately long and dominant, especially when viewed in conjunction with a further large outbuilding that it on the opposite side of the rear garden. The cottage would become visually dominated by later additions.
11. Whilst it is not necessary to slavishly replicate the appearance of an historic agricultural building, any extension in this location must be sympathetic to its context, and a design approach broadly reflective of a functional vernacular outbuilding would be appropriate in this instance. In this regard, the proposed weatherboarding and pinned back doors would give the structure a rural character, allowing the cottage to be more distinct, and be more reflective of the historic barn to the frontage. However, the unified, large, glazed openings would emphasise the size of the building, give it a more modern regimented appearance, and be at odds with the more random size and arrangement of openings associated with historic buildings on this site. The size and design of this element of the proposal would harm the special interest/significance of the listed building, including the way that it is appreciated and understood.
12. Secondly, the appeal proposal seeks to convert the barn to the front of the cottage into a bedroom and ensuite. Along with internal works of conversion the two doors would be glazed and two rooflights inserted at the rear. Internally, the structure shows evidence of significant repair and replacement of timbers and retains few historic features apart from brick flooring. Details are provided to specify the works, and, in this regard, I am satisfied that the building's significance as a former outbuilding associated with the cottage would be retained.
13. The link from the barn to the cottage would be located between the gable end of the barn and the later lean-to addition on the cottage. As it would be set well back in the narrow gap, it would only be noticeable in restricted views close to the entrance porch. Because of the angle of view, it would not be readily visible from the approach to the front of the cottage or wider views from the road. However, the extent of solid cladding to the link, whilst providing a greater degree of privacy and cosiness for the occupants, would fail to achieve the sense of visual separation needed to preserve the separate identity of the cottage and the barn. The link may be in a relatively discrete location, but nevertheless views would be possible from close to the building frontage and the failure to make this lightweight and visually transparent would make it look awkward and contrived, merging one building into another.
14. Thirdly, the enlargement of the lean-to of the western gable to form an additional bedroom would be in a visually contained area, difficult to see from practically all vantage points. Although the extension would result in a larger

roof slope with extremely low eaves, the roof pitch would remain the same and would be of a form and appearance not unexpected on a building of this age and character. I therefore consider that this element would cause no harm to the special interest/ significance of the building.

15. Finally, the proposal seeks to remove sections of wall within the historic three-room plan. On the ground floor, this would involve the creation of an opening between the existing dining room and kitchen, and adapting the position of the connecting doorway. The position of the doorway between the existing kitchen and utility room would also be adapted, and an unidentified corner feature in the kitchen would be removed. No evidence has been provided to explain the age or historic significance of these walls, the features to be disturbed, the nature of the fabric itself or how the works would be undertaken. Considering the age and plan form, each of these walls is likely to be a principal historic partition wall, containing historic fabric, and I noted on my visit evidence of timber framing within parts of these walls. The presence of historic ceiling joists and beams and other fixtures and fittings within these areas are also indicative of a high survival rate of historic fabric internally reinforcing the view that historic fabric would be affected.
16. In the absence of further information, potential loss of historic fabric would harm the building's special interest/significance. Furthermore, the enlargement of openings and repositioning doorways within the historic core of the building, despite the retention of nibs, would harm the historic plan form and the building's legibility. Whilst I recognise the aspirations for more open plan living, this is not reflective of the character of this building and given that there are already connecting doorways in these areas the level of intervention proposed cannot be justified.
17. Equally, there are no details to support the removal of the wall to create a larger bathroom on the first floor. Although this is likely to be a less contentious more recent division unlikely to harm historic fabric or layout there is no information before me to confirm that this is the case.
18. Considering all of the above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest and significance of the listed building. Therefore the expectations of the Act are not met. Paragraph 199 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 200 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of those assets and any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. I find the harm in the context of the significance of the heritage asset as a whole, in the language of the Framework, to be less than substantial in this instance. Although the Council regard the less than substantial harm to be at 'a minor level', nevertheless, this still commands considerable importance and weight and is not to be treated as a less than substantial objection to the proposal.
19. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use. The appellant is of the opinion that the proposal would be beneficial because the property would be more suitable for family living, grouping the bedrooms and connecting the

living area to the garden, thereby sustaining it for future generations and securing its optimal viable use. Whilst the proposal would clearly be beneficial to the appellant's living conditions, I regard this as a private rather than a public benefit. Moreover, I have been given no evidence that the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling is dependent on the proposal, as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence.

20. Given the above, I conclude that there are no public benefits that would outweigh the great weight to be given to the harm to the Grade II listed building. As such, the proposal would not comply with paragraph 202 of the Framework. In addition, there is no clear and convincing justification for the harm to the significance of the listed building.
21. The proposal would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses. It would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 199 of the Framework. It would also conflict with Policies 29, 41S and 66 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (2020). Although Policy 66, relating to the extension of dwellings in the countryside, was not referenced in the Council's Decision Notice, it is relevant to these appeals, and I have therefore referred to it. These policies, amongst other things, seek to protect and enhance the significance of heritage assets and to respect the original dwelling. As a result, the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan as a whole.

Other Matters

22. Both parties reference two Grade II listed buildings: Appleby Farmhouse (Ref:1311960) and No.56 & 58 Top End (Ref:1114914) located near to the appeal property. As a statutory consideration, I am required to have regard to these properties in determining the appeal. From the information before me, including my visit, I concur with them that due to the distance from the appeal site and with no evidence of any functional link, they do not form part of the setting of the appeal property.

Conclusion

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

G Bayliss

INSPECTOR