
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 3 November 2014

by Tim Wood BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 25 November 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/A/14/2219637

Airfield Control Tower, 92 Little Staughton Airfield, Little Staughton, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 2BN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for consent, agreement or approval to details required by a condition of a planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Little Staughton Airfield and Industrial Park Ltd against Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 1408036COND, dated 8 February 2014, sought approval of details pursuant to condition No 10 of a planning permission Ref 1101306FUL granted on 21 December 2011.
 - The development proposed is refurbishment of former airfield control tower to form a dwelling and use of workshop as associated garage/workshop.
 - The details for which approval is sought are pursuant to condition 10 which states: "Notwithstanding the submitted information the existing metal balcony and external metal stair will be retained and repaired. Where replacement is necessary, this shall first be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details".
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Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/E/14/2219641

Airfield Control Tower, 92 Little Staughton Airfield, Little Staughton, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 2BN

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for approval to details of works required by conditions of a listed building consent
 - The appeal is made by Little Staughton Airfield and Industrial Park Ltd against Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 1408038COND, dated 8 February 2014, sought approval of external stairs and balcony/railings pursuant to condition No 11 of listed building consent Ref 1101307LBC granted on 21 December 2011.
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Decisions

1. The appeals are dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by the appellant against the Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appeals relate to the failure of the Council to give notice of a decision on these 2 matters. Shortly after the appeals were made, the Council issued a letter containing its decisions which refused the submitted details. The reasons given by the Council relate to the unacceptable effects on the listed building. However, I shall determine the appeals as against the failure to issue decision, but the correspondence referred to informs me of the Council's position.
4. In the statement submitted by the Council, they accept that the external stair can be replaced with one of an appropriate design, replicating the existing one.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in these appeals is the effects of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

Reasons

6. The appeal site sits within a wider area that is a former World War 2 airfield, a number of the buildings being occupied by small industrial/commercial uses. The site also appears to still be used for flying. The building which is the subject of this appeal is the former control tower which stands away from the other buildings. It is 2 storeys in height, in a dilapidated state and is grade II listed. The building is of a rather stark and utilitarian design with a first floor balcony and a roof terrace, both surrounded by the original railings with the original external stairs.
7. The appellant is concerned that the existing railings and external stairs are unsound and do not offer sufficient protection for any future occupier of the building. It is apparent from the submitted documents that this issue has been the subject of lengthy discussions between the Council and the appellant. The documents indicate that a number of different alternative solutions have been suggested and commented upon; however, I have been provided with the details of the original submission made by the appellant and it is this scheme that is the subject of the appeal.
8. The existing railings are shown to be 0.9m high, the vertical tubes are about 1.8m apart and a second horizontal section is present half way up. The proposal is to replace all of the railings at first floor and roof level with new ones of 1.1m height and with sets of horizontal steel wires (8 shown on the submitted drawings) running between the vertical sections; the vertical elements would be 0.9m apart.
9. The listing description for this building notes that it is one of a very small number of World War 2 control towers which has survived in a substantially complete state of preservation and adds that it is an exceptionally well-preserved example. It also notes its particular historic associations.
10. Within the Council's reason for refusing the applications it states that the railings and stairs are "an iconic feature of the watch tower and make a substantial contribution to its special interest". It then adds that " the proposed replacement railings are not acceptable due to their considerable movement away from the original design".

11. From the submitted documentation it seems to me that the appellant is quite justified in not wishing to rely on the existing railings, in their current state, to ensure the safety of future occupiers of the building. However, I find that the proposed replacement railings would be quite different in their appearance and character and would have a considerable effect on the listed building. The existing railings are plain, simple and utilitarian, with significant space between the railings. What is proposed involves the taller railings with the uprights at closer intervals and the voids filled with horizontal sections of steel wires. I agree with the Council that this would give a quite different appearance than the original feature. Its appearance would be far more modern and more solid than the existing railings and would not be reflective of the buildings era or character. Whilst I accept that some alterations to the listed building would seem to be necessary to address the safety issue, I find that the proposal would do so at the unacceptable cost of failing to preserve its special interest. As a consequence, the proposal is contrary to the aims of Policies En2 and En3 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan and Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy.
12. I have taken account of all other matters raised in the representations but find nothing that is sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified. Therefore, the appeals are dismissed.

S T Wood

INSPECTOR

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