



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 21 October 2025

by **K Stephens BSc (Hons) MTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 December 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/K3415/W/25/3364824

Stables Barn, Hay Lane, Longdon Green, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 4QQ

- 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 A Barnes against the decision of Lichfield District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01406/FUH.
 - The development proposed is Installation of a solar photovoltaic cell array on outbuilding roof, erect a lean-to battery store, install new 3 x windows and 4 x skylights.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/K3415/Y/25/3364828

Stables Barn, Hay Lane, Longdon Green, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 4QQ

- 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 A Barnes against the decision of Lichfield District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01405/LBC.
 - The works proposed are the installation of a solar photovoltaic cell array on outbuilding roof, erect a lean-to battery store, install new 3 x windows and 4 x skylights.
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Decision

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

Preliminary Matters

3. Stables Barn is part of a traditional barn complex and farmstead of the Grade II listed farmhouse, known as Broomy Fields¹. The Council regards Stables Barn as being curtilage listed. The appellant also describes the building as being curtilage listed, the submitted Heritage Statement proceeds on that basis and the appellant submitted a listed building consent application. Consequently, I have determined the appeal on the basis that Stables Barn is curtilage listed.
4. By virtue of section 1(5)(b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), Stables Barn shall be “treated as part of the listed building” of Broomy Fields. Hence, having regard to the statutory duties set out in section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act, I shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
5. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. There is no dispute between the parties that the proposed small brick and tile lean-to extension to the existing garage/home office outbuilding (the outbuilding) for a battery store would not amount to a disproportionate addition to the original building and hence would not

¹ National Heritage List for England: list entry number 1248891

be inappropriate development in the Green Belt when assessed against exemption paragraph 154c)² of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). From the information before me and my own observations during my site visit, I have no reason to take a different view.

6. The Council is clear that it does not maintain objections to the proposed lean-to extension to the outbuilding, but that its concerns focus on the effects of the proposed rooflights, windows and photovoltaic panels (the PV panels). From the parties' evidence presented to me and my observations on site I have no reason to disagree and concur with the findings that the lean-to extension would preserve the special interest and significance of the listed building. In these regards the lean-to extension would comply with the relevant statutory presumptions of the Act, the Framework and Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP14, SC2 and BE1 of the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029 (the Local Plan) and Policy BE2 of the Lichfield District Local Plan Allocations Documents (the Allocations Plan) set out below. Therefore given the above and for the avoidance of doubt, I have focused my considerations on the proposed rooflights, windows and PV panels in determining the appeals.
7. As the two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation, I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Main Issues

8. The main issues are:-
 - Whether the proposals would preserve the Grade II listed building known as Broomy Fields or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses,
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and
 - Whether sufficient information has been provided regarding the effect of the proposed development on protected species.

Heritage

Special interest and significance

9. According to the official listing Broomy Fields is a Grade II listed farmhouse dating from the late-17th century with late-18th century extension and minor alterations circa 1900. It is a two storey dwelling with gable lit attic, built of red and brown brick of Flemish bond on a sandstone plinth with a plain tile roof with raised verges. The Farmhouse has since been subject to a number of more modern alterations.
10. Stables Barn is a linear two-storey brick barn with clay tiled roof. It is of traditional construction and materials and forms part of a traditional rectangular courtyard barn complex located close to the farmhouse, Broomy Fields. Whilst Stables Barn and the other units have been converted into residential use, the simple lines and strong form of the buildings, use of simple wooden door and windows, a relatively high solid to void ratio, and retention of historic features and fabric ensure that its

² 154c) "the extension or alteration of a building [is not inappropriate development] provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building".

former agricultural use is still largely legible, despite the creation of garden areas and the presence of domestic paraphernalia.

11. From the evidence and my own observations I find the special interest and significance of Broomy Fields is largely derived from a combination of its historic and architectural interests as an example of a rural vernacular farmhouse, with the building's age, surviving historic fabric, use of traditional construction and materials being important contributors to its significance. It also has group value with the nearby complex of former agricultural barns, including Stables Barn, as an example of a rural farmstead. Stables Barn, which is closest to the farmhouse, therefore contributes to the overall historic significance of Broomy Fields.
12. Pertinent to the appeals, special interest and significance also stem, in part, from the immediate and wider surroundings in which the listed building is experienced. Broomy Fields and the adjacent barns now have their own domestic garden areas and the central courtyard from which the converted barns can be seen and appreciated. Additionally the rural setting and surrounding countryside provide a wider setting in which to appreciate and better understand the listed farmhouse and its former barn complex in its rural agrarian context. Particularly on approach, the extensive traditional roofscape of the barn complex and the farmhouse are visible. Despite some rooflights that have been added as part of the various residential conversions, the roofscape is striking for being expansive and relatively uninterrupted. The buildings make an attractive group. Thus the buildings' immediate and wider settings contribute in a tangible and positive way to its heritage merit.

Appeal proposal and effects

13. The proposed 16no. PV panels would be installed on the blank pitched roof slopes of the detached outbuilding. The roof slopes above the home office part of the outbuilding will each have 6 panels, arranged in a block of 3 x 2 panels. On the garage roof, each roof slope will have 2 panels in a horizontal row. All blocks of PV panels would be symmetrically placed within each roof slope.
14. The submitted specification states that the PV panels would be an "all-black module" and have an anti-reflective coating. However, the black colouring of the PV panels would starkly contrast with the red/brown colour of the roof tiles. Furthermore, the texture and finish of the modern engineered black panels would differ from the natural material of the clay roof tiles. Hence the PV panels would be a visually incongruous addition to the roofscape of the outbuilding, and to the largely unaltered roofscape of the barn complex as a whole, and when viewed with Broomy Fields.
15. The specification details give measurements. However, there is no substantive information to explain how the PV panels would be fixed to the roof slopes, such as on fixing rails, and what historic fabric would be affected. The PV panels would be 30mm thick, but there are no sections to show how far above the surface of the roof slope the panels would protrude in combination with any fixing rails for example, as any upstand would likely further exacerbate the break in the surface of the roof slopes, causing further visual intrusion. Without such information I am not able to assess the full impact of the PV panels.

16. English Heritage offers advice on the installation of PV panels in its Advice Note 18³. It states that the installation of such panels will generally not be acceptable on principal roof slopes if they would be visible and would detract from the building's special interest. The advice goes on to suggest locations that would have minimal or no impact, such as valley roofs and behind parapets on flat or low pitched roofs.
17. The PV panels would not be in these advised locations, but on pitched roofs that are fully visible to residents within the complex, from the farmhouse and on approach to the farm complex. The PV panels would be visually incongruous on the roof slopes themselves of the outbuilding and to the wider roofscape of the barn complex. The PV panels would thus lessen the positive contribution that Stables Barn and their setting make to the special interest and significance of the listed building.
18. The installation of the PV panels is theoretically a reversible process, as the PV panels could be removed at a later date. However, with the life expectancy and guarantees for the PV panels being some 25 years and the appellant's financial commitment and time lapse to see financial returns, this is a significant period of time over which the harm to the integrity of the designated heritage asset would occur.
19. The appellant has suggested that the scheme could be amended to reduce the number of PV panels or not install them on the roof slope facing Broomy Fields. No such alternative scheme is formally before me for consideration and a revised scheme has not been consulted on. Furthermore, without plans I do not know what reduced array and configuration of PV panels a revised scheme would take.
20. The proposal also involves the installation of 4 new rooflights – three on the west roof slope facing towards Broomy Fields, and one on the rear facing onto the courtyard – and some new wall windows. Together these would improve the quality of daylight to a number of rooms to avoid the need for artificial light.
21. Three of the rooflights would be inserted into the roof slopes of the full-height, pitched-roof of the kitchen. These roof slopes are currently blank with no other interventions. The kitchen roof is also lower than the main building and therefore has a more ancillary association about it. Installing the rooflights, and especially two side by side on the west elevation, would unduly domesticate the building and break up the uninterrupted roof space. I saw during my visit on a cloudy day that the kitchen is already lit by a wide window in the end (south) elevation of the room and by a wide three-light full-height glazed door/window with minimal framing. There was no artificial light on and the room appeared to be adequately lit and open.
22. The fourth rooflight would be inserted to serve an existing first floor windowless ensuite shower to the master bedroom. It is a small shower room with a full height sloping ceiling. The room has mechanical ventilation and all light is artificial, which is not uncommon for some small bathrooms/shower rooms. Externally, the roof light would be located in a row of 4 other existing rooflights. This roof slope has therefore already been compromised with the insertion of the existing rooflights as part of its initial conversion. The extra rooflight would align with the rooflights either

³ Historic England Advice Note 18 (HEAN 18): Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency

side and therefore visually would not significantly detract from the overall roofscape on this particular roof slope.

23. The proposal also includes the insertion of three new wall windows. A new window would be created in the dining room that would look out onto the rear shared courtyard. Two small existing odd-shaped windows in the lounge, in the same courtyard elevation, would be replaced by a larger single window with associated making-good. This would remove historic fabric and insert bigger and new windows into a relatively blank and intact east elevation wall facing into the courtyard, and would disrupt the significant solid to void ratio on this particular elevation.
24. These rooms are already lit by large French door openings on the west elevation of the property, with other secondary windows. I visited on a dull day but found the rooms room to be adequately lit by natural light. There is no substantive evidence or technical guidance submitted to demonstrate that daylight levels to these rooms are inadequate or fall below accepted levels. The fenestration configuration, that would have been dictated to some extent by existing openings in the barns, which was not originally designed as a dwelling or for modern ways of life. This is part of the quirks and attraction of living in a former agricultural barn.
25. A new window is also proposed for the north end elevation of the home office outbuilding, beside the wooden entrance door. The building reads as a diminutive and simple outbuilding, especially when viewed from the garden. To insert a window in its north blank elevation would increase its domesticity and reduce the ancillary function and authenticity of the building. According to the plans there are no internal alterations proposed. However, I saw that the room partitions shown on the plans were not in place, such that the ground floor was a single open space, with a spiral staircase leading to a mezzanine floor. The whole space was well lit by two sets of double French doors across the whole of the outbuilding's east elevation. There is no substantive evidence before me to justify the insertion of a large window in a blank elevation.
26. Drawing the above points together, I find the proposed PV panels, roof lights and windows would separately and collectively create a more domestic appearance to Stables Barn, which would erode and undermine its agrarian past and use and its historic relationship with Broomy Fields. This would in turn have a residual effect on Broomy Fields and harm its special interest and significance.
27. There may well be more windows serving the other converted barn units, but that does not justify the insertion of new windows or rooflights into the appeal property. The appellant has also drawn my attention to a number of decisions granted for other residential barn conversions⁴, including some historic buildings, to show that the Council has permitted rooflights and windows under the same Local Plan policies.
28. The examples include initial alterations to Stables Barn itself as a conversion and plans showing window additions to the listed farmhouse Broomy Fields. However, the farmhouse was designed as a dwelling, and hence alterations to it would be considered in that context, whereas Stables Barn is an agricultural building that has been converted, so is not directly comparable. The other examples are for buildings in different parts of the district. I do not have the full details of these examples so

⁴ LPA ref 20/00055/COU granted 29 January 2021 (Moat Bank Barns) and 17/0557/FUL granted 24 April 2018 (Portway Farm)

am unable to make any meaningful comparisons with regard their contexts, setting and surroundings, and any other issues that may have been pertinent to the Council's decision to allow the various openings in these other buildings. Whilst they serve to show that in certain instances alterations can be acceptable, all decisions turn on their own particular circumstances based on the facts and evidence before the decision-makers at the time. In any event I must consider the appeal proposal on its own merits.

Public benefits and heritage balance

29. The Framework states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource. Paragraphs 212 and 213 of the Framework state that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alterations or destruction or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.
30. 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 against the advice in the Framework I find the harm to the significance of the listed building would be at the lower end of 'less than substantial'. Nonetheless, a finding of less than substantial harm still carries considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, paragraph 215 of the Framework requires the harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
31. The insertion of rooflights and windows would allow more natural light to enter the particular rooms and thus help reduce the reliance on artificial light during the day and in turn reduce energy consumption. The windows, plus the installation of a renewable energy source for electricity generation at the property, in preparation for all space and water heating to be via electricity, would help reduce carbon emissions. This would help support the government's move towards net zero carbon energy sources and help towards reducing the wider environmental effects of climate change. Whilst there are no substantive details or quantification of the intended energy production and efficiency measures upon which to meaningfully gauge the impact the proposal would make, the Framework nonetheless requires significant weight to be given to the need to support energy efficiency.
32. The health and wellbeing benefits to the appellant and their family from more natural light would be a private, rather than a public benefit. There is no evidence before me to suggest that there are no other opportunities for installing the PV panels elsewhere, such as freestanding arrays in the garden, or if there are that these are inadequate or not possible.
33. There is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that the proposals are necessary to secure the continued use of Stables Barn and that the building's use would cease if the appeal was dismissed. Clear and convincing justification for the harm to the asset's significance has not been provided.
34. 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 proposals would not preserve the Grade II listed Broomy Fields, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The proposal would also fail to preserve the setting of the listed building. As such the significance of the designated heritage asset would be harmed. The proposal would thus fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the relevant provisions of the Framework.

35. The installation of PV panels and the intention to increase daylight levels so as to reduce use of artificial light would comply in part with Policy CP3 of the Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029 (the Local Plan), which seeks, amongst other things, to facilitate energy conservation and the use of renewable energy resources where possible. However, overall the proposal would conflict with Local Plan Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP14, SC2 and BE1 and Policy BE2 of the Lichfield District Local Plan Allocations Document (the Allocations Plan). Collectively these seek, amongst other things, to protect and enhance the historic environment and avoid harm to the significance of heritage assets.
36. It would also be contrary to the advice in the Council's Lichfield Design Code, Rural Development SPD and Historic Environment SPD. Together these advise against arrays of PV panels and new openings that would adversely impact on the heritage asset.

Character and appearance

37. The Council's Rural Development SPD advises that roofs are often the most visible features of a farm building's character, often comprised of long unbroken rooflines. This was clearly the case at the appeal site, with the striking roof scape of the converted barn complex and Stables Barn. The installation of PV panels and additional rooflights would increase the domesticity of the building and lessen its integrity as a former agricultural building and complex.
38. The Rural Development SPD further advises that new openings should be avoided and the high solid to void ratios of wall to openings should be maintained. The proposed new windows on largely blank elevations would disrupt this. It also goes on to say that as farm buildings rarely had glazing at roof level, the number of rooflights should be used sparingly. The proposed rooflights to the kitchen would introduce openings to clean blank roof slopes.
39. The proposed interventions would lessen the agricultural character and appearance of the buildings in this rural setting. I accept that the buildings already have some domestic features as part of their initial residential conversions, but conversions should make minimal alterations to the building's fabric to ensure the agricultural character and appearance is maintained as much as possible.
40. I find the proposal would overall reduce the agricultural character and appearance of the building and the wider former barn complex and lessen its relationship with the surrounding rural area. The PV arrays in particular would be unduly visible and detract from the striking roofscape.
41. Accordingly, the proposal would conflict with Local Plan Policies CP3, CP14 and BE1 and Allocations Plan Policy BE2, whose aims are described above. It would also go against the advice in the Rural Development SPD.

Protected species

42. The proposal includes works to roofs and outbuildings which have the potential for bats. Under the Regulations⁵ there is a duty upon the competent authority in the exercise of any of their functions to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive insofar as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions.
43. The Council's ecologist requested that a Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats is undertaken prior to the determination of the application, as the roof of the outbuilding has the potential for bat roosts. Whilst the property has been converted and been occupied as a dwelling continuously since the 2000s, this does not indicate that bat roosts cannot occur. Bats are a protected species and without evidence to the contrary, it is not possible to determine whether the proposed development would harm the protected species. Therefore, there is insufficient information to demonstrate full compliance with relevant statutory protections or to demonstrate that appropriate mitigation or safeguarding measures can be put in place for the proposal.
44. The imposition of conditions requiring surveys to be done after the grant of planning permission is not recommended. Under current advice⁶ it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established *before the planning permission is granted* [my emphasis], otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances. There are no exceptional circumstances put forward in this case.
45. Consequently, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that bats, a statutorily protected species, would not be adversely affected by the proposed works. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Local Plan Policy NR3 that seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that biodiversity and protected species are protected, and that development that has a direct or indirect adverse effect is not supported. It would also be contrary to the Council's Biodiversity & Development SPD.

Conclusion

46. **Appeal A:** The proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole and there are no material considerations that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, for the reasons above I conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.
47. **Appeal B:** For the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

K Stephens
INSPECTOR

⁵ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

⁶ Circular 06/2005 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation and BS 42020:2013