
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 06 October 2020

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L1765/Y/20/3255205

2 Upper Silkstead Cottages, Silkstead Lane, Hursley SO21 2LG

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Young against the decision of Winchester City Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02506/LIS, dated 13 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 June 2020.
 - The works proposed are described as removal of window and formation of new door opening.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the works would preserve a Grade II listed building, its setting, or any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is one of 3 dwellings which together form the listed building. This is named 'Upper Silkstead Farmhouse' within the statutory list, reflecting the fact that it was once a single dwelling.
4. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the special interest and significance of the listed building resides particularly in its sixteenth century origin, its evident historic social status as a large farmhouse, its linear 6 bay form, and strong vernacular character, incorporating timber framing, brick, and flint construction. In this context, No 2 is located at the centre of the former farmhouse, and occupies what the list description identifies as 2 of the 4 original bays of the building.
5. Whilst the timber frame is clearly visible across the front elevation, the rear elevation of the former farmhouse was, at some point in the past, faced over in brick. This brickwork retains a fairly uniform character and bond, and more or less completely conceals the frame. As such it is unclear what the nature of the relationship is between openings within the rear wall, and any framing beneath. As too is the extent to which the positioning of existing openings reflects that of original openings. That said, insofar as openings on the ground floor of the rear elevation are larger, and more uniform in character than those on the front, it appears likely that some formalisation occurred when the facing took place.

6. Subdivision of the farmhouse has otherwise obscured a simple understanding of its overall historic layout, plan form and past patterns of circulation. In this regard the application is not supported by any analysis which clearly sets No 2 in the context of the cottages at either end, and the farmhouse of which they all once formed part.
7. The works would see an existing window opening in the back wall of the cottage enlarged to form a doorway. Whilst the window is not historic, the form and size of the opening itself generally matches that of others in the rear elevation, and so forms a component of the formal treatment noted above. Moreover, given that the opening is located roughly at the centre of an original bay of the farmhouse, the likely potential exists that it occupies the position of an original window opening.
8. The full nature of the impact that removal of the section of wall below the opening might have on the timber frame, and other original fabric, is unknown. Fabric would however be lost. A significant change in the character, appearance and function of the opening would also occur, both in terms both of its expression within the facing of the back wall, and its relationship with other openings of similar character. Furthermore, the historic role that the window opening appears to have played within the original design and layout of the building would also be obscured. Harm would thus be caused through loss of fabric, change in character, and loss of identity. In consequence the listed building would not be preserved. This would be contrary to the expectations of the Act, and in conflict with paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets.
9. Similar enlargement of a window appears to have occurred in the end cottage, which occupies a section of the building of later date. However, I have little background information regarding this alteration. In any case, I see no reason why it, or any harm it may have caused, should be held to justify the harm that would be caused by the works proposed.
10. In view of the above I find that the works proposed would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building. I attach great weight to the harm that would be caused. In accordance with paragraph 196 it is necessary to balance this harm against the public benefits advanced in favour of the appeal scheme.
11. There is currently no external means of access to the back garden, meaning that garden rubbish and other objects must be carried through the cottage. This has caused some surface damage to paintwork. The damage is however little more than cosmetic, and could presumably be avoided by careful manual handling. The works are not therefore necessary to preserve the listed building. Insofar as the works would otherwise serve to make passage through the house more convenient for its occupants, the related benefit would be of a private rather than public nature. No weight therefore attaches to this consideration.
12. The appellant states that the works are partly required in order to enable future wheelchair access into the garden. This might be required given the advancing age of the occupants. In view of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010), I have therefore had due regard under Section 149 of the EA 2010 to the requirement to take steps to meet the

needs of persons who share a protected characteristic. Age is one such characteristic.

13. As the stated requirement for wheelchair access into the garden is speculative, the works would not directly meet any age-related need. This being so, dismissal of the appeal would not fail to meet the needs of a person or persons sharing a protected characteristic. Again therefore, this consideration does not attract any weight in favour of the scheme.
14. The benefits in advanced in favour of the scheme do not therefore outweigh the harm that it would cause. The harm would not therefore be clearly or convincingly justified, contrary to paragraph 194 of the Framework. These considerations indicate that listed building consent should be refused.
15. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the proposal would not preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. It would thus fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act; heritage policy set out within the Framework; and, insofar as it is relevant, Policy DM29 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2: Development Management and Site Allocations 2017, which states that works which would cause an unacceptable level of harm to the special interest of heritage assets will only be permissible in exceptional circumstances. Though the decision notice also references Policy CP20 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy 2013, this sets out more general strategy, and is drafted in relation to 'development'.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR