



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 April 2026

by N Bromley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 April 2026

Appeal Ref: 6003478

Top House Farm, Rhosygadfa, Gobowen, Shropshire SY10 7BP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr. Justin Stevenson against the decision of Shropshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/04231/FUL.
 - The development proposed is renovation of existing dwelling including external insulation, render and timber cladding, new glazing and porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr. Justin Stevenson against the decision of Shropshire Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matter

3. The address on the application form includes reference to 'Road To Top Farm'. This is a description of the location, rather than part of the address. For this reason, I have omitted it from the banner heading above.

Main Issue

4. The effect of the proposed development on the host property, with regard to its significance as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA), and the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises Top House Farm, a farmhouse and a collection of former agricultural buildings accessed from the road by a long track. The property is located within the open countryside, and the surrounding area is remote and rural in character.
6. The farmhouse is attached to a former barn, which partially forms part of the main house. There are other buildings opposite and a neighbouring barn conversion, known as The Redlands, to the side. The Council identify that the collection of buildings forms a nineteenth century historic farmstead, which they consider to be a NDHA.
7. Despite The Redlands now being separated from Top House Farm by a brick wall and planting, and the access arrangements changing over time, the group of buildings, laid out in a courtyard arrangement, largely retain their original form and

appearance as a farmstead. Indeed, as you approach the appeal site from the long access drive, the cluster of buildings are viewed as a traditional farmstead. As such, even though it does not appear on an adopted Local List, I do not find the designation of the historic farmstead as a NDHA unreasonable.

8. The Planning Practice Guidance¹ establishes that an NDHA can be identified through a number of processes including when determining applications. Likewise, Historic England Advice Note 7 'Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage' also identifies that an NDHA can be established during decision making on planning applications.
9. The significance of the farmhouse and the historic farmstead, as an NDHA, largely derives from the layout of the buildings, their age and traditional appearance, which are their main visual qualities. Indeed, despite the addition of unsympathetic windows to the attached former barn, which is also in a state of disrepair, the buildings are attractive. Particularly in the context of the courtyard setting. In addition, although the history of the site and buildings, as a farmstead is limited, there remains a degree of historic interest from the previous agricultural use of the buildings, as well as their age and appearance. As such, the farmhouse and farmstead have local heritage significance, which also makes a positive contribution to the prevailing rural character and appearance of the area.
10. The main farmhouse, with red orange brickwork, a Welsh slate roof, sash windows, with stone head lintels and sills, retains its original appearance. With its contrasting brickwork and rustic appearance, the former barn, even with some previous alterations and additions, also retains its original appearance. In combination, the farmhouse and barn act as the main focal buildings within the site which contribute positively to the character of the historic farmstead.
11. In contrast, the proposed render, timber cladding, new, grey aluminium windows and doors would have a contemporary appearance which would be abrupt and inharmonious within the context of the site and surrounding rural character of the area. In particular, the loss of the sash windows, stone head lintels and sills, and the replacement with smaller, featureless windows, with a varied size and shape would exacerbate the incongruous appearance of the proposed works to the external façade of the original farmhouse. As a result, the stark appearance of the proposed development would harm the appearance and setting of the attractive farmstead.
12. While I acknowledge that the existing UPVC windows are not original and the works previously undertaken did not respect the original openings, the original form, scale and appearance of the barn and farmhouse is largely preserved. Therefore, I am not persuaded that the proposed works are necessary to provide visual improvements to the external appearance of the buildings, as suggested by the appellant.
13. In combination, the proposed works would be unacceptably harmful to the character and appearance of the existing buildings, which would harmfully impact the relationship between the buildings making up the group. As well as harm to the historic interest of the farmstead.

¹ Paragraph 040 Reference ID: 18a-040-20190723

14. As the layout of the buildings would not change, the harm to the significance of the NDHA would be moderate overall. Nevertheless, I attach considerable importance and weight to the identified harm.
15. Furthermore, for similar reasons to those set out above, although there are rendered buildings locally, and I observed some modern external cladding on other buildings nearby, the proposed development, which does not represent a high-quality design, would not complement the character and quality of the rural surroundings. Therefore, the proposed works would be discordant within the landscape.
16. Consequently, for the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the host property, with regard to its significance as a non-designated heritage asset, and the character and appearance of the area, such that it would negatively affect its significance. Therefore, it would conflict with Policy CS6 of the Shropshire Core Strategy 2011 and Policies MD2 and MD13 of the Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan 2015, which together and amongst other things, require high quality design and development proposals that protect, conserve, and enhance the historic context and character of heritage assets.

Other Matter

17. I acknowledge the appellants comments with regard to the Council's handling of the planning application. Nevertheless, I confirm that I have considered the appeal scheme on its planning merits.

Heritage Planning Balance

18. The Framework states that the planning system should be genuinely plan led. The development plan is the starting point for decision making and I must make my decision in accordance with it unless other considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), at paragraph 216, sets out that, in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
19. There would be moderate harm to the significance of the NDHA. The proposed development would refurbish the existing dwelling, providing increased energy insulation for the buildings. Likewise, the proposed render, cladding and new windows and doors would improve air tightness to maximise the effectiveness of the improved insulation throughout the house. I also acknowledge that an internal insulation scheme would not be feasible in this case due to a reduction in internal dimensions of the buildings, and that due to structural issues with the existing building, some demolition and rebuilding works would be necessary. Even so, I am not persuaded that the proposal is the only viable solution to repair and refurbish the buildings.
20. Paragraph 167 of the Framework attaches significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings to which I attribute positive weight as a public benefit. However, there is no substantive evidence that an alternative design approach, which would secure similar energy efficiency improvements, and have a less harmful design, would not achieve similar benefits. As such I attribute limited positive weight to this factor.

21. Overall, whilst I recognise the energy efficiency improvements of the proposed scheme, it should not come at the unacceptable expense to the NDHA or the character and appearance of the area. Indeed, there would be unacceptable and long-lasting harm, and this matter is decisive. In the absence of robust evidence to demonstrate otherwise, I therefore find that the benefits of the development would not outweigh the harm I have identified and the development plan conflict.

Conclusion

22. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that indicate that the development should be determined otherwise than in accordance with it. For these reasons, and having regard to all matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

N Bromley

INSPECTOR