
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2017

by Sarah Colebourne MA, MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11th December 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C1625/Y/17/3180714

Coombe House, The Green, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RG

- 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 Mrs Kate Delhanty against the decision of Stroud District Council.
 - The application Ref S.17/0502/LBC, dated 22 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 5 May 2017.
 - The work proposed is two roof lights to rear slope and alteration of door hood.
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Decisions

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the proposed rooflights.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the proposed door hood and listed building consent is granted for the alteration of door hood at Coombe House, The Green, Sheepscombe, Stroud, GL6 7RG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref S.17/0502/LBC, dated 22 February 2017, subject to the following conditions:-
 - 1) The works hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The works hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 001; Porch.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposals on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building at Coombe House and the setting of the wider group of listed buildings.

Reasons

4. In considering proposals for planning permission, the duty imposed by section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of new development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation. The paragraph goes on to say that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Paragraph 134 requires that where the harm is less than substantial, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the

- proposal. The development plan includes policy ES10 of the Stroud District Local Plan (LP) (2015) which reflects the statutory duty and accords with the Framework.
5. Coombe House is a grade II listed building built in the C17th. From what I saw at my site visit and on the basis of the submitted evidence, I would agree with the appellant who considers that its significance lies in its evidential and historical value as a little altered and good example of traditional Cotswold construction and design. It also has aesthetic value as identified in the design and access statement by reason of its overall simplicity of form, its patina of age and its location. Coombe House is seen within the context of a number of other listed buildings in the area, in particular Malthouse Farm opposite and a barn to the west.
 6. The proposals include alterations to the door hood on the front elevation which the Council considers acceptable. The alterations include the removal of the existing pitched roof door hood which is not original and its replacement with a new flat roof in a similar design to that shown in the appellant's photo of the building in around 1900. It is clear from the appellant's evidence and from my site inspection that the alteration is necessary for structural reasons and would enhance the significance of the building.
 7. The proposals also include the addition of two rooflights in the rear elevation of the roof. Paragraph 48 of Historic England's 'Making Changes to Heritage Assets' Advice Note 2 (referred to correctly in the Council's officer's report despite the incorrect reference in the decision) says that harm might be avoided if rooflights are located on less prominent roof slopes and that in some circumstances the unbroken line of a roof may be an important factor in its significance. In this case, the roof is constructed of limestone tiles laid in diminishing courses and is unbroken by any rooflights or windows in this elevation. I disagree with the appellant's assertion that the unbroken roof form of Coombe House is less critical to the significance of the building and the area. Rather it is the unbroken expanse of roof that contributes to its unaltered appearance and its simplicity of form and allows the patina of the stone tiles to dominate without disruption.
 8. The location on one of the village's steeply sloping sides means that the rear elevation of the roof can be clearly seen in reasonably close proximity from the principal route through the village at a lower point close to Coldstream Cottages and is likely to be seen in more distant views from properties on the other side of the valley. Although it is seen within the setting of other listed buildings in the area that have dormer windows or rooflights, the unbroken roof provides a pleasant contrast with those and as an unaltered example of a traditional Cotswold dwelling it contributes to their setting.
 9. I accept that the size, appearance, form and materials of the proposed rooflights are similar to the traditional cast iron rooflights seen on buildings in the area. However, in this case, by reason of the prominent siting the proposed rooflights would disrupt the unbroken form of the roof causing harm to the significance of the building, contrary to Historic England's Advice Note referred to above.
 10. Whilst I agree with the appellant that the wider area includes buildings of different heights with complex rooflines and I saw many examples of rooflights

and dormer windows in the area, my overall impressions looking across the valley were of a predominance of plain, unbroken roofs. Most of the examples referred to by the appellant are of rooflights in elevations which are already broken by dormer windows (The Old Vicarage, The Grange, Coldstream Cottages front elevation, Briar Cottage) or in less prominent locations (Coldstream Cottages rear elevation). It is unclear to me whether all have consent or the reasoning behind those consents. I am therefore unable to draw significant comparisons with this proposal and those examples do not provide sufficient justification for the proposed rooflights in this case.

11. The proposed works would provide additional natural light and safer access to two attic bedrooms but I am not persuaded that natural light is essential for safer access or for the continued use of the building given that the rooms each already have a window. As the proposed door hood is clearly severable from the rooflights, I shall issue a split decision in this respect, subject to the standard commencement and plans conditions which are necessary for certainty. However, the restoration of a historically accurate door hood would not offset the impact of the rooflights because those are sited on a different elevation. Whilst the level of harm arising from the proposal would be less than substantial, there are, therefore, no public benefits that would outweigh the identified harm as required in paragraph 134 of the Framework.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed door hood would preserve and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of Coombe House. It would accord with policy ES10 and the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations that justify determining the appeal otherwise. The appeal should be allowed insofar as it relates to the proposed door hood.
13. I conclude, for the reasons given above, that the proposed rooflights would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building at Coombe House and the setting of the wider group of listed buildings. They would, therefore, conflict with LP policy ES10 and the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations that justify determining the appeal otherwise. The appeal should be dismissed insofar as it relates to the proposed rooflights.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector