

Application No: 19/0402M

Location: BOOTH BANK FARM, REDDY LANE, MILLINGTON, CHESHIRE, WA14 3RE

Proposal: Listed building consent for Alterations, extensions and external repairs to Booth Bank Farmhouse, to include removal of existing UPVC porch and conservatory, and construction of extended contemporary new extension.

Applicant: Trustees of, Children's Adventure Farm Trust

Expiry Date: 02-Jul-2021

SUMMARY

The application site is the Children's Adventure Farm Trust, an outdoor activity centre based around the Grade-II listed Booth Bank Farmhouse.

The application seeks listed building consent for extensions and alterations to the main farmhouse and alterations to the stables building. Other works proposed, including the new wing and landscaping works, require planning permission but do not require listed building consent.

The new extension would result in less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset.

However, the proposed extension would address a number of operation issues that the Trust face, including providing wheelchair access to the farmhouse and dining room, which is not currently possible.

It has also been demonstrated that alternative locations have been considered and justifiably discounted.

On balance, the health, well-being and inclusivity benefits of the proposal amount to the public benefits required to outweigh the harm to the designated heritage asset.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is being considered by the Northern Planning Committee owing to the public interest of the application and the identified harm to a Grade-II listed building.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The application site is the Children's Adventure Farm Trust (CAFT), located at Booth Bank Farm, at the junction of Booth Bank Lane, Reddy Lane and Millington Lane.

The site comprises the former Booth Bank farmhouse (Grade II listed), with a converted 'U' shaped barn to the immediate rear, with open spaces, animal paddocks, and a large sports hall further to the rear. The site also includes various smaller structures, parking areas, and a woodland activity area to the north-east of the site, abutting the motorway.

There is a significant change in levels across the site. The land around the farmhouse complex rises up from the site frontage.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application relates to the works requiring listed building consent only. Other elements of the proposed works do not require listed building consent and have not been considered as part of this application (new wing and hard landscaping works)

The scheme has been amended during the lifetime of the application. The proposed works and amendments are detailed below:

Farmhouse:

- Alterations and repairs to the farmhouse
- Removal of existing conservatory and other later extensions
- New wraparound side and rear extension/conservatory, this would be a flat-roofed glazed structure, with a green roof.
- Internal rearrangements at ground floor level. The kitchen and dining areas would be re-located into the new extension, along with an accessible WC.

Alterations to the converted barns:

- Minor alterations to fenestration
- Internal re-arranging to provide enlarged office and store areas.
- Alterations to the residential accommodation provided and additional bedroom space at first floor level

Following feedback from the heritage officer during determination, revised plans were submitted with the following changes:

- Provision of additional bed spaces in the converted barns and corresponding reduction in officer space; changes to the proposed internal layout and external changes to the barns
- Additional removal of a lean-to extension from the farmhouse
- Reduction of the proposed farmhouse extension

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

19/0334M – pending consideration

Development of a new residential wing with ancillary office and children's activity space; alterations, extensions and repairs to Booth Bank Farmhouse, access and landscaping at Booth Bank Farm, Millington.

19/4912M – approved – 19 December 2019

Retrospective application for security lighting fixed to existing sports hall, siting of low-level solar lighting and security lighting to footway

10/1012M – approved – 13 March 2012

Erection of proposed machinery store

10/0889M – approved – 26 May 2010

Retrospective planning approval for: parking area - 669 sqm; tarmac area - 666sqm; aviary - 16.38 sqm; climbing frame - 90.25 sqm; fence - 191m length - 2.5m height

09/0277P – approved – 16 February 2011

Variation of condition 6 on application 82087P (retrospective)

09/0273P – approved – 16 February 2011

Variation of condition 3 attached to permission 99/2343P (retrospective)

04/2979P – approved – 25 January 2005

Formation of private pathway for wheelchair access

04/1958P – withdrawn - 17 August 2004

Re-surfacing of central section of existing driveway with tarmac

03/1355P – approved – 24 July 2003

Formation of a countryside access trail in place of former go kart track

00/0559P – permitted development – 18 April 2000

Retention of change of use of first floor recreational area to ancillary offices

99/2343P – approved – 5 January 2000

Proposed playground/adventure trail

99/1600P – refused – 6 October 1999

Installation of playground equipment

99/0386P – refused – 26 May 1999

Children's adventure playground

83245P – approved - 31 January 1996

Formation of car park to serve Booth Bank Farm

82503P – refused – 11 October 1995
Retention and surfacing of car park to serve Booth Bank Farm

82807P – approved – 16 August 1995
Sports hall/play barn and ancillary facilities (amended orientation from that approved by 5/77034P of 20 July 1994)

77034P – approved – 20 July 1994
Sports Hall/play barn and ancillary facilities

62912P - approved - 30 May 1990
Change of use from farm buildings to residential accommodation and workshops including extension

62868P – approved – 30 May 1990
Alterations and extensions to building

62867P – approved – 30 May 1990
Outbuildings change of use from farm use to residential/workshop use including extension to provide extra workshop accommodation all materials to match existing

62866P – approved – 30 May 1990
Change of use from residential to institutional residential

POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles
SC 3 Health and Well-Being
SE 1 Design
SE 7 The Historic Environment

It should be noted that the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy was formally adopted on 27th July 2017. There are however policies within the legacy local plans that still apply and have not yet been replaced. These policies are set out below.

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan

BE2 Preservation of Historic Fabric
BE15 Listed Buildings
BE18 Design Criteria for Listed Buildings

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Cheshire East Design Guide

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
National Planning Practice Guidance

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Millington Parish Council

The Parish Council feel that the roof of the new building is not in keeping with the existing listed farmhouse or other properties in the Parish, some of which are also listed. Also this is greenbelt land and very close to other residents who obviously came to live in the area to enjoy the views and peace and quiet of the countryside, we don't feel this has been given consideration when these plans were submitted due to the siting and size of the new building.

REPRESENTATIONS

Representations received from 5 addresses, in support of the proposal. The main points are summarised below:

- Farm is an amazing place for students to develop in confidence, independence and social skills and have a lot of fun participating in activities with their peers.
- Due to complex needs, high staffing levels required as the farm is not fully secure, and wheelchair users block space in the dining areas and lounge,
- Equipment for medical and behavioural needs takes up a lot of room.
- More modern spaces and equipment would ensure a safer, better quality environment to suit the needs of the students.
- Improvements to the buildings would provide an enhanced experience.
- CAFT offers platform for children and young people facing very challenging situations to meet others in similar circumstances
- Development would ensure there is even more space truly accessible to children with disabilities.
- Proposal would improve the facilities and efficiency of the site, whilst preserving the heritage of the farmhouse
- CAFT discussed the application in detail with neighbours
- In favour of providing access for visiting children so traffic is reduced
- No objections to delivery area
- Could the land on the opposite side of Millington Lane be used as a car park – reducing traffic on shared access lane
- Development needed to make the farm more accessible and inclusive for all.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

The main farmhouse is a Grade-II listed building, which dates from circa 1670, with later 19th century additions. There also appear to have been various extensions, dating from the second half of the 20th century, following its listing in 1959. These additions include a porch and UPVC conservatory, as well as alterations to fenestration. The porch and conservatory appear to be unlawful, as there is no record of them having received listed building consent.

Immediately to the north of the listed farmhouse is a 'U' shaped barn, which appears to have originally been a stable complex. This building is present on the first edition ordnance survey map, dating from 1875. It appears to have been subsequently extended.

While the stable building is not listed in itself, it lies within the curtilage of the listed building and pre-dates 1948. It is also within the same ownership. Given these factors, it is considered to be a curtilage listed building.

Listed Buildings are designated heritage assets for the purposes of NPPF chapter 16 and CELPS policy SE 7. NPPF paragraph 184 confirms that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Paragraph 193 states that:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph NPPF 194 notes that:

“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 196, *“where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”*

CELPS Policy SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles notes that all development will be expected to respect, and where possible enhance, the significance of heritage assets, including their wider settings.

Policy SE 7 notes that the Council will support development proposals that do not cause harm to, or which better reveal the significance of heritage assets and will seek to avoid or minimise conflict between the conservation of a heritage asset and any aspect of a development proposal. In the case of designated heritage assets, SE 7 notes that this will be done by:

i. Requiring development proposals that cause harm to, or loss of, a designated heritage asset and its significance, including its setting, to provide a clear and convincing justification as to why that harm is considered acceptable. Where that case cannot be demonstrated, proposals will not be supported.

ii. Considering the level of harm in relation to the public benefits that may be gained by the proposal.

iii. The use of appropriate legal agreements or planning obligations to secure the benefits arising from a development proposal where the loss, in whole or in part, of a heritage asset is accepted.

Additionally, in accordance with the Section 16 and 66 of the 1990 Act, when making a decision on all listed building consent applications or any decision on a planning application for development that affects a listed building or its setting, a local planning authority must 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. Preservation in this context means not harming the interest in the building, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.

The application is supported by a Heritage Statement which describes the significance of the heritage asset and assesses the impact of the proposals upon the significance.

The Conservation Officer assessed the proposals for the site and raised a number of concerns regarding the impact on the listed building. Following on from these concerns, amendments were made. Those relevant to this application include:

- Alterations to the fenestration on the barn.
- Reduction in scale of the proposed extension and moving it back further from the frontage of the building

These amendments have addressed the initial concerns relating to the barns. However, there are still outstanding concerns relating to the proposed farmhouse extension.

The Conservation Officer's latest comments in respect of the proposed extension are as follows

"The amendments relate only to the conservatory addition; no significant amendments have been proposed to the new block or wider hard landscaping. Whilst the conservatory has been reduced in size and pushed back from the front elevation, it still remains a large addition which will be prominent in wider views and in my opinion out of scale with this small farm building. The two parts of the scheme are in very close proximity and when read in conjunction will appear overly dominant and incongruous. In the absence of amendments to

the hard landscaping and location, scale of the new block I am unfortunately unable to alter my position with regard to this application, and remain of the view that it will cause a high degree of less than substantial harm to the historic building and its wider setting.”

The conclusions of the Council’s Conservation Officer in terms of the impact on the listed building and its setting are noted and agreed with. The proposed extension would still be a sizeable structure in relation to the relatively modest proportions of the host building.

The cumulative impact of the new wing and extension and areas of hardstanding would appear overly dominant and detract from the relatively modestly proportioned listed farmhouse. It is agreed that the development would result in a high level of ‘less than substantial harm’.

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 196, this harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriated securing its optimum viable use.

Public Benefits

Health, Wellbeing, and Inclusivity

NPPF chapter 8 focuses on promoting healthy and safe communities.

Paragraph 91 states that amongst other matters planning decisions should promote social interaction and be safe and accessible. This paragraph also states that planning decisions should:

“Enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling”

Amongst other matters, paragraph 92 states that in order to provide social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning decisions should:

- Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- Take in account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community
- Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services

At a local level, CELPS policies SD 1, SD2 and SC 3 are of particular relevance.

SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East notes that development should wherever possible, *inter alia*:

- *Provide appropriate infrastructure to meet the needs of the local community including: education; health and social care; transport; communication technology; landscaping and open space; sport and leisure; community facilities; water; waste water; and energy;*
- *Provide access to local jobs, services and facilities, reflecting the community's needs;*
- *Support the health, safety, social and cultural well-being of the residents of Cheshire East;*
- *Contribute towards the achievement of equality and social inclusion through positive cooperation with the local community;*

Policy SD 2 sets out the LPA's sustainable development principles. At vi), it states that all development will be expected to be socially inclusive and, where suitable integrate into the local community.

Policy SC 3 deals with Health and well-being. The following are considered of particular relevance:

"3. Ensuring new developments provide opportunities for healthy living and improve health and well-being through the encouragement of walking and cycling, good housing design (including the minimisation of social isolation and creation of inclusive communities), access to services, sufficient open space and other green infrastructure, and sports facilities and opportunity for recreation and sound safety standards.

5. Protecting existing community infrastructure and ensuring the provision of a network of community facilities, providing essential public services together with private and voluntary sector facilities, to meet the needs of the local community."

The public benefits put forward by the applicant in support of their case primarily revolve around the work of the Trust, which as detailed above provides holidays free of charge to disadvantaged and disabled children in the North-west.

The Trust enables children, who likely would not otherwise have the opportunity to do so, to have a holiday in the countryside. There is no doubt that the Trust, as an established community facility, provides an invaluable service to some of the most vulnerable children and their families.

The Trust has identified a number of areas of the current operation, which need addressing. They state that the application has been submitted for this reason, rather than to grow or significantly expand the existing operation:

1. Safeguarding: *The present situation on site can be dangerous to children and carers. Delivery vehicles and drivers, enter the courtyard to unload goods into the stores and farmhouse where children are playing, creating an immediate risk to the children. In addition, the children need to reach the gym and other attractions up the slope to the east. Able bodied children and carers can use the stepped ramp (1 in 6) behind the*

farmhouse, but disabled children in wheelchairs have to be pushed up the road around the courtyard buildings by carers, bringing them into immediate conflict with CAFT vehicular traffic, and with the traffic to Booth Bank Cottage.

2. Access into the site: *Because of the safeguarding issues outlined (...) above, there is the need to separate the children and the vehicles. The vehicle route to the west side of the outbuildings can remain, but the courtyard must be traffic free, with children moving around the site safely. Most particularly, the proposal is to create a new vehicle delivery area to the north side of the courtyard outbuilding by cutting into the hillside and also creating a new goods delivery door into the north elevation. This removes vehicles from the courtyard, whilst the children are removed from the road.*
3. Access around the site: *The farmhouse and the courtyard act as the 'hub' of the CAFT operation, but the gym, farm and animals, barbeque, adventure play facilities, etc are all sited up the slope at 4 metres or more above the lower level. There is therefore the need to create a safe and easily usable route to travel between the two.*
4. Additional accommodation: *The Planning Statement details the need for the facilities of the charity and how it could potentially benefit more children. CAFT, therefore, wish to make a modest increase to the accommodation for overnight stays (children are either day visitors, or overnight/over-weekend visitors) to be able to offer more help and be more efficient. In addition, the charity lives and exists purely by income from donations and additional staff are needed to help to increase these donations; extra admin space is therefore required.*

In April 2020, various addendums to the planning, heritage and design and access statements were submitted. These accompanied the submission of revised plans, which included a reduction in the areas given over to office space.

The planning statement addendum provides further details regarding the existing operational issues, and in particular the shortcomings with the accommodation.

It is stated that at present the trust struggles with a lack of flexibility and lack of disabled accommodation and inclusivity.

The farmhouse accommodates 16 children's bed spaces, which are unsuitable for disabled children. Carers are not able to provide 1:1 care in the farmhouse and bathroom facilities are shared. The second-floor bedrooms are only able to accommodate younger children due to low ceiling heights. At present the farmhouse includes the dining facilities, but these cannot be accessed by wheelchair users. As such children, who use wheelchairs, have to dine separately to able bodied children.

The proposed extension would incorporate a larger kitchen and a dining area, which would be fully accessible for wheelchair users.

This extension to the farmhouse forms part of the wider scheme, which includes a new wing. It is clear that the proposals, of which the extension forms a part, would address genuine operational issues at the Trust. The proposals would allow for more visitors, and visitors with a greater range of needs, to benefit from the services that CAFT offer.

The proposal would clearly advance the aims of CELPS policies SD 1, SD 2 and SC 3, in regard to inclusivity, health and well-being. It is considered that this is a public benefit which carries weight in favour of the proposal.

Other Benefits

Securing the optimal future long-term use of the building

It is not considered that it has been demonstrated that the proposed works are necessary to secure the optimal future long-term use of the building. Reference has been made in the submission to the benefits of removing the existing extensions from the building, including the existing conservatory. However, it is considered that the net effect of the proposals would be harmful, even considering the removal of any existing elements.

There is nothing to indicate that the building would not continue to be used by the Trust in the event that planning permission is refused. As such, this is not considered to carry weight in favour of the proposal.

The opportunity exists to improve the ecological value through landscaping and planting which will mitigate against the loss of the small area of existing amenity grassland taken by the new proposed wing. Further recommendations are contained in the report relating to the construction phase and include further mitigation opportunities for example through native species planting and bird boxes.

As these recommendations only seek to mitigate harm which will result from the development, no positive weight can be attributed to such opportunities. Furthermore, CELPS policy SE 3 requires all developments to aim to positively contribute to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity and should not negatively affect these interests. The provision of ecological enhancements is required to comply with this policy. It is therefore a neutral factor in the assessment of this application.

Planning Balance

The extension to the farmhouse, the new wing and the new areas of hard landscaping would result in less than substantial harm to the listed building and its setting. While not reaching the threshold for substantial harm, overall, the level of harm to the listed building and its setting would still be high.

In accordance with NPPF paragraph 196, the Local Planning Authority is obliged to weigh the less than substantial harm against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The development would allow the Trust to provide enhanced facilities for vulnerable children. The applicants have also demonstrated that alternative means of providing the requisite accommodation have been considered and discounted. The applicant has also proposed repairs to the listed building as part of the development. This carries modest weight in favour of the development, as a public benefit. To ensure that these repairs are carried out, this will

be required by condition. While the level of harm to the designated heritage asset is high, there are also compelling public benefits, which outweigh this harm.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed extension to the farmhouse would result in less than substantial harm to the listed building.

The proposal would address a number of operational issues that the Trust currently face, including matters relating to accessibility, inclusivity, accommodation for disabled children and vehicle/pedestrian conflict.

It is considered that the health, well-being and inclusivity benefits amount to the public benefits necessary to outweigh the harm to the designated heritage asset. The application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the application for listed building consent be approved subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement of development – three years**
- 2. Development in accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Samples of materials**
- 4. Large scale details – extension**
- 5. Metal rainwater goods**
- 6. Schedule of repairs and implementation prior to first use (farmhouse)**

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions / informatives / planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Northern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.



