



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2022

by A Edgington BSc (Hons) MA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/Y/21/3285964

14 The Square, Long Crendon, AYLESBURY, HP18 9AA

- The appeal is made under sections 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 and Mrs W Clark against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - North Area (Aylesbury). The application Ref 21/02707/ALB, dated 30 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 August 2021.
 - The demolition proposed is Works to two bedrooms comprising: 1. the creation of an ensuite bathroom with external extractor and soil stack; and 2. the division of the master bedroom into two bedrooms.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed, and listed building consent is refused.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan was adopted in September 2021 and as such Policy BE1 cited by the Council in its decision carries full weight.
3. The Council's decision cites Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). However, the application is for listed building consent and as such the relevant section of the Act is Section 16(2).

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the works would preserve the Grade II listed Cordwainers, 2, Bicester Road, also known as 14 The Square (No 14), or any features of special architectural and/or historic character that it possesses, and whether the works would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Long Crendon Conservation Area (LCCA).

Reasons

5. Number 14 is a T-shaped dwelling situated on a corner plot. From the front, it presents as a late 18th century two-storey brick wing under a hipped slate roof attached on one side to a thatched cottage (front cottage). The brick wing has two shallow bow windows on the ground floor, one on each side of a now bricked up door, and a central sash at first floor level.
6. The front cottage is listed as dating from medieval times, with 17th and 18th century additions, and is set back from the brick wing. It has a central entrance door and lean-to porch with a sash window to each side, and shallow casements under the thatch. The walls are rendered, with evidence of timber framed brick panels on the upper portion of the side elevation. Lean-to extensions turn the corner with High Street.

7. To the rear, a further thatched cottage is attached to the rear of the brick wing, and shares the ridge line. This projects beyond the rear elevation of the front cottage and has a combination of rubble and plastered walls, and small window openings on both floors.
8. Internally, the front cottage presents with a simple floor plan of one room on each side of a central fireplace and staircase, on the ground and first floors. The front cottage is linked to the brick wing through the end wall of one of the ground floor rooms where a door opens into a lobby and open stairwell. The stairwell and lobby are framed and oversailed by one side of the complete cruck truss mentioned in the listing.
9. The master bedroom is located to the rear of the rear cottage on the first floor. The internal wall between the master bedroom and the family bathroom, is formed of timber framed brick panels and the other side of the aforementioned cruck truss.
10. The location of the cruck truss and the wall between the master bedroom and family bathroom appears to correspond with the junction between the rear of the brick wing and the rear cottage when viewed externally. It also appears to correspond with a very thick wall between the kitchen and the pantry on the floor below. On the basis of what is before me, I conclude that the rear cottage was built perpendicular to the cottage fronting the road and that the brick wing may have been a forward extension to, or a replacement for, part of the rear cottage. Although the lobby and stairwell in the brick wing and rear cottage intrude into one side of the plan form on both floors, the remaining plan form is not dissimilar to the layout of the front cottage.
11. Although No 14 is a family home, it contains a wealth of historic features such as timber framing, fireplaces, chimney breasts, the retention of seemingly original window openings, and what appears to be the original staircase in the front cottage. These are in addition to its largely unaltered plan form and the cruck truss, and make a strong contribution to No 14's appreciation.
12. Overall, No 14 has historic, aesthetic value and evidential value in that it reflects building techniques, vernacular styles and craftsmanship associated with domestic architecture from the 17th century. I acknowledge that there have been recent interventions which provide modern conveniences, but these have been sympathetically undertaken and do not detract from the overall impression of No 14, as a largely unaltered example of the domestic and rural vernacular of the area.
13. The heritage statement contains very little assessment of No 14's significance as required by 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). On the basis of what is before me, I conclude that No 14's significance is derived from its extensive and intact historic fabric, evident both externally and internally, as well as the plan forms of the front cottage, the brick wing and the rear cottage.
14. There is also significance arising from No 14's external fabric and its visual and spatial relationship with the other high quality period buildings arranged around The Square.
15. The works would comprise the installation of a dog-legged partition in the master bedroom to create two bedrooms. Of the existing internal walls, the

wall separating the bathroom from the master bedroom appears to be authentic. However, this would remain in place and would be unaffected by the works. The wall separating the master bedroom from the stairwell is studwork, and is clearly a modern intervention. It has altered the corner of the room but has made a minor modification only to the room's overall plan form and size.

16. This room is dominated by a rough plastered chimney breast located in one corner, which has evidential value of the original cottage layout and construction. The plans showing the proposed partition and its relationship with the chimney breast appear to be inaccurate. From my observations I concluded that the partition would land on the chimney breast somewhere in the region of its return to the outer wall, but it was difficult to assess this with any more certainty.
17. However, wherever the partition would land in relation to the chimney breast, the chimney breast's importance as a feature in the room would be diminished as it would be bisected by the partition.
18. The works also include the provision of an en-suite bathroom in the end bedroom of the front cottage. This would be enabled through the provision of a partition with pocket door, running parallel to the part sloped rear elevation. There is a small brick fireplace and chimney breast in the corner, linking to the central stack.
19. This room appears very modest, partly as a consequence of its low ceiling and sloping eaves to the front and rear. Nonetheless, it has pleasing proportions which reflect its origins as one of the two attic rooms in the front cottage. The partition would be forward of the rear sloping eaves, leading to an asymmetry and the fireplace would be concealed in the bathroom. The original proportions and layout of the room would be diminished and the works would also disrupt the high level timber framing on the internal wall.
20. In subdividing bedrooms within the cottage, I conclude that the appreciation of the simple plan form, and the relationship between the plan form and the retained historic features within those rooms would be eroded. The alterations would therefore fail to preserve features of special architectural or historic interest, and this would lead to less than substantial harm as set out in Paragraph 199 of the Framework.
21. I appreciate that the works would not alter existing authentic walls, except in the implementation of associated works in relation to services, and so in this regard the harm would be limited to the appreciation of the original plan form. As such, the magnitude of harm could be considered to be towards the lower end of the range encompassed in the term less than substantial harm. Nonetheless, the Framework clearly states that great weight should be given to an asset's conservation, irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm.
22. Paragraph 202 of the Framework states that where development will lead to less than substantial harm this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
23. The creation of one more bedroom and an en-suite bathroom within No 14 would amount to private benefits. I appreciate that this is a growing family

with additional accommodation needs, but there is one large family bathroom on the first floor and a ground floor shower room. Although I appreciate the family's specific concerns in relation to the accommodation, I disagree that No 14 lacks modern conveniences to the extent that the basic plan form of the building should be altered and No 14's significance eroded.

24. I also acknowledge that the shower room is used by a lodger and is not available for the family, but it is unclear why this should carry weight in favour of the appeal. It is personal choice how a building is to be used and living in listed buildings, with constraints on alterations, can often lead to inconvenience. I appreciate that the works to the master bedroom could be reversed, but this is not what has been applied for.
25. Moreover, there is nothing before me to indicate that No 14 would not continue to be used as a family dwelling if the appeal is dismissed. As such, the arguments relating to long term residential occupation and ongoing maintenance, and the guidance in Planning Practice Guidance carry no weight in favour of the appeal.
26. The appeal statement argues that most homes have at least one en-suite bathroom, whether modern or listed. That may be the case, but it does not necessarily follow that there is an imperative to install an en-suite to every home that does not have one, or that this will always outweigh identified harm to a dwelling's significance.
27. In the light of the above I conclude that the works would fail to preserve No 14, or any features of special architectural and/or historic character that it possesses, contrary to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). There would also be conflict with LP Policy BE1 which is concerned with the safeguarding of heritage assets.

Conservation Area

28. The works would not alter No 14's appearance and there would be a neutral impact on the character or appearance of the LCCA. There would be no conflict with the provisions of Section 72(1) of the Act, or LP Policy BE1, as outlined above.

Conclusion

29. The appeal is dismissed.

A Edgington

INSPECTOR