
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 5 March 2025

by **S M Holden BSc (Hons) MSc CEng MICE CTPP FCIHT MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 March 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/Y9507/W/24/3351141

Locksash Farm House, Locksash Lane, West Marden, West Sussex PO18 9DZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by The Watergate Estate against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/24/00155/HOUS.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side extension and internal alterations.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Y9507/Y/24/3351140

Locksash Farm House, Locksash Lane, West Marden, West Sussex PO18 9DZ

- 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 The Watergate Estate against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is SDNP/24/00156/LIS.
 - The works proposed are a two storey side extension and internal alterations.
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Decisions

1. Appeals A and B are dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council acknowledged that it omitted referring to revision D on plans 06 and 07 listed on the decision notices. I have determined the appeal on the basis of the correct plans which were not amended during the application process.
3. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the 2024 Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. I am satisfied that none of the changes was material to the assessment of the proposal and have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. The two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complimentary legislation. I have dealt with them together in my reasoning.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposed development and works would preserve Locksash Farm House, a Grade II listed building, or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, and whether the scheme would conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the South Downs National Park.

Reasons

Significance of Locksash Farm House

6. Locksash Farm House is thought to have its origins in the early 17th century, or even earlier. Parts of its original timber frame are exposed internally, and it seems likely that there was an external stack dating from this period on the northern elevation which probably served an original fireplace. In the mid-18th century, the house was improved through provision of an extension to the front of the house. This has a higher floor level than the original. The extension is an example of a lobby-entry floor plan with a centrally positioned front door that opens onto a small lobby with a room on either side of a centrally located chimney. On the first floor there were also two rooms, one on each side of the stack, thereby providing the ability to heat these upper rooms. This was an indication of the increased status of the house and its owner.
7. It is thought that in the latter part of the 18th century the house was extended again on its northern and southern elevations. It was encased in materials that were contemporaneous making it appear as a 'modern' building. The symmetry of the building appears to have been lost at this point. The northern extension had a gable end constructed of red brick. However, the additional windows on the front elevation are casements which do not match the original small sash windows on either side of the front entrance. By contrast the roof of the southern end of the house was hipped and the elevation was encased with mathematical tiles. Following these additions the full width of the front elevation was given a new unifying façade. This frontage is mostly comprised of red brickwork. However, knapped and squared flints have been used to add decoration to the ground floor of the elevation. The use of these materials added interest to the frontage and is a further indication of the high status of the building and its owner.
8. The northern extension was enlarged again in the 19th century and now includes two gable ends. The use of flints on its northern and eastern elevations distinguishes it from the use of red brick in the previous extension at this end of the house. This 19th century addition enclosed the original external chimney stack. Nevertheless, the probable location of the fireplace is apparent from the dining room, and the stack is an obvious feature within what is now the kitchen. Subsequent minor alterations to openings and brickwork on the northern part of the house occurred during the 19th century. Further internal alterations in the mid-20th century provided a modern kitchen and bathroom and sub-divided the remaining space. Consequently, other than the enclosed chimney stack there are no significant historic features in this part of the house. Most recently a 20th century single storey conservatory-style extension has been added to the eastern elevation in the 1990s. Its central feature is an enclosed deep well. Although the internal layout of the house has therefore changed significantly over time, much of the late 18th century floorplan is still evident.
9. The significance of Locksash Farm House therefore initially arises from its age and the materials used in its original construction as a timber-framed farmhouse. Its significance has been retained and enhanced through its modernisation and enlargement over several centuries to reflect the status of its owner and its importance supporting the agricultural activities on the surrounding land. In addition to historic fabric from the 17th century or earlier, the house includes features and materials from the 18th century which are also of architectural and

historic interest. These include the mathematical tiles on the southern elevation and the attractive flint and brick front façade. Alterations at the northern end of the house to meet the needs of the 19th century, although not unique, have not undermined the architectural significance of the house or its historic role as part of an agricultural enterprise. 20th century alterations, although primarily internal, have continued this process of evolution even though the activities associated with the running of the farm and estate have moved elsewhere. The cumulative effect of the extensions and alterations over time has resulted in a larger house which has retained a significant number of important features from earlier periods. All these contribute to the dwelling's special architectural and historic interest.

10. Locksash Farm House lies within a remote and unspoilt part of the South Downs National Park, a highly sensitive protected landscape. Although part of a wider estate, the house is in a particularly beautiful and tranquil area surrounded by the rolling open fields of the Downs. Its immediate setting comprises the generously proportioned rear garden which has extensive views overlooking the surrounding countryside to the east. The house and its 18th century front elevation are prominent features of interest when approached along Locksash Lane, the narrow rural lane which serves the estate.
11. The modest-sized front garden, enclosed by a low flint wall that wraps around the side of the house, is an important part of its setting. There is a notable gap between the house, its domestic garden, the remnants of its walled garden and the more utilitarian garage buildings to the north. This has retained a separation between the domestic activities associated with the house and those associated with the operation of the wider estate. At present the gap between the house and these outbuildings provides glimpses into the garden and towards the rolling landscape to the east. The house and its setting therefore make a positive contribution to the beauty of the National Park and the cultural history associated with farming activities on the South Downs.

Assessment of proposal

12. The proposal seeks to further enlarge the house with the construction of a two-storey extension on its northern elevation. This would provide a new open plan kitchen/dining room on the ground floor and an additional bedroom and two en-suite shower rooms on the first floor. The footprint of the extension would occupy the full depth of the house. However, the new northern elevation would be staggered with the dining room projecting further from the building than that of the replacement kitchen. The proposal would significantly elongate the width of the house. It is accepted that the previous additions have already increased its width considerably beyond that of the original two room wide dwelling. However, taken together with these previous extensions the proposal would result in the overall width of the house being approximately double that of the original. I consider this would amount to a disproportionate addition to the existing dwelling.
13. The building already has a lopsided appearance with the hipped roof on the southern elevation and the twin gables at its northern end. This would be accentuated by the proposal, made even more apparent by the introduction of the stagger in the northern elevation. The excessive length of the ridge line would be out of character with the size of the original farmhouse. By carrying forward existing features, rather than recessing the elevations and stepping down the ridge line, the proposal would appear to be overly large in width, height and depth.

14. The creation of a large open plan kitchen/dining room would shift some key domestic activities away from the smaller rooms which formed the core of the original house. The addition of extra rooms at both ground and first floor level would therefore further diminish the legibility of the floor plan of the enlarged farmhouse. The extension would therefore compete with the more modest proportions and plan form of the original building.
15. The proposal would only result in a modest loss of historic fabric. Nevertheless, two windows on the ground floor would be lost to create doors into the open plan area for the new kitchen/dining room. At first floor level the existing windows on the northern elevation would be lost; one would be enlarged to create access for the en-suite to bedroom 2. The existing bathroom window would be lost, and the bathroom made smaller to create a corridor to reach the new bedroom. This would increase the perceived length of the house on the first floor to the detriment of the original and enlarged floor plans. The existing flint and brick gable walls would be subsumed into the dwelling. The four-panel opening including French doors would introduce increased areas of glazing on the eastern elevation. This would be out of keeping with the dimensions of existing doors and windows.
16. The extension would retain the twin gable feature but the introduction of the stagger in the northern elevation would be out of character with the previous extension of this part of the house. The use of timber windows, brick and flint on the external elevations would ensure that the extension retained the appearance of the existing house. However, this would not diminish the harm caused by the excessive bulk of the proposal, the inclusion of the stagger in the elevation, the limited loss of historic fabric and the internalisation of the brick and flint northern elevation into the building.
17. Although it is proposed to open up and reveal the historic stack within the existing kitchen there was no substantive evidence before me of what might be found behind what is currently obscuring it. As it was originally an external stack it is unclear what would be uncovered in the kitchen other than historic brickwork. Any fireplace would almost certainly have faced towards what is now the dining room. This is currently a blank wall, so whether a fireplace still exists behind it is a matter of speculation and conjecture rather than certainty. No exploratory work appears to have been attempted to find out and the proposal does not include any explanation of the proposed works. It is therefore unclear how the proposal would be beneficial in further revealing features which contribute to the significance of the house and its evolution over time.
18. The proposal would significantly reduce the gap between the house and the low flint and brick wall which encloses the front garden and wraps around the northern side of the house. This would disrupt the sensitive relationship between the house and the flint walls which have historically enclosed it, and which positively contribute to its setting. Consequently, this part of the setting would appear more cramped. It would also reduce the gap between the house and the outbuildings partially obscuring views towards the garden and open countryside beyond.
19. For all the above reasons, the proposal would be harmful to the special historic interest and character of Locksash Farm House, a Grade II listed building. It would also fail to preserve the setting of the listed building and would appear intrusive within the sensitive landscape of the National Park.

Heritage balance

20. Taking all the above factors into consideration I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic and architectural interest of the Grade II listed building and its setting. This would be contrary to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, (the 1990 Act) which requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The proposal would also be contrary to paragraph 212 of the 2024 Framework which states that great weight should be given to conserving a designated heritage asset's significance.
21. Nevertheless, the harm I have identified may be quantified as less than substantial. It is therefore necessary for me to weigh this harm against the public benefits of the proposal as required by paragraph 215 of the 2024 Framework. Extending the house would reflect a desire to upgrade some of the existing facilities, particularly by enlarging the kitchen and providing additional en-suite shower rooms. However, as Locksash Farm House is a private dwelling the proposed alterations and extensions would be private benefits for the owners and occupants. They are not, therefore, ones which can be weighed against the identified harm to the Grade II listed building. There was no substantive information about the original fireplace and stack or what works could be undertaken to reveal it. Even if there were public benefits from doing so, they would not outweigh the harm which would be caused by the proposed two storey extension.
22. The adverse effects on the setting of the listed building arising from the proposed development and works also would be harmful to the character and appearance of the South Downs National Park. The proposal would therefore fail to further the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park, as required by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, (the 2023 Act). Neither would the scheme accord with the requirements of paragraph 189 of the 2024 Framework in relation to National Parks.
23. The proposal would conflict with Policies SD12, SD13 of the South Downs Local Plan 2019 (SDLP) which specifically requires development affecting heritage assets to preserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings. There would also be conflict with Policies SD1, SD4, SD5 and SD31 of the SDLP which requires proposals to incorporate highly sensitive design which respects established local character and complements the character of the landscape so as to conserve and enhance the beauty and cultural heritage of the National Park.
24. Whilst the proposal would result in a limited loss of visual integrity in the immediate vicinity of the site, no landmark views would be adversely affected, I therefore find no conflict with Policy SD6. The proposal would enlarge the house and could result in increased comings and goings and, if permitted, there would be short term loss of tranquillity during the construction period. However, I do not consider these matters would amount to conflict with Policy SD7 that would justify refusal of an otherwise acceptable scheme. No external lighting was included in the proposal and in any event, this could be controlled by imposition of an appropriate condition. Additional internal lighting would be limited so spillage would be minimal. I therefore find no conflict with Policy SD8.

Conclusion

25. Nevertheless, for the reasons set out above, the proposal would conflict with the 1990 Act, the 2023 Act, the provisions of the Framework and the development plan.
26. I therefore conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

S M Holden

INSPECTOR