
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 July 2022

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P1133/Y/22/3295073

Christie Cottage, Six Mile Hill, Tedburn St Mary, Devon EX6 6AX

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Sam Tame against the decision of Teignbridge District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02753/LBC, dated 30 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 25 January 2022.
 - The works proposed are described as an internal opening.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the works would preserve a Grade II listed building and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

3. Christie Cottage is a Grade II listed building, and thus a designated heritage asset. Whilst the Act sets out the desirability of preserving listed buildings, paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) makes clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.
4. Insofar as it is relevant to this appeal the special interest and significance of the listed building resides in its C16/C17th origin, evidence of its original plan form, and its simple vernacular character and historic fabric, including construction from cob.
5. A modern single storey extension is attached to the side of the cottage. This replaced a previous extension, and projects forward of the front elevation. It holds no historic or architectural interest in itself, and detracts from the character of the historic part of the cottage. The works would entail forming a new doorway opening through the wall of the cottage into this extension.
6. The works would as such almost certainly involve the loss of original fabric. As cob walls form a single mass, the long term structural consequences of punching a hole through the thickness of the gable end are unclear. Here some preliminary advice has been provided which indeed acknowledges risk. However, it also suggests that the works required to form the opening could

benefit the stability of the wall. But though past movement is noted, no evidence has been presented which confirms that any form of structural intervention would be required to stabilise the structure in the absence of the proposed works. It is hard to see therefore why the proposed works should be considered as anything other than structurally harmful.

7. It is apparent that the cottage has been the subject of past modifications which have included the formation and closure of various openings. This does not mean to say that the formation of further openings should therefore be considered appropriate. Indeed, whilst such past modifications may reflect historic change in the nature of use of the cottage, they also obscure appreciation of its original layout and related circulation and diminish the integrity of its fabric. The formation of an additional opening in a new location would further obscure appreciation of these important aspects of the building's special interest and significance.
8. Though omitted from the plans, the supporting information indicates that the works would include formation of a new partition, reusing material removed to form the opening. In this regard cob can sometimes be reconstituted and reused, most typically as blocks laid in lime mortar. This is a useful attribute where the reconstruction of a cob wall is required, as it allows some sense of integrity to be retained. In this case, given that the material removed from the wall would be used to form a partition elsewhere within the ground floor, it would clearly not have the same effect. Whilst it would in no way mitigate the harm caused by formation of the opening, the proposed wall would itself further confuse appreciation of the historic plan form and circulation of the cottage. This is particularly insofar as it would see part of the ground floor effectively severed, with access to the pantry space formed only available from within the modern extension.
9. I therefore find that the works would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building. The harm caused to the significance of the listed building would be less than substantial. Such harm attracts great weight. It is necessary to weigh this harm against the public benefits of the scheme in accordance with paragraph 202 of the Framework.
10. It is claimed that without the proposed works the building would not be viable as a family home. This is given anticipated difficulties in relation to childcare. In this regard the existing opening between the kitchen and dining room is not located in the most efficient position, and it provides a limited line of sight between the rooms. The new opening would be more efficiently located and would modestly ease movement between the rooms in question, and around the property as a whole. However, though clearly more convenient, I have no reason to believe that this would be in any way essential for childcare purposes. The extent of visibility between rooms is itself constrained by the dimensions of the wall, other fabric, and where the observer stands. This would equally apply in relation to the proposed opening, which would also provide a somewhat limited range of view between the rooms. I therefore have no reason to believe that the works are necessary to secure the future occupation and use of the building by a family, or indeed any other form of household. Given that improved convenience is otherwise a private rather than public benefit, this is not a consideration that attracts weight.

11. Implementing the scheme would generate minor work/trade for businesses. However, the benefits of this to the broader economy would be negligible. That and the above being so, the public benefits of the scheme would not outweigh the harm that it would cause.
12. I therefore conclude that the works would fail to preserve the Grade II listed building, contrary to the expectations of the Act and heritage policy set out within the Framework.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR