



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 3 April 2024

by Guy Davies BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th April 2024

Appeal A Ref: APP/E2205/W/23/3332392

White House Farm, Shenley Road, Headcorn, Ashford TN27 9HY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Jamie Freeman against the decision of Ashford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PA/2023/0271.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing extension and construction of ground floor and first floor extensions, internal alterations to provide open plan accommodation together with conversion of redundant agricultural barn into home office/annexe and glazed link (alternative scheme to 21/02198/AS).
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/E2205/Y/23/3332395

White House Farm, Shenley Road, Headcorn, Ashford TN27 9HY

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Jamie Freeman against the decision of Ashford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PA/2023/0287.
 - The works proposed are demolition of existing extension and construction of ground floor and first floor extensions, internal alterations to provide open plan accommodation together with conversion of redundant agricultural barn into home office/annexe and glazed link (alternative scheme to 21/02198/AS).
-

Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. The addresses variously refer to the villages of Smarden or Headcorn. I have used Headcorn as being consistent with the Royal Mail postal address.
4. I have used the descriptions of the development and works given on the respective application forms in the banner headings above. The descriptions used by the Council differ from these, including a reference in the planning description to the change of use of land from agriculture to residential with the construction of a boiler house and log store, and a reference in the listed building description to the replacement of UPVC windows with timber framed windows. Although not explicitly included in the application descriptions, the boiler house and log store, and replacement of windows, are shown on the submitted plans and I have taken them into account in my decisions.

5. Also not included in the description on the planning application but implicit from the plans is the change of use of the paddock associated with the barn to residential garden area. I have taken this into account as part of the proposal as well.
6. A separate permission has recently been granted by the Council for the change of use of a small parcel of land from agriculture to residential and the construction of an ancillary outbuilding to house a biomass boiler and log store on it under PA/2023/1497. This is similar to that proposed in the current appeals, other than that in the permitted scheme the building is fully enclosed.
7. The planning and listed building appeals relate to the same scheme. The legislative regimes dealing with these aspects are different. To avoid repetition I have dealt with both appeals together unless otherwise noted in this decision letter.

Main Issues

8. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would preserve the grade II listed building¹ or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses
 - The effect on protected species.

Reasons

Listed building

9. The listed building is a two storey dwelling with brick and weatherboarded elevations under a half hipped, plain tiled roof. It has a prominent chimneystack and a cat slide roof on its northern (road) elevation from which a small, single storey extension projects. To one side is a modern two storey extension, linked to the main building by a flat roofed section. The significance and special interest of the listed building lie in the surviving historic fabric and the vernacular form and appearance of the original range, characteristic of buildings in this part of Kent.
10. Alongside the farmhouse is a timber framed barn and stable, not separately listed but of historical interest. They are roofed in a mixture of plain tiles and corrugated metal sheeting. The barn is somewhat dilapidated. The significance of these buildings lies in their surviving structures and historical association with the farmhouse.
11. The existing two storey extension was added to the property in the 1960's before it was listed and relates poorly to the historic part of the building in form and design. Its demolition would not result in any loss of historic fabric and would in visual terms allow a better appreciation of the original building. I also note the argument that it is poorly insulated and no longer fit for purpose.
12. However, the extension that is proposed to replace it suffers from the same shortcomings, and in certain respects exacerbates them. It would be wider and taller than the existing extension which would serve to emphasise the lack of subservience between the extension and the original building. Its form and design, with the range at right angles to the main part of the building and

¹ List Entry Number: 1071354

gable ended would be unsympathetic to the simple plan form, half hipped roof and vernacular design of the historic element. Its siting hard up against the end elevation of the original building without any visual or physical separation would appear awkward and further accentuate the incongruity between the two forms.

13. I note that the proposal has been made in response to the refusal of earlier schemes by the Council. However, for the reasons given above, the changes made would not in my view overcome the harm that would be caused to the significance of the listed building, and would in fact make it worse.
14. The proposal includes conversion of the barn and stable to ancillary living accommodation, with a glazed extension linking them and the farmhouse. I see no objection in principle to the conversion of the barn and stable to living accommodation, which would have the advantage of ensuring their repair and retention. Glazing the existing openings and the introduction of relatively modest additional windows as proposed would in my view retain the agricultural appearance of the barn and stable.
15. However, the size of the glazed extension would appear excessive. It would relate poorly in terms of design and appearance to the traditional form and materials of the barn and stable, and would obscure all of the southern elevation of the stable. As designed, this element of the proposed conversion would detract from the significance and appearance of the barn and stable, and harm its relationship with the listed building.
16. The scheme also proposes changes to the original farmhouse. All of the windows in the farmhouse would appear to be modern, with those on the ground floor being of UPVC. Their replacement with timber windows would, subject to design, be of benefit to the appearance of the listed building.
17. The proposed single storey side extension would however involve the loss of a section of brickwork. The heritage statement² accompanying the applications notes that the brick and weatherboarded elevations are likely to be later alterations to the building as originally constructed. That would not be unusual for a timber framed structure where underbuilding in brick is a common alteration but the brickwork is still historic and of interest in itself. Its loss would therefore detract from the significance of the listed building and its development over time. Such a loss of material would be modest, but nevertheless regrettable.
18. I note the Council's concern that the single storey extension would also detract from the listed building's simple plan form, but given its modest scale I do not consider that would be the case.
19. The proposed boiler house and log store would have a traditional appearance and would have no adverse impact on the listed building or its setting.
20. Sections 16(1) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) require that special regard is paid to the preservation of the listed building or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses. The scheme would have varying impacts on the listed building and associated structures, some beneficial, some adverse. Taken together, I conclude that the harm caused would outweigh the benefits to the

² Cornwallis Rumley, Whitehouse Farm Heritage Statement, v2, December 2022

listed building and its ancillary structures. Adopting the categorisation used in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that harm would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, the desirability of preserving the listed building carries great weight and avoiding such harm is therefore of considerable importance in determining these appeals.

21. For the same reasons, the proposal would conflict with Policies SP1, SP6, ENV3a, ENV13, HOU8 and HOU9 of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 (adopted 2019) (the Local Plan), which seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets and promote good design. The appellant's statement of case refers to Policy HOU7 of the Local Plan, but as this relates to replacement dwellings it is not relevant to the current proposal.

Protected species

22. The Council's concern revolves around the lack of information on whether protected species are present on the site and if so whether they may be harmed as a result of the proposed development.
23. A preliminary ecological assessment³ has been submitted with the appeals to address that concern. No protected species were observed on the site at the time of the survey although the assessment concludes that the buildings have the potential to be used as bat roosts and surrounding land and hedgerows have the potential to support nesting birds, dormice and reptiles. It recommends bat emergence surveys on all the buildings, and further checks if any hedgerows or scrub requires clearance. It also recommends avoiding negative impacts on protected species, such as minimising light spill.
24. Having regard to the assessment carried out, it is unlikely that any protected species would be harmed by the proposed development. Any residual concern could be addressed through the imposition of conditions requiring further survey work or mitigation as appropriate. Consequently, I conclude that the development would not have an adverse ecological impact and would comply with Policy ENV1 of the Local Plan, which requires development proposals to safeguard features of nature conservation interest.

Conclusion

25. Where harm to a heritage asset would be less than substantial, paragraph 208 of the Framework requires that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
26. In this case I recognise that some aspects of the proposals would benefit the significance of the listed building and contribute towards the repair and reuse of ancillary structures. Because these elements would help with the appreciation of the historic buildings they would be of public as well as private benefit. However, for the reasons set out above, I consider that the harmful aspects of the scheme, in particular the larger two storey extension, removal of historic fabric and overly large glazed link would collectively outweigh those benefits, leading to a net harm to the historic and architectural significance of the heritage assets.

³ Marsh Environmental Ecological Consultants, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, September 2023

27. I also recognise the benefits to the appellant of improving the size and quality of living accommodation on the site, not only through reconfiguration of the main farmhouse but also creation of an annexe in the adjoining barn and stable. However, the increase in living accommodation is essentially a private rather than a public benefit, and therefore carries less weight in the planning balance. The farmhouse is already in optimum viable use as a dwellinghouse, the purpose for which it was built, and is likely to continue to be so used irrespective of the current proposals.
28. I acknowledge that the barn and stable are impractical for use by modern farming machinery but they are still serving a purpose for ancillary storage and associated activities on the farm. While reuse would help ensure their repair and retention as already noted, their current condition is not so poor nor are they of such historical or architectural importance as to justify the degree of harm I have found would be caused to the listed building.
29. The boiler room and wood store would cause no harm to the setting of the listed building, and I have found that protected species would not be harmed by the proposed scheme, subject to conditions. These aspects carry neutral weight in my decisions.
30. Because of the net harm to the significance of the listed building the proposed scheme would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole, and also with the statutory protections afforded by the Act. There are no material considerations, including the public and private benefits identified above, that outweigh that conflict. Consequently, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

Guy Davies

INSPECTOR