



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2017

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 11th September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/Y/17/3171070

30 Homebridge Court, Hatfield Road, Witham, Essex CM8 1GJ

- 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 Matthew Ward against the decision of Braintree District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01717/LBC, dated 5 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2016.
 - The works proposed are fitting of woodburning stove and stainless steel flue.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building known as Homebridge Court (listed as Bridge Hospital) or any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses.

Reasons

3. Homebridge Court is a Grade II listed building that consists of a number of residential units. It was originally built as a workhouse in the first half of the 19th century and subsequently became a hospital before conversion to its current residential use. It is a large complex of buildings that is prominent within the street scene from Hatfield Road and Windsor Close. There is much architectural uniformity and simplicity in terms of materials, detailing and proportions that results in an imposing and austere building complex appropriate to its former use as a workhouse. This uniformity and simplicity of architecture makes an important contribution to the special interest of the listed building and its significance.
4. The Council also refers to the positive contribution the building makes to the adjoining Newland Street Conservation Area. However, I have not been provided with a map to verify the boundaries of the conservation area, so have not been able to give this much consideration.
5. There are a number of modern features on the listed building that reflect its residential use. This includes grey plastic soil vent pipes and rectangular box vents which protrude through the roof slopes in places. However, these pipes and box vents are not prolific, but are spaced across certain roof slopes with some roof slopes exhibiting none. Other features such as television aerials,

satellite dishes, roof lights and security boxes also exist, but are in the minority and/or discreetly placed and designed.

6. 30 Homebridge Court is a single storey building at the rear of the complex which is more modest in scale and appearance to the principal buildings fronting onto Hatfield Road. Nevertheless, it shares many of the same architectural features of the rest of the complex including an unbroken rear roof slope that faces north onto Windsor Close. As such, the building and the roof slope contribute to the special interest and significance of the listed building and are visible passing along the adjoining pavement and road.
7. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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; the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.
8. The proposed works include a stainless steel flue that would be sited towards the middle of rear roof slope of the building towards the eaves. From the details provided, it would project by a metre with an additional rain cap. Due to the relatively limited width, the flue would not result in the loss of much roof fabric. However, it would look out of place with the rest of the listed building complex as a tall metal pipe with a modern design and appearance that does not appear to exist anywhere else. I recognise that as a residential conversion there will be a number of signs of domestic activities. However, the existing soil vent pipes and other modern features do not have the same design or appearance and so do not set a precedent for these works.
9. The flue would detract from the simplicity of the unbroken roof slope and would be highly conspicuous when viewed from Windsor Close due to its stainless steel materials and its prominent siting. Even if the flue were to be painted black, it would still appear overly modern and incongruous. As a consequence, it would fail to preserve the special architectural interest of the listed building and would result in harm to its significance.
10. The harm to significance would be less than substantial as the works would be a small alteration to a large building complex, but nevertheless the harm is still important given the architectural uniformity. However, it does not follow that this less than substantial harm equates to less than substantial planning objection, especially where the statutory test has not been met. Furthermore, paragraph 134 of the NPPF requires less than substantial harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the development.
11. The appellant highlights the costly, inefficient and unreliable nature of the existing electric boiler at No 30. Improving energy efficiency is an important public benefit. I note that the Council does not object to a woodburning stove and would support a less conspicuous location for the flue. While I appreciate that building regulations impose certain requirements for woodburning stoves and flues, it has not been adequately demonstrated that the proposed works are the only solution to improving energy efficiency. Thus, I can only give limited weight to the public benefits of the works, and they do not outweigh the harm I have identified.

12. In conclusion, the proposed works would fail to preserve the special architectural interest of listed building and would harm its significance without adequate public benefits to outweigh that harm. In coming to this conclusion, I have had regard to Policy CS9 of the Braintree Core Strategy 2011 and Policy RLP100 of the Braintree District Local Plan Review 2005. Both policies seek to protect the historic environment and avoid harm to listed buildings.

Conclusion

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

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR