

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 October 2016

by Roger Catchpole DipHort BSc(hons) PhD MCIEEM

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 8 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/Y/16/3147674

Selby House Annex, Stanton, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 8PR

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs R and E Potts against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref: 15/02278/LBC, dated 3 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 9 October 2015.
 - The works proposed are the addition of a fire escape balcony.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and listed building consent is refused for the addition of a fire escape balcony.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether or not the proposed works would preserve a Grade II listed building, Selby House Farmhouse and Adjacent Outbuilding and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses

Reasons

3. The building was originally listed in 1986 and was constructed around 1860 with 17th century elements incorporated in the rear of the main house and the adjoining, southern outbuilding. The main house comprises a single range of substantial massing consisting of two stories with a tooled, square stone façade with simple dressings and a slate roof. The adjoining outbuilding has a substantially reduced massing and is set back from the front elevation of the main house to a significant extent. This is constructed from matching materials and has two, low storeys. The rear elevations of both elements have rubble walls. The consistent use of materials and architectural features with relatively little modification is such that the building has a cohesive appearance. Given the above, I find that the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily related to its simple vernacular architecture and uncluttered form.
 4. The appeal property is situated in a remote rural location to the northwest of Morpeth. It is one of a number of dwellings arranged along a single road that form the small hamlet of Stanton. The proposed works would lead to the attachment of a purpose-built steel balcony with railings on the southern gable end of the adjoining outbuilding which has been converted for use as a holiday
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- let. It would have a span of approximately 1.75 m and project approximately 0.5 m.
5. I observe from the plans and my site visit that the proposed works would lead to the installation of a highly incongruent, alien feature that would be at odds with the simple vernacular form of the listed building. This would be highly disruptive to the original form of the building and as such I find that the works would fail to preserve its special interest. As a result I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of this appeal.
 6. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. It goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets. Given the scale and nature of the works, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance.
 7. Under such circumstances, paragraph 134 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of optimal viable use. The appellants are of the opinion that the works are required as an additional fire safety measure to supplement an existing means of escape comprising a glazed door in the gable end of the first floor of the converted outbuilding.
 8. I acknowledge the appellants concerns over the suitability of this escape in relation to elderly, infirm or corpulent guests. However, the size and position of the egress would remain the same and I am not satisfied that a sufficient case has been made to justify the need for the balcony. I also note that the Council's own building control officer found the existing measures to be sufficient when professionally assessed.
 9. Whilst a reference has been made to discussions with an insurance company, their role in this matter is unclear. Even if the balcony is a requirement of an insurance policy for holiday accommodation, it is open to the appellants to use a different insurance company to achieve a more favourable outcome. Consequently, I find that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the viable use of the converted outbuilding for short term holiday accommodation would not be possible in the absence of the proposed works.
 10. Whilst the harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial, I have no substantiated evidence before me to suggest that any public benefit would outweigh that harm. I therefore conclude that the works would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building. This would conflict with paragraph 134 of the Framework and local policies insofar as they seek to implement the Act.

Conclusion

11. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Roger Catchpole

INSPECTOR