
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 7 January 2025

by **A James BSc (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 January 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/W3520/W/24/3345019

White House Farm, Dublin Road, Occold, Suffolk IP23 7PY

- 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 Mrs Celia Johnstone against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application reference is DC/23/05738.
 - The development is proposed single storey side extension (orangery).
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/W3520/Y/24/3345022

White House Farm, Dublin Road, Occold, Suffolk IP23 7PY

- 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 Mrs Celia Johnstone against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application reference is DC/23/05739.
 - The works relate to a proposed single storey side extension (orangery).
-

Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. As the appeals relate to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
4. Since the Council issued its decision notice, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been revised, with the latest version published on 12 December 2024. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal remain unchanged. As a result, I have not sought further submissions on the revised Framework, and I am satisfied that no party has been prejudiced by my approach.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, known as 'White House Farmhouse' (Ref: 1352445) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

6. White House Farmhouse is a timber framed, detached dwelling, which is estimated to date back to around the 16/17th century. The building is two storeys high and has a rendered finish. It has a slate roof and decorative pierced bargeboards. The historic core of the building is one room deep and has a rectilinear plan form. A two storey rear projection was added to the building in the 19th century, creating a double room plan form. The building also has a single storey rear projection. The front elevation is symmetrical in its appearance and features large, timber-framed sash windows and a 19th century double height porch.
7. 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 a historic farmhouse from around the 16/17th century. The building's historic plan form, its timber frame, use of traditional materials, its pleasing architectural design and its rural surrounds all make important contributions in these regards.
8. The proposal seeks to provide a new orangery, which would infill a gap between the existing conservatory and the single storey rear projection. The proposal would be attached to the side elevation of the two storey, 19th century rear projection. Although the proposal would not be attached to the historic core of the building, the 19th century projection is of some age and contributes to the historic evolution of the farmhouse and the special interest of the listed building.
9. The proposed orangery would be single storey in height and would have a lower roof height than the existing conservatory. Given its modest size and height, the proposed orangery would be subservient to the existing building. The low roof height would enable the roof forms of the historic core of the building and 19th century rear projection to remain visible and legible.
10. The proposed orangery would have larger windows than the adjacent conservatory. While the farmhouse has large, sash windows, the size and solid to void ratio of the proposed glazing would harmfully contrast with the more domestic scale of fenestration on the historic part of the building. Although parts of the proposal including the eaves line, dentil pattern, materials and colour of joinery would complement the adjacent conservatory, the different roof form (including the glazed lantern); the size and the extent of the glazing; the smaller brick plinth; and, the fact that it would project further to the side of the building than the existing conservatory would result in a disjointed development, which would fail to respect the agricultural heritage of the listed building.
11. While the extent of fenestration would provide some visual permeability, the proposal would partially obscure views of the lower part of the 19th century projection. I appreciate that the existing windows in the side elevation of the dwelling would be retained and the proposal would not result in the loss of any historic timbers. However, the widening of the kitchen door would result in the loss of historic fabric. While the appellant states that this historic fabric could be reused, the proposal would still result in the loss of historic fabric from its current positioning.
12. Although the proposal would extend the rectilinear plan form of the listed building, I find that, in combination with the existing conservatory, the proposal would create a large, elongated room and would create a more open plan living arrangement,

which would be out of character with the more simplistic, historic plan form of the listed building.

13. The appellant states that the proposal would not be visible from the public realm. However, glimpsed views of the proposed orangery would be available from the highway. Nevertheless, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
14. The appellant argues that the agricultural character of the farmhouse has been eroded by later changes, including the 19th century porch and the more recent conservatory. However, the appellant's Heritage Statement states that the listed building '*has a strong farmhouse design*'. While the agricultural setting of the listed building and the adjacent brick outbuildings contribute towards its significance, I find that among other things, the building's architectural style and historic fabric make an important contribution to its special interest. I do not find that the later additions, such as the porch or the conservatory justify further overtly domestic additions to the listed building. The conservatory also replaced a previous flat roofed garden room. As a result, the appeal scheme is materially different from the consented scheme for the conservatory.
15. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and would harm the significance of this designated heritage asset.
16. Paragraph 212 of 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 213 advises that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should have clear and convincing justification. I find the proposal would result in less than substantial harm; however, this should not be equated with a lesser planning objection and is still of considerable importance and weight.
17. Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 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.
18. The proposal would provide improved accommodation for the appellant, which is a private benefit. The replacement of some plastic rainwater goods, with traditional rainwater gutters, hoppers and downpipes would improve the appearance of the building. However, there is no compelling evidence before me, why such works cannot be carried out in the absence of the proposal and I give this benefit limited weight in favour of the proposal as a public benefit.
19. The appellant considers that the proposal would break up large areas of stucco. However, I find that the existing openings on the side elevation already break up this elevation and I find no public benefit in this regard. I do not find that painting the joinery of the conservatory and the orangery grey, in order to blend in with the slate roof to be a public benefit. This is because the existing white paintwork on the conservatory blends in with the colour of the side elevation of the building.

20. The proposal would result in investment into the property and also provide employment for local craftsmen or women, which would have a small economic benefit. This carries limited weight in favour of the proposal as a public benefit.
21. There is no evidence before me to suggest that the use of the building as a residential dwelling would cease in the absence of the proposed changes and I do not find the proposal necessary to secure the viability and long-term conservation of the building as a result.
22. Overall, I give the public benefits limited weight in my decision. Consequently, in attributing great weight to the harm that would be caused 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.
23. Given the above, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest and significance of the listed building. The proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the historic environment policies of the Framework. The proposal would conflict with Policies LP03, LP19 and LP24 of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan – Part 1, November 2023. These policies among other things require that proposals preserve, enhance or conserve designated heritage assets and are of a high standard of design which maintains or enhances the character and appearance of buildings.

Other Matters

24. There is discussion in the evidence regarding an alternative scheme, which would include replacing the existing conservatory with a single storey extension. However, there is limited information before me on an alternative scheme. Nevertheless, I am required to determine these appeals based on the plans considered by the Council. As a result, I give this argument very limited weight in my decision.
25. 'Maltings immediately north west of Malting Farmhouse (Ref: 1032373) lies adjacent to the appeal site and is a Grade II listed building, which is estimated to date back to at least the early/mid-19th century. The Council raises no objections to the proposal in respect to the setting of this listed building. I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of this listed building in the determination of these appeals and I am satisfied that there would be no harm to the special interest of this listed building through changes to its setting.
26. I note the Parish Council's support for the proposal. However, this does not alter my findings set out above.

Conclusion

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

A James

INSPECTOR

.