
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2019

by Jonathan Hockley BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/Y/19/3229392

Thornborough Mill, Mill Lane, Thornborough MK18 2ED

- 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 M Spinks against the decision of Aylesbury Vale District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/03851/ALB, dated 30 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 24 January 2019.
 - The works proposed are described as a 'new glass/steel balcony to South gable'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is whether the proposed works would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II listed building.

Reasons

3. Thornborough Mill is an attractive 17th century coursed stone water mill with a red tiled roof, which was altered and enlarged in the 18th century. The main building has 2 storeys and an attic range, with an off centre opening with balconied opening above. Four gabled dormers are set in the attic range. An open wheel arch at the north end of the façade allows the mill race to be seen below, and the mill machinery, stated to date from the late 18th/19th century is partially intact within the building. The openings to the façade are noticeable in their irregularity and have differing lintels, with plain timber beams to many and arched openings to the right hand windows. To the right is a 1½ storey extension which has a red tiled roof and flat stone arch to entrance.
4. The Mill is approached down Mill Lane, a quiet dead-end road which ends at the Mill. The south side of the extension faces the lane and has double French doors at first floor level. While the listing notes that the Mill is disused, the Planning Officer report notes that the Mill was converted into residential use in the 1980s and renovation works were underway at the time of my visit. The special interest and significance of the building arises from its age, siting on the River Great Ouse, and the industrial heritage of the mill. Internally, significance arises from the retention of the mill machinery.
5. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses.

6. The proposal seeks to construct a glass and steel balcony to the south elevation, with access to be gained via the French doors. The proposal would cover virtually the full width of the gabled end of the building and would have a corten steel beam/floor and columns. A glass balustrade would surround the balcony.
7. The weathering of the corten steel would produce a modern industrial material similar in colour to the red tiled roof of the Mill and would also have similarities with the single timber lintels in the building. However, this would not be the case with the glass balcony, which would appear modern and as an alien feature set against the gable of the 18th century extension. The proposal would bring a domestic air, which would detract from the largely plain and simple gable form. While the glass would allow views to be maintained of the gable end and the balcony would in effect be reversible in the future, the balcony would still be visible and the likely introduction of domestic furniture to the balcony would amplify such harm.
8. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) makes it clear that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a listed building, great weight should be given to its conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration of the heritage asset, and as they are irreplaceable, any harm should require clear and convincing justification. For the reasons given above I consider the proposal would result in harm being caused to the significance of this listed building. However, and particularly as the works would only affect a small part of the building, I am satisfied that the degree of harm caused would be less than substantial.
9. In such situations the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal, including securing the asset's optimum use. The proposal would provide benefits to the appellant in terms of providing accessible outside living space. I also note the appellant's argument that the space would provide outside space that would be accessible in flood conditions and that the proposal would help to secure the long-term optimum use of the heritage asset. However, leaving aside whether the appellant's enjoyment of the property can properly be regarded as a public benefit, it appears to adequately function as a dwelling already; it is well maintained and being sympathetically renovated by the current owner. While I do not doubt the appellant's intentions to carry out the proposal works in a similarly sympathetic manner, I find no convincing justification for this element of the proposal, and I am not convinced that the space would be particularly useful in flood conditions with no access to the ground floor. As a consequence, what public benefits there might be are insufficient to outweigh the harm caused.
10. The proposal would cause harm to the significance and special interest of the Grade II listed building, and such harm would not be outweighed by public benefits. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jon Hockley

INSPECTOR