



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 23 June 2021

by AJ Steen BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 July 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/Y/20/3271120

23 Friars Walk, Lewes, BN7 2LF

- 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 Ms Claire Kane against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/20/00814/LIS, dated 14 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 April 2020.
 - The works proposed are the removal of existing walls to lower ground floor & reinstatement of W.C.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and listed building consent is refused for the removal of existing walls to lower ground floor & reinstatement of W.C.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the proposal relates to internal works to a listed building, I shall have special regard to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was replaced during the course of the appeal. I have based my decision on the latest version.

Main Issue

4. Whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building known as 23 Friars Walk or any features of special architectural and historic interest (or significance) which it possesses.

Reasons

5. 23 Friars Walk is a three storey terraced dwelling with the front elevation constructed in grey brick headers with red brick dressings that dates from the early 19th Century. The terrace faces directly onto Friars Walk, a one way street in the centre of Lewes with the Church of All Saints behind the brick and flint retaining wall opposite. Friars Walk is located within Lewes Conservation Area that comprises much of the town, set within the South Downs National Park. The streetscape of the historic town centre is notably intact with rows of listed buildings lining the main streets, including Friars Walk. This description generally accords with the Lewes Conservation Area Character Appraisal. As a result, 23 Friars Walk contributes to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset.

6. The lower ground floor of 23 Friars Walk comprises a kitchen with access to storage rooms with W.C. to the front and the garden to the rear. The kitchen is divided from the storage rooms by a wall across approximately half the width of the building containing a window to the W.C. that provides light. This wall is an historic brick wall that is probably contemporary with the building. A beam above the opening between the kitchen and storage rooms continues the line of the wall and may have been installed to replace a previous wall dividing the rooms. It is proposed to remove this wall and replace the beam. There is a small step up from the kitchen to the storage room below the beam. The layout of the lower ground floor, in particular the remaining historic section of wall between kitchen and storage room, contribute toward the significance of the listed building and one's understanding of it.
7. Other walls in the lower ground floor are later stud walls. The remainder of the wall dividing the kitchen and storage room cuts across an arched area to the side of the storage room, which results in an awkward relationship that appears incongruous. The later stud walls dividing the storage space and W.C. do not contribute to the special interest or significance of the building. The removal of the stud walls would alter the layout of the lower ground floor. Nevertheless, their loss would have a neutral effect on the special interest of the listed building. However, the effect of the loss of the historic section of wall on the layout of the building would have a material harmful effect on the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building.
8. A new block wall is proposed inside the front wall of this floor of the property with a new door to the storage room under the basement. It is unclear why this is proposed, but it would reduce the size of the storage room by a small amount and obscure the original front wall. As a result, this would harm the special interest of the listed building.
9. The proposal would result in a new, larger W.C. to the side of what is currently the storage room with a door through the original wall at the bottom of the stairs. Light would be provided through the high level window that is under the step to the front door. It would alter how this floor of the building has been subdivided. However, with the exception of the loss of part of the original wall to form the new door opening, this alteration to the layout would not result in greater harm to the special interest of the building than the existing layout.
10. For these reasons, I conclude that the removal of the original section of wall across the lower ground floor and construction of a block wall inside the front wall would not preserve the Grade II listed building and features of special architectural and historic interest that it possesses. However, given that the works are all internal, the works would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As such, the works would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building as a heritage asset. The works do not comply with Policies SD12 and SD13 of the South Downs National Park Local Plan, Policy HC3B of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan and paragraphs 194-200 of the Framework. These policies seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment and seek works to have regard to, and minimise harm to, the significance of heritage assets, avoiding the loss of historic fabric and detail of significance.
11. Paragraph 202 of the Framework establishes that, where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset,

this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. This proposal would provide more flexible living accommodation for the occupiers, but this is a private rather than public benefit. As a result, there are no public benefits that would outweigh the identified harm to the listed building.

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should fail.

AJ Steen

INSPECTOR

