



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2026

by **Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/D/24/3355960

Clear Farm, Bassingbourn Cum Kneesworth, Cambridgeshire SG8 5NL

- 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 Nigel Howard against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- The application Ref is 24/02748/HFUL.
- The development proposed is brickwork repairs to Dovecot infilling cracks and repointing and the erection of two garages.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is adjacent to the Bassingbourn Conservation Area and relates to a listed building. I have therefore had special regard to sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issue

3. At the same time the planning application subject of this appeal was refused, listed building consent (ref 24/02749/LBC) was also refused for apparently the same proposal. This appeal relates only to the refusal of planning permission and there is no appeal against the refusal of listed building consent. However, the proposed works to the dovecot require listed building consent but not planning permission.
4. Therefore, the main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed garages on the character and appearance of the area, bearing in mind the special attention that should be paid to the desirability of preserving the setting of the nearby Grade II listed building, "Dovecot circa 55 metres to south east of number 29 (South End House)" (ref 1128287) and the effect on the Bassingbourn Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises converted 19th century farmstead buildings, Dovecot (the listed building, LB) and access land. It sits to the rear of Nos 29 and 31 South End, respectively the Grade II listed South End House (former Clear Farm farmhouse) and Grade II listed Barns, Coach House, Bakehouse and maltings.
6. The Dovecot dates from around 1800 and it is a square red brick building with a tile roof hipped in 2 stages for flight entry. It has been converted to residential use and its west facing round headed brick arch opening has been glazed and boarded door pinned open. Nevertheless, it retains its historic character and appearance. Its special interest, in so far as relevant to the appeal, relates to its distinctive simple

form and relationship to the farmstead which illustrate its historic function and use and is indicative of the wealth and status of Clear Farm at that time.

7. The CA extends along the crossroads where North End, South End and High Street meet, encompassing the historic core of the village and surrounding land. It includes a 13th century church and the remains of a medieval moated manor but the settlement is characterised by post-medieval buildings including farm buildings and farmsteads. Given the above, insofar as it relates to the appeal, the significance of the CA derives from its traditional farmsteads which illustrate the rural agricultural origins and evolution of the village.
8. The appeal site buildings replaced a series of original barns that were destroyed by arson in 1849. Historic maps and aerial photographs illustrate the 19th century farmstead group as enclosing the north, east and south sides of a yard that was in part open to the Clear Farm buildings to the west. The layout remained little changed until the late 1990s when planning permission (ref S/0043/96/F) was granted for the residential conversion and extension of the west barns and commercial use of the east barn. A detached building south west of the Dovecot was demolished around that time.
9. The east barn burnt down in the early 21st century and planning permission was granted some years later for the existing semi-detached, barn-style dwellings. Their traditional design, scale and materials is sympathetic to the historic context. Albeit they were constructed slightly east of the original barn footprint, the historic yard continues to be defined by the residential boundary between the appeal site and the new dwellings.
10. Therefore, the former farm buildings are in residential use, more than one historic barn has been lost, replacement dwellings have been constructed, and the means of enclosure to the yard and wider site have been altered. This has undoubtedly eroded the agricultural appearance of the farmstead and the historic visual and functional relationship with the farmhouse and adjoining farmland. Nevertheless, the appeal site is recognisable as a rural traditional farmstead. The historic relationship to the built environment, including village envelope, and rural agricultural setting remains legible. Consequently, the appeal site contributes positively to the character and appearance of the CA.
11. The listed buildings and 19th century farmstead buildings are within the CA, the boundary of which aligns with the southern building line of the former farmstead group. The location of both proposed garages lies outside the boundary but in the immediate setting of the CA.
12. Garage Barn 1 (GB1) would be a detached 4-bay building, around 12m x 6m and roughly 5.3m tall. It would be sited close to the existing parking spaces near the boundary with the agricultural land to the south. Irrespective of its traditional materials, by virtue of its prominent siting and wide separation, it would be poorly related to both the dwelling it would serve and the historic farmstead.
13. Garage Barn 2 (GB2) would have a similar footprint to GB1, but it would be around 4.4m tall and with a hipped roof in contrast to the gable ends that characterise nearby built development. It would be finished in weather boarding and slate, with an open west elevation with wooden posts between each of the 4 parking bays. The very close proximity of the large building, hardstanding and domestic parking to the 19th century barn with attached Dovecot would be dominant and incongruous

in juxtaposition with the low historic barn and listed building. The adverse visual impact would be exacerbated by the removal of part of the existing hedgerow to facilitate vehicular access.

14. The contemporary domestic garages would emphasize the residential use and erode the legibility of the historic layout and use of the barns as part of the former Clear Farm. The large scale and prominent siting of the garages south of the farmstead would urbanise the setting of the historic group and erode the visual and functional link to the surrounding agricultural land.
15. I accept that the garages would not have a material impact on the understanding of the original use of the Dovecot. However, GB2 in particular would be jarring and visually obtrusive in juxtaposition with the 19th century barn and the Dovecot. In views from the west and looking past the Dovecot, the harm would be compounded by the cumulative visual impact of the combined bulk and use of the garages. The proposal would detract from the rural setting and views of the Dovecot. It would not make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness or sense of place.
16. While long-established farmsteads can change over time, the arrangement of the farmstead buildings and spaces and the surrounding context remained substantially the same from the 1800s until the late 1990s. The relatively recent residential conversion, loss of historic buildings and replacement of the former commercial use with residential development does not evidence the evolution of a working farm. Moreover, the former building south west of the Dovecot does not provide a historic precedent for domestic garages where no buildings previously existed.
17. Therefore, I find the garages would harm the setting of the listed Dovecot and the character and appearance of the historic farmstead group, thereby adversely affecting how the CA was experienced in this location. The garages would not be readily visible from the public domain but would be prominent from the private domain and in the immediate setting of the CA. As such, they would be capable of harming the wider character and appearance of the CA.
18. Given the above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and the significance of the CA. Consequently, I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of these appeals.
19. Paragraph 212 of 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. Paragraph 213 advises that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. Given the nature and scale of the garages, I find the harm to be at the lower end of less than substantial but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
20. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimal viable use.
21. The external repairs to the Dovecot would be a heritage benefit, but those works require listed building consent which is not the subject of this appeal. The continued viable use, and conservation, of the Dovecot is not dependent on the proposed

garages as the LB has an ongoing residential use as part of the appeal property that would not cease in the absence of the garages. The garages would not remove vehicles from the setting of the heritage assets. The provision of secure vehicle storage for the residential occupiers would be a private benefit. Therefore, the public benefits would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have found.

22. Given the above, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the setting and thereby special historic interest of the Grade II listed building and the character and appearance of Bassingbourn CA. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 212 of the Framework. The proposal would conflict with policy NH14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Adopted September 2018 and the aims of the 'Listed Buildings: Works to or affecting the setting of' Supplementary Planning Document Adopted July 2009. Among other things, these require proposals to sustain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the historic environment, taking into account factors including appearance, context and relationships between buildings and their surroundings. As a result, the proposal would not be in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict.
24. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR