
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 24 November 2014

by R M Barrett BSc (Hons) MSc Dip UD Dip Hist Cons MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 8th December 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/A/14/2224810 (Appeal A)
Sevington Hall, Sevington, Grittleton, Chippenham SN14 7LD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Bridges against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 14/03327/FUL, dated 21 March 2014, was refused by notice dated 20 May 2014.
 - The development proposed is planting of a new hedgerow and fence along the east elevation with gate entrance. Construction of a new single storey link between the existing house and outbuilding.
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Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/E/14/2227531 (Appeal B)
Sevington Hall, Sevington, Grittleton, Chippenham SN14 7LD

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
- The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Bridges against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
- The application Ref 14/03375/LBC, dated 21 March 2014, was refused by notice dated 20 May 2014.
- The works are described as planting of a new hedgerow and fence along the east elevation with gate entrance. Construction of a new single storey link between the existing house and outbuilding.

Decision

1. Both appeals are dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Amended plans were submitted at appeal Ref 0317-01.1A; 0317-01.2A; 0317-01.4A; 0317-01.5A; 0317-01.6A; 0317-01.7A; 0317-04.1A; 0317-04.2A; 0317-04.3A; 0317-04.4A; 0317-04.5A. These correct site levels affecting the relative height of the outbuilding and the main listed building. As these do not materially alter the scheme and the Council has had the opportunity to comment on them, their consideration as part of this appeal would not prejudice the interests of any third parties. I have made my decision accordingly.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in both cases are whether the appeal proposals would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building and its farmyard setting and whether they would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Sevington Conservation Area.

Listed Buildings and Setting

4. The appeal site is a grade II listed barn, which forms part of a group of farm buildings. The space immediately around it provides its immediate setting, to which the visual separation from the outbuilding close by, as viewed from the courtyard, contributes. Its relationship with the other barn buildings and the farm house, around a central courtyard, with open space in front of the large wagon entrance is of fundamental importance to the historic unity of the farmstead and is an important part of its setting. That there is some subdivision at present within the courtyard and historically some buildings may have been close to the appeal barn, does not alter this assessment as its prominence and the space in front are essential to understanding its historic layout.
5. The appeal building is a traditional barn with a simple rectangular form, prominent, generally uninterrupted roofscape and plain solid elevations. It has a generally agricultural character that has been retained, even though it is now in residential use. By visually linking the barn to the outbuilding close by, as proposed, it would erode its simple rectangular form and compromise the open space around it. Further, the proposed roof lantern would be visible from in front of the appeal barn and together with the proposed primarily glazed frontage it would further domesticate the listed barn and erode its simple agricultural character.
6. The removal of historic fabric such as the internal walls of the outbuilding and the proposed door opening in the main listed building would result in the loss of historic fabric, even though the works may be reversible. In the absence of a clear justification and an indication of the effect on the structural integrity of the outbuilding, the loss of most of the internal walls of that outbuilding adds to my concern.
7. The proposed access gate and piers would be very close to the street entrance and prominently sited when viewed from the street and within the courtyard. They would be set at an angle to the listed barn and would result in a domestic feature in the generally open courtyard. They would make explicit the domestication of the space surrounding it and would seriously erode its agricultural character and its relationship to the other buildings in the farm complex and the farm yard.
8. I noted on my site visit the wall between the main farm house and the barns to its rear. However, this is some distance from the appeal building and is not comparable to the appeal proposal.
9. I have taken into account the views of my colleague in dealing with a proposal for the same site, brought to my attention (Ref APP/J3910/E/06/2017056). As far as that proposal relates to this appeal, I have generally concurred with her conclusions.
10. I am aware that the thrust of Planning Policy Statement 5 *Planning for the Historic Environment*: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (2010) and section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is that heritage assets should be conserved and accommodate sensitive alteration. However, I have found that material harm would result as a consequence of this appeal proposal.

11. I conclude that the appeal proposal would fail to preserve the significance of the listed building and its farmyard setting and would fail to accord with Policy C3 (ii) and HE4 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2011) (LP) and Policy 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-submission Document (2012) (CS), which together aim to ensure the conservation of the historic environment. As the CS is at an advanced stage of preparation, I accord it significant weight in coming to my decision.

Conservation Area

12. The Sevington Conservation Area includes a small collection of high quality historic buildings, including houses, farm buildings, some now used as dwellings and the appeal farm complex. Generally buildings front onto the road and sit in spacious grounds. Open land to their rear adds to a generally open and rural character and appearance. The appeal building, forming part of a historic farm complex, significantly contributes to the open and rural character and appearance of the Conservation Area. I have found that unacceptable harm would result to the listed building and its setting as a consequence of the appeal proposals. The appeal listed building and its farmyard setting significantly contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It follows, therefore, that they would also result in material harm to the Sevington Conservation Area.
13. On this issue, I conclude that the appeal proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Sevington Conservation Area. It would therefore fail to accord with LP Policy C3 (ii) and CS Policy 58.

Public Benefits

14. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, as they are irreplaceable and any harm should require clear and convincing justification. In this case, I find that the harm identified to the listed building and the Conservation Area would, in the context of the significance of those heritage assets, be less than substantial in each case. Paragraph 134 of the Framework requires that where the harm identified would be less than substantial, that harm should be weighed against any public benefits of the proposal. I acknowledge that the appeal proposal would provide greater privacy and security for the appellants following the use of other buildings in the farmstead as holiday accommodation and would provide additional living space for them. Whilst it may result in greater use of the outbuilding by the current occupiers, as I saw on my site visit that it was already in use, I attach limited weight to this as a benefit.
15. All in all, whilst some these matters would be benefits of the appeal proposal, they would not constitute the public benefits referred to in Paragraph 134 of the Framework. On this basis Appeal A and B fail.

Other Matters

16. The proposed amendments suggested by the appellant are not before me and therefore I am unable to properly assess their impact.

Conclusion

17. For the above reasons, and taking all other matters raised into consideration, I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

R Barrett

INSPECTOR