



Appeal Decision

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

Ref: APP/E0345/Y/19/3228236

43 South Street, Reading, RG1 4QU

- 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 T Bolitho against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 190205, dated 5 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2019.
 - The works proposed are internal alterations to remove lower ground floor internal walls, alterations to existing stair to provide additional balustrading, construction of replacement sanitary accommodation including alterations to the internal drainage and addition of a mechanical extractor vent.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for internal alterations to remove lower ground floor internal walls, alterations to existing stair to provide additional balustrading, construction of replacement sanitary accommodation including alterations to the internal drainage and addition of a mechanical extractor vent at 43 South Street, Reading, RG1 4QU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 190205, dated 5 February 2019 and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions below.
 - 1) The works hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) All new external and internal works and finishes and any works of making good shall match the existing original fabric in respect of using materials of a matching form, composition and consistency, detailed execution and finished appearance, except where indicated otherwise on the plan hereby approved.
 - 3) No works in respect of the vent shall commence until details of the external vent grill and its materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building known as 43 South Street (listed as 43-49 South Street) or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

3. In considering proposals for listed building consent, the statutory duty imposed by section 16(2) 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. 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 policy EN1 in the Reading Borough Local Plan which has replaced the policy referred to by the Council in its decision. The policy seeks to protect heritage assets and reflects the statutory duty and the Framework.
5. The property is an end of terrace, Grade II listed building, built around 1852 as one of four symmetrical town houses. Its significance derives from its evidential value as a late C19th town house and from the aesthetic value of its polite architecture which is seen particularly in the front elevation. Its surviving plan form includes a basement which would have been used for service functions and was compartmentalised to accommodate these. The layout and plan form of the basement is therefore also a significant component of the building's special interest because it tells us about the social mores that governed its development.
6. In 2010 the building was converted from an office to a house of multiple occupation and in 2018 was converted to a single dwelling with a lawful development certificate granted in July 2018.
7. The proposed works are in regard to the basement of the property. During my visit I saw that there have been significant alterations at this level. Remaining features of interest include the original windows in the front and rear elevations and the stairs. The proposed works include the removal of most of the internal walls at this level. I noted that whilst some of the walling comprises historic fabric (either side of the stairs), others are modern stud partition walls. Nonetheless, they suggest adherence to the historic pattern and partly follow the arrangement on the floors above. However, the actual evidential value is limited as a result of the modern walls. The proposal includes the retention of most of the original wall between the stairs and the proposed shower room and a section of the original wall between the stairs and the proposed dining room. This would sufficiently retain the legibility, and allow some understanding of, the historic arrangement of the dwelling. As such, the works would not result in material harm to the special interest and significance of the building, thus preserving the listed building and the features of its special architectural or historic interest.
8. The proposal also includes the positioning of a vent on the front elevation for a new shower room. It would involve drilling a small hole through the ashlar dressed sandstone which would then be covered with a vent in a colour to blend with the stone. It would be sited at pavement level, adjacent to a small dark coloured box to one side of the front elevation. The front elevation of the

terrace already has a number of other, more prominent external features which include cables, doorbells, alarms and damp-proofing drill holes and plugs. By reason of its small size and discreet siting, this small additional feature would not be clearly perceived. It would not detract from the front elevation and its principal features, the original windows, ashlar materials and the original railings around the basement window, would be retained.

9. I see no reason why it would set an undesirable precedent for other buildings in the terrace as any future proposals would be assessed on their merits. The other examples referred to by the Council at Kings Road, Reading differ significantly from this case in that they show more prominently sited, protruding pipes on Grade II* listed buildings.
10. The proposed works would therefore be acceptable and would preserve the listed building and the features of its special architectural and historic interest, in accordance with the expectations of the Act and would comply with paragraph 193 of the Framework and with policy EN1. As I have found that no harm would be caused, there is no need for me to consider whether or not there are any public benefits as required by the Framework.

Conditions

11. The conditions suggested by the Council have been considered against the tests of the Framework and the advice provided by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). I find some of them to be reasonable and necessary in the circumstances of this case, although amendments to the wording of some have been necessary in the interests of clarity and the advice of the PPG.
12. In addition to the standard commencement condition, conditions relating to materials and requiring further details of the vent grill are necessary in the interests of the listed building. A condition for compliance with the plans is unnecessary as that is referred to in the formal decision. The Council has not provided sufficient justification for its suggested condition for the use of hand tools rather than powered tools. Whilst hand tools are normally appropriate for listed building works, I find this to be unduly onerous and unnecessary in this case because power tools are likely to provide greater accuracy and minimise damage.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed works would preserve the listed building, its setting and the features of its special architectural and historic interest. They would accord with the development plan and the Framework as a whole and there are no other material considerations that warrant determining the appeal otherwise. The appeal should be allowed.

Sarah Colebourne

Inspector