



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 19 November 2019

by Sarah Colebourne MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th December 2019

Appeal A Ref: APP/W0340/W/19/3230985

Old Thatch, Crookham Common Road, Brimpton, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 4PT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Gerald Allum against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00518/HOUSE, dated 22 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 19 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of a 1960's single storey extension and erection of a single storey extension to rear of property.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W0340/Y/19/3230982

Old Thatch, Crookham Common Road, Brimpton, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 4PT

- 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 Gerald Allum against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00519/LBC2, dated 22 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 28 May 2019.
 - The works proposed are the demolition of a 1960's single storey extension and erection of a single storey extension to rear of property.
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Decisions

1. Both appeals are dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in these appeals is whether the proposed works and development would preserve the Grade II listed building known as Old Thatch (listed as The Thatch) or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

3. In considering proposals for planning permission, the statutory duty imposed by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended 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. The Act also has the same requirement under section 16(2) for proposals for listed building consent. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (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. Paragraph 194 goes on to say that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 196 requires that where the harm is less than substantial, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.

4. The development plan includes policies CS14 and CS19 in the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012) which seek to protect heritage assets and broadly reflect the statutory duty. They accord broadly with the Framework although they fail to acknowledge the need to weigh any less than substantial harm against the public benefits of the proposal as sought in the Framework. CS19 also seeks to encourage high quality design, as does the Framework.
5. Old Thatch is a Grade II listed building, dating from the C17th with C19th additions and alterations. It has a half hipped, thatched roof and timber framed construction. The C19th alterations include an extension to the eastern end of the original dwelling, three first floor gabled semi-dormer windows and a gabled porch on the front elevation. To the side and rear there is a later, two storey wing with a tiled roof and although the date of this is unclear from the listing description, the Council says that it dates from the mid C20th. A small flat roofed extension was added to the rear elevation of that wing in the 1960's. The building's significance derives from its considerable age, its original form and plan-form and its scale as a modest cottage, together with the survival of historic fabric and the use of vernacular building techniques and materials, in particular the timber framing and thatched roof.
6. Planning permission and listed building consent were granted in 2018 for the replacement of the 1960's extension with a new extension with a catslide roof which continued the slope of the existing roof of the later wing. The Council considered that scheme acceptable because it was more in keeping with the building than the previous extension, did not extend beyond the footprint of that extension and its impact would be only minimally greater than that.
7. This scheme seeks to extend the depth of the approved extension by 1.1m. The plans show that the resulting roof pitch would be changed from a pitch of some 40° to a pitch in the region of 25°. To my mind this is not slightly shallower than that of the approved roof, as the appellant alleges. Rather, it is a significant change that, by reason of its shallower pitch, would be at odds with the more steeply pitched roofs of both the original part and the later wing of the building. Additionally, the further projection of the extension to the rear, albeit only a small increase over the approved footprint, would result in a greater extent of building to the rear of the original cottage. The additional volume and contrasting roof pitch would be clearly seen when looking towards the side elevations of the building. The increased depth would appear disproportionate to the original building and both by itself and together with the existing later wing the extension would be unduly dominant.
8. It would make it more difficult to understand the original form and scale of the cottage and would distract from the form and materials of the original dwelling which contribute to its significance. Thus it would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, contrary to the clear

expectations of the Act and the desirability of which the Courts have judged a matter of considerable importance and weight. It would also be contrary to paragraphs 193 and 194 of the Framework.

9. Whilst the harm would be less than substantial, it carries considerable weight. It should also be remembered that less than substantial harm does not equate to less than substantial planning objection, especially where the statutory and national policy tests have not been met. It is necessary to consider whether or not there are any public benefits that would outweigh the harm that would be caused as required in paragraph 196 of the Framework.
10. The removal of the dilapidated and unused flat roofed 1960's extension, which I saw at my visit has already been carried out, enhances the character and appearance of the listed building and is, therefore, a public benefit. However, that has already been done and formed part of the previous scheme. The covering of a plain first floor level wall could also be achieved as part of the approved scheme. Therefore, the current proposals are not necessary to secure this public benefit.
11. I accept that the cottage has small windows and that artificial lighting may be needed even on a sunny day. It also has limited views of, and limited access to, the garden. The proposed scheme would provide a garden room which would provide more natural light and access to and views of the garden. However, those would be private benefits and are not necessary for the continued use of the property as a dwelling. In any case, those benefits could be achieved through the approved scheme.
12. The appellant considers that the floor area of the approved scheme was too small to be of any practical use and not economically viable. However, as this scheme is not necessary for the continued use as a dwelling, the preferences and financial circumstances of the appellant are not relevant considerations in this case and do not provide sufficient justification for the harm that would be caused.
13. I conclude then that the proposals would not result in public benefits sufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused. The proposals would fail to preserve the significance of this listed building and are therefore not of a high quality design, contrary to the development plan policies CS14 and CS19 and to the Framework.

Conclusions

14. The proposals fail to meet the statutory duty in regard to the listed building and conflict with the development plan and the Framework as a whole. There are no other material considerations that warrant determining the appeals otherwise. Both appeals should be dismissed.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector