



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 December 2019

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/Y/19/3225098

Elton Smithy, Elton

- 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 Sir William Proby of Elton Estates Co. Ltd against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02456/LBC, dated 16 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 29 January 2019.
 - The works proposed are repair and restoration of former smithy.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for repair and restoration of former smithy at Elton Smithy, Elton in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 18/02456/LBC dated 16 November 2018 and the plans submitted with it subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
 - 2) Prior to the commencement of works, details of the proposed internal alterations, including but not limited to, new openings, flooring, pipework, flues, vents and wiring shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details
 - 3) Prior to the commencement of works, a Method Statement detailing the works, including tools to be used, to re-open the blocked doorway shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved Method Statement.
 - 4) Notwithstanding the submitted details, and prior to the commencement of works, scale elevations and section drawings of all new windows and doors in situ (including details such as glazing bars, reveals, materials and finishes) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 5) Notwithstanding the submitted details, and prior to the commencement of works, details of the proposed internal insulation are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 6) Notwithstanding the submitted details, and prior to the commencement of works, details of all alterations to the existing roof structure are to be

submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details

- 7) Notwithstanding the submitted details, the existing historic workbench, vice and tethering rings are to remain in situ.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the appeal was submitted, the site is now in new ownership. However, the appellant remains the same person who made the original application, and the listed building consent goes with the site, not the individual.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building known as 'The Smithy, Highgate' and the character and appearance of Elton Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The Smithy in Elton is a small single storey building listed Grade II. It was previously used as a blacksmith's premises up to around the 1970s and today is largely redundant apart from informal storage use. Externally, the building has a modest but attractive appearance, with coursed rubble limestone walls and a pantile roof with brick chimneystacks. Internally, the main smithy room contains a surviving forge with most of the smoke hood and chimneybreast. A historic workbench and vice are situated beneath the window on the north side of the building and an anvil lies on the floor. There is an adjoining store room (indicated to be a farrier's workshop) accessed via external double doors and a smaller store room behind the forge.
5. The building was first listed in 1988 and is described as 18th century with later alterations. It is possible that it was once thatched but the evidence is inconclusive. The list description states that the interior details are complete, although it is not clear what was present in 1988. It is evident that the building internally has been subject to changes over the years, with the roof structure and floor materials containing 20th century elements. Openings between the smithy and store have been blocked up while external window and door openings have also been blocked or boarded up. The western window survives merely as an opening, while the northern window has remnants of a timber frame with metal bars. The building is in need of repair, with cracked masonry a particular issue in places. Notwithstanding the degree of alterations and the current physical condition of the building, it has much architectural and historic interest as a smithy that retains a number of associated features. This contributes greatly to the special interest and significance of the listed building.
6. The Smithy is within Elton Conservation Area, which covers most of the village of Elton as well as the stately home of Elton Hall and its park and gardens. The building occupies a prominent position on the B671 near the junctions with Middle Street and Oundle Road. Its appearance is compatible with the numerous stone properties that characterise the conservation area and thus it makes a positive contribution to the significance of this heritage asset.
7. Planning permission and listed building consent was granted in January 2018 for the creation of new single storey dwelling including the conversion of The Smithy. The appeal proposal seeks to convert the building into ancillary living

accommodation with a toilet and kitchen in the smaller and larger store rooms respectively.

8. The replacement windows would be timber casements with large panes and few glazing bars. The surviving windows remnants plus a historic photograph indicates that the windows were multipaned and set back into reveals. While replication in conservation is not always essential, I consider that multipaned windows with reveals would reflect the historic building more appropriately and would have a better effect on the conservation area too. The appellant has submitted amended elevations showing such glazing, although I do not have detailed drawings of each amended window. This could be secured by condition to ensure the details are suitable for both heritage assets.
9. The re-opening of a blocked doorway next to the forge would reinstate a historic feature and not have a significant effect on historic materials. While tight to the corner, it would appear achievable in structural terms. The screen doors to replace the existing double doors would retain a large amount of timber with slatted glazing. They would not look overly modern and instead would be in keeping with the simple appearance of the building. Both elements would have an acceptable effect on the significance of the two heritage assets.
10. The Council has stated that it is not opposed to any form of internal insulation and that versions of dry lining that use timber battens and occasional fixings limit the physical impact on the historic fabric. The evidence before me is limited in terms of the type of insulation proposed and the method of fixing. However, it seems probable that an approach can be adopted that restricts the impact of fixings on historic wall fabric and could be reversible. The Council has indicated that this could be addressed by the submission of further details via a condition. This would help to clarify the precise effects on the listed building.
11. The conversion of the larger store room to a kitchen would cover up the stone walls with modern appliances and cupboards and obscure historic details including metal tethering rings. However, given that the Council accepts a form of insulation is possible, such details would be covered up by any conversion to a habitable space. Subject to further details of the internal insulation, such details could be left untouched behind a reversible layer and secured by condition. The creation of a new opening from the kitchen into the main room would be larger than the existing blocked openings that appear to have provided communication between the main smithy area and the farrier's workshop. However, the opening would be no wider than necessary for people to pass through, and the two spaces would remain essentially separate rooms. Therefore, the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the listed building.
12. The historic workbench and vice are partly obscured by a more recent workbench. They are simple features but of some interest as part of the surviving internal parts of the smithy. As such, their removal would impact on the significance of the listed building. However, given the size of the room and their location to one side, it is possible that they could be retained in-situ. This can be required by condition.
13. The conversion of the smaller store to toilet and the insertion of new internal door would not have a significant impact on the primacy of the main smithy area as it would remain a small space with modern partitions removed. Moreover, as part of an overall proposal to create residential accommodation, the conversion would not overly domesticate the listed building.

14. The existing 20th century roof structure requires strengthening. It is conceivable that a king post roof would have been used originally given that they are widely found in historic agricultural buildings. It would have a simple design and not be too formal in appearance for the listed building. Details of the new roof structure can be secured by condition.
15. While the proposal involves elements that could harm the significance of the listed building and conservation area, such as internal insulation and replacement windows, details of these elements can be satisfactorily addressed via conditions. Existing features like tethering rings and the workbench can be retained, while new features such as the screen door and a king post can be sympathetically designed. The proposal would ensure the repair and restoration of the building as well as its longer term use. Any harm would be clearly outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal.
16. In conclusion, the proposed works would preserve the special interest of the listed building known as The Smithy and the character and appearance of Elton Conservation Area. This would be in accordance with Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It would also be in accordance with paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework which require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, with clear and convincing justification for any harm, and the weighing of any public benefits against any harm.
17. In coming to this conclusion, I have had regard to Policies LP2, LP11, LP12 and LP34 of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 which, amongst other things, require proposals to conserve and enhance the historic environment, respond positively to their context, and protect the significance of designated heritage assets.

Conditions

18. The formal decision states that consent is granted in accordance with submitted plans. However, conditions 4, 5 and 6 state that notwithstanding the submitted details, further details relating to windows/doors, internal insulation, and the roof structure are required to be approved. This is necessary to ensure that the details are appropriate for the listed building. Condition 7 specifies the retention of the historic workbench/vice and tethering rings and is necessary to safeguard the listed building. I have removed the clauses saying 'in perpetuity unless otherwise agreed in writing' as this could result in a more informal agreement and circumvent the proper processes to be followed when seeking to alter a listed building. Conditions 2 and 3 are necessary to ensure that internal alterations and the re-opening the blocked doorway are suitable for the listed building. Condition 1 specifies the time limit.

Conclusion

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

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR