



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 6 April 2021

by L Fleming BSc(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/20/3261714

Westbury Farm House, West End, Ashwell SG7 5PJ

- 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 Rick Willmott against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00734/FPH, dated 31 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is extension and alterations to garden room between Westbury Moat House and Westbury Farm House.
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Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/Y/20/3261713

Westbury Farm House, West End, Ashwell SG7 5PJ

- 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 Rick Willmott against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00735/LBC, dated 31 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 August 2020.
 - The works proposed are extension, alterations and internal alterations to garden room between Westbury Moat House and Westbury Farm House.
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Decision - Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Decision - Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

3. Both appeals relate to the same scheme under different but complimentary legislation, I have therefore dealt with them together in my reasoning.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in both appeals is whether the proposed development/works would preserve the grade II listed Westbury Farm House, West End or its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses and whether the scheme would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ashwell Conservation Area.

Reasons

Significance

5. The appeal property is a grade II listed dwelling (Westbury Farm House) within the Ashwell Conservation Area (CA).
6. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses. The same act also requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Furthermore, paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of new development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
7. Westbury Farm House is a C15 or C16 timber-framed hall house with more recent extensions. It has been extensively refurbished and altered. The original hall has been subdivided, it has sash windows and rebuilt chimney stacks. The external walls are mainly rendered with brick base and it has a clay tiled roof.
8. The historical maps show Westbury Farm House surrounded by buildings as part of a farm complex. To the west of Westbury Farm House large barns were replaced in the 1990's by new dwellings known as Westbury Moat House and Westbury Spring House. Westbury Moat House, closest to Westbury Farm House was acquired by the occupants of Westbury Farm House in 2006. Subsequently, the two properties were combined to form a single dwelling through the construction of a garden room link which the appeal proposals seek to extend and alter. Other former agricultural buildings originally part of the farmstead have also now been redeveloped.
9. Westbury Farm House is on the western edge of the CA which covers a large part of the built-up area of the village. It includes a variety of traditional buildings, many also of medieval origin, all set in a rural and agricultural landscape.
10. Insofar as is relevant to these appeals the significance of Westbury Farm House derives from its historical and architectural interest as a late medieval hall house, its associated architectural detailing and its positioning within a group of buildings as the focal point of a traditional farmstead. The significance of the CA derives from the architecture and layout of the buildings within it and the agricultural relationship between the village and the surrounding countryside.

Effects on Westbury Farmhouse and Ashwell Conservation Area

11. In considering a very similar proposal to the garden room already in place an Inspector in 2006¹ found that the wall against which the new link would be sited has already been rebuilt. The proposed extension of the existing garden room would enclose a small section of the same rendered external wall. It would be attached to it by two resin bonded dowl bars with modest additional loading carried by new trench-fill foundations. Overall, due to the proposed method of construction, the alterations to the external wall and foundations of

¹ Appeal References APP/X1925/E/06/2022838 & APP/X1925/A/06/2022843

- the listed building would be limited. As such there would be no harm to the historic fabric of the grade II listed Westbury Farm House.
12. Although linking Westbury Moat House with Westbury Farm House, the existing garden room is a much larger space than would be necessary for passage between them. It is already a reasonably sized space which could comfortably accommodate seating and furniture for dining whilst also allowing passage through it. Therefore, although the scheme would increase the size of the garden room, its function would not change as a result of the proposals.
 13. Furthermore, the proposed chimney would be in matching brickwork, with a wide base and would be an overall sympathetic addition to the modern garden room having a neutral effect on the setting or significance of the listed building.
 14. The existing mainly timber framed and glazed single storey garden room with a section of flat roof at its juncture with Westbury Farm House is subservient to the grade II listed building. The simple flat roof elements retain the detached character of both Westbury Farm House and Westbury Moat House even though they are joined together. The proposed extension would also have a flat roof, filling in a small corner between the two buildings. Although the flat roof elements would be larger, the detached character would be retained.
 15. However, on top of the proposed flat roof would be a large roof lantern. This would be of symmetrical and formal appearance more reflective of Victorian or Georgian architecture and in conflict with the simple traditional architectural detailing of the grade II listed farmhouse. It would also complicate the appearance of the purposefully low and simple lead flat roof. Thus, through the conflicting form and siting of the proposed roof lantern, the appeal proposals would harm the setting and significance of the grade II listed building.
 16. I have found harm to the setting and significance of a grade II listed building within the CA. I accept that the roof lantern would not be visible from any public vantage point within the CA. However, its conflict with the grade II listed farmhouse would be visible from within the appeal site which is part of the CA. Thus, the harm I have identified to the setting and significance of a traditional building within the CA would also fail to preserve or enhance its character or appearance, harming the significance of the CA as a whole.

Planning and Heritage Balance

17. The combined harm I have identified to the significance of the designated heritage assets would be less than substantial. In which case paragraph 196 of the Framework requires it to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, including where appropriate, securing optimum viable use.
18. The proposals would improve the living conditions for the occupiers in terms of additional internal living space. However, these benefits are largely private and would be insufficient to outweigh the great weight I must attach to the harm I have identified to the designated heritage assets.
19. Thus, overall, I find the proposed development/works would fail to preserve the grade II listed Westbury Farmhouse and its setting and would also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA contrary to the respective sections of the Act and the Framework. For the same reasons both appeal proposals would also conflict with the development plan, particularly

Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (2016) which amongst other things seeks to ensure that proposals do not cause harm to designated heritage assets.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

L Fleming

INSPECTOR