



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2021

by C Jack BSc MA MA(TP) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X2220/Y/20/3264031

Padbrook Cottage, Padbrook Lane, Elmstone CT3 1HE

- 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 Mark Ashby against the decision of Dover District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01153, dated 9 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 25 November 2020.
 - The works proposed are the opening up of a 'blind' window to first floor front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for the opening up of a 'blind' window to first floor front elevation at Padbrook Cottage, Padbrook Lane, Elmstone CT3 1HE in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 20/01153 dated 9 October 2020 and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
 - 2) No works shall take place until details of the leaded light window including the glazing, materials, finishes and colour, and detailed drawings at scale 1:5 and 1:1, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings and details.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building known as Padbrook Cottage or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

3. Padbrook Cottage is a Grade II listed building, first listed in 1987. The statutory list entry description identifies the building as being of 18th century origin, two storeys and garret on plinth with plat band, and half-hipped roof with a central chimney stack. The house is constructed in red brick with a plain tiled roof and catslide outshot to the rear. The principal elevation, facing towards Padbrook Lane, has two 12 pane timber sash windows at first floor level with a smaller, central 'blind' window above the front door. The front door and the two sash windows on the ground floor each have segmental heads. A worn date plaque above the door appears to read 1712.
4. It is understood that, until recently, Padbrook Cottage was tenant-occupied as a 'tied' cottage associated with a local farm. The current owners have carried

out a programme of repair and refurbishment including replacement sash and casement windows and front door; and internal works including a partition, 2 new internal doors, a new staircase to access the attic rooms and the boarding over of the hatch to the existing stairs to the second floor. These consented works have included a degree of alterations to, and loss of, historic fabric.

5. While the listed building has been subject to changes over time, including historic changes to fenestration, it maintains integrity and authenticity as a traditional rural cottage, with its construction and materials defining it as an attractive, historic dwelling typical of the local vernacular. From the evidence, the significance and special interest of Padbrook Cottage in so far as relevant to this appeal derive from the building's design, the history of its development, the surviving traditional materials, detailing and construction, and its open, stream-fronted setting within a small rural settlement and the Elmstone Conservation Area.
6. Four windows in the front elevation of the building were changed to multi-paned sash with the cill heights dropped, probably around the early 19th century, referred to by the Council as the 2nd phase window treatment. At some point, possibly at the same time as the 2nd phase although there is no clear evidence to confirm so, the central first floor window was blocked up externally with simple lath and plaster. The opening size of the central window has not been altered, and the timber mullioned window remains in situ behind the lath and plaster, albeit the glazing has been removed at some stage. The surviving window is accessible internally via a cupboard situated on the first-floor landing. Externally, the brick lintel remains evident above the lath and plaster.
7. The parties agree that the blocked window is remnant of the 1st phase elevation treatment, and that it is probable that all five front windows would have been glazed with leaded lights prior to the 2nd phase alterations. There is no suggestion that a blind window formed part of the original design intentions for the building, rather, it is most likely that the surviving window was part of the original elevation treatment. Furthermore, there is no documented evidence that the blocking-up was a consequence of the Window Tax or resulted from significant structural alterations to the building. While the 'blind' window differs in style and size from the later sash windows, the proposed opening up would not unbalance or visually disrupt the front elevation due to its central position above the main door. The simple and symmetrical appearance of the front elevation, with traditional window openings, would therefore be maintained.
8. In its 'blind' form, the window holds a degree of historic interest in evidencing the evolution of the cottage, and the proposed opening up would result in the modest loss of historic fabric by way of removal of the covering lath and plaster. However, as Padbrook Cottage was evidently not designed with a blank window feature, the works would better reveal the central window that is considered to have been part of the original intended elevational treatment and, as such, it bears significant historic interest itself. Furthermore, in this instance, the historic timber window frame remains, and the opening was never 'permanently' bricked in. The thin lath and plaster covering is in relatively poor condition, particularly the plaster, with gaps having opened up allowing draughts and potentially also moisture to penetrate the building.

9. There would also be some loss of fabric from the proposed removal of the cupboard, which is thought to have been added around the time the window was blocked up. However, while it includes a historic vertical boarded door and simple timber decorated panel above, this later interior addition is of limited quality and limited historic or architectural interest such that its removal would not detract from the overall significance or special interest of the listed building. While little detail of the proposed reinstated window is provided, such details of the leaded lights to be installed and the proposed finish and paint colour, this necessary detailed information could be addressed by condition.
10. On this basis, and in light of the above, I conclude that the opening up and reinstatement of the 'blind' window would better reveal an element of the listed building's special interest whilst continuing to allow the understanding of its historic evolution. This would counterbalance the modest associated loss of the later lath and plaster covering and the internal cupboard. As a result, and subject to details by condition, the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building and its special architectural and historic interest, and its significance, in a manner consistent with the policies for the conservation of designated heritage assets set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and the expectations of Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Other Matters

11. Limited details of the Elmstone Conservation Area are provided but, based on my visit, its significance lies in its aesthetic and historic charm as a cluster of dwellings of mixed historic status and origin set in a verdant rural location and denoting its evolution. The authenticity and historic vernacular charm of Padbrook Cottage contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area. While the proposed works would modestly alter the appearance of the front elevation of the building, evidence of the historic window position and size, including the brick lintel, can already be seen from the lane. The works would be consistent with the historic nature of the building and would have a neutral effect on the significance of the conservation area as a whole and its character and appearance would be preserved.

Conditions

12. In addition to the standard time limit for commencement, a condition requiring further drawings and details is necessary for certainty and in the interests of preserving the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given, the appeal is allowed.

Catherine Jack

INSPECTOR