



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 September 2026

by Simon Hand MA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 September 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1153/F/24/3355120

Greenslade, Greenslade lane, Sampford Courtenay, EX20 2SF

- The appeal is made under section 39 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended (the Act).
 - The appeal is made by Ms T Meaker against a listed building enforcement notice issued by West Devon Borough Council.
 - The enforcement notice was issued on 9 October 2024.
 - The contravention of listed building control alleged in the notice is (a) The creation of a concrete beam across the top of the remaining levelled cob wall at the north west facing gable end of the barn. (b) The creation of concrete block piers under the eaves of the existing roof truss at the north west facing gable end of the barn. (c) The addition of a timber gable infill at the north west facing gable end of the barn .
 - The requirements of the notices are (a) Remove the unauthorised concrete creating a beam across the top of the remaining section of the historic cob wall of the Barn. Make good in mass cob any part of the structure altered to accommodate the concrete beam damaged by either its installation or removal. (b) Remove the concrete block piers, erected on the beam up to the eaves of the Barn. (c) Remove the timber gable infill and cladding added to the northwestern gable end of the Barn. (d) Reinstall the gable end wall of the building using mass cob in the traditional manner of 'lifts'. Where possible the historic cob which fell shall be re-constituted and used. Any additional cob shall be obtained on site or another local source. (e) Fix or attach the roof structure to the re-constructed cob.
 - The period for compliance with the requirements is 12 months.
 - The appeal is made on the grounds set out in section 39(1)(d), (e), (g), (h), (j) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and the listed building enforcement notice is upheld. Listed building consent is refused for the retention of the works carried out in contravention of section 9 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

Reasons

2. Greenslade is a farm complex. The farm building is listed as are several of the barns in the farmyard. The predominant material of construction is cob and the farmyard presents an impressive collection of historic cob-built barns and other farm buildings. The barn itself is a large building with huge cob walls. There have been some repairs carried out over the years using modern materials but these are fairly minor compared to the scale of the barn. The exception is the southerly gable end which has been completely rebuilt in concrete blocks. The northern gable was damaged in a storm and the top half (more or less) fell out. The remaining cob wall was capped with a poured concrete beam and the concrete pillars introduced to the sides to support a new wooden gable end.

The Appeal on Ground (d)

3. I fully accept that something had to be done quickly to prevent further damage to the now exposed roof and cob wall, and the advice was that tarpaulin would not be sufficient given the likelihood of further gales. However, the concrete option was a final solution that was no doubt quick and cheap. But there is no evidence that a more temporary option was considered, using wooden beams to stabilise the wall for example. It seems the concrete was the proposal of a local builder, but there is no evidence an expert in cob construction was consulted and the Council deny they were involved.
4. It is unusual for damaging and permanent works to be acceptable as an emergency repair and this case is no exception. I am not convinced the works carried out were the only and least invasive option and the appeal on ground (d) fails.

The Appeal on Ground (e)

5. The significance of the barn, as far as this appeal is concerned, is both its cob construction and the part it plays in the overall farmyard where cob is the predominant material. The replacement of the cob gable end with wood and concrete has seriously harmed the significance of the barn. Inevitably there has been some minor patching with brick and stone, that is part and parcel of the life of the barn. The rebuild of the south gable is more serious and serves to underline the dangers facing these cob structures. It will always be easier to repair in modern materials and eventually there will be no original barn left. The appellant suggests the repairs that were carried out are typical and not unhistoric. They may be typical but they are certainly unhistoric. Historically all the repairs would have been made in local materials not concrete.
6. I note a gable end of the farmhouse, which appears to have been meticulously restored has been replaced with wooden slats similar to that used in the barn. I have no evidence as to why this was the case or the background to that decision and it certainly does not provide a precedent for further erosion of the cob farm buildings. There seems to be no reason why the repairs cannot be carried out as suggested by the Council and consent should not be granted for the concrete and wooden gable end.

The Appeals on Grounds (g) and (j)

7. These two grounds are often confused. The purpose of the notice is to restore the building to the condition it was in before the repairs were carried out. That is ground (g). Ground (j) is for when the unlawful works have damaged a building so that it cannot be simply returned to its original state and the Council have suggested further and different works to undo some of the harm. There is thus no appeal on ground (j).
8. The appellant suggests that not all the gable end was cob, although she does not suggest what other material it could have been. She also says in her e-mail to HE that over 15 tons of cob fell out of the wall but doesn't mention any other material. It seems unlikely to me the gable end wasn't entirely made of cob and so replacing it with cob is the obvious recourse. As discussed above it is not excessive to repair using the original materials, that is usual practice for listed buildings. Given

my view that the cob walling is important to the significance of the barn, then it follows that repairing with cob is not excessive.

The appeal on Ground (h)

9. I agree that the repairs could take some time, especially as summer is now over. However, the period for compliance is 12 months which seems plenty of time to undertake a relatively modest repair.

Other Matters

10. Since the appeal was made a new version of the NPPF has been issued, but the treatment of heritage assets in policies HE5 and 6 does not change my view on this appeal. There has been harm to the significance of the asset that is far from minor, this carries great weight and there are no public benefits to offset that harm.

Conclusion

11. The appeal is dismissed and I shall uphold the notice.

Simon Hand

INSPECTOR