
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 2 January 2024

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd February 2024

Appeal A Ref: APP/C1760/W/23/3321709

Shorts Farmhouse, Scallows Lane, West Wellow, Romsey SO51 6DX

- 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 Daniel Baggot against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02942/FULLS, dated 9 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as 'single storey rear extension and external alterations'.
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/C1760/Y/23/3321707

Shorts Farmhouse, Scallows Lane, West Wellow, Romsey SO51 6DX

- 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 Daniel Baggot against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02943/LBWS, dated 9 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 February 2023.
 - The works proposed are described as 'single storey rear extension and external alterations'.
-

Decisions

Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for Costs

3. An application for costs was made by Test Valley Borough Council against Mr Daniel Baggot. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

4. The proposal relates to a listed building. I have therefore had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act').
5. As part of the appeals, the appellant submitted information in respect of render sample analysis and survey, and then subsequently plans and photos providing further survey details of the render seeking to address concerns raised by the Council in its refusal of the applications. These details were not before the

Council when it made its decisions. However, the submissions comprise additional supporting information about the existing building. They do not alter any part of the proposal from that considered by the Council and interested parties at the application stage. As a consequence, I consider that they do not result in a substantial difference or fundamental change to the applications. That the complete package of information was not initially provided with the appeal submission is regrettable. Nevertheless, the Council has had the opportunity to comment on the submissions as part of the appeal, and having regard to the nature of the information, I am satisfied that no party would be unfairly prejudiced by my consideration of it. I have therefore taken the additional information into account in determining the appeals.

6. The descriptions of the proposed development and works in the banner headings above are taken from the application form. For the avoidance of doubt however, I have considered the appeals on the basis of the submitted plans which indicate a replacement front porch as well as a single storey rear extension, and external alterations including replacement of some windows and doors, alterations to ground levels and to the building's render.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special interest of the Grade II listed building 'Shorts Farmhouse' (Ref: 1093598) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

8. Shorts Farmhouse is a one and a half storey four-bay building with a predominantly pebbledash render exterior and a half-hipped thatched roof with eyebrow dormers. The historic core of the building dates to the 16th century and is timber-framed with a rectilinear form including a smoke passage/bay that is now infilled with a chimney breast and stair. The southernmost bay comprises an 18th century addition of very slightly lesser depth than the historic core. To the north of the historic core is a substantial late 20th century extension which projects beyond the main rear elevation. Other modern interventions include a 20th century red brick porch to the front of the building and uPVC casements to some of the windows. Despite these interventions however, the historic form, proportions and layout of the building remain legible and it has a distinctive vernacular appearance which is characteristic of farmhouses in the local area, pointing to its agricultural origins.
9. Given the above, I find the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to be primarily associated with its age and historic fabric and its architectural, historic and evidential interest as a traditionally constructed former farmhouse that reflects the rural vernacular of the area.

Replacement windows, doors and front porch and alterations to ground levels

10. The proposal includes replacement of some windows and doors with timber casements and frames. The Council is satisfied that the joinery details would be appropriate. I agree, and I find that the timber replacement windows and doors would be more sympathetic to the traditional materials and character of the building than the existing uPVC. The replacement porch would also be of appropriate design, and the oak frame, brick plinth and plain clay tiled roof would be less striking against the materials to the host building than the red

brick of the existing porch. As a consequence, I find that these elements of the proposal would offer a slight enhancement to the overall appearance and special interest of the listed building. I am also satisfied that the reduction of ground levels to expose the brick plinth would preserve the special interest of the building.

Rear extension

11. The rear extension would adjoin the side of the 20th century extension and part of the rear elevation of the historic building. The roof would be set below the eaves of the roof and first floor dormers and while it would sit against the ground floor of one of the building's 16th century bays, it would not project as far as the southernmost 16th century bay or the 18th century addition beyond. In my assessment, it would be a subservient structure against the scale of the historic building. It would also be read as a later addition, and while the footprint of the building would be altered, I consider that the historic plan form of the building would remain legible.
12. I further acknowledge given the predominantly glazed structure proposed that some views through to the building behind would be possible. Nevertheless, the solid frame of the extension and glazing bars would be readily apparent and would intrude on views of the historic building where there is currently a ground-floor window. The uPVC material of this window may not be historic, but I have no firm information indicating that it does not maintain the position and proportions of a historic opening. The 20th century extension already conceals part of the core of the building and the proposal would further diminish clear views of the historic part of the building and opportunities to appreciate it. There would also be some loss of historic fabric through enlargement of an existing opening to form a doorway into the extension, reducing the intactness of the building. While the southern bays and the roof and section of wall above the extension would remain visible, I consequently find that there would be some harm to the special interest of the listed building.
13. Moreover, the extensive glazing to the extension would contrast with the high solid to void ratio of the host building. The appellant advises that the extension's lean-to form and joinery is based on a 19th century greenhouse or vinehouse. Nevertheless, while I accept that the scale of the listed building gives it an impression of status above a modest farmworkers cottage, its form, materials and simple appearance instil a distinctive rural vernacular character. Despite the solid lead roof, the degree of glazing and fenestration detail would give the extension an unexpectedly formal conservatory-style appearance. In my view, the more polite architecture of the extension would sit awkwardly and unsympathetically against the traditional building and would erode its rural vernacular character. Irrespective of the building's scale and the existing juxtaposition with the 20th century extension, I therefore find that the extension would stand out as an incongruous and visually jarring addition that would harm the architectural character and quality of the listed building.
14. I accept that the extension would not be readily visible from Scallows Lane. However, I saw that it would be clearly visible from rights of way to the south of the site. In any event, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of any public views.
15. The appellant suggests that the extension would be reversible. This may be technically feasible in respect of the new structure, but it seems to me that

there would be little realistic prospect of reversion once the extension had been occupied as part of the dwelling.

16. I find for these reasons that the rear extension would fail to preserve the features of special architectural and historic interest that the listed building possesses and would cause harm to its special interest.
17. In support of the proposal, I have been referred to examples of garden rooms to buildings including a cottage at East Cholderton. However, it is unclear from the very limited details provided whether the examples relate to listed buildings. There is also insufficient evidence to show that the relevant circumstances and considerations are directly comparable to the scheme before me. These examples do not therefore alter my assessment of the proposal which I have in any event considered on its own merits.

Alterations to render

18. The proposal refers to removal of render from the building. I saw that the existing pebbledash render is visibly patched and in poor condition and cracked in places. I also note that the enclosed end frame of the 16th Century core of the building is not rendered, and the appellant highlights that the timbers have not been keyed to take laths or render. As a result, it seems that render was not the building's original finish.
19. The appellant has also provided photo condition surveys of the render as well as a Mortar Analysis (Test Report No. 5579) in respect of 'Sample 2' taken from the front of the building in an area that it was initially suggested in the Design, Access and Heritage Statement to possibly date to the late 19th or early 20th century. This analysis details the composition of the sample. However, while it describes the sample as 'believed to date from the first half of the 20th century', the submitted report does not draw any explicit conclusions in respect of its age or date.
20. In any event, even if I were to accept that the pebbledash is not a historic alteration which contributes to the special interest of the building, the physical effects of removal also need to be considered. Where samples of render have been taken, the appellant outlines that the render and friable basecoat can be easily removed without damage to the substrate brick. However, no detailed investigation of the cementitious mortar patches has taken place and so it is unclear whether or not removal of these sections would be likely to damage the fabric underneath. Indeed, the appellant acknowledges the stronger adherence of these patches. The patches may be limited in extent relative to the building as a whole, but irrespective of damage to the substrate that may have already occurred, I cannot be sure that there would not be some detriment caused to the strength or integrity of the structure. Furthermore, the detailed methodology for removal of the render is not entirely clear at this stage.
21. I am therefore unable to conclude that harm would not be caused to the structure of the building through removal of existing pebbledash. The appellant suggests that further investigation and a detailed methodology for render removal could be the subject of conditions. However, there is little firm information to persuade me that it would not be possible in the absence of the appeal proposal to carefully manage localised testing of the existing render with repair if necessary to provide sufficient information to properly inform assessment of the effects of removal.

22. Furthermore, the evidence refers to various possible finishes in place of the existing pebbledash, including replacement non-hydraulic traditional render in either a smooth render or traditional rough cast; or replacement of just patched/failing areas with a hydraulic lime mix with specialist mixed aggregate to the pebbledash and redecoration in a unifying micro-porous silicate coating.
23. The appellant suggests that the eventual finish would depend on the results of further investigation in respect of the extent of damage that would be caused by the removal of render. To my mind however, the broad range of the possible options that have been mentioned result in considerable uncertainty as to the eventual finish and particularly its texture. Even if I were satisfied that it would be appropriate to secure further investigation by condition, I am therefore concerned that I cannot be sure at this stage what the finish would be or assess with confidence that it would be acceptable. Given the potential effect of the external finish on the special interest of the listed building, I am not satisfied that it would be appropriate in this case to leave consideration of such integral matters to a condition. I further consider in view of the degree of uncertainty that a condition deferring approval of the finish would not be adequately effective or reasonable and would lack sufficient precision as to what is being permitted.
24. I acknowledge the condition of the existing pebbledash and differences in colour and texture which result in a noticeably uneven appearance to the building. I agree with the appellant that a more consistent external finish could in principle enhance the appearance of the building. I also agree that the extent of sections showing deterioration and non-breathable repairs would be likely to require extensive renewal such that patch repairs may be impractical to address identified issues relating to water penetration, damp and the decay of parts of the timber frame. I further note that while the brickwork may have been historically painted, a return to this finish would be likely to be hampered by damage caused by keying to take the existing render. However, and irrespective of how sympathetic the existing pebbledash is to the appearance of the building and local vernacular, I consider that there is insufficient information currently before me to determine that the proposed external finish would sustain the building's special interest overall, far less enhance it.
25. Given the above factors, I am not persuaded that the potential adverse effects on the building of the removal of the existing pebbledash would be outweighed and I am unable to determine that alterations to the render finish would not harm the special interest of the listed building.

Heritage balance

26. I have found that the proposed rear extension would fail to preserve the features of special architectural and historic interest that the listed building possesses causing harm to its special interest. In addition, I am unable to determine that alterations to the render finish would not cause further harm to the special interest of the listed building.
27. The National Planning Policy Framework ('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. It goes on to advise that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

28. Bearing in mind the nature and scale of the proposal relative to the listed building and that there would not be a significant loss of historic fabric, the harm to the listed building would be less than substantial in the terms of the Framework. Nevertheless, this harm carries considerable importance and weight.
29. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.
30. I appreciate the state of the existing pebbledash render and the uneven appearance and condition issues of the building. However, given the uncertainty in respect of the proposed external finish and that I have been unable to conclude that this would be acceptable, I am not satisfied that the alterations to render would represent a clear public benefit of the proposal overall.
31. I have found that the proposed replacement windows, doors and front porch would offer a slight enhancement to the appearance and special interest of the listed building and I note that the existing porch is readily visible from Scallows Lane. However, it is of modest scale, and the rear extension would be larger and also readily visible from the nearby right of way. In my assessment, the heritage benefits of the proposal would be outweighed by the adverse effects that I have identified.
32. The proposal would offer additional and enhanced living accommodation for occupiers of the site. However, this is a mainly private benefit, and there is no firm evidence before me to demonstrate 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. Even if I had been satisfied that the removal/replacement of the pebbledash were in itself acceptable, there is no substantive evidence to show that these works, the replacement of windows, doors and the porch or preservation of the building long-term would be dependent on the rear extension which I have found would cause harm. In this context, I find that the public benefits of the proposal would be insufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified to the listed building which carries considerable importance and weight.
33. Given the above, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building, Shorts Farmhouse and it would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework. There would also be conflict with Policy E9 of the Test Valley Borough Council Revised Local Plan 2016 insofar as it requires the significance of heritage assets to be sustained or enhanced. As a result, the Appeal A proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached.

Conclusion

34. For the reasons given above, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR