
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020 by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/19/3241098

Wilkinsons Farmhouse, Simonstone Lane, Simonstone, Burnley, BB12 7NX

- 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 John Ford against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 3/2019/0698, dated 4 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a double garage structure with a first floor home office.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the setting of the Grade II listed building, Wilkinsons Farmhouse, and
 - the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on the western side of Simonstone Lane. It includes a two-storey dwelling with outbuilding to the rear, both of which are Grade II listed. The dwelling has a large side and rear garden, enclosed by a high stone wall and mature planting. This proposal seeks permission for a detached double garage.

Listed Building

5. Wilkinsons Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building dating from the early 18th century. Its significance appears to be principally derived from its linear plan form and the detailing of the front elevation, including the coursed sandstone blocks and flush mullion windows. Located to the rear of the dwelling is a Grade II listed former pigsty with poultry loft. The listing identifies it as being a

good example of this type of agricultural building, which is rare in this area. The two buildings have a group value, derived from the historic relationship of the farmstead and it is symbolic of the importance and hierarchy of the main farmhouse with working building to the rear.

6. The proposed development would be positioned within the setting of the farmhouse. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) identifies what is meant by the term "setting" as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced.
7. The farmhouse is set back from the highway within a generous plot with land to the front, side and rear. These areas have been landscaped and are used as a domestic garden. Whilst this somewhat reduces the contribution of the setting to the significance of the heritage asset, the space nevertheless remains large and open and reflects the space historically associated with the front of the farmhouse, which was generally uncluttered by buildings.
8. My attention has been drawn to historic evidence which suggests an ancillary structure existed in a similar forward location to the appeal proposal. I acknowledge the detail provided in the appellant's heritage assessment including the map extracts, however the information is limited. Moreover, it seems to me that the earlier structure was of a single storey scale and existed for a limited time in the history of the site. As such, the open setting around the farmhouse makes a positive contribution and allows the significance of the heritage asset to be fully appreciated.
9. The proposed garage would introduce a large structure in the open space to the front and side of the farmhouse. Whilst it would not be positioned between the two listed buildings, it would be sited within close proximity to the farmhouse and forward of its important front elevation. Its presence in this location would interrupt the linear form and historic connection and narrative of the site, and it would erode the sense of openness which contributes positively towards its setting. Whilst buildings adjacent to the roadside or forward of front elevations may be common in the wider area, such as that opposite at the grade II listed Starkie Farmhouse, the appeal site has a different setting, as noted above. The proposal would therefore detract from the ability to appreciate the significance of the heritage asset.
10. Although the proposal would be positioned at a lower level to the farmhouse, its presence would be further accentuated by its substantial overall height and massing. It would therefore be an overly dominant and incongruous addition to the site and would compete with the heritage asset. It is acknowledged that the proposal has been modelled upon a building of vernacular tradition and the elevations would be finished in stone to match the main farmhouse. However, this does not outweigh the harm caused to the historic setting of the heritage asset as a result of the size and positioning of the proposed garage.
11. Given the above, the proposal would be harmful to the setting of Wilkinsons Farmhouse. The Framework is clear that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Due to the scale of the proposal and given that it would only affect part of the setting of the building and would not alter its built form, the level of harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial, having regard to the approach set out in paragraph 193 of the

Framework. Where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

12. The proposed garage could accommodate two vehicles and the appellant notes that this would allow cars to be parked out of sight away from the front elevation of the heritage asset. However, there would be no mechanism to prohibit the parking of vehicles in the existing driveway even if the proposed garage was erected. As such, I consider the benefits of this proposal to be solely private and do not therefore outweigh the harm that I have found.
13. Accordingly, I conclude that this proposal would fail to preserve the setting of the listed building and would not meet the statutory requirements of the Act. Furthermore, it would conflict with guidance in the Framework and policies DME4 and DMG1 and Key Statement EN5 of the Core Strategy 2008-2028, A Local Plan for Ribble Valley (December 2014) (the 'CS'), which collectively seek to ensure proposals conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings.

Character and Appearance

14. The proposed garage would be located in the side garden of the host dwelling. This area is well screened from the highway due to a high boundary wall and mature planting. This proposal would include the loss of four trees. I observed that three of the trees were ornamental and set-off the boundary, and therefore do not contribute to existing levels of screening. The fourth is positioned close to the southern boundary of the site.
15. I note the comments of the Council's Tree Officer that, individually, the trees do not have significant amenity value but collectively they do make a contribution. Be that as it may, I am not satisfied that their loss and thus any potential effect on the streetscene could not be mitigated by way of additional tree planting, controlled via a condition. Further, a condition could also seek to prevent any damage to other trees during the construction phase.
16. Consequently, I find that the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area through the loss of trees. As such, it would not conflict with policies DME1 and DME2 and Key Statement EN2 of the CS which collectively seek to ensure developments protect or do not significantly harm trees and are in keeping with the character of the landscape.

Conclusion and Recommendation

17. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Hannah Ellison

Appeal Planning Officer

Inspector's Decision

18. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Susan Ashworth

INSPECTOR

