
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2017

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 07 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/Y/17/3171735

First floor, 18 High Street (formerly the King's Arms), Calne SN11 0BS

- 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 Messrs Anthony Sharp and Paul Bunker against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/10059/LBC, dated 14 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 January 2017.
 - The works proposed are internal alterations to first floor to effect use for residential (C3/C4) purposes.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. 18 High Street is a grade II listed building within the Calne Conservation Area. As required by Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) I have paid special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
3. At the time of my visit I saw that the ground floor of the premises was occupied by a café and hairdressers, and within the first floor the proposed works were underway. There were some differences between what has occurred on site and what has been shown on the submitted drawings. For the avoidance of doubt, I have confined myself to the consideration of the appeal proposal before me, rather than what has occurred on site.

Main Issue

4. 18 High Street is within the Calne Conservation Area. Neither of the main parties has raised an issue with regard to the impact of the proposal upon the conservation area and given that the proposed works are solely internal I have no reason to disagree.
5. On that basis the main issue is whether the internal alterations to the first floor would preserve a listed building or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses.

Reasons

6. The appeal property is a two storey former public house positioned on the corner formed by the junction of High Street and Curzon Street. Constructed of render and brick under a slate roof, the prominent position of the building, its size and elegant style and detailing make it a distinctive and focal building that contributes positively to the conservation area.
7. The original eighteenth century building has been extended with both historic side and rear additions. These extensions are apparent internally from the changes in floor levels and also from the layout of the rooms, including the single depth plan form of the building. The plan form along with the extension of the building over time and the historic fabric from which it is constructed, are all important elements of the significance of this listed building.
8. The proposed internal alterations to the first floor would allow its use for residential purposes including as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). However, to achieve this works would occur to every room, including the hallway. The extent and form of the alterations and works would be such that they would harmfully erode the special interest of the listed building.
9. Although the plan form of the first floor would be retained, the insertion of five ensembles would erode the mostly regular room forms, giving them a contrived appearance that would be at harmful odds with their simple shaped spaciousness. Moreover, within the smaller proposed bedrooms the ensembles would give an unacceptably cramped form to the spaces they would subdivide, with the angled form of bedroom 2 and the proximity of the partition wall of bedroom 1 to the window being particularly contrived. In addition, the provision of a utility cupboard in the hallway would further erode the historic plan form.
10. The reveal of historic fireplaces would be a positive aspect of the proposal. Nevertheless, I share the concerns of the Council as regards the impact of the scheme upon the historic fabric of the building. Some removal of twentieth century fabric would occur, but there would also be the replacement of historic joinery, doors and the use of modern materials such as insulation and plasterboard to overlay remaining historic fabric. The extent of these changes, combined with the subdivision of rooms and the relocation of the kitchen would go beyond repair or maintenance.
11. Moreover, the appellants would remove much of the nineteenth century fabric of the building, considering it to be of low to moderate importance. However, it is part of the historic development of the building, and consequently contributes to its special interest. Whilst it was apparent some historic fabric would remain on site, from the evidence before me much would be lost.
12. It has been pointed out by the appellants that the proposed work would be of benefit to the conservation of the building, that the ensuite partitions would be reversible, and that the scheme would be the most appropriate means of securing a long-term optimum viable use. Be that as it may, the extent of the alterations and works would unacceptably harm the special interest of the listed building, and as such this harm would not result in the optimum use for the first floor.

13. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. I appreciate services have to be updated and made safe and note the appellants consider the proposal would allow the building to evolve to provide safe and modern accommodation. However, there remains a clear statutory requirement to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This is an important duty to which I must give considerable weight, and for the reasons given the internal works would unacceptably harm the special interest of the listed building.
14. The Framework requires that where a development proposal would be less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. There may be a demand for such residential accommodation in the town, but this has not been demonstrated nor that the works would be the only viable use for the first floor. As such the public benefit of the scheme would be modest, and would not outweigh the harm I have found to the special interest of the listed building.

Other Matters

15. Finally, the appellants concern regarding the Council's handling of the application is a procedural matter that falls to be pursued by other means separate from the appeal process and is not for me to consider.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR