



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 3 April 2025

by **A Price BSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd April 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/C1570/W/24/3349874

Pledgdon Green Farm, Brick End Road, Henham, Essex CM22 6BN

- 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 Chloe Ralph-Smith of Ralph & Smith Ltd against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/24/0367/HHF.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'for the replacement of windows to the rear of the property and conversion of window to French doors to family room.'
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Appeal B Ref: APP/C1570/Y/24/3349872

Pledgdon Green Farm, Brick End Road, Henham, Essex CM22 6BN

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Chloe Ralph-Smith of Ralph & Smith Ltd against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/24/0368/LB.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'for the replacement of windows to the rear of the property and conversion of window to French doors to family room.'
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Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. The development and works relate to a listed building. Accordingly, I have had special regard to the requirements of section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
4. Both Appeals A and B concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation. To avoid duplication, I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning.
5. Notwithstanding the description of development set out above, which is taken from the application form, the proposed works are more concisely described as 'proposed replacement windows to rear and conversion of window to French doors'. The Council determined the case on this basis and so shall I.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:

- whether the proposed development and works would preserve the Grade II listed building, Pledgdon Green Farmhouse, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and
- the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the dwelling.

Reasons

Heritage - special interest and significance

7. Pledgdon Green Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building¹. It comprises a 16-17th century house of timber frame construction with a jettied upper storey to the north elevation. Later additions, some reasonably significant, have not unduly eroded the building's intrinsic heritage merit.
8. Based on the evidence before me, the listed building's special interest and significance is largely derived from its age and architectural style. Important contributors in these regards, which are pertinent to the appeals, are the use of traditional construction techniques and materials, surviving historic fabric, and the building's illustration as a vernacular farmhouse.

Heritage - appeal proposal and effects

9. The proposed works would involve the replacement of windows across the rear elevation. An enlarged opening would be created at ground floor level to enable the installation of a set of French doors in place of an existing window.
10. In respect of the replacement windows annotated as W2, W3, W4, W5, W6 and W7, these would replace what are understood to be non-original installations. The materials and detailed design are such that they would be acceptable, matching those elsewhere in the building. The Council does not object to this aspect of the works and, from the information before me and my site visit, I have no reason to disagree.
11. Turning to the removal of historic fabric, the window annotated as W1 would be removed. This is understood to be a relatively contemporary replacement. However, an area of historic masonry and timber would also be removed from below that window. Despite the relatively limited extent of interventions to that fabric, I have insufficient information before me to demonstrate its age, or to fully understand the effects/extent of any harm as a result of its removal. Without clarification, it is not possible to satisfactorily demonstrate that the proposed irreversible alteration here would preserve the special interest of the listed building and not cause harm to its significance.
12. I acknowledge that the proposed French doors have been designed with some sensitivity to prevailing styles and would be set to the rear of the building, with limited views from public vantage points. However, the building is listed for its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and the visibility of the proposed works is

¹ List Entry Number: 1231098

not a determining factor in considering whether they would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the building.

13. Overall, I conclude that the proposed development and works would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, contrary to the requirements of section 16(2) of the Act. Consequently, the proposal would harm the special interest and significance of this designated heritage asset.

Heritage - public benefits and balance

14. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework, December 2024) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting and that this should have clear and convincing justification.
15. With reference to paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent of the works relative to the listed building, I find the harm to be 'less than substantial' in this instance but, nevertheless, of considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, paragraph 215 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development, which includes securing the asset's optimum viable use.
16. Economic benefits would be brought about through the installation phase and the general investment into the property. However, the scale of those benefits is short-term and very limited by the extent and nature of the proposal. The primary outcomes of the proposed development and works, namely the provision of a new doorway to provide improved access and visibility, light, sound insulation and security, would be private benefits to the appellant that do not provide clear and convincing justification for allowing the appeal. Moreover, I have no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that those same benefits could not be achieved through other means.
17. I acknowledge that the building (and its context) has changed over time, including since listing, and that photographic evidence has been provided to show the position of a previous extension that no longer exists. However, the evidence does not demonstrate that an opening ever existed here. Moreover, I have very limited detail before me of the planning history and any planning balance made in respect of historic alterations at the property. In any case, that alterations have taken place at the property historically is not reason to allow any changes going forward, particularly where harm has been identified.
18. Conservation is an active process of managing change to heritage assets in ways that sustain, reveal or reinforce their heritage interests. I am not persuaded that the scheme before me is fundamentally necessary to secure the optimum viable use of the building, particularly as an existing doorway exists directly adjacent to the proposed French doors. Moreover, no substantive evidence has been put before me which verifies that the property would not be useable or viable as a dwelling now or in the future, or that its conservation as a designated heritage

asset would be at risk, if the appeals were to fail and the proposal, as submitted, was not implemented.

19. Overall, the weight that I ascribe to the public benefits that would accrue from the proposal, is not sufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and weight that I attach to the harm I have found. Accordingly, the proposed development and works would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building, Pledgdon Green Farmhouse, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to the requirements of section 16(2) of the Act. The proposal would also be contrary to the relevant provisions of Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005) which, in summary, seeks to protect listed buildings.

Character and appearance

20. Notwithstanding the harm that has been identified above in respect of the listed building, the position, nature and extent of the proposed French doors are such that they would be, broadly, out of sight from any public vantage point. Although atypical, positioned next to an existing historic entrance, they would appear as relatively modest and be of an appropriate design. Unlike listed buildings, the effect on character and appearance is, in part, dependent upon how a proposal is seen and experienced. For the reasons above, I consider that the proposals would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the dwelling.
21. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the dwelling, in accordance with the relevant provisions of policy GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005) which, in summary, seeks to ensure high quality design in development. The lack of harm in this respect does not outweigh or overcome the harm identified under the other main issue.

Other Matters

22. I note that a letter of support has been received. I also acknowledge that there would be no loss of privacy as a result of the proposals. However, these matters are neutral in my determination of the appeals.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons above and having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

A Price

INSPECTOR