



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 April 2022

by Geoff Underwood BA(Hons) PGDip(Urb Cons) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/Y/22/3292569

West House, Shoreston, Seahouses, Northumberland NE68 7SX

- 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 Mr Gavin Neilson against Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 21/04610/LBC is dated 26 November 2021.
 - The works proposed are described as "various works including changes to internal layout, en-suite shower room, two new window openings to rear, replace windows/external doors with double glazed timber units, installation of external door to sunroom, removal of rear porch, raised deck and steps down to garden".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and listed building consent is refused insofar as it relates to changes to internal layout at ground floor (excluding removal of partition between former kitchen and sitting room), two new window openings to rear, replace windows/external doors with double glazed timber units (excluding ground floor window to south west elevation), installation of external door to sunroom, raised deck and steps down to garden, remodel and alter the stair case and installation of air source heat pump.
2. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted insofar as it relates to the demolition of the rear porch, replacement of ground floor back door, new plumbing and electrical system, changes to internal layout limited to new en-suite shower room to Bedroom 1, removal of WC cubicle in Bedroom 3, removal of built in cupboard in Bedroom 4, reconfiguration of existing bathroom, replacement skirting boards, removal of partition between former kitchen and sitting room and replacement of ground floor window to south west elevation at West House, Shoreston, Seahouses, Northumberland NE68 7SX in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 21/04610/LBC dated 26 November 2021 subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

3. The address on the application form included a rather complicated reference to road junctions on an unclassified road and I have therefore used the clearer one from the Appeal Form in the heading above and my formal decision.

Scope of the works

4. As well as the list of works on the application form which I have used in the heading above, the appellant's Design and Access, and Heritage, Statements also included the installation of new plumbing and electrical installations as well

as describing internal alterations as enlarging the structural opening between the existing breakfast room and kitchen and reconfiguring a bathroom layout. Furthermore, the appellant's Planning Statement also proposes replacing the skirting boards, and remodelling and altering the existing staircase.

5. In addition, the proposed drawings show the removal of a chimney breast in the existing breakfast room, the removal of a small WC room in one bedroom, the removal of a built in cupboard in another and the installation of an air source heat pump
6. An annotation to the Heritage Statement confirms that the original front entrance door is to now be retained given its significance to the building. I have therefore considered that the distinctive front door, which is specifically mentioned in the list description, is to be retained and does not form any part of the works for the purposes of this appeal. I have considered the appeal on this basis and this is reflected in the descriptions in my formal decisions above.
7. The application was made partly in an attempt to regularise some of the works which have already been carried out. The Council consider that the application also includes the removal of a chimney breast in the dining room. However, this particular element is not mentioned in the description of the works or accompanying information, nor shown on the drawings.
8. Similarly, the Council point out that internal walls have been stripped, and some have been insulated and dry lined, but again this does not appear to be included in works applied for. I have not, therefore, taken these elements as forming part of the works which are the subject of this appeal. The Council have also mentioned that they consider that the sun room extension is unauthorised. However, it is not within my remit in determining this appeal under section 20 of the Act¹ to formally determine whether that requires listed building consent and its retention does not form part of the works before me.
9. Those works which have already been carried out include the replacement of most of the windows, internal removal of partitions, walls and breakfast room chimney breast, and the insertion of two new windows in the rear elevation. I observed that at least one of those new window openings, being slightly offset from the window above, is not in the same position shown on the drawings. I have determined the appeal on the basis of the works shown on the drawings. Given that particular discrepancy, this is with the exception of the right hand side ground floor window on the north west rear elevation which I have considered on the basis of the works carried out and what I saw on site.

Drawings

10. The existing and proposed drawings omit an existing small window to the lower ground floor on the south west elevation. The north west elevations show a gable whereas the building has a hipped roof at this point. In the absence of any reference to these I have taken them to be drafting errors but for the avoidance of doubt have referenced them in conditions.

Council's position

11. The Council did not make a decision on the application. However, they advise that had they done so they would have refused listed building consent for a

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

number of the works as they consider they have harmed, or would harm, the significance of the listed building. Other works they consider might be acceptable with the caveat of requiring more details. These are the demolition of the porch, replacement rear door, new plumbing and electrical system, new en-suite bathroom, reconfiguration of existing bathroom, remodelling staircase, replacement skirting boards and the air-source heat pump.

Planning policy

12. Since the appeal was made, the Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036, 2022 (Local Plan) has been adopted and forms part of the development plan. Although there is not a statutory requirement that this appeal is determined in accordance with the development plan, I have taken the development plan into consideration insofar as it is material to the appeal, taking any views of the main parties in respect of this change into account.

Main Issue

13. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect the works have had, or would have, on the special architectural and historic interest of the grade II listed East House and West House.

Reasons

Significance

14. The appeal property forms one half of the listed building which comprises a pair of semi-detached houses, dating from 1913 by architect Robert Mauchlen. The listed building is a designated heritage asset of national significance much of which it derives from its arts and crafts style domestic architecture, traditional materials and history. The considerable similarity between the two houses, which at the front mirror one another, contributes to this special interest. It forms part of a picturesque group of similarly detailed buildings with the nearby range of former workers' cottages as part of the Shoreston Hall estate.
15. The multipaned windows, mentioned in the list description, largely set within stone surrounds, are an important part of the building's design and composition. Although no longer in situ, based on photographs these casement windows are features which will have made an important contribution to the listed building's special interest including through their aesthetic and historic value.
16. The appellant's Heritage Statement provides only a limited exploration of the building's special interest and, other than the windows, makes little attempt to understand the interior of the building and hence what contribution it makes to significance. It is not noted whether or not any features of interest remain in East House that may have informed the approach in the appeal property.
17. Whilst the attractive exterior is notable this does not mean that the interior does not make a contribution to its special interest. Although not mentioned in the list description, the listed building also obtains some significance from internal features including chimney breasts and its original plan form. These contribute to the appreciation and understanding of the building and the function and hierarchy of rooms. The appellant's position that 'listing status only related to the external appearance' of the building is unsupported.

Windows and doors

18. The appellant's Heritage Statement notes that the original multi-pane timber casement windows with their thin glazing bars, and curved handles and stays typical of the Arts and Craft movement, are a principal architectural feature of the building. However, with the exception of those at lower ground floor, these have been entirely replaced in the appeal building. Windows matching that original description on their exterior remain in the adjoining East House. From the exterior were the two properties join subtle but noticeable differences in the windows in each are evident.
19. As well as the different reflective properties the sealed double glazed units display on the appeal property, the windows in East House and those shown on photographs are set within deeper looking glazing bars. The new windows have slightly wider casements with a very fine central mullion between them and, along with their frames, have a subtly flatter appearance than those previously in place or next door, apart from more pronounced drip moulds under the lowermost panes. The opening mechanisms differ with hinges evident on the exterior of the originals. Inside the new windows have modern handles which display none of the finesse suggested by photographs of the previous ironmongery and there are no stays.
20. Whilst the distinctive small pane pattern has been replicated and trickle vents appear to have been skilfully incorporated to minimise their presence on the exterior of the units, overall they do not match the originals. As a result the windows lack the detailed constructional integrity and important visual subtleties offered by traditional carpentry and glazing methods and appear at odds with those in the other house in the pair. Those that have been installed cannot reasonably be considered as the accurate copies matching the form, detailing and operation of the originals that Historic England advice² advocates in the event that historic windows need to be replaced. They consequently fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.
21. Other than a few photographs showing deterioration of some bottom rails there is very little evidence of the condition of the former windows. No substantive evidence has been provided that they were incapable of sensitive conservative repair. Neither is there evidence of any consideration of alternative methods for improving draughtproofing or thermal efficiency. I note the neighbours' comments about their windows' delicacy and challenges with their maintenance and efficiency, but that does not justify the replacement of original windows with units which do not match the historic windows they replaced.
22. The appellant and interested parties supporting the works point out that other buildings in the Shoreston Hall group have similar replacement windows and that these have the benefit of listed building consent. From my observations these appeared similar to those installed in the appeal building. However, I do not have full details of these schemes including whether the windows they replaced were original ones nor whether their joinery and other details differed from original specifications, and if so what the circumstances were. In these circumstances I can only give these other examples, in different buildings, limited weight.

² Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading, Historic England 2017.

23. It is unclear whether the works include the replacement of the lower ground floor doors and windows. Although simpler and plainer than the front door, the doors to the cellar and under stairs at the rear contribute to the building's interest through their construction and illustration of the hierarchy of openings in the building. Similarly, the modest six pane windows to the lower ground floor contribute to the building's overall significance. There is no evidence that these doors and windows are beyond repair and as such their replacement is not justified.
24. It is also not clear what the relationship is with the new openings in the rear elevation and the now removed chimney breast on the interior would have been. Nor what effect their retention would have on the building's significance in that respect. On the exterior the openings appear somewhat uncomfortable in their proximity to one another in the context of the width of the substantial chimney stack which rises from the eaves above. The new windows reduce the more incidental approach to fenestration on the listed building where areas of blank wall form an important part of the elevational composition on all elevations.
25. There is an absence of detailed understanding of the architecture and no justification or explanation has been provided about the approach to these windows, nor why on the drawings at least they are shown smaller than the other similarly proportioned ground floor windows. The drawings do not detail whether it is intended that the new openings be surrounded by the distinctive stone cill, lintel and quoins that other windows on the rear wing are.
26. But in any event, the various detailed shortcomings of the two new windows, which also share those of the joinery details of others, means that they harm the special interest of the listed building. Although the appellant notes the 'freer' approach to symmetry in the arts and crafts movement, the offset situation of the installed window relative to that above renders it particularly awkward. Although judging by their style and appearance the pair of windows in a similar situation on the rear of East House have been there for some time, there is no suggestion that they are original. Any contribution the appeal proposal might make to balancing the symmetry of the pair of houses at the rear is offset by their harmful effects.
27. Unlike the majority of the windows, the rather clumsy and utilitarian window to the former kitchen detracts from the building's significance by way of its design and detailing. Its replacement with a window whose joinery, glazing and ironmongery accurately matches that of the original windows would preserve and to a limited degree restore, the building's significance. I note that the Council have no objections to this element nor to the replacement back door, and I have no reason to disagree.

Ground floor internal alterations

28. The plan form of the listed building is important in reflecting the layout of a relatively modest Edwardian home where different rooms will have had clear functions. The internal arrangement along with any historic fabric contributes to the significance of the listed building. The removal of the internal wall between what is notated on the drawings as the breakfast room and kitchen has created a single long living space the full depth of the property which has upset the internal layout. This has made the understanding of the internal spaces less legible and also created a space whose elongated proportions are

add odds with the modest house. The remaining stubs would provide only very limited legibility and understanding of the former arrangement and their retention does not render the substantial removal of the wall appropriate.

29. Floor plans in the appellant's Heritage Statement show a substantial chimney breast in what was then the breakfast room. The entire removal of this feature has resulted in the loss of historic fabric, an ability to understand the former function of the room and a disconnect between the interior and the substantial chimney outside. This has eroded the architectural interest of the building.
30. On the other hand, based on the information before, the removal of the partition between what was the kitchen and sitting room did not involve removing original fabric and there is no suggestion that the space was not once contiguous with the sitting room. Resulting room proportions and effect on the plan form and layout of the house preserve its special interest in this respect.
31. Photographs show that the skirtings in most rooms were plain, unremarkable and unlikely to have been of any particular interest. Consequently, their removal will not have affected the building's significance provided that they are replaced by ones with an appropriate profile.

Staircase

32. The current stair has no balusters between the newel posts but rather diagonal timbers running parallel to the flight. Even without any investigation these features would be unlikely to be an original or early part of the stair, nor consequently contribute to the listed building's significance. However, other elements may well do, including the newel posts which on the half landing with their simple decorative carving. The only details of proposed alterations to the stairs is a photograph showing a turned newel post and simple stick balusters.
33. Without a clearer understanding of both the extent of historic fabric including the newel posts and the suitability of any replacement baluster and handrail design it is not possible to conclude that the building's significance would not be harmed. Whilst I note the Council find this aspect acceptable, they do so with the caveat of requiring further details. However, given the lack of information it would not be appropriate to leave confirmation of the extent of works and replacement details to a condition in this respect.

First floor internal alterations

34. Notwithstanding the limited information provided, the re-arrangement of the bathroom would not harm the building's significance nor has the removal of the inset WC in the corner of one of the bedrooms. The partly installed en-suite to Bedroom 1 neatly occupies an inset in the room with little interference into the appreciation or understanding of this part of the interior. Similarly, there is no suggestion that the cupboard removed in the front bedroom contributed any special interest. Therefore, provided that any external manifestations of these changes in the form of plumbing or ventilation can be controlled by condition, they would preserve the listed building's significance.

Rear porch

35. Judging from the now exposed masonry details which it formerly covered and photographs of the rear porch when in situ, it does not appear original. Its partial removal has better revealed the building and it is of note that there is

no porch on the more open arrangement on East House opposite. Whilst it was partly pebble dashed and had a pan tiled roof, based on the photographs I am not convinced it made a positive contribution to the building. Its removal and replacement of the remaining wall with an appropriately detailed handrail would preserve the listed building's special interest.

Steps, deck and doors to sunroom

36. The materials, design and situation of the proposed deck and steps would appear harmfully at odds with the building which has masonry steps to the rear. They would in part cover up some of the attractive coursed stone work and quoins which are a feature of flank elevation of the front wing of the building and contrast with the solid composition of the house. They would emphasise the somewhat incongruous elevated sunroom. This would harm the listed building's significance. Given the disputed nature of the sunroom itself it would be inappropriate for me to make a determination about the suitability of replacement doors in isolation.

Plumbing, electrics and air source heat pump

37. The drawings show the large and utilitarian heat pump unit being installed between two of the sunroom support columns. Whilst screened from the front, it would not be discreet from the rear and would obscure the stonework and small cellar windows from some locations. It would harm the significance of the listed building. Little explanation has been provided about the locational necessities of such a unit and it has not been demonstrated that this would be the only location it could function in.
38. Re-wiring and plumbing will have been unlikely to have had a harmful effect on the building's significance provided that any external aspects are well considered and I note the Council raised no objections in this respect.

Findings and balance

39. In accordance with the Act I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. In so doing, and in giving great weight to the designated heritage asset's conservation, I consider that those components of the proposal identified as such would fail to preserve these attributes and consequently harm its significance. This harm carries considerable importance and weight.
40. However, this harm to significance would relate to only parts of the listed building and as such would be considered as less than substantial. These are circumstances where the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires such harm to be balanced against the public benefits of the proposal.
41. In this case any benefits would largely be private ones to the occupiers. However, the replacement of the unsympathetic window frame to what was the kitchen would enhance, in a modest way, the building's significance. Other works found to be acceptable would preserve the building's significance and therefore be of neutral effect.
42. The air source heat pump has the potential to provide low carbon energy which is encouraged by the Framework. Notwithstanding their harmful effects in heritage terms the new windows could perform better than the previous ones

in terms of retaining heat, according with Local Plan Policy STP 3's energy and renewables criterion. This would make the occupiers of West House less reliant on energy which could include that from higher carbon sources. This would consequently be a public benefit albeit a very limited one.

43. Notwithstanding the appellant's description of the building when they acquired it there is no compelling evidence that it was in a condition where the works which are the subject of this appeal would be necessary to preserve the building to any extent that could constitute a public benefit. The laudable ambition for the dwelling to help host refugees would not be a public benefit as this is not the purpose for carrying out the works and could not reasonably be considered an activity dependent on the works.
44. Overall, the public benefits arising from the works would be very limited and would not outweigh the harm. Those works would be contrary to Local Plan heritage conservation and design Policies ENV 7 and QOP 1 and Policy STP 3's conservation criteria.
45. The appellant's suggestion that the reversal of works already carried out may create more harm carries very little weight as this is based on speculation as to what any remedy might entail.

Conditions

46. For the avoidance of doubt it is necessary to be explicit about which elements of the works benefit from listed building consent and which do not (2 & 3). To ensure that works preserve the building's special interest it is necessary to require that joinery and other details are approved (4, 5, 6, 7 & 8).

Conclusion

47. For the above reasons, some of the works would harm the special interest and hence significance of the listed building contrary to the Act, the Framework and the development plan so far as it is relevant to the proposal. The appeal is therefore dismissed in respect of those works set out in my formal decision at paragraph 1.
48. Other works are clearly severable from unacceptable works given their self-contained nature. These would preserve the listed building's special interest, in accordance with the Act, the Framework and Local Plan Policies ENV 7, QOP 1 and STP 3. In that regard the appeal is allowed in respect of those works set out in my formal decision at paragraph 2.

Geoff Underwood

INSPECTOR

Schedule of conditions

- 1) The works authorised by this consent shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
- 2) The works hereby permitted are limited to: i) demolition of the rear porch; ii) replacement of ground floor back door; iii) new plumbing and electrical system; iv) new en-suite bathroom to bedroom 1; v) removal of WC cubicle in bedroom 3; vi) removal of built in cupboard in bedroom 4; vii) reconfiguration of existing bathroom; viii) replacement skirting boards; ix) removal of partition between former kitchen and sitting room; and, x) replacement of ground floor window to south west elevation.
- 3) The works hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawings Nos C650-LBC-002 and C650-LBC-003 rev A except in respect of: i) replacement windows and doors (with the exception of the ground floor back door on the north east side elevation and the ground floor replacement window to the proposed living/dining area on the south west elevation); ii) insertion of two new windows in north west elevation; iii), the installation of air source heat pump; iv) the removal of the wall and widening of opening between the proposed dining and kitchen areas; v) removal of chimney breast in proposed kitchen area; vi) the raised deck, steps and replacement door to sun room; and, vii) any removal of lower ground floor window on the south west elevation or any alteration to the hipped roof and chimney on the north west elevation.
- 4) Prior to the replacement of the ground floor window to the south west elevation, joinery details at 1:5 scale or larger including details of its reveal within the opening, and details of materials, colour finish, glazing specifications and all ironmongery, are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The window is to be installed in accordance with the approved details.
- 5) Prior to the removal of any further fabric of the rear porch or the installation of the handrail serving the rear steps, full details and specifications of the handrail, balusters and fixings are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The handrail is to be installed in accordance with the approved details.
- 6) Prior to the installation of replacement skirting boards, joinery details at 1:5 scale or larger are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The skirting boards are to be installed in accordance with the approved details.
- 7) Prior to any external ventilation or extraction equipment, and any external pipework including waste and soil pipes or other external alterations, being carried out full details are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works are to be installed in accordance with the approved details.
- 8) Prior to any further internal work taking place details of i) making good removal of internal wall between the former sitting room and kitchen, cupboard in bedroom 4 and WC cubicle in bedroom 3; and ii) installation of en-suite shower room to bedroom 1, are to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works are to be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

*** End of Schedule of Conditions ***