

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2016

by Nicholas Taylor BA(Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 7th December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/K3415/Y/16/3154331

Ashmore Brook Farm, Cross in Hand Lane, Farewell, Lichfield WS13 8DY

- 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 Paul Broome against the decision of Lichfield District Council.
 - The application Ref 15/01165/LBC, dated 6 September 2015, was refused by notice dated 7 July 2016.
 - The works proposed are glazed extension with duo pitched roof and glazed gable.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The original application was made by Mr Peter Elton (Royal Oak Buildings). He has subsequently confirmed that he was purely acting as agent and hence the appeal has proceeded in the names of Mr and Mrs Broome.
3. A number of plans and drawings are listed in the Council's decision report. It was confirmed to me at the site visit that drawing No. LDC 02A shows the amended elevations on which the Council based its decision and, consequently, this is the elevation drawing which I have used in reaching my decision. Various earlier versions and alternatives which were discussed between the parties, together with drawing No. 06A, described as an artist's impression and submitted after the application was determined, differ in detail from LDC 02A and so do not form the basis of my decision.

Main Issue

4. The appeal concerns a Grade II listed building. Consequently, the main issue in this case is whether the proposal would preserve the listed building or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses (i.e. its significance).

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a detached farmhouse, standing within generous gardens, slightly apart from the other farm buildings and yards, among open countryside.
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6. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) requires that the significance of a heritage asset should be established, to a level proportionate with the asset's importance. All listed buildings, regardless of their grade, are irreplaceable heritage assets and are, by definition, of national significance. In this case, I have been given limited detail regarding the significance of the building but it is clear that the central section has its origins in a medieval timber framed hall house, subsequently floored-in during the 17th Century. East and west wings were added, producing an 'H' plan, and further additions and alterations made up to the 19th Century. More recent external alterations appear to be relatively minor. All in all, therefore, the building possesses considerable historic and aesthetic value. Moreover, the back of the house, on which the proposed works would be situated, is no less important, interesting or attractive than the other elevations and contributes positively to the building's significance.
7. The proposal would involve the addition of a timber framed, single storey garden room to one wing of the house. The Council does not object in principle to the proposed main structure but is mainly concerned with its detailed form and, in particular, with the design of a flat-roofed link from the existing, brick-built, back porch to the garden room. I see no strong reason to disagree with the Council's general assessment of the impact of the proposals on the building's significance. Whilst the works would involve negligible, if any, loss of historic fabric and would be reversible, they would result in a fairly large extension which would considerably alter the south and east elevations. The back porch is stated to be not original and of limited historic value but it is a small, mellow brick structure which has blended into the overall composition of the rear elevation.
8. In the light of the building's significance, great care is required in the design of an extension such as that proposed. Thus, as the Council acknowledges, a garden room extension could be acceptable in principle, provided that its size was subservient and roof pitch, detailed design and materials were sympathetic to the proportions and appearance of the existing house. I am inclined to be less hostile than the Council to the principle of a flat-roofed, single storey link between the existing porch and the garden room, provided that it would be restrained in size, proportions, materials and details. However, in drawing LDC 02A the elevations lack sufficient accuracy and detail and the details and proportions of the proposed structure appear crude, failing to demonstrate sufficient appreciation of and sensitivity to the listed building. In the circumstances, involving change to a listed building, a precautionary approach is justified and I consider that the submitted scheme's shortcomings cannot be satisfactorily resolved by grant of consent subject to conditions.
9. Therefore, I am not convinced that the proposed works would preserve the listed building or its features of special architectural and historic interest. Consequently, there would be conflict with the clear expectations of Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
10. Core Policies 3 and 14 and Policy BE1 of the *Lichfield and District Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029* have, as a common thread, the protection and enhancement of the District's historic environment. The proposal would conflict with those policies in particular and with the plan as a whole. I have also had

regard to the Council's *Sustainable Design and Historic Environment* supplementary planning documents.

11. Paragraph 132 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposal on a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It confirms that, as I have found in this case, significance can be harmed by alterations to a heritage asset. However, the harm in this case would be less than substantial, in terms of its meaning in paragraph 134 of the Framework. This requires that, in such circumstances, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant acknowledges that the scheme is intended to provide for the increased private enjoyment of the dwelling. I have seen no evidence that it would create any significant public benefit, such as securing the optimum viable use of the building, which would be needed to outweigh the potential harm to the significance of the heritage asset, indicating conflict with the Framework. Nor do the appellants' concerns regarding communication with the Council, including discussion of design options, affect my conclusion on the appeal's planning merits.
12. Whilst the property is located within the Green Belt, the Council has not raised concern, in the context of this listed building appeal, regarding the impact of the proposal on the Green Belt. In those terms, the Green Belt location has little bearing on my overall conclusion.

Conclusion

13. In considering whether to grant listed building consent, the relevant Act requires decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building. Even though the harm would be less than substantial in this case, this overarching statutory duty must be given considerable importance and weight, indicating that the proposal would not be acceptable. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicholas Taylor

INSPECTOR