

To Kathryn Hughes Ref: 3/2022/1165 and
3/2022/1166

From Joanne McKay – Growth Lancashire

Subject Conservation Comments

Date 24 March 2023

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for the proposed refurbishment of existing farmhouse, conversion of existing attached and detached barns to create three new dwellings, conversion of outbuildings for associated residential use and external works. Resubmission of 3/2022/0727 and 0729.

Site Address: Lower Reaps Farm, Whinney Lane, Mellor BB2 7EL

Site / Building / Location

The proposal site is a former farmstead consisting of a two-storey farmhouse and adjoining former stables and hayloft, constructed in the early 17th Century, with different phases of historical development. The farmhouse is constructed from Slobbered rubble with eaves height raised in brick and roof replaced by asbestos sheets mid C20, with a mix of windows with plain reveals and mullioned window.

The proposal site includes an additional detached barn and outbuilding. The former barn lies directly opposite the house to the south approximately 20m away. A further two outbuildings lie to the west edge of the site. The additional farm buildings are also constructed from stone with a mix of asbestos sheet roof and slate.

The farmstead occupies an elevated position accessed by a track from the east. The immediate surroundings are rural, consisting of open countryside, with modern residential developments located to the south of Yew Tree Drive.

The property is located to the south east of Mellor and to the north of Yew Tree Drive (A6119).

Designations

The site is a Grade II Listed building (List Entry: 1362343).

Legislation

The principle statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is to preserve the special character of heritage assets, including

their setting. LPA's should, in coming to decisions, consider the principle Act, which states the following;

Listed Buildings - Section 66(1)

In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Planning Guidance and Policy

NPFF

In determining planning applications LPA's should take account of;

- a. The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b. The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c. The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

P.199 states that when considering the impact of proposals on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be applied. This is irrespective of whether any harm is identified as being substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

P.202 states that where proposals will lead to less than substantial harm this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme, which includes securing its optimum viable use.

Local Plan

Ribble Valley Borough Council - Core Strategy 2008 – 2028- A Local Plan for Ribble Valley:

- Policy DMG1: General Considerations
- Policy DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets
- Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets

Assessment

I have reviewed the supporting documents, which includes the existing and proposed plans and elevations and a Structural Engineers Report, prepared by Les Gooding Design Ltd, dated June 2022. I have also been provided with photos by the Case Officer.

The submission also includes a detailed Heritage Statement provided by Sunderland Peacock and Associates Ltd.

The key heritage issue for the LPA to consider is whether the proposal would harm the significance of the Grade II listed building and the curtilage buildings which form part of the immediate setting.

The Proposal

The proposed scheme seeks Listed Building Consent to refurbish the existing farmhouse, to convert the existing attached and detached barns to create a further three new dwellings, and the conversion of outbuildings for associated residential use and external works.

I note that the application is a re-submission of a previous application (3/2022/0727 and 0729) which was withdrawn in November 2022.

The Farmhouse

The proposals to the farmhouse are minimal; largely they retain the existing plan form, with the exception of minor alterations to the internal dividing wall of the existing bedroom and landing to create a bathroom; the existing bathroom will become an en-suite. In addition, a dividing wall between the existing snug and workshop will be removed, to create a larger snug. The doorway through from the existing workshop to the former stables will be blocked up. From the plan drawings provided, it appears some of the rooms of the farmhouse, will be lined/insulated. However, no details have been provided.

Adjoining Former Stables/Hayloft

The adjoining store/hayloft will be converted into a one-bedroom living space, with the installation of a new staircase to the existing hayloft, which will become a bedroom and bathroom. From the plan drawings provided, it appears some of the rooms of the farmhouse, will be lined/insulated. However, no details have been provided of the internal works.

The Detached Barn

Opposite (south) the farmhouse, the existing stone barn will be converted to two separate units, a large five-bedroom property, with a one-bedroom unit at the ground floor rear. Largely the existing plan form is retained, with the addition of stud walls to create bedrooms, en-suites, kitchen and utility areas. In addition, one existing internal opening will be blocked up to separate the proposed two properties. From the plan drawings provided, it appears some of the rooms of the farmhouse, will be lined/insulated. However, no details have been provided.

Externally, the existing fenestration remains; however, a new window will be introduced, as well as two large full height glazed installations, one of which will create the entrance from the existing cart opening. Additionally, there are some roof lights on the front and rear roof slopes proposed.

Stone Outbuilding

Similarly, the stone outbuilding retains its existing form and fenestration, but will be converted to an office/play room for Unit 3 (the existing adjoining former stable and hayloft). From the plan drawings provided, it appears some of the rooms of the farmhouse, will be lined/insulated. However, no details have been provided.

The proposed materials for all the refurbishment and conversion works, include stone for the exterior walls, grey slate for the roof, with heritage metal rainwater goods and timber windows and doors (colour, design and profiles not provided).

The proposal includes the addition of new retaining walls, paved and parking areas for each unit, formed by stone setts, gravel and paving.

Impact to the significance of the Grade II listed building

The main issue from a conservation perspective is whether the proposal causes any harm to the significance of the listed building (which includes those curtilage buildings). The properties significance lies in its aesthetic and historic context, primarily evidenced in the buildings fabric and architectural form/appearance, as well as in its former use as a farmstead.

In this context, as a listed building of national importance, the building can be attributed as having a high significance.

Whilst it is apparent that the property has experienced historical extensions, some alterations, including some modern interventions and is in a state of disrepair, it is evident from the plans and photographs provided that the original plan form of all the buildings remains evident; as well as many of the original features that contribute to its significance.

In regards to the farmhouse itself, I do not object to the alterations to the dividing walls to the bedroom and landing, nor to the relocation of the bathroom. The existing stud wall is most likely a later addition, with little intrinsic value to the significance of the listed building. Similarly, this also applies to the loss of the dividing wall between the snug and the workshop, which is to be removed.

Likewise, I do not object to the subdivision of the adjoining former stables and hayloft. Whilst the ground floor alterations will see the removal of the existing timber stall divider, the proposed stud wall for the utility room and new staircase will be located in its place maintaining some sense of its former division. It is here where the newly proposed staircase will be located, which I think is an appropriate addition and location, to allow for a new use of this space.

The proposed blocking up of the existing doorway from the former stables to the existing workshop, in my view is a minor alteration that is required to subdivide the separate units. However, I would prefer to see the blocked up entrance set back in the reveal, as a way of evidencing the former opening. This could be done via the submission of an additional detail or a suitable Condition.

In respect of the detached barn, again, 'in principle' I raise no objection to its conversion to a large five-bedroom family home, with a one-bedroom unit at the rear. Indeed I am supportive of the re-use and conversion as a way of sustaining the value of the group of buildings. Whilst parts of the barn will be subdivided to create a first floor, bedrooms, en-suites and a kitchen in the rear unit, largely the existing plan form is retained and the central core of the barn on the ground floor remains open plan retaining the existing space. The design sees the bedrooms located in the projecting aisles of the north elevation, which I think is an appropriate solution. Likewise, the location of the proposed new staircase in the open plan area at the core of the barn is a suitable solution that will be recognised as the modern installation that it is.

The proposed works also include the blocking up of an existing doorway from the core of the barn to the existing rear cattle aisle. In my view, this is a minor alteration that is required to subdivide the separate units. However, similar to comments above I would prefer to see the blocked up entrance set back in the reveal, as a way of evidencing the former opening.

In regards to the external elevations, the fenestration will mostly remain the same, with the addition of a new window on the east (side) elevation, to provide a window that will serve the new living room; and a small number of rooflights to both the roof slopes. Again, this is a minor alteration that will provide some light into the area.

The biggest impact to the exterior of the existing barn is the introduction of the full height glazing to the existing cart entrance and to the eastern side of the north elevation. Whilst large areas of glazing is out of context and character with the building itself and that of the principle listed building; in respect of the cart opening, I accept that it is already in situ and the proposal is utilising this existing opening. Furthermore, the east side of the north elevation has mostly collapsed and what is left is a later addition constructed from concrete. Therefore, I do not think that it would be unreasonable to rebuild this area with the full height glazing, as the historic elements are already lost.

Lastly, the stone built outbuilding, in its plan form and external elevations visually remain the same. As such, 'in principle' I do not object to its refurbishment/conversion.

In respect of the internal alterations, largely I feel the current proposals have been adequately assessed and justified. Whilst there will be some minor loss of historic fabric, to create the additional units and provide new uses for the spaces, I do not think this translates into any substantive harm to the significance of the building.

In this context, whilst undoubtedly a change to the listed and curtilage buildings, when viewing the application as a whole, generally the proposed works, retain the existing plan form and existing fenestration, which contribute to their character. The most significant interventions (full height glazing and subdivision of some spaces) are not located in the principle property, were the principle heritage significance lies.

In my view, the proposals see the adaption and change of the buildings that are in a poor state of repair and are an appropriate and viable use that will help to preserve the heritage significance and secure the long-term future of the heritage assets, consistent with their conservation.

My only concern relates to the lack of details within the submission, relating to any new stone finish to the elevations, roof slates, window and door profiles and the internal wall finishes. I would suggest that these details either be provided for assessment prior to any planning decision being made, or be secured via suitably worded Conditions.

As such, subject to further details for the materials (stone, mortar and internal wall finish/lining/insulation) and window and door profiles, it is my view that any harm caused as a result of the proposed works, on balance, will be negligible.

Conclusion / recommendation

As I am required to do so, I have given the duty's imposed by s.66(1) of the P(LBCA) Act 1990 considerable weight in my comments.

Subject to further details or suitably worded Conditions relating to the materials, window and door profiles and internal finishes (work methodology) I consider that the proposal would meet the statutory test 'to preserve', causing no substantive level of harm to the significance of the principle listed building or curtilage buildings.

Whilst I do not feel the LPA is required to do a weighted balancing exercise (as per NPPF P.202) I would regard the benefits gained by the sustainable re-use of the buildings to outweigh the very limited harm caused by the works themselves.

As such, I consider the proposal meets the objectives of Chapter 16 of the NPPF and is accords with Policy DMG1: General Considerations, Policy DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets and Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets of the Core Strategy.

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