Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 4 September 2025

by A James BSc (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th September 2025

Appeal A: APP/Z3825/W/25/3361433
The Coach House, The Hollow, Washington, West Sussex RH20 3DA

- 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 Mrs Amanda Davis against the decision of Horsham District Council.
- The application reference is DC/24/1653.
- The development is described as 'retrospective application for solar panels'.

Appeal B: APP/Z3825/Y/25/3362126
The Coach House, The Hollow, Washington, West Sussex RH20 3DA

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
- The appeal is made by Mrs Amanda Davis against the decision of Horsham District Council.
- The application reference is DC/24/1460.
- The works are described as 'install solar panels to the roof.'

Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.

2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. Section 1(5)b of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) states that a listed building includes 'any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948.' The main parties disagree on whether the appeal property is curtilage listed and therefore should be treated as part of the listed building, known as 'Rock House' (Ref: 1182011). The appellant advises that they were informed by their solicitor that the building was not listed and embarked on the works believing they were permitted development. There is insufficient information before me to come to a definitive finding on this matter. However, listed building consent was granted for the conversion of The Coach House to a dwelling in 1996. The appellant has also submitted a listed building consent application for the appeal scheme, which I have determined accordingly.

4. As the appeal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Act.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the appeal scheme preserves a Grade II listed building, known as 'Rock House' and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

6. Rock House is a Grade II listed building, which dates back to the early-19th century. It is two storeys high with a hipped slate roof. Attached to Rock House is a two storey dwelling, which has a tiled roof and historically provided accommodation for the housekeeper at Rock House. The Coach House lies a short distance away from the principal listed building and is separated by a modern boundary wall. The Coach House is modest in size and has a pitched roof, which is finished with tiles. It is estimated that The Coach House dates back to the 18th century. While The Coach House has been converted to residential use, its historic use remains legible through its overall design, including the cart doors and the retention of historic fabric. The appeal property and Rock House form part of a small group of historic buildings, which are access via a private driveway off The Hollow.

7. From the evidence before me, the special interest and significance of Rock House mainly stems from its architectural and historic interests, as an illustration of architecture from around the 18th and 19th centuries, with associated outbuildings. The building's surviving historic fabric, the presence of traditional materials and its rural surrounds make important contributions in these regards. Pertinent to these appeals, The Coach House has historic, physical and functional associations, which support the heritage value as part of this group. Moreover, while The Coach House has been altered as part of its conversion, its modest agrarian form, design and materials are still legible. For these reasons, The Coach House contributes in a positive way to the special interest and significance of Rock House as a designated heritage asset.

8. The solar panels are sited on the roof slope that faces towards Rock House. They cover a large expanse of this roof slope and introduce an engineered and artificial material, which appears incongruous in the historic environment. The solar panels harmfully jar with the other more traditional and natural materials found on this historic group of buildings and detract from the authenticity and integrity of the heritage asset. There is also intervention into the historic fabric of the building due to the installation of the solar panels on the roof.

9. Given the orientation of the building, its set back position from the highway and the intervening mature landscaping, there are only limited views of the solar panels from the public realm. Glimpsed views of the solar panels exist near to a bend in the road. I acknowledge that there is no public footpath along this stretch of the road and such views are filtered by vegetation. However, even when the trees are in leaf, the solar panels are visible and harmfully discord with the other more traditional materials found on the listed building. While I appreciate that these are only glimpsed views, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building, or any of their curtilage structures can be gained.

10. Both main parties refer to Historic England's guidance on 'Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency' (2024). This guidance among other things advises that roof slopes of less prominence will generally provide the more

acceptable place to install solar panels, even if they would be visible. However, the extent and form of the solar panels do not respect, nor successfully integrate with, the agrarian form and character of the historic Coach House. As such, they weaken the contribution the appeal property makes to the special interest and significance of Rock House.

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal scheme fails to preserve the special interest of the listed building. Given the nature and extent of the development and works, I find the harm to the significance of the listed building to be 'less than substantial' and at the lower end of the scale. However, this should not be equated with a less than substantial planning objection and is of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the appeal scheme, including where appropriate, securing the asset's optimum viable use.

12. There is a small economic benefit associated with the installation of the panels, which I give limited weight in my decision as a public benefit. The solar panels generate green energy and help to meet the government's target of achieving net zero. They enable the appellant to charge their cars, providing a clean source of energy, which also benefits local air quality. Paragraph 168 of the Framework requires that significant weight is given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation. However, this does not disapply other parts of the Framework, including paragraphs 202 and 213. These paragraphs state that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance and 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.'

13. In this case, there is no compelling evidence before me that the location, technology used and the extent and design of the scheme equates to the least harmful option for securing these public benefits. Accordingly, clear and convincing justification for the harm that has occurred to the significance of the designated heritage asset has not been demonstrated. There is also no substantive evidence that the appeal scheme is necessary in order to secure the optimum viable use of the asset. Nonetheless, even when affording significant weight to the public benefits of the appeal scheme, they do not outweigh the great weight, which is required to be given to the conservation of heritage assets.

14. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal scheme fails to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building. The appeal scheme fails to comply with the requirements of the Act and the historic environment policies of the Framework. Conflict also arises with Policies 32, 33 and 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework November 2015. These policies among other things require that development sustains and enhances the historic environment, while ensuring clear legibility of locally distinctive vernacular building forms and their settings, features, fabric and materials.

Other Matters

15. I acknowledge the support received by the Ward Councillors for the appeal scheme. However, this does not alter my findings set out above.

Conclusion

16. **Appeal A:** The appeal scheme conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no other material considerations, including the Framework, that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, for the reasons given above, Appeal A should be dismissed.

17. **Appeal B:** For the reasons given above, Appeal B should be dismissed.

A James

INSPECTOR