



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 29 October 2024

by H Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date:

Appeal A Ref: APP/W2845/W/24/3348525

Dovecote House, Nobottle Road, Upper Harlestone, West Northamptonshire NN7 4EL

- 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 Grahame Aldous KC against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2023/5130/FULL.
 - The development proposed is 'demolition of existing conservatory and replacement with new garden room; new greenhouse; alterations to timber store including replacement of timber wall and roof to create new plant room and WC; construction of two new dormers to the rear elevation; various other internal and external alterations.'
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W2845/Y/24/3348518

Dovecote House, Nobottle Road, Upper Harlestone, West Northamptonshire NN7 4EL

- 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 Grahame Aldous KC against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2023/5135/LBC.
 - The works proposed are 'demolition of existing conservatory and replacement with new garden room; new greenhouse; alterations to timber store including replacement of timber wall and roof to create new plant room and WC; construction of two new dormers to the rear elevation; various other internal and external alterations.'
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Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. As the proposal relates to a listed building which is within a conservation area, I have had special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act).
4. The two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation. I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning.
5. The proposal would comprise a new greenhouse, alterations to the existing timber store including replacement of timber wall and roof to create a new plant room and WC, and other internal and external alterations including the removal of modern fireplaces in the snug and living room, unblocking original fireplace openings, and installing freestanding stoves. The Council found these

aspects of the proposed development and works to be acceptable. Further to my own observations, I am also satisfied that these particular elements of the scheme would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building. Therefore, the focus of these appeals is on the proposed construction of the rear dormers and the demolition of existing conservatory and replacement with new garden room.

Main Issues

6. A main issue in Appeal A and the main issue in Appeal B is:
 - whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building known as Dovecote House, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
7. An additional main issue in Appeal A is:
 - The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, with regard to loss of privacy.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

8. The appeal site comprises Dovecote House, a Grade II listed¹ building dating from the late 17th to early 18th Century. It is a detached two-storey dwelling with attic, constructed from local stone with a steep pitched plain tiled roof. The building has side gables with small, attached outbuildings on both sides and a late 20th Century conservatory to the rear.
9. The front elevation has a symmetrical design which incorporates a central entrance with plank and braced door and a rustic porch. It has 2-light stone mullioned windows with single casements in stone surrounds flanking to left and right, all with leaded lights. The building has ashlar gable parapets and kneelers with brick stacks at ridge and end. The rear elevation is also constructed from local stone and has mullioned leaded casement windows which display slim metal glazing bars.
10. The existing plain tile roof of the appeal property dates from the 20th Century. The submitted Heritage Impact Assessment, dated March 2023, states that the historic thatched roof and chimney stacks of the appeal building were destroyed by fire in the 1960s.
11. Based on the listed description and what I observed during my site visit together with the evidence put forward, I find that the special interest and significance of this heritage asset largely derives from its historic and architectural interests. These are drawn from its illustration of late 17th to early 18th Century domestic rural architecture along with the simplicity of its historic form, which remains evident despite the alterations which have taken place to its roof structure and to the rear of the property. The local building materials and building style are reflected in, amongst other characteristics, the steep roof pitch and, with regard to external walls, the high proportion of masonry in relation to window openings.

¹ List Entry Number: 1281654 – The Dovecote, Grade II

Proposal and effects

12. The existing conservatory to the rear is a glass conservatory on a low stone wall base. It has been designed with slim, minimal frames and simple eaves detailing that blend comfortably with the traditional building. In contrast, the proposal would introduce a large expanse of oak framed glazing against the rear wall of the listed building. The thick timber frames would appear bulky and would not replicate the delicate lines of the historic fenestration, such as the slim glazing bars, or match the traditional materials used on the listed building.
13. The proposal's thick framing would disrupt the balance and proportion between the new addition and the historic structure, making the garden room seem overbearing and visually awkward against the listed building. This visual contrast would distract the building's character and historic integrity.
14. Additionally, its larger form with thick frames, projecting lantern and deep cornice would obscure more of the building's historic fabric, including the attractive window opening above. Thus, the proposal would introduce a discordant feature that would draw attention away from the historic features of the building's rear elevation to the detriment of the designated heritage asset. It would therefore unacceptably harm the historic building.
15. I acknowledge that the existing conservatory is leaking and needs replacing. However, this is not sufficient justification for the alterations and extension to the property in the manner now proposed.
16. It is acknowledged that the roof structure and plain tiles are a 20th Century replacement for the thatch that was destroyed by the fire. The main parties agree that the physical act of introducing dormers to the building's roof structure would not result in the loss of significant historic fabric from the listed building. Based on the evidence before me, I have no reason to disagree.
17. The proposed dormers would be small scale traditional dormers set down from the ridge line and within the roof scape, so that the main roof remains the dominant feature. The front roof slope would remain unchanged.
18. Consequently, the proposed dormer's modest scale and proportions, and its position and alignment on the building's rear roof slope, would result in a harmonious addition above the existing roof slope.
19. The Council states that the dormers are not necessary as the attic already has 2 windows. However, light levels within attic rooms of historic buildings are typically lower than in the principal rooms. Although the attic is lit from windows in the gable walls, the building's roof slopes are steeply pitched making the central attic space appear darker. I therefore sympathise with the appellant's desire to provide additional light to the attic rooms.
20. I accept that there is no direct evidence as to whether there were dormers in place before the thatch fire. Nevertheless, a number of properties within the local area have dormer windows. Indeed, I observed that the neighbouring property has a rear dormer. Therefore, it is unlikely that the proposed small-scale dormers would look out of place on the appeal building.

21. Moreover, the overall design would be similar to the local vernacular tradition whereby dormers are typically narrow and set well down from the ridge and above eaves level. As such, it would not have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the building. I therefore agree with the appellant that the proposed dormers would result in a neutral effect to the listed building.
22. Nevertheless, drawing the above together, I find that the proposal, by reason of its poor design, would not preserve the Grade II listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. In doing so, it would harm the significance of this designated heritage asset.

Public benefits and balance

23. With reference to paragraphs 207 and 208 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent and fairly localised nature of the proposal, I find that the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset assessed above would be 'less than substantial' but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 208 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing the asset's optimum viable use.
24. In this case, economic benefits would be delivered through the manufacturing and construction phase and the general investment into the property. Social benefits would be generated by an improvement to the local housing stock by bringing the attic space back into use. I also acknowledge that the proposal would reveal features of architectural and historic interest that have been obscured by later alterations. There would also be environmental benefits from the use of thermally efficient materials and the installation of environmentally friendly heating and hot water systems.
25. Having regard to the objectives in the Framework, these outcomes would constitute benefits that would flow to the public at large and, whilst moderated by the scale of the scheme, carry moderate weight in favour of the appeals.
26. However, I am not persuaded that similar benefits could not be achieved by a proposal which would be less harmful to the significance of this designated heritage asset. Additionally, no compelling evidence is before me which confirms that the property would not be useable or viable as a dwelling or that its future would be at risk if the appeals were to fail and the development and works as proposed were not implemented. In these respects, the identified harm to the significance of the listed building has not been clearly and convincingly justified.
27. Whilst there are development and works proposed that would not harm the significance of the listed building, this is a neutral consideration in the balance.
28. On balance, in giving considerable importance and weight to the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, I find that this would not be outweighed by the moderate weight I attach to the public benefits arising from the proposal.
29. I conclude that the proposal would not preserve the Grade II listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. It would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the provisions

within the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. It would also conflict with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (adopted 2014), and Policies ENV7 and ENV10 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) for Daventry District 2011-2029 (adopted 2020), and Policies H1 and H2 of the Harlestone Neighbourhood Development Plan to 2029 (Made 2023). Collectively, these policies amongst other things, seek to ensure developments conserve and enhance heritage assets, including their settings, and are of high quality design that respect the character and distinctiveness of the local area.

Living Conditions

30. The appeal building is adjacent to the rear garden of 121 Nobottle Road (No 121). Due to the orientation of the appeal building's rear roof slope, the proposed dormers would be facing the appellant's rear garden and therefore only side views of the neighbouring garden would be possible. However, the opportunity for overlooking the rear garden of No 121 would be limited as views would be well screened by the existing vegetation along the site's boundary with No 121. Accordingly, there would be no adverse effect on residents' living conditions at No 121, in respect of privacy.
31. The other neighbouring dwellings would be located a sufficient distance away from the proposed development to safeguard privacy. Consequently, the proposal would not harm the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.
32. For the reasons given, living conditions for neighbouring occupiers would not be unacceptably harmed. The proposal therefore accords with Policy ENV10 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) for Daventry District 2011-2029 (adopted 2020), and Policy H1 of the Harlestone Neighbourhood Development Plan to 2029 (Made 2023). Collectively, these policies amongst other things, seek to protect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. It would also accord with paragraph 135 of the Framework, which requires a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers.

Other Matters

33. The appeal site is located within the Harlestone Conservation Area (CA). Mindful of the statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Act, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance. The Harlestone Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (adopted 2017) states that the significance of Harlestone Parish can be characterised by Harlestone's unique setting within rolling heathland, contributing to its views and sense of place, its continued rural and agricultural nature, and the use of local building materials prevalent throughout the settlement, creating a cohesive and strong character. The special interest and significance of the CA mainly stems from the varying ages and architectural styles of its buildings that reflect the evolution of the settlement.
34. The appeal listed building largely retains its overall external historic character and detailing and therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and thereby to its significance as a designated heritage asset.

35. Given the limited scale of the proposal and its siting to the rear of the property, the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and would not harm its significance as a designated heritage asset.
36. The appeal site is near to other listed buildings, including the dovecote that stands on the land to the north-west of the appeal building, which is also Grade II listed. I have therefore had regard to the statutory duty referred to in the Act. However, given the proximity and physical relationship of the proposal with these designated assets, their settings would be preserved, and the proposal would not detract from them.
37. Concerns have been raised about potential noise nuisance emanating from the air source heat pump. A noise assessment was undertaken which confirms that the noise output would be no more than that allowed under householder permitted development rights. The Officer's report states that the air source heat pump would be acceptable. Based on the evidence before me, I see no reason to disagree.

Conclusion

Appeal A: The proposed development would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no material considerations which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.

Appeal B: For the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR