



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 June 2023

by Paul Martinson BA(Hons) MSC MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 July 2023

Appeal A Ref: APP/W0340/W/22/3306941

Frogmore Farm, Back Lane, Bradfield, Reading RG7 6DS

- 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 Dr and Mrs S Brown against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01383/HOUSE, dated 8 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 9 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as: 'alterations to the elevation of north facing roof section including the removal of 4 velux windows and replacement with 4 dormers. Repositioning of a chimney in the modern elevation to the west, and internal alterations within the modern extension'.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W0340/Y/22/3306948

Frogmore Farm, Back Lane, Bradfield, Reading RG7 6DS

- 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 Dr and Mrs S Brown against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01384/LBC2, dated 8 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 9 August 2022.
 - The works proposed are described as: 'alterations to the elevation of north facing roof section including the removal of 4 velux windows and replacement with 4 dormers. Repositioning of a chimney in the modern elevation to the west, and internal alterations within the modern extension'.
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Decisions

1. *Appeal A*: The appeal is dismissed.
2. *Appeal B*: The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation. I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning.
4. The application form identifies the appeal building as Frogmore Farm, whilst it is referred to as Lower Frogmore Farmhouse on the Statutory List¹. For the avoidance of any doubt, I have used the name Lower Frogmore Farmhouse in my decision.

¹ List Entry Number: 1289576.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building of Lower Frogmore Farmhouse, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

Special Interest and Significance

6. Lower Frogmore Farmhouse is a seventeenth century farmhouse located in a rural location surrounded by agricultural fields. The site lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The building has been extended significantly at one and two storeys to the rear (north) following a grant of planning permission and listed building consent in 1998². This extension is predominantly red brick with clay tile roofs.
7. The older part of the building is timber framed with white painted brick nogging and a clay tile roof with diapering. The tall central chimney stack is a dominant feature of the building that has greatly influenced the historic plan form with rooms to either side. As is highlighted in the appellant's heritage statement, there is evidence of three distinct phases of development comprising of the main front section of the building, the rear catslide and the side extension. The evidence indicates that all of these were carried out between the mid to late seventeenth century.
8. Attached to the rear of the catslide and the side extension, and incorporating a two storey wing extending further out to the side, the 1998 extension (the fourth phase as set out in the heritage statement) comprises of dominant structures to the rear of the building. Of considerable scale and obscuring historic fabric, both parties agree that these recent additions are harmful. Indeed, the appellant's heritage statement acknowledges that the 1998 extension is of no heritage significance. Having regard to the above, I agree.
9. Nevertheless, the lower eaves and ridge height and generally more simple treatment of the extension helps to reduce its impact and ensure that it is, to a degree, subordinate to the main seventeenth century part of the building. In this regard, the extension predominantly appears as single or one and a half storeys, with only a comparatively small element, comprising the entrance hall, at two storeys. The simplicity extends to the roofslopes of the extension which are predominantly unbroken, aside from four rooflights.
10. From the evidence before me, the building's special interest and significance largely derive from its architectural interest and historic interest as a good example of a seventeenth century farmhouse, despite the harmful alterations that have occurred. Important contributors in these regards which are pertinent to the appeals, are the building's surviving historic fabric, including key architectural features; discernability of its historic plan form; and legibility of its development over time.

Appeal Proposal and Effects

11. Sections 66(1) and 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) require that special regard shall be had to the

² Ref 97/51842/FUL and 97/51843/LBC.

desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

12. Moreover, Paragraph 199 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, 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 the heritage asset or development within its setting and that this should have clear and convincing justification.
13. It is proposed to insert four dual pitched roof dormer windows across the rear elevation of the extension, replacing the four existing rooflights. The proposed dormers would vary in terms of scale and position on the roofslope. The largest two of these would be located on the taller section of roof to the rear of the side extension. These would be particularly wide, incorporating windows comprised of three casements. As such, they would have considerable bulk and would require the raising of the eaves of the existing structure. The resulting dormer windows would sit around eaves level.
14. A smaller dormer would be installed on the lower height section immediately to the rear of the catslide. In contrast with the larger rooflights, this would sit awkwardly high on the roofslope with its ridge broadly level with the ridge of the roof. This would be evident in views of the west elevation. Its position on the roofslope would add to its bulk, leading to this part of the structure appearing top heavy as well as adding to the bulk and massing of the scheme as a whole.
15. I accept that the proposal is within the existing footprint and no historic fabric would be lost. The works proposed would also be comparatively small in scale to that of the 1998 extension.
16. Nevertheless, the combination of the addition of the four substantial dormer windows and the raising of the eaves would add to the overall scale, bulk and massing of the 1998 extension, increasing its dominance on the seventeenth century elements. Moreover, the inconsistent positions of the dormer windows in the roofslope, occupying a significant portion of the roof would add additional complexity and interrupt the simplicity of the existing extensions. Additionally, the proposed dormer windows would represent the introduction of a prominent range of distinctive architectural features not present on the existing building, This would further erode the building's architectural integrity and compete with the primacy of the historic structure, exacerbating the harm of the later extension.
17. The proposed relocation of the chimney would bring it much closer to the existing historical chimney. This would compete visually with the existing chimney which is a key architectural feature which greatly contributes to the special interest of the listed building. The proposed chimney would also confuse the historical development of the building, being seen projecting above the ridgeline of the seventeenth century side extension.
18. The appellant's heritage statement argues that the existing rooflights detract from the built form due to sunlight reflecting off them, being visible from a bridleway. Whilst that may be the case, I have set out above how the dormer windows would result in much greater harm. They would not represent an enhancement of the building. Moreover, owing to their considerable scale, the

harm arising from the dormer windows when seen across the fields from the bridleway and nearby road would not be limited to times when the sun is shining.

19. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building, Lower Frogmore Farmhouse or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This would be contrary to the requirements of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act. As such the proposal would cause harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset.

Public Benefits and Balance

20. With reference to Paragraphs 201 and 202 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent and nature of the proposal, I find that the harm in this instance would be 'less than substantial' but, nevertheless, of considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, Paragraph 202 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimum viable use.
21. It has been highlighted that the appellant has planted hedges and trees, improved rivers and wildflower meadows, and ensured improved access along a public right of way. Whilst this represents good land stewardship, these matters do not appear to be linked to the appeal proposal and therefore I cannot ascribe them weight as a public benefit of this scheme.
22. Nevertheless, economic benefits through investment in the property as well as from construction would arise. The appellant has highlighted environmental benefits in the form of providing opportunities for improved insulation and installation of renewable energy technologies. However, the resulting environmental benefits would be limited through the small scale of the proposal and therefore carry limited weight in favour of the appeal. Moreover, as set out above, I am not convinced that such environmental improvements are dependent upon the harmful aspects of the appeal scheme, or that benefits could not be achieved through a more sensitive solution.
23. The appellant argues that the appeal scheme is the least harmful way of upgrading insulation and improving energy efficiency at the appeal property. In that regard, the appellant argues that the proposal would help to maintain the optimum viable use of the building. This is on the basis that the appellant's alternative would be to demolish the existing extensions, removal of which would be more invasive to the building.
24. I am not convinced that the proposal is fundamentally necessary to maintain the building's optimum viable use. Nor am I persuaded that the only way of securing such benefits would be via the particular development and works proposed. In this sense clear and convincing justification for the harm has not been demonstrated.
25. Overall, the aforementioned limited public benefits would not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
26. The proposal would not preserve the Grade II listed building of Lower Frogmore Farmhouse or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it

possesses, this would be contrary to the requirements of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act and the provisions within the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. The harmful impact would also be contrary to Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012) which together seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets and safeguard the historic environment.

Other Matters

27. I note that there were no objections from local residents. However, the lack of an objection is not necessarily indicative of a lack of harm.
28. Reference is made in the reasons for refusal of the listed building consent application to the effect on the AONB. Nonetheless, I am satisfied that, being a comparatively small scale development and located within the existing footprint, the effect on the natural beauty of the AONB would be minimal.

Conclusion

29. *Appeal A:* The proposed development would conflict with the development plan. There are no material considerations that indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.
30. *Appeal B:* For the above reasons and having regard to all matters raised I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

Paul Martinson

INSPECTOR