



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 21 May 2024

by A James BSc (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 June 2024

Appeal A: APP/N0410/W/23/3325716

Stoke Green Farmhouse, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire SL2 4HN

- 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 Richard Weare against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - South Area (South Bucks).
 - The application reference is PL/22/4083/FA.
 - The development proposed is single storey ground floor rear extension.
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Appeal B: APP/N0410/Y/23/3325719

Stoke Green Farmhouse, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire SL2 4HN

- 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 Richard Weare against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - South Area (South Bucks).
 - The application reference is PL/22/4256/HB.
 - The works proposed relate to single storey ground floor rear extension.
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Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. As the appeal site lies within a conservation area and relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
4. While there is an alternative scheme before me, it is clear from the appellant's email correspondence to the Council that the scheme which features the crown top roof is the scheme that the appellant wanted the Council to consider. I have therefore determined these appeals on the basis of the scheme considered by the Council.
5. Planning permission and listed building consent were granted in July 2022 for a two storey side/rear infill extension with internal alterations including the relocation of the downstairs cloakroom, changes to layout and the refurbishment of ceilings¹. The proposed plans before me show the removal of the downstairs cloakroom, removal of a false ceiling on the first floor and repositioning of a door on the first floor. Given that these works already have

¹ Application refs: PL/22/2495/FA and PL/22/2496/HB

consent, I have not considered them further in my determination of this appeal.

Main Issues

6. The main issues for both appeals are whether the proposal would:
- preserve a Grade II listed building, known as 'Stoke Green Farmhouse' (Ref: 1165155), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses;
 - preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stoke Green Conservation Area (CA); and,
 - preserve the setting and therefore the significance of a Grade II registered park and garden, known as Stoke Place (Ref: 1436431).

Reasons

Listed building

7. Stoke Green Farmhouse is a detached dwelling, which is part timber framed and part masonry construction. Historic mapping shows that the building was previously in use as a pair of semi-detached dwellings but converted to a single residence in the 20th century. The listing description states that the building dates from the 17th and 18th century. However, it appears from the evidence before me and the features I observed during my site visit that part of the southern section of the building originally formed part of a hall house and is of an earlier origin.
8. A western wing and rear projection were added to the building in the 18th century. A further two storey rear projection was added in the 19th century, which incorporates the kitchen on the ground floor. Further alterations and extensions took place in the 20th century, including the construction of a lean-to on the rear elevation.
9. While the rear of the building is not referenced in the list description or in the Historic Environment Record, these are primarily for identification purposes and do not provide an exhaustive or complete description of the special interest.
10. Based on my site visit and the evidence before me, I find that the listed building's special interest, insofar as is relevant to these appeals is derived from its historic and architectural interest, as an illustration of how domestic architecture has evolved over the centuries. The building's pleasing architectural style and design, its timber frame, use of traditional materials, its pitched roofs and low ceilings with exposed timber beams add to the building's charm and make important contributions in these regards.
11. The proposal seeks to remove an existing lean-to and construct a single storey rear extension in a pastiche design, which would have a contemporary glazed link. The glazed link provides a visual break between the historic building and the new extension. The glazed link would allow internal and external views of the brickwork on the north wall. The proposed extension would have a staggered rear elevation and two crown roofs. A roof lantern is proposed on the flat roof and bi-fold doors are proposed on the rear elevation.

12. The proposal by reason of its size, design and siting would appear subservient to the host building. However, I find that the provision of a crown roof, with large expanses of glazing on the walls and roof and the stepped down nature of the proposal would be harmfully discordant and would jar with the host building, which has traditional, pitched roofs and smaller and more domestic-style fenestration. While the appellant states that farmhouse style windows, with curved heads are proposed, I find that the proposed windows by reason of their size and design are out of proportion with those found on the host property.
13. In order to provide the floor to ceiling height desired by the appellant and reduce the overall height of the proposed extension, the floor level of the proposal would be approximately 600mm lower than that of the existing dwelling. The Council raises concerns that the proposal could affect the structural integrity of the listed building, as older buildings are often built with limited or no foundations. The appellant states in their rebuttal that they accept this advice and would change the floor level of the proposal. However, there is no revised scheme before me to consider in this respect. In the absence of any substantive evidence to the contrary, I find that the proposal could harmfully affect the structural stability of the listed building.
14. The stepped down nature of the proposal and its higher ceiling would also appear incongruous on this listed building, which typically has a uniformed floor level and low ceiling heights.
15. The proposal seeks to remove brickwork below the existing kitchen windows to facilitate access into the new extension. While there is some 20th century brickwork with cement pointing and a modern bay window on this elevation, the brickwork below these windows is more historic in its appearance and would be lost to facilitate the proposal. The increase in size of the openings for the kitchen would also harmfully erode the quaint character of this room and the legibility of the building as a whole.
16. The proposal also seeks to enlarge the size of the window for the existing WC. This window is sited on the 18th century rear projection and historic fabric would be lost to facilitate this.
17. Although not visible from a public viewpoint, the rear elevation of the property is currently unobstructed and this allows one to better appreciate the form, architectural interest and historic evolution of this listed building. The proposal would obscure part of the rear elevation and result in the loss of historic fabric, which would harmfully erode the special interest and legibility of the listed building. In combination with the extant scheme, the proposal would further diminish the visibility of the 18th century part of the building and reduce the legibility of this phase of the building's history.
18. Both main parties consider that the existing lean-to is of low architectural significance. The Council raises no objection to its removal. Given that it is a later addition and of low architectural significance, which has been subjected to inferior patching and frost damage, I find no reason to reach a contrary view to the Council on this part of the proposal. As a result, I find that the removal of the lean-to would preserve the special interest of the listed building. The appellant advises that the rendered wall would be rebuilt to match the existing. The appellant's Heritage Impact Assessment shows that this wall also dates

from the 18th century and historic fabric would be lost to facilitate this part of the proposal.

19. I appreciate that the property has a long and diverse history of extensions and reconfiguration and that consent has recently been granted for another extension. However, this does not set a precedent for further extensions/alterations or justify a proposal that would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building.

Conservation Area

20. The appeal site lies within the Stoke Green Conservation Area (CA). The significance of the CA insofar as is relevant to this appeal is derived from the concentration of high quality historic buildings, its agricultural history and its verdant character.
21. Stoke Green Farmhouse is set back from the highway and partially screened from the public realm by the existing boundary treatment and soft landscaping. However, glimpsed views of the appeal property are available from the public realm.
22. Despite the harm that would be caused to the listed building, I do not find that the proposal would be detrimental to the character or appearance of the CA. This is because, at most, only a very minor glimpse of the proposal would be visible from the public domain and the proposal would only have limited prominence from the private domain. Under such circumstances, case law² has established that proposals must be judged according to their effect on a CA as a whole and must therefore have a moderate degree of prominence. Given the above, I find that the proposal would not be detrimental to the CA as a whole and would thus preserve its significance.

Registered Park and Garden (RP&G)

23. Stoke Place, which is a RP&G is sited on the opposite side of the road behind a high boundary wall. The significance of Stoke Place insofar as is relevant to this appeal is derived from it being an 18th century pleasure ground, which was designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, who is a renowned and historically important English landscape gardener and architect.
24. The proposal would be sited to the rear of the dwelling. Given the nature, design and siting of the proposal; the intervening road, boundary treatment and soft landscaping; and, the proposed use of automatic roof blinds to minimise any light spillage, I find that the proposal would preserve the setting and therefore the significance of the RP&G.

Other Matters

25. I acknowledge the appellant's frustration with the Council's pre-application service; however, this is a matter that should be addressed with the Council and does not bear weight on my decision.
26. While I note that the appellant has recommended a number of conditions, I do not find that the imposition of conditions would address the harm that I have identified.

² South Oxfordshire DC v SSE & J Donaldson [1991] CO/1440/89

Public Benefits, Heritage and Planning Balance

27. Although I find that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the CA and the setting and therefore the significance of the RP&G, for the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building.
28. Paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (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. Paragraph 206 advises that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should require clear and convincing justification. Given the nature and extent of the proposal, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
29. Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 208 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimum viable use.
30. The proposal would create a more open, bright and modern living space, which would be less susceptible to traffic noise. The proposal would also provide easy access to the garden. However, these are solely private benefits. The appellant advises that without the extension the house would be uninhabitable in the winter as investment into the existing building is uneconomical due to constraints regarding its heritage status. However, there is no compelling evidence before me to suggest that the use of the building as a dwelling would cease in the absence of the proposal. As a result, I do not find the proposal necessary to secure the viability and long-term conservation of the building. Furthermore, there is no substantive evidence before me that the proposal is necessary in order to secure the optimum viable use of the asset.
31. The proposal would result in investment into the property, which would have a small economic benefit, which carries limited weight in favour of the proposal. The removal of the existing soil vent pipes and modern windows carries very limited weight in favour of the proposal. While the proposal would use traditional materials, I do not find that the increase in 'period' brickwork would outweigh the loss of historic fabric that I have identified. Accordingly, I do not find this to be a public benefit.
32. Overall, there would be limited public benefits from the proposal. Consequently, in attributing considerable importance and weight to the identified harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, I find that there would be insufficient public benefits arising from the proposal to outweigh this harm. Given the above, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 203 of the Framework.
33. The proposal would also conflict with Policies C6 and EP3 of the South Bucks District Local Plan (adopted March 1999, Consolidated September 2007 and February 2011) and Core Policy 8 of the South Bucks Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted February 2011 (The Local Plan). These policies among other things require that proposals for alterations or extensions to a listed building do not harm the character or

appearance of a listed building or its features of special architectural or historic interest, that proposals protect and where appropriate enhance the district's historic environment and that extensions respect the form and design of the host building. As a result, in respect of the section 78 appeal, the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan and the considerations I identify would not outweigh that conflict.

34. Given I have found that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the CA, I find no conflict with Policy C1 of the Local Plan.

Conclusion

35. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

A James

INSPECTOR