
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2022

by M Woodward BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C9499/Y/22/3291849

Beckstones House, Beckstones, Gayle DL8 3SA

- 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 Paul Taylor against the decision of Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref R/56/467B/LB, dated 5 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 14 September 2021.
 - The works proposed are listed building consent for removal of timber stair and brick flank walls full height, installation of new timber stairs ground to first and first to second floor levels, insertion of conservation type roof windows 3no in front roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have confined my assessment to the works as detailed on the application form, reflected in the banner heading above. Therefore, whilst the Council allege that other unauthorised works have been carried out, they fall outside the remit of this appeal.
3. I saw on my site visit that a number of the internal works, as detailed in the banner heading above, were substantially complete. This included works to create the staircases and some other internal works, but they appeared to have been carried out in accordance with the submitted plans¹. As a result, this appeal also deals with the retention of these elements, although I use the word 'proposal' in my decision to describe all the works I am considering as part of this appeal.
4. The proposal lies in the Gayle Conservation Area and affects a Grade II listed building. Consequently, I have had special regard to section 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, 'Land to south-west of Clints House, Beckstones' (Ref: 1166614), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and whether the character or appearance of the Gayle Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced.

¹ Plan refs – 458/200 A and 458/201 B

Reasons

6. According to the list description, Beckstones House (the building) was listed in 1986 and dates from the 18th or 19th Century. It is attached to Clints House, itself an imposing Grade II listed building², and forms part of a wider terrace of properties. Whilst there is uncertainty over the original use of the building, the loft space appears to have been a component part of the building's original useable floorspace, reinforced by evidence of a fireplace and small windows directly under the eaves which provided an element of light. Moreover, the appearance and function of the building has evolved over time, with a range of internal and external alterations having facilitated different residential uses³.
7. Nevertheless, the building reflects the authenticity of its traditional construction and is befitting of the village's historic core. It is built from local stone and has a symmetrical arrangement of sash windows along with quoins and other architectural features which contribute to its traditional appearance. The plain stone slate roof includes two chimney stacks and extends across the building, adjoining the roof associated with Clints House, resulting in a large expansive traditional roof slope. Given the above, I find that the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the legibility of the building's historic layout as well as any surviving historic fabric.
8. In terms of the Gayle Conservation Area (CA), I have taken into account the evidence before me, the Gayle Conservation Area Appraisal draft update (2011) (CA Appraisal), and my own observations. Due to the architectural interest of the building as set out above, I find that it evokes a timeless quality which is also due in part to the historic street pattern and its position amidst a terrace of traditional buildings clustered around Gayle Beck. Its aesthetic value is reinforced by attractive views of the appeal site and its surroundings from Gayle Bridge⁴. Therefore, for the foregoing reasons, I find that the significance of the CA, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the composition of traditional buildings and their relationship with the streets and spaces around them which provides a rich aesthetic value to the historic core.
9. The appellant has questioned the date of the building and the reported historic use of it as a former wool warehouse, as detailed in the listing description. However, listings are primarily for identification purposes and do not provide an exhaustive or complete description of the special interest. As such, the significance and historical value of a building is not dependent on the listing description.
10. Turning to the proposed external works, I am aware that the existing roof was replaced completely in *circa* 1937. It is nevertheless sympathetic to traditional construction and appearance and forms part of the historic fabric of the building. Therefore, as a result of the proposed rooflight insertions, a relatively small part of the historic fabric of the building would be lost.
11. Of greater concern, however, is the harmful effect of the proposed rooflights on the roof's composition. Despite their 'conservation style' design and flat

² Listing ref: 1131996

³ Including evidence of a 1969 consent to amalgamate two dwellings into a single dwelling and further alterations and refurbishment works consented in 2019 (Ref – R/56/467/LB)

⁴ Which is identified as a 'key view' in the Gayle Conservation Area Appraisal 2011 draft update

appearance, the size, number and position of the rooflights would be an unacceptably dominant addition, contrary to the unadorned simplicity of the existing roof slope. Even if I was to accept the appellant's assertion that the loft space was originally used for residential purposes, there is no substantive evidence before me to corroborate that a rooflight ever existed. As a result, the window insertions proposed would diminish the legibility and authenticity of the roof, detracting from the building's special interest.

12. Turning to the effect of the proposed rooflights on the significance of the CA. When viewed from Gayle Bridge the combined expanse of the roof slopes associated with the appeal building and the adjoining Clints House is readily apparent. Whilst the other property which adjoins the appeal building has a single roof light and glass pane within the principal roof slope, this element is visually contained due to the building's lower roof and recessed front elevation in relation to the appeal building.
13. Consequently, when viewed from Gayle Bridge, the entire terrace appears as a roofscape with chimney stacks and plain roof slopes. As a result of the number and prominent position of the proposed rooflights, they would appear discordant, unbalancing the homogenous roof slope in context of Clints House, as well as harming the strong unified character and appearance of the roofscape associated with the row of properties as a whole.
14. I understand that rooflights have been present in the locality for many centuries, and there are several buildings within the CA which exhibit rooflights, visible from some of the key views identified in the CA Appraisal. However, in the context of the appeal proposal, rooflights are not prominent features of the roofscape, and those proposed in this case would fail to preserve the building's special interest and would harm the character and appearance of the CA, for the reasons set out.
15. In respect of the other internal works proposed, it is noteworthy that the Council do not detail any in principle objection to them, rather they contend that the original submission lacked sufficient detail to determine that significance of the assets would not be harmed⁵. By the Council's own admission, the appeal building has been significantly altered both prior to listing and more recently.
16. With this in mind, the existing stairs were evidence of more recent phasing post 1969 and the new stairs, proposed on the opposite side and to the rear of the ground floor living space, appear in a position generally reflective of a time when the building was used as two separate dwellings. Moreover, the proposed addition of partition walls in the first floor and loft are not out of keeping with the building's historic residential use, nor do the partition walls within the loft affect the integrity of the original purlins and internal historic roof structure. Moreover, works involving internal pipework and other utility provision would mainly utilise existing infrastructure, thus would not harm the building's historic fabric.
17. In terms of the loft space, given that it is likely to have formed a second floor in connection with the building's historic use, and despite the potential for limited loss of historic fabric, overall, I am satisfied that the inserted staircase and other works preserve the building's historic layout and authenticity. The

⁵ Contrary to paragraph 194 of the Framework

level of information provided is proportionate in this respect and the internal works, excluding the proposed rooflights, ensure preservation of the heritage assets.

18. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation. Paragraph 200 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of the asset and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. Given my findings above relating to the harmful effect of the proposed rooflights, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the CA. I consider the harm to be less than substantial in this instance but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight.
19. Under such circumstances, paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes securing the optimal viable use of designated assets. Whilst I appreciate that the intention of the proposal would be to convert the building into a viable holiday let, there is nothing to suggest that the works, including providing living accommodation in the loft space, would be necessary for the long-term occupancy of the listed building, and there is no detailed viability information suggesting that such works would be necessary to secure its optimum viable use.
20. I also appreciate that the works would maximise modern living space, and that converting the building to a holiday let would contribute to the local economy. In addition, the layout of the accommodation as proposed better reflects the historic residential layout of the building. The works would also retain revealed historic elements such as fireplaces and a doorway used in connection with Clints House. The rooflights would also allow the second floor to be a useable living space by ensuring sufficient natural light could illuminate the room during the day time. Finally, I realise that alternatives to the rooflights as proposed were explored, including siting them on the rear roof, but this area would be too small to insert rooflights of sufficient size. I have carefully considered these elements collectively as public benefits. However, I am not satisfied that these public benefits would be sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.
21. Given the above and in the absence of sufficient public benefit, I conclude that the proposal would fail, on balance, to preserve the special historic interest of the Grade II listed building and the character or appearance of the Gayle Conservation Area. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 199 of the Framework, and development plan policies insofar as relevant.

Other Matters

22. I am aware that the appeal building has been the subject of extensive discussions between the appellant and the Council over an extended period. The appellant points to inconsistent advice from the Council over this period. Be that as it may, I have assessed this appeal on its merits. I am obliged to have regard to the Act, which I have done in determining the appeal and

fundamentally, for the reasons set out having regard to the evidence before me, I find that the proposal would be unacceptable for the reasons given.

Conclusion

23. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Woodward

INSPECTOR