



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 8 December 2020

by Jillian Rann BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/Y/20/3254515

4 Challis Green, Barrington, CB22 7RJ

- 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 James Elliott against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref: S/3655/19/LB, dated 24 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2019.
 - The works proposed are demolition of modern single-storey rear extension and replacement with two-storey tiled extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appeal relates to a grade II listed building in a conservation area. I am mindful of my statutory duties under sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) and have considered the appeal accordingly.
3. The address in the banner heading is taken from the application form. The list description gives the appeal building's address as 4, 6, Challis Green and describes it as a pair of cottages. The building was converted to a single dwelling in the early 2000s. However, I am satisfied that the list description refers to the whole of the building to which this appeal relates. For the avoidance of doubt, I have used the address from the list description throughout my decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are whether the proposal would preserve the special interest of the grade II listed building known as '4, 6, Challis Green' and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Barrington Conservation Area (BCA).

Reasons

5. The appeal building is a thatched roof dwelling which faces an area of open space on Challis Green in the BCA. The building dates from the early 19th century and appears to have been converted to residential use from a barn and apple store. It was previously 2 cottages but was converted into a single dwelling in the early 21st century.

6. The form and appearance of the building have changed over the years including, amongst other things, alterations to its windows and the addition of single storey rear extensions in the relatively recent past. However, its thatched roof has been preserved, with its low, projecting eaves to the front and rear which conceal much of the upper floor accommodation to those parts of the building. The distinctive low eaves to the rear of the building remain largely intact, with only brief interruptions where those two small single storey extensions have been added. A slight sweep upwards in the low eaves to the rear also remains as evidence of what appears to have been a former cart opening associated with the building's historic agricultural use.
7. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the special interest of the listed building arises from the traditional construction techniques and materials associated with its thatched roof as well as the distinctive soft edges and low, sweeping eaves of that thatched roof, which are characteristic features of this vernacular building type.
8. The BCA covers a relatively large area, encompassing the wide green spaces alongside Challis Green, High Street and West Green together with the various dwellings and community buildings set back around their edges. The buildings around the greens include numerous thatched roof properties, together with tiled roof buildings and some more recent infill. Those open green areas create a feeling of spaciousness to the routes through the village and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the BCA. So too do the well-preserved vernacular buildings around their edges, which give a sense of enclosure, activity and animation to those spaces. The significance of the BCA, insofar as it relates to this appeal, arises from those open spaces and the traditional buildings around them.
9. The appeal building faces directly onto one of those greens and features prominently in views across it upon entering the village along Challis Green. The rear elevation of the building and its thatched roof can also be glimpsed between trees and buildings further along Challis Green. The building and its typical vernacular detailing, including to its rear elevation, therefore contribute to the character and appearance of the BCA and thus its significance.
10. The extension would be lower than the ridge of the host building. However, its tallest section would be a full two storeys in height. The eaves of that section may be relatively low. Nonetheless, they would still be notably taller than those of the building's existing rear elevation, stepping up somewhat abruptly from those lower eaves to either side. The extension would thus fail to preserve the distinctive low, sweeping eaves line which characterises the rear of the existing building's thatched roof.
11. Furthermore, the extension would have a significant depth, greater than that of the listed building's existing side elevation. It would also be of some substantial width, including a single storey projection alongside much of the two storey section. The extension would therefore have a substantial volume and massing. Consequently, and given its taller eaves relative to those at the rear of the building, it would not appear as a subservient addition to the listed building despite its lower ridge height. Rather, it would appear as an incongruous and unduly dominant feature which would unbalance and fail to respect the scale or visual primacy of the listed building. It would thus not be consistent with Historic England guidance, *Making Changes to Heritage Assets*, which has been

- referred to. That harm would not be overcome by the use of materials intended to visually differentiate it from the existing building.
12. The slight upward sweep in the rear eaves line of the thatched roof would be retained as evidence of the former cart opening in that position. Nonetheless, the wide extension would create a significant and lengthy interruption in the building's low rear eaves line beyond that point. It would also obscure a large proportion of the listed building's rear elevation. From some angles it would also obscure the building's roof, including the decorative detailing in the thatch below the ridge line. Therefore, it would erode the legibility of the rear elevation, including elements of its typical vernacular detailing.
 13. The appellant's submissions indicate that the connection of the extension to the existing building would be focused around the existing opening created by the current extension and that the impact on historic fabric would be kept to a minimum. However, the details provided regarding the specific nature of the works necessary to join the extension into the roof of the existing building are very limited. I therefore cannot be certain as to the exact nature, extent or potential significance of any historic fabric which would need to be removed in order to do so. Therefore, insufficient information has been provided to allow the potential impact of the proposal in that regard to be understood, as required by paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
 14. As well as being visible from surrounding properties, the rear of the building can be glimpsed from nearby public vantage points on Challis Green. The significant scale and massing of the extension, its relationship to the existing building and the harm to one of the village's vernacular thatched buildings would be evident in those views. The proposal would therefore also fail to preserve the appearance of the BCA.
 15. Historic maps submitted by the appellant indicate that the appeal building had a large rear projection in the past, which had been demolished by around 1901. However, I cannot be certain from the evidence before me as to the appearance, scale or height of that former rear projection or that it was comparable to the extension now proposed. Therefore, and given the time which has passed since its demolition, I have considered the current proposal on its own merits and based on the building as it exists today.
 16. I have been referred to previous appeal decisions relating to extensions to the appeal property, which were dismissed in August 2003¹. However, from the very limited information before me I cannot be certain that the proposal or the level of detail provided regarding the likely loss of historic fabric in that case were directly comparable to those in the current appeal. In any event, I have considered this appeal on its own merits.
 17. My attention has been drawn to the Council's recent approval of a two storey extension to replace a single storey extension at a grade II listed thatched building, 9 Back Lane, elsewhere in the village. My attention has also been drawn to extensions to other buildings within the BCA. However, I do not have full details before me of those various extensions referred to or the circumstances in which they were approved or constructed. Consequently, I

¹ Appeal references: APP/W0530/E/02/1102216 and APP/W0530/A/02/1102217.

- cannot be certain that they were directly comparable in all respects to the proposal before me which, in any event, I have considered on its own merits.
18. Given the above, the works would cause harm to the special interest of the listed building and to the appearance of the BCA. That harm would be less than substantial. It has been suggested that the works would not result in a significant degree of less than substantial harm and that the appeal building is less important than other listed buildings in the village. However, less than substantial harm does not equate to less than substantial weight and I give considerable importance and weight to the harm arising, having regard to the special interest of the appeal building as a listed building in its own right. The Framework requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
 19. The modern extension to be removed has little intrinsic historic or architectural interest. The proposed extension would incorporate some elements of sympathetic detailing, including to its windows. Nonetheless, the harm arising from the much larger extension now proposed would not be offset or outweighed by any public benefits arising from the incorporation of such details or from the removal of that more modest extension.
 20. The works would provide additional living accommodation which would be of benefit to the appellants and their family. I have noted comments made regarding the configuration of the appeal building's existing first floor accommodation. However, such benefits would be private rather than public in nature and do not outweigh the harm I have identified.
 21. Given the above, the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the grade II listed building known as '4, 6, Challis Green' or the appearance of the BCA. It would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework and would conflict with Policies NH/14 and HQ/1 (part b. and d.) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan which require proposals to conserve or enhance heritage assets and to be appropriate in scale and proportion.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jillian Rann
INSPECTOR