



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2025

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/D/24/3352524

Stallance View, Rectory Lane, Sutton Valence, Kent ME17 3BT

- 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 Dan Price against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/501167/FULL.
 - The development proposed was described as 'retention of curtilage listed wall. Erection of extensions and alterations to dwelling with associated works'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal dwelling is referred to as both Stallance View and Stallance Views in the evidence before me. I have used Stallance View which is the name given on the signage attached to the dwelling itself.
3. The dwelling is part of a cluster of buildings which includes two Grade II listed buildings; 'Stallance' and Pancake Barn which is named on the list entry as 'Barn about 36 Metres East South East of Stallance'.
4. Section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) ('the Act') defines a listed building as, in summary, the building itself along with any object or structure fixed to the building or within its curtilage since before 1 July 1948. Within the evidence before me, the appellant has not disputed the Council's position that the north west corner wall of the appeal dwelling is curtilage listed in association with one or both of the nearby listed buildings. I have no firm reason to take a different view, and I have considered the appeal on that basis.
5. There is no application seeking listed building consent before me, but in determining the appeal, I have nevertheless had special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess in accordance with section 66(1) of the Act.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are (i) effect of the proposal on the significance of the Grade II listed buildings, Stallance and Pancake Barn; and (ii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Listed Buildings

7. The cluster of buildings which includes the appeal dwelling together with Stallance and Pancake Barn is set within surrounding orchards, fields and parcels of woodland. As noted in the appellant's evidence, the majority of the buildings are vernacular in style and of brick or weatherboard construction, typical of farm developments in the area.

Significance of Stallance

8. The list entry indicates that Stallance is a timber-framed farmhouse dating to the 17th century with the gable end of an earlier house. Alterations and extensions in each of the subsequent centuries have resulted in a somewhat complex plan form and roofscape, and fenestration and features vary to different parts of the building. Nevertheless, the use of traditional materials and architectural detailing in keeping with the local Kent rural vernacular means that the building retains much of its historic character, and its age, quality and historic function as a farmhouse remain generally apparent.
9. Stallance sits off to one side of a yard, around which are the appeal dwelling, Stallance Barn and a lower barn-style structure attached to a garage. Notwithstanding the sloping topography, and the presence of a driveway, parking and boundary treatments, the courtyard layout remains legible. Together with the surrounding open countryside, the arrangement informs appreciation and understanding of the historic role and function of the listed building as a farmhouse forming part of a working enterprise within the rural landscape.
10. The appellant indicates that the majority of Stallance View dates to the early 21st century. However, the north west corner incorporates the remnants of an older wall which may formerly have been part of the side and back wall of an open-fronted piggery and later a produce packing house. The appellant refers to reshaping and rebuilding of the wall and I agree that it has limited aesthetic value in itself. Nevertheless, it has historic and evidential value associated with the retained historic fabric and its position marking part of the historic arrangement of structures around Stallance.
11. As for the rest of the dwelling, it may be of modern construction, but the traditional materials, simple form and architecture and its very modest height and overall scale as it faces the courtyard provide for a generally functional ancillary appearance and give the impression of a former working building supporting the farm operation.
12. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, I consider Stallance to derive significance from the architectural, historic and evidential interest associated with its age and rural vernacular character which inform its legibility as a former farmhouse to a working farm complex. As part of this, Stallance View, including the historic section of wall to its north west corner, reflects part of the historic arrangement of ancillary structures around Stallance contributing to the understanding of both the morphology of the farmstead and how it has evolved over time. Its form and appearance further sit comfortably around the courtyard of former working buildings, reinforcing the historic role and function of the listed building. In these ways and together with the retained historic fabric, the appeal dwelling contributes to the significance of Stallance.

Significance of Pancake Barn

13. The appellant's Heritage Statement outlines that Pancake Barn was rebuilt following fire in 2019. The former building dated to the early to mid 17th Century and comprised a timber-frame barn on a stone plinth with weatherboarding and a 20th century plain tile roof. The fabric of the current structure may be modern, but the Heritage Statement indicates that it replicates the character and appearance of the barn and from my observations, its form and appearance are clearly read as a converted working agricultural building.
14. Despite the fire and rebuilding, Pancake Barn currently remains a listed building. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, I consider surviving significance to relate to its historic and evidential value in illustrating a former agricultural building within a working farm complex, aiding understanding of past activity at the site. Given my findings above that the appeal dwelling informs some understanding of the historic morphology of the farmstead and that it reinforces the vernacular agricultural appearance of the cluster, it contributes to the legibility of the listed building in its context and thus its significance.

Effect of the Proposal

15. The proposal would increase the height of the appeal dwelling at both eaves and ridge levels, including around a doubling of the height of the eaves which would sit some way higher than the existing ridge. Whether or not it has been reduced from an earlier scheme, I consider the increase in height relative to the existing dwelling would be significant. The additional height, together with the increased depth and infilling of the inset section to the rear of the main part of the dwelling would result in a marked increase in the bulk, mass and overall scale of the dwelling.
16. It would remain set down and of appreciably smaller overall scale than Stallance and Pancake Barn. However, the dominance of the dwelling within the cluster would consequently be increased and there would be some erosion of the clearly ancillary quality of the existing building, albeit that I accept the general hierarchy of structures would not be undermined.
17. Moreover, the materiality of the proposed standing seam roof may be similar to the corrugated metal roof of Old Apple Barn to the north east, but it would contrast with the traditional roof materials to the listed and other buildings in the cluster which are of softer appearance. The lack of eaves overhang would also be atypical. In addition, the pitch of the roof would be comparable to the existing rear roof slope, but much lower than the front slope. It would be unusually shallow for a traditional building in the local area and would stand out against the steeper forms of other roofs that I observed in the cluster, including that to Old Apple Barn. Overall, the design and the form and height of the roof relative to the tall eaves and structure below would result in an awkwardly proportioned and conspicuous building.
18. Furthermore, varied fenestration is shown to different parts of the dwelling. This includes windows of an inconsistent mix of sizes and shapes to the front elevation, most of which would have relatively large expanses of glazing and which would in my view have unusually squat proportions relative to those that I observed were typical to converted agricultural buildings in the cluster.
19. The elevations of the dwelling would comprise red brick and horizontal cladding which would be generally sympathetic to the context. However, the above factors in

combination would give the development an unattractive and unduly modern industrialised character which would be urbanising. Its unsympathetic appearance as it would face the courtyard would be particularly apparent in conjunction with Stallance. The resulting juxtaposition would be discordant, and I find that the proposal would be harmfully at odds with the vernacular agricultural character and appearance of traditional buildings within the cluster and it would erode the rural quality of the area which contributes to the significance of the nearby listed buildings.

20. Notwithstanding the appellant's assertion that the curtilage listed wall at the north west corner would be retained and incorporated into the form of the proposed extensions, I also have no firm information demonstrating how this would be achieved in practical terms to ensure its integrity during works. I cannot therefore be sure that there would not be loss or displacement of historic fabric.
21. Even if I were satisfied that the wall could be appropriately safeguarded, the additional height and scale of the dwelling rising up behind the wall would compete and draw attention from it. I consider that this would offset the potential for greater distinction of the wall through being set forward of the adjacent front elevation such that there would not be benefit to the appreciation of this feature overall.
22. Opportunities for public views of the development would be limited and in most cases at some distance. Nevertheless, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest which is not dependent upon the availability of public views. For the cumulative reasons above, I find that the proposal would diminish the legibility and vernacular agricultural character of the historic farmstead including Stallance and Pancake Barn and it would detract from the experience and understanding of these buildings within their rural setting. As a consequence, there would be harm to the significance of both listed buildings.
23. The National Planning Policy Framework ('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. It 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 any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification.
24. The proposal would not affect the fabric of the principal listed buildings of Stallance or Pancake Barn, and relates to only a limited section of curtilage listed wall and a small part of their wider setting. Having regard to the scale of the proposal and its effects, I find that harm to the significance of Stallance would be modest. Given the relationship with Pancake Barn including the greater separation and intervening development, I consider that harm to the significance of this listed building would be negligible, but there would nevertheless be some harm. In both cases, the harm would be less than substantial in the terms of the Framework.
25. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
26. I have found above that the proposal would not benefit appreciation of the wall at the north west of the dwelling. The appellant has further referred to opportunities to repair the wall and address past alterations. However, details have not been provided and it seems to me that any enhancement would be modest in extent.

Furthermore, I have no firm information to indicate that the wall is currently unstable or that there is any other threat to its continued presence. In this context, I find that the extent of any heritage benefit would be far outweighed by the cumulative adverse effects that I have identified.

27. The proposal would offer additional living accommodation for the appellant's family, but there is no firm evidence to demonstrate that the continued viable use of the appeal property as a dwelling is dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence. Accordingly, the provision of additional and improved living accommodation for occupiers of the dwelling would essentially be a private rather than a public benefit.
28. In my assessment, public benefits of the proposal would be insufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified would be caused to listed buildings and the information before me does not therefore provide clear and convincing justification for the proposal.
29. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would harm the significance of Stallance and Pancake Barn as Grade II listed buildings, thus failing to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework. There would also be conflict with Policies LPRSP14(B) and LPRENV1 of the Local Plan Review 2024 ('the LPR') insofar as they include requirements broadly seeking sympathetic proposals that would conserve or enhance the setting and significance of heritage assets.

Character and Appearance

30. The appellant highlights that the appeal site is part of the Low Weald National Character Area, as well as the Sutton Valence to Pluckley Mixed Farmlands Landscape Character Area ('LCA') which the Landscape Assessment of Kent 2004 notes as a tranquil, rural landscape with spectacular rural views over the flatter areas of the Low Weald. Farmlands are mainly improved pasture, but orchards are locally important and built development has a positive impact.
31. At the more local level, the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012, amended 2013 ('the MLCA') identifies that the appeal site is part of the Sutton Valence Greensand Ridge LCA which relates to part of the sloping scarp face of the Ridge. Characteristics noted in the MLCA include a reasonable amount of tree cover, sparsely scattered farmsteads and small hamlets and extensive rural views across the Low Weald to the south. The MLCA references numerous traditional and unique buildings through the area and comments that built development has a positive impact on the landscape because it generally respects local vernacular and contributes much to the overall sense of place. Guidelines for the LCA include conserving the scattered pattern of development, the rural character of the landscape, and the rural setting of traditional buildings and settlements.
32. The appeal dwelling sits at the south of a farmstead cluster within surrounding open countryside which is part of the Greensand Ridge designated Landscape of Local Value ('LLV'). Buildings in the cluster have been converted to residential use and there are associated areas of parking and gardens, but the dwellings retain the form and general appearance of vernacular agricultural buildings and the courtyard layout is legible. As a result, the impression remains of a traditional farm complex. As part of this, the appeal dwelling may be an existing feature in the landscape but its very modest height and form and its ancillary character mean that it is a relatively discreet feature on the edge of the cluster, including in views from nearby

rights of way. Despite the residential nature of the cluster, I find for these reasons that there is a strong rural character to the area around the site overall. It reflects many of the characteristics of the LCAs and contributes positively to the LLV.

33. I have already noted in relation to the first main issue that the proposal would result in a significant increase in the height of the appeal dwelling and a marked increase in its bulk, mass and overall scale. Furthermore, I acknowledge that the angle of the proposed roof would be similar to the existing rear roofslope, but the standing seam metal finish would be more conspicuous in the landscape relative to the existing plain tiles which have a muted appearance. Given also its greater height, the roof would be a markedly more prominent feature on the site.
34. I appreciate that hit and miss cladding would reduce the visual impact of first floor windows to the rear of the dwelling and that the extensive glazing to the ground floor would be similar to the existing building. Nevertheless, the awkward proportions and unattractive and unduly modern industrialised character of the development would be jarring against the traditional agricultural vernacular of the cluster and wider landscape.
35. I cannot therefore agree with the appellant that the existing residential character would remain unchanged, nor that the development would reflect its historic farmstead origins.
36. In terms of visual impacts, the appellant's evidence identifies that opportunities for public views would be constrained by vegetation and in many cases would be at some distance. However, there would be some opportunity to appreciate the development including from viewpoints on rights of way to the south.
37. In these views, the proposal would be seen in the context of the existing cluster of development and I acknowledge that it would remain set down relative to Stallance, Stallance Barn and Pancake Barn. Even so, the greater height and scale of the building together with its contrasting roof material and incongruous overall design would result in a more visually obtrusive feature on the edge of the cluster which would not sit well against the existing character of development. I find as a result that it would stand out in views and would diminish the distinctive rural quality of its surroundings. It would further fail to conserve the rural setting of nearby traditional buildings contrary to guidelines in the MLCA.
38. Having regard to the small scale of the site and of the development which would be a very minor component within the wider landscape, effects would be localised and of low magnitude. Be that as it may, the proposal would detract from the distinctive local sense of place and I find that there would be harm to the rural character and appearance of the landscape with detriment to the qualities of the Greensand Ridge LLV. It would also detract from the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
39. I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause harm, albeit limited, to the character and appearance of the area resulting in conflict with Policies LPRSP9, LPRSP15, LPRQD4 and LPRHOU11 of the LPR which include requirements broadly seeking high quality design that responds positively to local character, development that is visually acceptable and that avoids harm to the rural character and appearance of the countryside and the conservation and enhancement of the distinctive landscape character of the Greensand Ridge. It would also be contrary to guidance in the Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2009 seeking to avoid adverse impact on the character and openness of the countryside

and good design including in respect of the roof shape and proportions of buildings and the design and arrangement of windows.

Other Matters

40. The Council states that the red line defining the application site includes a large area of land that is not lawfully part of the residential curtilage. However this does not alter my assessment of the main issues and given that I am dismissing the appeal in any case, I have not found it necessary to consider this matter further in my decision.
41. The appellant has drawn my attention to planning permission for a replacement dwelling at Tumblers Platt. However, while that development may be within the LLV, the details provided do not indicate that it is part of a scattered farmstead which are a characteristic element of the landscape. Nor that there is a similarly close relationship to listed buildings as here. In addition, the appellant refers to approval for the Old Apple Store as a conversion of a former agricultural building. I do not have full details of the considerations relevant to that proposal or to the agricultural building being established. It is therefore unclear that the circumstances of these examples are directly comparable to the current appeal and they do not alter my assessment of the proposal which I have considered according to its particular merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

42. The proposal would cause harm to the significance of two listed buildings which would not be outweighed by public benefits. There would also be harm, albeit limited, to the character and appearance of the local area and LLV and I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole.
43. In my assessment, the limited benefits of the proposal would be insufficient to outweigh the cumulative harm that I have identified and material considerations do not indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
44. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR