



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 20 February 2024

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2024

Appeal A Ref: APP/H1705/W/23/3329693

Sherfield Court, Reading Road, Church End, Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hampshire RG27 0JB

- 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 K Adams against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01425/FUL, dated 5 June 2023, was refused by notice dated 29 August 2023.
 - The development proposed was originally described as 'new garage door in new structural opening. Proposed removal of existing external personnel door and installation of new internal personnel door to access the sunken feature.'
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Appeal B Ref: APP/H1705/Y/23/3329694

Sherfield Court, Reading Road, Church End, Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hampshire RG27 0JB

- 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 K Adams against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01426/LBC, dated 5 June 2023, was refused by notice dated 29 August 2023.
 - The works proposed were originally described as 'new garage door in new structural opening. Proposed removal of existing external personnel door and installation of new internal personnel door to access the sunken feature.'
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Decisions

Appeal A

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for new garage door in new structural opening at Sherfield Court, Reading Road, Church End, Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hampshire RG27 0JB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 23/01425/FUL, dated 5 June 2023, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 221510/01 (New Garage Door and Opening Location Plan), 22151/003 (New Garage Door and Opening Existing Plans and Elevation) and 221510/04 Rev C (New Garage Door and Opening Proposed Plans and Elevation); and 221510/03 New Garage Door and Opening Block Plan) only insofar as it relates to the location of the proposed new garage door.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for new garage door in new structural opening at Sherfield Court, Reading Road, Church End, Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hampshire RG27 0JB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 23/01426/LBC, dated 5 June 2023 and the plans submitted with it, only insofar as they relate to the location of the proposed new garage door, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) No works shall take place until details of the design of the garage door including plans and elevations at a scale of not less than 1:20 and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the garage door in new structural opening hereby authorised have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 3) No works shall take place until a schedule and methodology detailing the installation of the garage door in new structural opening and works of making good have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved methodology.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appeal relates to a single-storey building located to the north east of Sherfield Court. Sherfield Court is a grade II listed building (Ref: 1339605) and 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. As a structure within the curtilage of Sherfield Court that has a principal and accessory relationship to the main building, the appeal building is consequently listed. There are also further structures within the curtilage of Sherfield Court, as well as other listed buildings in the vicinity including the Church of St Leonard which is a Grade II listed building (Ref: 1092816).
4. As the proposal relates to a listed building and is in the vicinity of other listed buildings, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act.
5. As part of the appeals, the appellant provided amended plans that were also submitted to the Council before it determined the applications. These amended the proposal to omit the initially indicated removal of an existing personnel door and installation of new internal personnel door to access the sunken feature. They also amend the proposed garage door from a roller shutter to a segmented door. The Council determined the applications on the basis of the original proposal. However, it has considered the amended proposal in its appeal evidence. Noting also the nature of the changes and that they do not fundamentally alter the development still proposed, I am satisfied that no prejudice would be caused by my considering the appeals on the basis of the amended plans. I have therefore taken them into account and determined the appeals as seeking planning permission and listed building consent for 'new garage door in new structural opening'. I have used this revised description which reflects the amended plans in my formal decisions above.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are (i) the effect of the proposal on the special interest of the Grade II listed building, 'Sherfield Court' and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and (ii) the effect of the proposal on the setting of the Grade II listed building, 'Church of St. Leonard'.

Reasons

7. Sherfield Court dates to the early 18th century with 20th century additions. The principal elevation of the main part of the building has a symmetrical 7 bay arrangement, including a first-floor venetian window over a Tuscan porch to the centre, and is finished in red brick in Flemish bond with floor bands. A tall parapet including plastered panels above the first-floor windows and ornamentation at the corners partly conceals a hipped tiled roof. Lower bow-fronted wings to either side continue the floor bands and symmetry of the elevation. The result is a striking Georgian building, now divided vertically into dwellings, which sits within extensive grounds. These grounds include a deep front lawn up to Reading Road, a walled garden, a tree-lined avenue out to a copse of woodland to the north east and an island within a moat as well as a variety of ancillary buildings.
8. One of these ancillary buildings is the appeal building which the main parties describe as a barn dating to around the middle of the 19th century that historically functioned as an ancillary agricultural building to Sherfield Court. There is a late 19th century water tower with a weatherboard exterior attached to the north end of the barn, but the barn itself has an elongated linear form with two porch projections on the south west side and is finished in brick with a slate roof supported on a timber frame. The form and materials of the building are typical of the north Wessex vernacular, although lozenge shaped honeycomb vents in the brick work of the southern part of the building add an interesting architectural detail to an otherwise fairly utilitarian structure. Internally, the building is divided into three main bays, with a brick partition around a small sunken section to the central bay that includes a chimney stack extending up through the roof and which the parties suggest was used as a boiler room. Other alterations include infilling of the openings in the porches, the installation of windows in the north east elevation and provision of garage doors to historic cart openings. I also saw a roller shutter present to the southern cart opening, although the Council indicates that there is no record of consent having been granted for this feature.
9. Given the above, I find the special interest of Sherfield Court, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to be primarily associated with the historic and architectural value of the building and the legibility of its relationship with its extensive grounds and wider complex of associated structures. As part of this, the surviving historic fabric and architectural detailing of the appeal building make some contribution to the listed building's special interest. Its form, layout and vernacular appearance further reflect its historic function and use and illustrate alterations over time to reflect changing requirements which informs an understanding of its relationship with Sherfield Court and contributes to the legibility of the historic complex.
10. The listing description indicates that the Church of St Leonard dates to the 14th century, and that it was almost wholly restored during the 19th century. It includes a prominent tower topped by a spire and a mostly flint wall exterior

with contrasting stone dressings and sits within a churchyard, most of which extends to the south and west. The Church shares an access from Reading Road with part of Sherfield Court which sits very close to its north east corner. The close proximity of these buildings is apparent given intervisibility between them, although there is little direct visual relationship between the Church and the appeal building. Beyond the development around Sherfield Court are open fields and parcels of woodland which serve to set the Church apart from other nearby development and provide for a decidedly rural backdrop.

11. Given the above, I find the contribution made to the special interest of the Church by its setting, insofar as it relates to the current proposal, to be primarily associated with its relationship to its spacious rural surroundings which emphasise its historic position and importance. The evidence before me does not assert any direct functional link between Sherfield Court and the Church, but I consider the appeal site to make some limited contribution to the special interest of the Church as a feature which complements the rural quality of its wider setting.
12. The proposal would form a new entrance with garage door to the central bay of the appeal building. As an additional interruption, this would diminish the historic simplicity of the elevation along the access track which has already been punctuated by openings. There would also be a loss of historic fabric which would diminish the intactness of the appeal building.
13. However, I saw that the part of the building that would be affected is showing spalling to some of the exterior bricks and a section of the internal brick skin is missing. Even noting other openings that have been formed over time, the amount of fabric that would be lost would also be fairly small in the context of the structure as a whole and there would remain significant brickwork sections. As a result, there would remain a clear impression of the building's historic materials. In my judgement, the harm caused to the special interest of Sherfield Court through the loss of historic fabric at the appeal building would therefore be very limited.
14. Furthermore, the design and appearance of the opening would reflect existing doors to the building's northern bay. The proportions of the opening would also be consistent with the northernmost door and would be markedly narrower than the historic cart entrances so as to be subservient to these features. In addition, the spacing between the door and adjacent openings would be similar to that present between other openings currently and the honeycomb brick vent and bell above the proposed door would be retained as distinctive architectural features to this part of the building. I find that the proposal would therefore be in keeping with the existing building and its generally utilitarian and functional appearance and I am satisfied that the elevation would not appear unduly cluttered. The additional opening would also be the only change to the layout of the building. In my judgement, it would not significantly affect the understanding of the latent plan form of the building and how this has changed over time so as to undermine its legibility.
15. These factors would temper considerably the effect of the proposal. I find that the opening would be a generally sympathetic addition and that while there would be detriment to the overall integrity of the building through the change to its layout and elevation and the loss of historic fabric, this would be very minor and its ancillary quality and appearance would not be harmfully eroded.

- Notwithstanding the effects on the appeal building itself, its relationship to Sherfield Court and to other ancillary buildings within the curtilage of this listed building would not therefore be disrupted. As a consequence, the legibility of the complex would not be adversely affected and I see no reason that any contribution made to the special interest of Sherfield Court by other buildings within its curtilage would be diminished.
16. Given also that the appeal building would retain its overall character and appearance as a utilitarian structure ancillary to Sherfield Court, I consider there would be no meaningful change to the rural quality of the wider setting to the Church of St Leonard. The proposal would not be clearly seen in visual juxtaposition with the Church and I find that there would not be harm to the special interest of the Church of St Leonard through the development in its wider setting.
 17. Nevertheless, the loss of historic fabric and the dilution to the historic layout of the appeal building and the simplicity of its elevation through the creation of a new opening would cause some harm to the special interest of Sherfield Court, albeit that I consider the harm would be very limited.
 18. 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.
 19. Bearing in mind the scale of the proposal and how it would affect the listed building of Sherfield Court as a whole, I find that the harm would be less than substantial in the terms of the Framework. Nevertheless, I give considerable importance and weight to this harm.
 20. 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.
 21. The appellant advises that the door is required to improve access to the central bay of the building to provide storage for equipment related to the maintenance of the estate and garden features. Sherfield Court is set within extensive grounds including the moat, tree-lined avenue and copse. To my mind, the ability to effectively manage and maintain the grounds around Sherfield Court would help to at least sustain the contribution that the setting makes to the special interest of the listed building and would therefore represent a potential heritage benefit.
 22. The appeal building is subdivided internally and the only current access to the central bay is a pedestrian door. Given that the south west elevation of the building and the internal wall to the south of the central bay adjoin land shown to be in separate ownership, there would seem to be little realistic scope to provide access from these directions. It might be technically possible to form an opening in the internal wall to provide access from the northern bay which is within the same ownership, but I saw that this bay is already in use as a garage and the requirement to shunt vehicles to enable access to the central bay would be undesirable. From the information before me, there would seem

little practical alternative to the proposal to enable suitable access to the central bay of the building. In my judgement, the realisation of the potential heritage benefit deriving from supporting the effective management and maintenance of the estate would comprise an important public benefit of the proposal.

23. Although finely balanced, I consider the resulting public benefit would be of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the considerable importance and weight attached to the harm caused to the special interest of Sherfield Court by the proposal.
24. I therefore conclude that the proposal would preserve the special interest of the Church of St Leonard and that while it would fail to preserve the special interest of Sherfield Court, the harm would be outweighed by the public benefit of the proposal. The proposal would therefore accord with the Framework and the expectations of the Act.
25. Subject to conditions securing appropriate materials and detailing, the proposal would also be suitably respectful of the host building and its quality as sought by Policy EM11 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029 and Policy D1 of the Sherfield on Loddon Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2029 insofar as they seek to preserve or enhance the borough's heritage assets. I find that the Appeal A proposal would comply with the development plan when it is read as a whole. It would also accord with similar broad objectives under Principles LB02, LB04, SHA01, SHA02 and SHA04 of the Heritage Supplementary Planning Document 2019 ('the SPD'). Given that I have found there to be clear and convincing justification for the harm to Sherfield Court, it would further comply with Principle LB01 of the SPD.

Conditions

26. In addition to standard conditions specifying the time limit, I have imposed a condition in respect of Appeal A specifying the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of certainty. The Council suggested a further condition requiring materials and finishes to match the existing building. However, I saw different finishes to parts of the existing building which could give rise to uncertainty. I have therefore imposed conditions in respect of Appeal B requiring further plans and details of the materials and works of making-good which I consider are necessary for clarity and in the interest of preserving the special interest of the listed building and the appellant has provided written agreement to these conditions. Because the proposal would need to be implemented complying with the conditions on Appeal B, it would not be necessary in this case to impose duplicate conditions on Appeal A.

Conclusion

27. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeals should be allowed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR