

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 20 August 2024

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an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th October 2024

Appeal A Ref: APP/D2320/Y/24/3343770

Holland Fold Farm, Long Lane, Heath Charnock, Chorley, Lancashire PR6 9EF

- 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 G Berry against the decision of Chorley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00772/LBC.
 - The works proposed are roof repairs comprising removal of existing roof covering, installation of structural enhancements, insulation and plywood deck and replacement roof covering in artificial stone slates.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/D2320/Y/24/3343439

Holland Fold Farm, Long Lane, Heath Charnock, Chorley, Lancashire PR6 9EF

- 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 G Berry against the decision of Chorley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00771/LBC.
 - The works proposed are roof repairs comprising removal of existing roof covering, installation of steel structural supports, insulation and plywood deck and replacement roof covering in natural stone slates, reclaimed from the existing roof where possible, and an array of solar panels on each roof pitch. Proposal will require the eaves and ridge height to be raised by at least 150mm to accommodate the structural supports within the roof void. The height of the external walls will be built up to the new eaves and ridge height in natural stone to match the existing. The existing roof gutter will be removed and replaced to match the new eaves height.
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Decision – Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Decision – Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

3. In the appellant's statement of case, reference was made to the public consultation version of Historic England's 2023 'Climate Change and Historic

Building Adaptation Advice Note' published in November last year. Following the closure of the consultation on this document, Historic England published its advice on 'Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency: Historic England Advice Note 18 (HEAN18)' on 23rd July 2024. The parties were invited to comment on this document in relation to Appeal B and the comments received have been taken into account in the determination of that appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in both appeals is whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building, Holland Fold Farmhouse and attached barn, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

5. The National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') identifies at paragraph 195 that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource. Paragraph 205 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a listed building, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
6. In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, the statutory requirement is that special regard is had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
7. Holland Fold Farmhouse and attached barn (List Entry No: 1362145) is a two storey, detached building set amongst a loose cluster of buildings within the open countryside at the end of a narrow lane. Constructed from coursed sandstone rubble with small stone mullioned windows and a stone slate roof this rectangular plan, gable ended building dates from the late seventeenth century.
8. The building has framed internal panels separating the barn from the farmhouse and a vaulted ceiling supported by Queen Post trusses. The barn was incorporated into residential use as part of the farmhouse in approximately 2007. As far as is relevant to the proposed works, the special interest and significance of the listed building is due to its simple form, distinctive squat proportions, solid appearance with small openings and architectural features such as stone rubble walls and uninterrupted stone slate roof supported by internally exposed trusses. These features all aid an understanding of the building and the locality's agrarian past and contribute to its significance as a heritage asset.
9. Whilst there are small rooflight openings they have not materially compromised the generally solid appearance of the roof because they are few in number and the rooflights have a slim profile.

Appeal proposals

10. The submitted Heritage Statement is of the view that stone slate was not the original roof covering and suggests that the roof may have originally been

thatched. This is due to the extent to which mortar has been used to build up the height of the top of the building's external walls. However, there is no further evidence to support this suggestion. Given that the roof has been covered in stone slate for many years, and that it is in keeping with the local historic vernacular, recovering the roof in stone slate would be appropriate for this building. Reference to the building possibly being thatched is therefore a consideration of little weight in favour of the use of an alternative roofing material as proposed in Appeal A.

11. Prior to the works that converted the barn to residential use around 2007, its stone roof slates overlapped each other by one third. As part of the conversion works the slates were re-laid with a two third overlay. This significantly increased the weight supported by the structure of the roof.
12. The roof trusses are structurally the strongest part of the roof and have coped well with the additional weight of the stone slates. However, the purlins on each slope, although braced close to the trusses, are less substantial timbers and in outdoor views at the mid-point of their spans pronounced sagging of the roof is evident. It is also apparent that movement of the roof has led to gaps and draughts which adversely affects comfort within the dwelling. It is not a matter in dispute that the condition of the roof structure needs to be assessed and remedial work carried out. I have no reason to disagree with that position.
13. In Appeal A, the proposed work seeks to address the roof issue by installing unspecified structural enhancements to the roof and replacing the stone slates with lighter weight artificial slates.
14. In Appeal B, the work proposed seeks to address this matter by raising the eaves and ridge height of the roof so that steel structural supports can be inserted to support the weight of stone slates and the solar panels proposed for the front and rear elevation of the building. This work would involve raising the height of the external walls, eaves and roof ridge by at least 150mm in order to accommodate the steel structural supports.

Information on the extent of roof issues and the extent of work proposed

15. In both appeals the appellant seeks listed building consent without having first carried out a structural survey of the roof. Instead, he seeks that this matter, and the detail of the remedial works that would be carried out, are dealt with by condition. This is in order to avoid the cost and disturbance of stripping the roof and installing a temporary roof before the application was made and determined.
16. In order to comply with the statutory preservation duty it is normal practice when a problem in a listed building occurs to investigate the cause, identify the work required and to then apply for consent to carry out that work. It is an accepted principle that the work specified should be the minimum repair work necessary using traditional techniques as appropriate. The approach of requiring such information as part of an application for Listed Building Consent rather than dealing with it by condition is supported by paragraph 39 of Historic England Advice Note 16 *Listed Building Consent* (HEAN 16). As I have noted, this has not occurred in either of the two appeals.

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17. The roof trusses and purlins are exposed inside the building with only their upper surfaces hidden from view. In the absence of justification therefore as to why the condition of the roof structure can only be assessed if the roof covering is removed, it seems to me that the removal of the internal covering between the trusses and purlins would allow the condition of the roof to be largely assessed from inside the building. This would enable appropriate structural enhancements to be identified and submitted for approval as part of an application for listed building consent. As a result, it appears to me that the cost and inconvenience of stripping the roof of its covering and erecting a temporary roof to assess the roof whilst awaiting listed building consent could be avoided.
 18. For the reasons given above, it is necessary as part of both applications to have confirmed the cause of the sagging roof and following investigation to have identified and proposed the minimum remedial work necessary using appropriate traditional techniques. This has not occurred. As such matters are at the heart of deciding whether listed building consent should be granted and relate to the main roof slopes of the building, rather than smaller less important parts of the building, this matter should not be left to a condition attached to a listed building consent to control.

Effects of the proposed works

Appeal A

19. The replacement of stone slates covering the barn, a large proportion of which predate the re-roofing work that took part as part of the barn conversion work around 2007, would result in the loss of historic fabric.
20. The proposed artificial stone slate would be constructed from glass fibre reinforced concrete. When new the artificial slates are very similar to the appearance of the stone slates. However, I do not have assurance that they would weather over time in the same manner as a stone slate. The extent to which the artificial slate attracts lichens or mosses is also likely to be different. Furthermore, the roof slope consists of some particularly wide slates and I am not persuaded that the width of the widest artificial slate available in the brochure would be wide enough to replicate these slates.
21. The manufacturer states that the artificial stone slates concerned have been used on a number of listed buildings around the country. However, the circumstances surrounding each application are likely to be different. In this case, no evidence has been provided in the examples given that the artificial stone slates directly abut new artificial slates on wide unbroken main roof slopes, as would be the case in Appeal A. As a consequence, reference to these examples has not altered my findings in relation to this issue.
22. With the roof to the farmhouse and barn forming a continuous unbroken run any of the discrepancies described between the stone slates on the farmhouse and the artificial slates covering the barn would stand out and disrupt the harmony of the roof. I therefore find that the use of artificial stone slates would result in the loss of historic fabric and would fail to preserve the significance of the building.

Appeal B

23. As I earlier noted, the roof to the house and attached barn is uninterrupted and reads as one. Together with the simple rectangular plan form of the building, small stone mullioned windows and coursed sandstone rubble walls, the simple form of the roof is an important defining feature of the building. The addition of a long line of solar panels level with the roof surface on the front and rear roof slopes would dominate the roof and detract from its special interest and significance. Moreover, increasing the height of the eaves and roof ridge to accommodate steel structural supports to support the weight of the roof covering and solar panels would add to the harm caused. This is because it would also increase the clearance between eaves levels and the small first floor windows immediately below, undermining the distinctive squat appearance of this late seventeenth century building.
24. The harm that solar panels can cause to the significance of listed buildings is recognised in paragraphs 96 to 100 of Historic England Advice Note 18 *Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency* (HEAN 18). It advises that where such panels would be visible on principal roof slopes and detract from the building's special interest, as would be the case here, they will not generally be acceptable. In such situations, it advises that solar panels mounted on outbuildings or land associated with the listed building will generally be preferable.

Public benefits and balance

25. The harm that would be caused to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial. Paragraph 206 of the Framework requires clear and convincing justification for any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 208 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
26. In accordance with the statutory duty, I attach considerable importance and weight to the harm that would be caused by the proposed works to this listed building.
27. The proposed work would prevent the sagging roof from collapsing which would damage the listed building and result in the loss of historic fabric. The repairs would also allow the building to continue to be used as a dwellinghouse which is its optimal viable use. Insulating and draughtproofing the roof would help reduce carbon emissions from the property. I attach significant weight to these public benefits of both proposals.
28. In terms of public benefits specific to the individual appeals, it is stated that the use of artificial slate in Appeal A would avoid the need for greater structural work involving heightening of the roof if the existing stone slates were to be retained as proposed in Appeal B. However, in the absence of a roof survey that identifies the extent of problems with the roof, and the minimum extent of works necessary to rectify them, I am not persuaded that the extensive steel structural work proposed in Appeal B would be the only alternative to the use of artificial slates. I therefore attach limited weight to this consideration as a public benefit in favour of Appeal A.

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29. In relation to Appeal B, the solar panels proposed would make a contribution to addressing climate change and the climate emergency by reducing the use of fossil fuels. With regard to energy efficiency and climate change, HEAN 18 is clear that measures such as heat pumps and draught proofing are supported, and that insulation may be suitable within the roof plane in some cases. However, as noted above, HEAN 18 does not support the use of solar panels where they are proposed on principal roof slopes and would detract from the building's special interest, as is the case here. Moreover, the evidence submitted does not demonstrate that without the proposed energy efficiency work it would no longer be viable to use the building as a dwelling house. Accordingly, I attach minimal weight to the proposed solar panels as a public benefit in favour of Appeal B, and little weight to the public benefits in both appeals of wider energy efficiency work being necessary to allow continued occupation of the building as a dwelling house.
30. Given that it is an accepted principle that the owner of a building, included listed buildings, pay for repair work, the carrying out of such work by the owner is not a public benefit to be weighed in favour of the appeals.
31. Taking all these matters into account, my overall conclusion is that the public benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the considerable importance and weight that I attach to the harm that would be caused.
32. Given the above, I find that the proposal would not preserve the Grade II listed building, Holland Fold Farmhouse and attached barn, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This would be contrary to the requirements of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act. Conflict would also occur with policies BNE1 and BNE8 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026, policy 16 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and the historic environment provisions within the Framework. Collectively these policies and provisions seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Conclusion

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

Ian Radcliffe

Inspector