

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 10 September 2020

by S Edwards MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 October 2020

Appeal A Ref: APP/Q3305/W/20/3251835

The Blue House, The Bridge, Frome BA11 1AP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by The Blue House Trustees [Davis Bequest] against Mendip District Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/2610/FUL, is dated 24 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'alterations and extension to North Wing [Flat 21]; Reroofing of it and the adjoining laundry'.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/Q3305/Y/20/3251834

The Blue House, The Bridge, Frome BA11 1AP

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by The Blue House Trustees [Davis Bequest] against Mendip District Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/2611/LBC is dated 24 October 2019.
 - The works proposed are described as 'alterations and extension to North Wing [Flat 21]; Reroofing of it and the adjoining laundry'.
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Decisions

Appeal A

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for alterations and extension to North Wing [Flat 21]; Reroofing of it and the adjoining laundry at The Blue House, The Bridge, Frome BA11 1AP, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 2019/2610/FUL, dated 24 October 2019, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the attached schedule of conditions.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for alterations and extension to North Wing [Flat 21]; Reroofing of it and the adjoining laundry at The Blue House, The Bridge, Frome BA11 1AP, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 2019/2610/FUL, dated 24 October 2019, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the attached schedule of conditions.

Procedural Matters

3. The appeals relate to a listed building located in a conservation area, and I shall therefore have special regard to sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
4. The appeals are against the Council's failure to give notice, within the prescribed timescales, of decisions on applications for planning permission and listed building consent. The Council have confirmed within their submissions that they are raising no objection to the proposed development and works, subject to a number of conditions being imposed. Both appeals relate to the same site and raise similar issues, and I shall therefore consider them in a single document, in the interests of brevity.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is, in both appeals, the effect of the proposed development and works upon the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade I listed building known as the Blue House.

Reasons

6. Located within Frome town centre, the Blue House was constructed circa 1726 as a Bluecoat School with almshouses, at a time where such institutions were powerful emblems of corporate status and private munificence. It replaced an earlier almshouse, which was founded there circa 1465. The imposing scale and rich detailing of the Blue House reflect the philanthropic care of its benefactors, with its central break constructed of regularly coursed ashlar masonry and slate roof, complimented by a clock turret with bell shaped lead roof. The central block is flanked by three and a half storeyed wings of lesser proportions, built in coursed rubble. The statues of an elderly parishioner known as Nancy Guy and a Bluecoat schoolboy known as Billy Ball, which adorn the façade, are also of particular note.
7. There is no doubt that the Blue House is a visually striking building, which makes a very important contribution to Frome's townscape, and thus the character and appearance of the conservation area. Having regard to the available evidence, I find that the significance of this designated heritage asset of exceptional interest derives largely from its architectural interest as a building of institutional character, but also from its historic function as an almshouse, which still endures today.
8. The appeal scheme comprises the erection of a small single storey extension to existing modern additions which were constructed in 1964 and 1986 to the northern end of the listed building. The proposal includes a number of alterations to improve the overall appearance of these later additions which, despite their subservience, presently detract from the main property, particularly given its significance as a Grade I listed building.
9. The polycarbonate dome rooflights would be removed and the existing flat roofs, which are prone to damp penetration, are proposed to be replaced by a shallow pitched roof finished with a standing seam zinc and set behind the existing parapets. These alterations, together with the proposed fenestration details and use of random rubble natural stone and dressed stone quoins, would ensure that the previous additions and the new extension remain subservient, whilst relating better to the listed building.

10. Although it would be of a limited scale, the new extension would however further erode the strong symmetry which characterises the Blue House. It would also slightly protrude forward and thus diminish the appreciation of the historic property, to the detriment of its significance. The proposed development and works would therefore cause harm to the significance of the Blue House as a designated heritage asset albeit, in my opinion, at the lower end of the less than substantial spectrum. In such circumstances, paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and Policy DP3 of the Mendip District Local Plan 2006-2029 Part 1: Strategy and Policies¹ (LP) require the identified harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
11. The proposed development and works would enable the conversion of an existing bedsit into a larger self-contained flat, thus providing a larger and better standard of accommodation for existing and future occupiers of the appeal premises. It would also help sustaining the optimum viable use of this Grade I listed building, which provides sheltered accommodation for older local residents in housing need. Furthermore, the appeal scheme would assist with securing the future of the appeal property as a designated heritage asset. For these reasons, the identified harm would in this instance be outweighed by the public benefits which would be derived from the proposal. Accordingly, I find no conflict with LP Policy DP3, insofar as it requires proposals to justify any harm to a Heritage Asset and demonstrate the overriding public benefits which would outweigh the damage to that Asset or its setting.

Other Matters

12. As noted above, the appeal site lies within the Frome Conservation Area. It is of particular note that the western elevation of the single storey element, which fronts the public highway, would remain unchanged, and the proposed development and works would not be visible within the street scene. I am therefore satisfied that, subject to the imposition of suitably worded conditions, the proposed development and works would preserve the character and appearance of the Frome Conservation Area.

Conditions

13. I have considered the conditions suggested by the Council, making minor amendments where necessary, to ensure compliance with the tests as set out within paragraph 55 of the Framework and the national Planning Practice Guidance. In addition to the standard time limit, I have imposed conditions specifying the relevant drawings, in the interests of certainty and to provide clarity. Conditions regarding external materials and detailing are required to ensure that the appearance of the extension to the listed building is of a suitably high standard.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons detailed above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that both appeals should be allowed.

S Edwards
INSPECTOR

¹ Adopted 15 December 2014.

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

List of conditions for Appeal A Ref: APP/Q3305/W/20/3251835

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2100/01, 2100/07, 2100/08, 2100/09, 2100/10, 2100/11.
- 3) No construction of the external walls of the development hereby permitted shall commence until a schedule of materials and finishes, and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces, including roofs, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details and retained thereafter in that form.

List of conditions for Appeal B Ref: APP/Q3305/Y/20/3251834

- 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2100/01, 2100/07, 2100/08, 2100/09, 2100/10, 2100/11.
- 3) No construction of the external walls of the works hereby permitted shall commence until a schedule of materials and finishes, and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces, including roofs, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details and samples, and retained thereafter in that form.
- 4) No piece of external joinery shall be installed or undertaken unless full details have been first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall be at full or half scale and shall include cross-sections, profiles, reveal, surrounds, materials, finish and colour. The works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details, and retained thereafter in that form.
- 5) No ducts, pipes, rainwater goods, vents or other external attachments shall be fitted or installed, until details have been first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

END OF SCHEDULE