



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 August 2025

by Mr C J Tivey BSc (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/25/3368403

Duck Barn, The Street, Furneux, Pelham SG9 0LA

- 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 & Mrs Sheffield against the decision of East Herts Council.
 - The application Ref is 3/25/0313/HH.
 - The development proposed is for the demolition of ground floor linking passage. Construction of two storey and part single storey corner extension linking two main buildings with first floor inset balcony. Replacing thatched roof with tiled roof incorporating roof lights. Alteration to existing dormer and addition of new dormer window. Alterations to ground floor fenestration.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of proposed works as set out within the planning application form simply stated "Removal of thatch to non-listed property, replace with a tiled roof, and infill extension", however the extent of works goes significantly beyond that description and therefore the Council's Planning Officer sought and received agreement from the appellants to change it to that as set out within the banner heading above. I consider this to be a more accurate description of the proposal and have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the appeal proposal upon the character and appearance of the area, having special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed Duck Street Cottages.

Reasons

4. Duck Barn comprises 2no barns located almost at right angles to each other and connected by a small flat roof single storey link. I understand that the present buildings replaced former fire damaged agricultural buildings, but nonetheless they are of an agrarian appearance with weather boarded elevations and thatched roofs befitting of their historic location adjacent to 1 and 2 Duck Street Cottages.
5. The official list entry to Duck Street Cottages highlights that these are probably 16th Century timber framed and plastered with thatched hipped roof with one storey and attics, the listing also acknowledges a modern extension at the rear of 'The Thatched Cottage'.

6. From the front elevation (and clearly visible from the road) these cottages are modest in their appearance and whilst the extensions comprise modern flat roof and dummy pitched elements to the side/rear, it is not for me to comment on the appropriateness of these or otherwise, and ultimately each case must be assessed on its own merits.
7. Each barn element of the appeal dwelling has a degree of galleried accommodation within the roof void, with a modest dormer provided to each. The proposal would see the removal of the thatch and replacement with tiles along with alterations to the roof structure itself; and the addition of new fenestration and the infilling of the current gap where the aforementioned link is located, amongst other things. The two distinct building forms would become amalgamated by the proposal and would dilute the vernacular architecture of Duck Barn in a number of ways which I consider would be detrimental to the overall contribution it makes to the rural scene. The essence of the 2no linked barns would be lost and the detailing would be far more suburban in appearance. Further, the overall scale and massing would be significantly greater than the existing situation and I consider that the scheme would give rise to harm to the setting of the Listed Buildings.
8. I accept that the existing thatch is in poor condition, however I have been provided with no evidence to suggest that it could not be repaired or replaced, notwithstanding the fact that it relates to modern replacement buildings, nonetheless the barns add value to the character of The Street. I note that the principle of extending the dwelling was approved quite recently, however I consider that the appeal scheme would be a retrograde step and pays little regard to the original design concept that enabled their construction.
9. I acknowledge that the barns themselves are not listed, and their fabric has limited heritage value in itself, but nonetheless, for the reasons I have given above, the changes that are proposed would erode the setting of the designated heritage assets giving rise to less than substantial harm, with no public benefits advanced to outweigh this harm. I note the appellants' concern about reducing fire risk; however, thatch is commonly used throughout the area within which the host dwelling finds itself located and, bearing in mind that it is a historic building material, in the grand scheme of things, I consider that it is not inherently dangerous to retain it as such. Further, the claim that replacing the thatch with tiles would improve the functionality and energy performance of the building has not been substantiated.
10. Consequently, I consider that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area as well as the setting of the listed buildings and it conflicts with Policies GBR2, DES4, HA1 and HA7 of the East Herts District Plan (2018), which stipulate that the rural area beyond the Green Belt is a valued countryside resource and the extension or alteration of a building will be permitted provided the size, scale, mass, form, siting, design and materials of construction are appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the site and / or surrounding areas, whilst requiring that all development proposals including extensions to existing buildings be of a high standard of design allowed to reflect and promote local distinctiveness and requiring proposals to preserve, and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment of East Herts and only allow proposals that affect the setting of a Listed Building where that setting is preserved.

Conclusion

11. Having regard to the above and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

C J Tivey

INSPECTOR