



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2024

by R J Redford MTCP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/Y/24/3337643

Talks Farmhouse, East Martin Road, East Martin SP6 3LJ

- 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 R Watts against the decision of New Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/10722.
 - The works proposed are to retain the plaster to walls and ceiling in situ, and to retain internal partition and mezzanine floor.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of works refers to the retention of the plaster to the walls and ceiling of the west barn and the installation of an internal partition and mezzanine floor within that barn. However, it is also noted that there has been an insertion of a door between the west and north barns and the plans show a proposed recessed glazed folding door in one of the west barn's doorways. These elements do not form part of the description of works and so cannot be considered within this appeal.

Background and Main Issues

3. The appeal site includes 3 Grade II listed buildings which have group value and are within the Martin Conservation Area (the CA). The listed building in which works the have been undertaken is known as "L-shaped barn immediately north of Talk's Farmhouse" (Ref: 1167289) (the LB), the other 2 buildings are known as "Talk's Farmhouse" (Ref: 1094860) (LB2) and "Wall along road south of Talk's Farmhouse" (Ref: 1350992) (LB3).
4. Due to sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act), I am bound to have special regard to all these heritage assets.
5. The main issue is, however, whether the proposal would preserve the LB, and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

6. The LB and LB2 follow a traditional layout for farm buildings around a central yard that faces out towards the fields and pastures beyond. LB3 follows the line of the LB and LB2's road facing elevations and extends down the lane to provide a boundary to the more formal gardens on the opposite side of the LB2

to the farmyard. These structures date from the mid-18th century and are a good example of vernacular rural farm buildings. Therefore, the significance of these buildings is that they represent a traditional farmyard where the hierarchy between farmhouse and barns is retained, and there are few modern incursions or extensions.

7. The LB is made up of 2 barns known as the west barn and north barn. The north barn has been converted into ancillary residential accommodation for the main dwelling, LB2, whilst the west barn is used for incidental uses such as a workshop and garage.
8. The evidence before me infers both barns were built for threshing purposes, and this aligns with my observations on site. Traditionally barns of this nature are often a singular open space divided by the positioning of doors on opposing sides of the building, as with the west barn, which inform the location of the threshing floor. The doors are usually off centre providing a larger bay to one side for holding the un-threshed crop and a smaller bay for the storage of products of threshing. In the specific case of the west barn, the Council's heritage officer considers the produce to be for threshed straw, and there is nothing before me to contradict this. It is noted that sometimes temporary walls were used within larger threshing barns to create separate storage spaces but there does not appear to be evidence of this within the LB.
9. The proposed internal partition and mezzanine floor is located within the larger bay of the west barn and although it allows the wooden frame of the roof to be appreciated it alters the dimensions of the floorspace. By creating broadly equal open spaces to either side of the barn's doors and threshing floor it conceals the traditional layout indicative of the agricultural use of the building and so would harm the historic significance of the LB.
10. It is noted that the previously approved scheme¹ included a similar structure but this would have enclosed the shorter section on the opposite side of the threshing floor. It was considered by the Council that this would have retained the proportions of the west barn's historic layout and so in combination with bringing the barns back into use was acceptable.
11. The internal plastering between the timber framing is divisive as it still allows the form and construction of the north barn to be easily interpreted. It is appreciated that traditionally the construction of the outer skin of an agricultural building would likely be visible internally. However, in this instance it is understood that fire boarding between the rafters has already been approved which would conceal the roof construction and in my mind the plaster would provide a more sympathetic finish. In this instance I therefore find the internal plastering to have a neutral impact on the architectural and historical interest of the LB. Nevertheless, this does not mitigate or overcome the less than substantial harm identified in relation to the floor layout of the LB.
12. 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 its optimal viable use.

¹ Planning permission and listed building consent 15/01312 and 15/10313

13. That the internal plastering may improve the fire safety of the west barn would be a public benefit. However, this does not relate to the partition wall and mezzanine element of the scheme. It is appreciated this element of the scheme has personal advantages to the occupants in terms of useability of the space, but this does not constitute a public benefit. It is also evident that the optimal viable use of the west barn is that of incidental residential purposes, due to its location between the farmhouse and the north barn, and this had already been achieved without the need for the partition wall or mezzanine floor. Consequently, I do not find the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh the harm identified.
14. As the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the LB, it fails to comply with the Act and the Framework, and Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management Policy DM1, as far as it seeks to conserve and enhance historic assets.
15. As set out above the LB is within the setting of LB2 and LB3, all of which are within the CA. The proposed works are all internal but by concealing the internal layout of the west barn there is potential that it would impact the interpretation of LB2 and LB3 as a group, as well as their relationship with the wider CA. However, as the harm to the LB cannot be overcome, I have not found it necessary to consider these matters further. Nevertheless, I note the Council did not find harm in relation to LB2, LB3 and the CA.

Other Matters

16. It is appreciated that the appellant has had various and sometimes contradicting advice from different Council officers over the years. This is regrettable but does not impact the planning merits of the case which I must consider.

Conclusion

17. Given the above and considering all other matters raised, the appeals should be dismissed.

RJ Redford

INSPECTOR