



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 5 June 2023

by Guy Davies BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 June 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/C1435/W/22/3298664

Ladymeads House, Bewlbridge Lane, Cousley Wood, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6HH

- 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 Elliott against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2021/2047/F, dated 2 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is internal and external alterations, remodelling of the roof to the modern kitchen extension.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/C1435/Y/22/3298673

Ladymeads House, Bewlbridge Lane, Cousley Wood, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6HH

- 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 Elliott against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2021/2048/LB, dated 2 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 February 2022.
 - The works proposed are internal and external alterations, remodelling of the roof to the modern kitchen extension.
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Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. These decisions address both planning and listed building appeals for the same site and for the same scheme. Although the regimes are separate, given the commonality between the subjects and to reduce repetition, I have dealt with both appeals together.
4. As originally submitted, both applications proposed additional development and works including internal alterations to other parts of the building. During consideration of the applications it was agreed between the appellant and Council to amend the proposal to limit it to the development and works associated with the kitchen extension, as described in the banner heading. It was on this amended proposal that the Council reached its decisions. I have done the same.
5. The appellant has submitted an addendum to the historic building assessment, which provides further information on the kitchen roof structure, and also a

sketch plan of the structure of the proposed roof in relation to the adjacent wing. The Council has had the opportunity to respond to both these new documents. I have therefore taken them into account in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

6. The main issue in both appeals is whether the proposal would preserve the grade II listed building, Ladymeads House¹, and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

7. Ladymeads House consists of an L-shaped range dated 1707 in the Queen Anne style and a two-storey wing at the rear rebuilt around 1800. Connected to both on the northern elevation is a smaller single-storey double-pitched range used as the kitchen. The house stands in mature grounds in a rural location, with its principal entrance now on the northern side elevation rather than the front. A small outbuilding and modern detached garage flank the parking and turning area to the north of the main house.
8. The eastern half of the smaller single-storey range consists of a mid-C19 service building, which was extended by the addition of the western half in the mid-1980s to form the present kitchen. Based on the evidence in the historic building assessment addendum, the building was open to the roof (the rafters are whitewashed) and was probably used as a washhouse, bakehouse or similar as it originally contained a chimney that heated one half of the range. The chimney has since been removed although the remainder of its roof structure and part of the external brick walls have been retained and incorporated in the extended building.
9. The significance and special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to these appeals, is predominantly derived from the quality of the architectural features of the rather elegant 1707 range which provides a good example of an early C18 Queen Anne style country house with symmetrical front, wide projecting eaves and steep pitched roof. Moreover, the comprehensive historic building assessment indicates that an earlier house on the site was replaced in phases by the present front and rear ranges and the addition of the service building in the mid-C19. The phased development and the historic fabric associated with those phases positively contributes to its special interest/significance.
10. The proposed alterations to the roof would result in the removal of all of the original roof structure over the mid-C19 range. This is for the most part machine sawn timber and nailed rather than jointed construction. It is however contemporary with the original range and is likely to date from its construction in the mid-C19. It forms part of its evolution and contributes towards an understanding of how the service functions of the property were conducted. Although by no means the oldest part of the listed building I consider the roof structure still has moderate value in terms of the architectural and historic interest of the house. The loss of the original roof to the service range would therefore erode the contribution that the roof structure makes to the significance and special interest of the listed building.

¹ List entry number: 1028071

11. The form of the roof would also change from a double pitch with twin gables to a hipped form with crown roof. The use of a crown roof would in my view appear awkward and out of place on the building. It is not a form of roof that is found anywhere else on the listed building. Because the kitchen can be viewed from more than one elevation the crown roof would be apparent from ground floor level, as well as clearly seen from the first floor window in the rear of the main range. Widening the gully adjacent to the main range would also be a retrograde step in visual terms, as would the insertion of two roof lights on the more visible eastern roof plane of the kitchen extension.
12. Although the historic building assessment describes the 1984 kitchen extension as 'subservient and relatively innocuous' the existing twin gables are later criticised as being anachronistic. I disagree. While the 1707 range has a fully hipped roof characteristic of its period, other parts are either half hipped (the 1800s range) or gabled (the small outbuilding). The double gabled range does not in my view detract from the overall significance/special interest of the listed building.
13. The proposed alterations include the blocking up of a small window and insertion of a pair of French doors in place of an existing window in the eastern elevation. The Council raises no objection to these alterations as the window is not original, and although the door would be inserted in one of the walls retained from the mid-C19 service range, there is evidence of a door being located here previously. There would therefore be a minimal loss of historic fabric. On that basis, these particular alterations would have a neutral effect on the special interest of the listed building.
14. The Council is concerned that the proposed roof structure might damage the adjacent 1800s range, in particular the daub infill. While I understand that concern, the sketch provided by the appellant indicates that the proposed roof could be built without needing to take any structural support from the adjacent range. Subject to details of how the roof would be weathered against the 1800s range, which could be secured by condition, I am satisfied that the integrity of the adjacent range would not be compromised. The proposal would give rise to the loss of an area of tile hanging, but that area would be small and the tiles could be salvaged for future use.
15. Bringing all these matters together, I consider that the proposed scheme would cause harm to the significance and special interest of the listed building through the loss of historic fabric and the introduction of the proposed incongruous roof form. It would conflict with sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which require special regard to be had to preserving the architectural and historic interest of the listed building, its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses. That harm would be less than substantial, but nevertheless carry great weight.
16. Where harm would be less than substantial, paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. I appreciate that the alterations are intended to provide a higher ceiling in the kitchen, more akin to the high ceilings found in the rest of the building. However, that is a private rather than a public benefit. As has been demonstrated by its use since the mid-80s, the room

functions as a kitchen, and there is no indication that the viable use of the property as a dwellinghouse is seriously threatened by it continuing to function in that way.

17. Even though I have found that the harm to the designated heritage asset is less than substantial, it is not to be treated as a less than substantial objection. I consider that there are no public benefits of sufficient weight to outweigh the great weight attributed to the harm to the heritage asset that I have identified. It follows that the proposal would not comply with paragraph 202 of the Framework.
18. For the same reasons, the proposal would conflict with Spatial Objective SPO2 of the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013, which requires that the intrinsic quality of the historic environment is protected. I have also had regard to the Wealden.

Other Matters

19. Reference is also made to Policy EN27 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 and Policy WCS14 of the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 in the Council's planning refusal notice. These relate primarily to amenity and general sustainability issues and are therefore of limited relevance to the main issue I have identified in both appeals. While they are noted, I consider Spatial Objective SPO2 to be the most relevant to the appeal.
20. Reference is made to the Wealden Design Guide 2008, chapter 12 on alterations and extensions to listed buildings. The cited parts 4, 5 and 10 are of limited relevance as they relate to extensions, glazed structures and curtilage.
21. The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. I am satisfied that the proposal would have no material impact on the landscape qualities of the area.

Conclusion

22. Having regard to the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

Guy Davies

INSPECTOR