



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 July 2025

by K Stephens BSc (Hons) MTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3425/Y/24/3355628

The Granary, Weston Hall, Weston Lane, Bowers, Staffordshire ST21 6RF

- 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 and Mrs Finn against the decision of Stafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/39159/LBC.
 - The works proposed were originally described as “Proposed single storey extension and 1.2m post and rail fence to front.”
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I see from the submitted evidence that a planning application was also determined by the Council, but an appeal to this was lodged out of time. For the avoidance of doubt, my considerations and conclusions relate solely to the application for listed building consent.
3. The Council considers The Granary is curtilage listed to Weston Hall, a Grade II listed building. The appellant expresses some doubt as to whether this is the case. However, limited evidence has been provided in this regard. Moreover, the appellant’s Heritage Statement has been submitted and proceeds on the basis that The Granary is curtilage listed. Furthermore, a listed building consent application was submitted to the Council and is the subject of this appeal. Consequently, I have determined the appeal on the basis that The Granary is curtilage listed. Hence by virtue of section 1(5)(b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), The Granary shall be “treated as part of the listed building” of Weston Hall. Hence, having regard to the statutory duty set out in section 16(2) of the Act I shall 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.
4. A combined planning and listed building consent application form was submitted with a description that includes the erection of a 1.2 metre high post and rail fence. However, the fence does not fall within the scope of works under section 7(1) of the Act and hence does not require listed building consent. For the avoidance of doubt I have confined my assessment in this appeal to the proposed single storey extension and associated works to facilitate that.
5. During the course of the appeal a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in December 2024. However, as any policies in the Framework that are material to this decision have not fundamentally changed, I am

satisfied that neither party would be prejudiced by my consideration of the revised Framework in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

6. The main issue in this appeal is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building, Weston Hall, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

Special interest and significance of the heritage asset

7. Weston Hall is a Grade II listed building¹. According to the listing description and submitted evidence, the dwelling dates from about the 18th century, is 3 storeys and of red brick, with tiles and toothed eaves. It has some detailing to the windows and doors and inside it has massive, moulded stop-chamfered ceiling beams in the kitchen. The appellant's Heritage Statement suggests that the Hall was never really a 'Hall' in the true sense, but more an 18th century farmhouse renamed to gentrify it.
8. The Granary forms part of a larger brick and tile building and one of a number of former outbuildings to the rear of Weston Hall. The evidence suggests that the main part of the uninterrupted roof of the building is pre-1840. A long swept roof to the 'front' north-west elevation was added later, probably between 1840-1900. Nonetheless, the overall roofscape with the adjacent roof of Ewe Barn presents a striking and dominant feature of the property. The linear building has been converted into two dwellings (the appeal property and Ewe Barn), with limited external alterations and generally small window openings. The evidence suggests that the existing arched full height openings, now timber doors/windows, were probably added after 1840. Overall, the building's former agricultural use is still largely legible despite changes to the historical relationship with Weston Hall and subsequent residential conversion and creation of gardens and the presence of domestic paraphernalia.
9. From the evidence before me, I find the special interest and significance of Weston Hall, insofar as it relates to this appeal, is largely derived from a combination of its historic and architectural interest illustrating a rural vernacular dwelling with associated agricultural outbuildings in rural Staffordshire. The building's age, its vernacular design, use of traditional materials and construction and surviving historic fabric and features make important contributions in these regards. It also has group value with the other outbuildings, including The Granary, as an example of a rural farmstead with an associated range of former brick farm buildings. The Granary therefore contributes to the overall historic interest and significance of Weston Hall.

Appeal proposal and effects

10. The proposed works would involve the erection of a single storey flat roof extension to the 'front' of the building on the north-west elevation over what is currently an outside patio where there is a break in the swept roof slope. It would effectively 'infill' the gap and 'square' off the plan form of the building and would not project

¹ National Heritage List for England: list entry number 1189872

beyond the end of the building or beyond the existing front building line. The roof slope is already indented at this location and so the proposal would not interfere with this in the main.

11. The extension would have a flat roof with a projecting roof lantern, so as not to interfere with the existing first floor bedroom window above. However, the roof lantern introduces an unduly domestic addition to the relatively simple low-key range of former agricultural buildings that still retain an agrarian character. The extension would be faced in black stained hit-and-miss vertical timber cladding, intended as a deliberate contrast to the adjacent brick of the building. Whilst timber cladding is not necessarily out of place in agricultural settings, the contrast in materials, texture and colour in this instance would appear as an incongruous addition to this simple range of brick and tile buildings.
12. The side of the extension would be joined to the side of the main building by a small brick linked recess. Techniques such as this can be used to clearly indicate junctions between older and new building fabric, as indeed can the use of different materials. The contemporary design used in this proposal is relatively simple in its form and detailing and would be legible as a modern phase of intervention. However, the height of the front elevation of the extension and its flat roof would sit higher than the eaves of the swept roof. This would create an awkward junction, despite a nominal set back of the linking part.
13. The proposed extension would also introduce a large expanse of full-height glazing in the form of bi-fold doors across much of the elevation of the extension. The expanse and horizontal alignment of glazing would be at odds with the limited number of small door and window openings and would disrupt the solid-to-void ratio of the building. The existing building does have some full height timber doors/windows on the western 'front' elevation, but these occupy what appear to be historic openings with curved headers (even if they were added after the main building was built) and are set back from the main western elevation at the back of the patio area. The wide window in the side of the extension would also be out of proportion with the prevailing small-scale fenestration on the building.
14. As part of the proposed works, the existing full height doors/windows on the north-west elevation would be removed to create a more open-plan internal layout. A central pillar would remain as would some nibs at either end of the wall. However, I do not have plans showing how much of this wall would be removed, so it is not clear if the arched window heads would be retained for example. This could involve the irreversible removal of historic fabric from the older part of the building, albeit limited as most of the wall is timber glazed doors.
15. Drawing all the points together, whilst the floor area of the extension would be relatively modest and I have no reason to doubt the extension would be built to a high quality, it would be a visually uncomfortable and incongruous addition to the building. It would also create a more domestic appearance to the building, which would erode and undermine its agrarian past and use and its historic relationship with Weston Hall. This would in turn have a residual effect on Weston Hall and harm its special interest and significance.

Public benefits and heritage balance

16. The Framework identifies at paragraph 213 that any harm to, or loss of, significance of a designed heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. In finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, Framework paragraphs 214 and 215 require the magnitude of that harm to be assessed. Given the nature and extent of the proposed development and against the advice in the Framework and national Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) I find the harm to the significance of the listed building would be 'less than substantial' and somewhere in the middle of that category. Nonetheless, a finding of less than substantial harm still carries considerable importance and weight.
17. In line with paragraph 215 of the Framework, less than substantial harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the works. Public benefits, as described in the PPG, can be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives and do not have to be visible or publicly accessible. They can also include works to a listed private dwelling, for example, which secure its future as a designated heritage asset.
18. There would be some public benefits in the form of short-term economic benefits to the wider local economy from jobs and the supply chain during the construction phase of the extension. There would be some improvement to the energy and thermal efficiency of the building which would help reduce carbon emissions and climate change, which is supported by the Framework.
19. There would be some improvements to the standard and layout of living accommodation for the benefit of the appellants and their family, but this would be a largely private, not public, benefit. There is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that the proposed extension is necessary to secure the continued use of The Granary and that its use would cease if the appeal was dismissed. Clear and convincing justification for the harm to the asset's significance has not been provided.
20. Overall, the weight I ascribe to the limited public benefits is not sufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and weight I attach to the harm that would be caused to the significance of the listed building and the presumption in favour of preservation. Accordingly the proposal would fail to preserve a grade II listed building and would thus fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the provisions of the Framework
21. Listed building appeals are not subject to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and therefore development plan policies do not carry the same weight as when considering planning applications. Nevertheless, the Council refers to them and so the proposal would also conflict with Policy N9 of The Plan for Stafford Borough (2011-2031), which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that proposals conserve and protect the significance of a heritage asset by avoiding the unnecessary loss of historic fabric and details of significance.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

K. Stephens
INSPECTOR