
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 June 2019

by Brendan Lyons BArch MA MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/Y/18/3215052

19a The Hill, Wheathampstead, St Albans AL4 8PW

- 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 & Mrs Misseldine against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref 5/18/1488LB, dated 2 May 2018, was refused by notice dated 31 July 2018.
 - The works proposed are the replacement of all windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed replacement of windows on the special interest of the listed building.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a house that dates originally from the mid/late eighteenth century but was extended during the late nineteenth century. The house sits slightly above the level of the road that slopes down to the village centre. It is adjoined to the north by a smaller house that appears to form part of the same original build and is contained under the same continuous plain tile roof. The houses are listed Grade II, described by a single entry on the list. They also lie within the Wheathampstead Conservation Area.
4. Listed building consent is now sought for the replacement of all the existing windows at the appeal property with new double-glazed windows in timber frames.
5. In considering a proposal for the alteration of a listed building, statutory duty¹ 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. A similar duty applies in respect of the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of a conservation area². National policy guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') confirms the great weight in favour of the conservation of 'designated heritage

¹ Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

² Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- assets' such as listed buildings and conservation areas³. The particular significance of any element of the historic environment likely to be affected by a proposal should be identified and assessed⁴. Any harm should require clear and convincing justification⁵.
6. In this case, the application was supported by a Heritage Statement but, other than quoting the list entry, this lacks any analysis of the listed building's special interest or of the contribution made to its significance by the existing windows.
 7. In my view the building has historic interest as a surviving example of eighteenth-century residential development along the main road approach to the village, with its status enhanced by its later extension. Its architectural interest derives from its simple form, elaborated by the extension, and the consistent treatment and detailing of its traditional materials. As part of a row of houses of different periods along The Hill, the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
 8. The list entry records the presence of nineteenth-century casement windows, and examination shows that these are still present. Some other windows may be of later date, but all combine in a simple consistent pattern of light-weight casement frames and slender glazing bars that contributes to the building's special interest. The delicacy of the glazing profiles and the lightness of the single glazing are particularly apparent at close range within the relevant rooms, but also from outside the understated treatment of the windows is an important part of the building's character.
 9. No detailed dimension survey of the existing windows has been provided. Only a small-scale elevation has been submitted to show both existing and proposed. Detailed frame section drawings have been submitted, but these appear to be the manufacturer's standard plans. There is no indication of how these sections might fit in the existing openings to show what thickness of frame might be visible, and no comparison with the precise dimensions of the existing profiles. Perhaps due to the extra weight of the proposed double-glazed units, the plans suggest that the proposed glazing bars would be heavier than the existing. There is inadequate information to establish the likely effect on the significance of the listed building. In this case, a close match to the existing would be very important, in order to maintain consistency with the frames in the adjoining house.
 10. Similarly, there is no detailed survey of the condition of the existing windows. However, a relatively brief examination tended to contradict the appellants' assessment that the frames are beyond repair. In many of the windows damage appeared to be confined to the projecting sills, almost certainly due to failure to maintain the paint finish. Some of the sills may have been previously repaired, and there may also be some existing filling of the frame members hidden by paint. But apart from a few instances of decay in lower sections, most of the frame timbers appeared generally sound or in need only of minor repair and proper re-painting.
 11. The appellants raise concern about the windows impact on energy consumption. But on inspection, the opening casements appeared to be

³ NPPF paragraph 193

⁴ NPPF paragraphs 189, 190

⁵ NPPF paragraph 194

operational and not showing obvious large gaps. I agree with the Council that other methods of draughtproofing and energy saving could be considered before opting for total replacement of historic fabric.

12. For the above reasons, I agree with the Council that the proposal is supported by inadequate information and does not provide sufficient justification for the proposed alteration. This could not be resolved by the imposition of conditions. On the evidence submitted, the proposal would not preserve the special interest of the listed building. There would also be an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
13. Given the intention to try to replicate the existing pattern of openings, subject to detailed design the harm to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial, and relatively minor in the case of the conservation area. However, there is no indication that the alterations would be necessary to retain the house in viable use. The likely energy savings would not amount to a public benefit that would outweigh the harm caused.

Conclusion

14. I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Brendan Lyons

INSPECTOR