



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 March 2025

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J0540/Y/24/3352020

Manor Farm, Russell Hill, Thornhaugh, Peterborough PE8 6HL

- 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 P Sharpley against the decision of Peterborough City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00669/LBC.
 - The works proposed are alterations to barn including formation of blockwork and proposed rendering of blockwork.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Some of the works have already taken place but other elements have not. Although the description of the works refers to them as “(part) retrospective”, this is not a phrase that should be used in formal descriptions. Thus, in the banner heading above, I have deleted this phrase and otherwise used the description of works contained in the decision notice and the appeal form, which more comprehensively describe the works than the application form.
3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024, but there were no material changes relevant to this appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the works on the significance and special interest of the listed building known as Manor House.

Reasons

5. Manor House is a Grade II listed building within the small village of Thornhaugh. This large two storey house dates from the 17th century with a 19th century wing to the rear. Externally, the house contains coursed limestone walls and a steeply pitched Collyweston stone roof, with casement windows set in stone mullions with cornices, and a moulded string course beneath the eaves. The house occupies a prominent location on Russell Hill next to a private road and public footpath. To the north and west of the house is a large working farmyard in the same ownership.
6. The special interest and significance of Manor House is informed by its architectural and historic qualities as a significant rural property but is also influenced by its setting. Most of the village is a conservation area, which incorporates Manor House and the part of the farmyard nearest to Russell Hill. There are several other historic and listed buildings nearby including a barn range a short distance to the north-west of Manor House. There are open fields to the

north-east. Thus, the rural and historic surroundings in which the listed building is situated make a positive contribution to its significance and special interest.

7. The barn range is a distinctive mid-19th century building built as part of the Duke of Bedford's agricultural estate at the time. It comprises one long east-west range with four perpendicular ranges facing Russell Hill. The southern and western elevations are visible from Russell Hill and the building has a whole can be appreciated from within the farmyard. The ranges are constructed from limestone similar to Manor House with small yards between each perpendicular range. The north-west side of the barn range abuts two larger 20th century portal frame barns clad with asbestos sheeting and roofs. The incongruous position and appearance of the modern barns, and several alterations such as later corrugated roofs, do not detract greatly from the architectural and historic interest of the barn range.
8. The barn range is not listed separately but is accepted by the parties to be listed for planning purposes by virtue of being within the curtilage of Manor House and forming part of the land since before 1 July 1948. While as a standalone building it has no more than medium significance, there are clear architectural similarities and historical associations with Manor House as part of the wider agricultural estate. Therefore, the barn range forms an important part of the special interest and significance of the listed building.
9. The appeal site comprises the western third of the east-west range and the immediately adjacent portal barn. The latter has little architectural or historic interest internally or externally. The former has historic roof timbers and plaster and brickwork internally. Its northern eaves have been truncated by the portal barn which overlaps the historic structure internally. However, there is a remnant of historic stone wall on the west elevation below where the eaves used to be.
10. The west elevation of the east-west range also has a metal roller shutter garage door, flanked by concrete blocks and topped by corrugated sheeting over the end gable. All these features are recent alterations and there is also a newer timber frame above the door internally. They appear to form part of the works that are the subject of this appeal. There was a stone wall where the concrete blocks now exist to link this part of the elevation to the remaining stone walls either side. There was apparently asbestos sheeting on this elevation and a previous garage door, but it is unclear quite what existed externally and internally before the recent alterations.
11. The replacement of the stone wall has caused a loss of historic fabric. The concrete blocks also jar with the historic character of the curtilage listed barn range due to their stark modern appearance. The works before this appeal propose to render the blocks in a cream/stone colour to reflect the stone walls either side. This would help to lessen the current adverse effect but is unlikely to replicate the texture and details of the stone wall. It would also result in the remnant stone wall below the former eaves being isolated from the rest of the historic building. The sheeting and garage door are also stark and industrial in appearance, although it is harder to know what they have replaced. While the farmyard is a utilitarian working space, this does not justify unsympathetic alterations to a historic building.
12. The public visibility of a listed building is not determinative. Nevertheless, the works are and would be visible from Russell Hill and from within the farmyard adjacent to Manor House. The works, both the recent alterations and the proposed rendering, would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the

listed building. This harm would be modest given the scale of the works compared to the listed building, but such harm still needs to be balanced against the public benefits of the scheme as required by NPPF paragraph 215.

13. It is understood that the stone wall was in a poor structural position following the construction of the portal barn and required steel supports and cladding. These supports failed more recently leading to the whole western elevation being at risk of collapse. This led to the removal of the stone wall and its current replacement. While there was a need for urgent intervention and seemingly insufficient time to secure listed building consent, it is unclear quite how quickly the situation needed to be addressed. Furthermore, it remains uncertain why concrete blocks were inserted instead of attempting to reinforce the existing stone wall again. Reference is made to this being unfeasible now due to the presence of the portal barn, but few details have been provided on this matter. Therefore, I give little weight to the urgent intervention in terms of this appeal.
14. The appellant intends to demolish the portal barn in the future when it requires rebuilding. Although this would represent a public benefit to the historic barn range, no timetable has been provided and there is no mechanism as part of this appeal to require such action to be undertaken. If this appeal was allowed, it would be on a permanent basis and so there would be little to compel the appellant or any future owner to demolish the portal barn. Thus, I give this matter little weight.
15. While the use of render over the concrete blocks would improve their appearance, the blocks themselves form part of the works before me rather than an existing incongruous feature. Therefore, the render would represent mitigation rather than a public benefit and so it carries very little weight in the balance.
16. There are insufficient public benefits to outweigh the harm to significance as outlined above. In conclusion, the works would not preserve the special interest or significance of the listed building. Therefore, they would not accord with Policy LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan 2019 which, amongst other things, seeks to conserve heritage assets and their settings.
17. The works would also not comply with NPPF paragraph 215, along with paragraphs 212 and 213 which give great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets and require clear and convincing justification for any harm to significance. Finally, the works would not accord with Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires decisions on listed building consent to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest¹.

Conclusion

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

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR

¹ The Council's decision notice refers to Section 66, but this relates to planning permission even though the duty is similar.