



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 September 2022

by Louise Nurser BA (Hons) Dip UP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L3245/Y/22/3290422

Pentre Farm, Woodhill, Oswestry, SY10 9AS

- 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 Dr. Dennis Carter against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02451/LBC, dated 19 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 4 August 2021.
 - The works proposed are installation of 18no replacement windows affecting a grade II listed building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed, and listed building consent is refused for the installation of 18no replacement windows affecting a grade II listed building.

Preliminary Matters

2. The works took place in 1997. As the proposal relates to a listed building consent, I have had special regard to sections 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the works on the special interest of the Grade II listed building.

Reasons

4. Pentre Farm was designated as a Grade II listed building in 1986. It sits within a rural setting close to the Welsh borders. It was part of a substantial wider farmstead, many of the outbuildings remain, but have been, or are currently being converted into residential use.
5. The two storey farmhouse dates from the sixteenth century. There is a datestone of 1695, which suggests that it was remodelled in the late seventeenth century. In common with other buildings of historic interest, it has been further altered and extended, including a nineteenth century full length lean-to at the rear, associated with the extension's former role as a dairy.
6. Nonetheless, it retains considerable historic and architectural interest as a large farmhouse, with a central hall range with a projecting two storey gabled porch and flanking cross wings. Much of the historic fabric has been retained, including a late seventeenth century carved oak staircase, and an inner door at the front, which is decorated with studded nails and strap hinges.

7. Externally, the farmhouse is imposing, with decorative brick work, at first floor level of the gable ends to the front of the property. As such, it is clear that the large farmhouse was a substantial building and was attributed significant status given the decorative flourishes both within and outside of the building.
8. In the context of the appeal before me, the significance of the listed building derives from its historic construction, plan form and evolution as a working farm, including the nineteenth century alterations, whilst at the same time retaining its predominant late seventeenth century character.
9. However, following the works, the subject of the appeal, the evidential significance of the fenestration has been removed. There is no dispute that the replacement windows did not result in any alterations to the size or number of window openings. Moreover, it is clear from the limited evidence which I have before me that the double glazed, replacement timber windows, whilst produced by a local craftsman, do not accurately reflect the detailed appearance of the previous fenestration and have resulted in the loss of important historic fabric, including original glass. For example, the mid-nineteenth century casement windows which were referred to within the listing have been removed. These six light windows appear from the photographs to have had glazing bars which were thinner than the outer frame. This contrasts with the replacement frames, which on site, all look to have simple, glazing bars and frames of the same width, and are of a crude design. The photographic evidence suggests that these earlier windows, which have a strong vertical emphasis were of an elegant appearance and provided more light than the current nine light windows with heavy glazing bars.
10. Similarly, the windows on the north-west elevation have been replaced with glazing which appear to have more lights than the windows which were shown in the photographs accompanying the appeal. These included larger panes of glass, which were possible with advances in glass production and appeared consistent with the listing which references a nineteenth century extension across the rear of the property.
11. Again, the windows facing the garden are substantively different to the simple sliding sash windows which are shown in the picture of the dining room within the appellant's evidence. Other subtle, but important differences include the loss of a projecting sill which is evident on the photo of the north-east elevation, but which has not been replaced as part of the works. In sum, the replacement windows do not accurately reflect what was there.
12. As such, cumulatively, this has had an adverse impact on the heritage asset not only through the loss of the historic fabric, but also on the appearance of the building introducing a uniformity of style which is inconsistent with the historic development of the building, and a consequential loss of the evidential value in determining the legibility of the farmhouse. As such, I conclude that this has resulted in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.
13. I have been referred to the poor state of repair of the property which lay empty for a considerable period of time prior to its purchase by the appellant. I accept that they have undertaken considerable work to ensure that it is a habitable home. Nonetheless, whilst I have carefully considered the Colley's Structural Survey, there is nothing within it which recommended the wholesale replacement of the windows, and even if it did, further detailed assessment of

the state of the individual windows would be required. It is well established that it is possible for most windows to be successfully repaired even where they appear to be in poor condition.

14. I understand that some windowpanes were broken, and that other window frames required overhauling to ensure that they did not let in draughts and rain. Others required general maintenance including regular painting, and the provision of new, or repaired catches. The windows were described as a mix of original and more modern, albeit it is unclear what is meant by modern.
15. I also note the problems described in the report in relation to penetrating dampness from the window surrounds, and the issues involving condensation and subsequent vulnerability to wet rot. However, there is not the compelling evidence before me to suggest that any of the windows were beyond repair, nor that the windows were a significant cause of the issues of dampness, or that the lack of effective ventilation and heating which impacted on the building, could not be otherwise resolved. Therefore, I do not consider that the removal and replacement of all the windows in the manner that has occurred was necessary to protect the heritage asset or secure its future.
16. I have been referred to the changes in fenestration being part of the continuing evolution of the building. However, whilst in the past, windows had been altered reflecting changes in fashion, or repairs, or alterations to the building, this does not alter the protection which the fabric of the listed building enjoys, and the current control over further alterations which necessitate careful consideration of the asset in the context of its national importance.
17. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Paragraph 200 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets or from development within their setting and that this should have a clear and convincing justification. Given my conclusions set out above, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
18. Under such circumstances, paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of optimal viable use of listed buildings. The appellant is of the opinion that the works were beneficial because of the requirement to reduce water ingress, draughts, dampness, and retain heat, and as such, positively impacts on the protection of the heritage asset. However, for the reasons set out above, I consider that these benefits were achievable through alternative less destructive methods, and the benefits derived from the works are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.
19. Given the above, I conclude that the works fail to preserve the special historic and architectural interest of the Grade II listed building, thus they fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 197 of the Framework and development plan policies CS6, CS17 of the Shropshire Local Development Framework: Core Strategy, adopted 2011 and policies MD2 and MD13 of the Shropshire Council, Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan adopted 2015, which cumulatively seek to protect local distinctiveness, and loss of significance to designated heritage assets, insofar as relevant.

Other Matters

20. I am aware of the lack of objections to the application for the listed building consent, the support from Oswestry Rural Parish Council and that there have been no complaints to the Council during the extensive time period in which the windows have been installed. I have also been referred to the visit by a representative of English Heritage, now known as Historic England, who did not mention the replacement windows. However, none of these circumstances alter my conclusion.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should fail.

Louise Nurser

INSPECTOR