



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2023

by G Bayliss BA (Hons) MA MA MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 June 2023

Appeal Ref: Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/Y/22/3303511

The Clock House, West End Road, Kempston, Bedford MK43 8RT

- 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 and Mrs Bradbury against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00641/LBC, dated 22 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 May 2022.
 - The works proposed is an orangery kitchen extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the works in the heading above has been taken from the application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of the works has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties have provided written confirmation that a revised description of the works has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the one given in the original application.
3. Although the appellant's appeal statement refers to an accompanying planning application for the same proposal, which was also refused, that appeal is not before me. This decision relates solely to the appeal in relation to the refusal of Listed Building Consent.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed buildings and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that they possess, and whether any harm would be caused to the significance of the designated heritage assets.

Reasons

5. There are several listed buildings that are included in the list entries within the appeal site. The Clock House (Ref: 1321548) dates from the early 18th century. Extending from the rear of The Clock House is Grooms Cottage, Stables, Fodder Store and Carriage Shed (Ref: 1159604) (Listed Outbuildings) which date from the late 19th century and are arranged around three sides of a square courtyard. At the far end of the Listed Outbuildings is Barn at The Clock House (Ref: 1114287) which is late 17th or 18th century and almost closes off

the courtyard. The buildings were listed in 1987 and collectively are identified as having Group Value.

6. The list description for the Clock House states, amongst other things, that the building is of red brick and clay tile, of two storeys with attics and two hipped dormers with tile hung cheeks. It has a central projecting section to the front surmounted by a pediment with a modillion eaves cornice. Compared to the architectural embellishment and the symmetry of the frontage, the rear is planer with a more functional arrangement of openings. Nevertheless, the sash windows, some with cambered heads, the brick corbelled projecting dormer window and cellar entry are well detailed and reflective of buildings of this period and add to the special interest and significance of the listed building.
7. The attached red brick and slate/tile roofed Listed Outbuildings abut the north-west corner of The Clock House and extend away at right-angles to it. The list description outlines the historic functions of the buildings and identifies features to the elevations facing the courtyard. The elevation facing east overlooking the terrace at the rear of The Clock House has a simple arrangement of glazed doors and casement windows with small panes. The window nearest to the house has a cambered head, stone cill and contrasting brickwork detailing. Other windows and doors on this elevation have either cambered heads or straight lintels. The courtyard (western) elevation of this building has predominantly a mix of small-paned windows with contrasting brickwork to the openings. Although some openings on the eastern elevation overlooking the terrace have been altered, their design and arrangement reflect the agricultural origins of these buildings and clearly identifies their separate character to The Clock House.
8. The list description describes The Barn at the Clock House as being constructed in red brick with some grey headers and a tile roof with tile gable coping. It describes features of the building including a sunk clock face in the eastern gable.
9. From the evidence before me, including the list descriptions, and my own observations, I consider that the significance of the Listed Buildings both individually and collectively, insofar as it relates to these appeals, is largely derived from the age of the buildings, the plan form and function, historic fabric and architectural features. Collectively, the listed buildings have a distinctive plan form with The Clock House set on one end of the courtyard with its main views looking towards the road or over an expansive rear garden, and the more functional Listed Outbuildings and The Barn at the Clock House forming a tightly enclosed courtyard away from the main views of the house. The historic use and separate identity of each building is legible, and each reinforces the special interest and significance of the group as a whole.
10. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
11. The proposal would involve a single storey extension to the rear of The Clock House and the first bay of the adjoining Listed Outbuildings. The walls would be

largely of Bath Stone comprising a plinth and pilasters with a raised parapet concealing a flat roof and two roof lanterns. It would have a staggered plan form, being widest further away from The Clock House. The existing rear wall to The Clock House would remain exposed within the extension and the openings, including the cellar steps, would remain unaltered. The first bay of the Listed Outbuildings currently serves as the kitchen for the house and a new, structural opening would be formed between the kitchen and the proposed extension requiring the removal of a small area of brickwork together with two sets of glazed double doors and the infilling of a window.

12. The location of the proposed extension at the junction of The Clock House and Listed Outbuildings would, to some extent, divert attention from the ability to read and understand the clear historic functional and visual division between the house and outbuildings, including the distinctive plan form of the listed building group as a whole and how they are experienced within the garden area. It would therefore erode the ability to appreciate the special interest/significance of the listed buildings from the rear garden.
13. Despite the retention of the openings and features on the rear elevation of The Clock House, and the stepping in of its footprint nearest to the rear elevation, views of a large part of the rear elevation would be masked and obscured when viewed from the rear garden. Details including the cellar steps with its part-glazed timber door, together with the well detailed windows of various historic designs would be obscured by the extension. Windows and doors are often a key feature of an historic building and an integral part of its design and make an important contribution to the significance/special interest of a listed building. The masking of these features would be exacerbated by the amount of solid walling shown abutting the listed buildings which would not represent a transitional, lightweight link. Furthermore, I have no construction details to indicate how the proposed extension would be linked to the listed buildings which if not detailed sympathetically could have an adverse effect on the historic fabric.
14. Although I have not been provided with details of the existing kitchen conversion, I saw on my visit that the walling along its eastern elevation had been disturbed and the double door openings appear to be of relatively modern age. Considering this degree of disturbance, the proposed formation of a large opening in this wall would only have a slight adverse impact on its special interest/significance in the context of the overall listed building. However, the existing window with its small panes, cambered head and contrasting brickwork shares features with other historic windows on this listed building and its infilling would harm the building's special interest/significance, unnecessarily eroding the agricultural character of the building.
15. The elaborate design of the proposed extension with its dominant pilasters, decorative cornice and large expanse of glazing, together with the L-shaped form, would contrast strongly with the more modest design of the rear of the Clock House and the Listed Outbuildings, and their simple form. The solid to void ratio of walling to openings of the proposal would also contrast strongly with that of the adjoining buildings. Furthermore, the upper edge of the parapet to the extension would lie above the height of the eaves of the Listed Outbuildings. The extension would therefore not read as a subordinate addition as well as introducing an awkward junction that would be clearly visible in views from the garden towards the house. Although the appellant has

suggested that the eaves could be lowered to make the extension more subservient, I don't have any details of how this would be achieved. A revised proposal would need to be carefully considered and could not be dealt with by condition. In any event, this would not address the harm arising from the inappropriate design, scale and form of the proposal.

16. Whilst elements of stone are used for window cills, steps and other small building details throughout the Listed Buildings, the proposed use of Bath Stone for the walling of the proposal would be visually jarring against these brick-built buildings. Whilst this would make the extension appear distinct, in my view, it would further exacerbate the inappropriateness of the appeal proposal and harm the buildings' significance/special interest. Whilst it is suggested that there is a limited availability of bricks to match the adjoining buildings and that a newer brick would not assimilate with the building group, I have no evidence before me to substantiate this suggestion.
17. Considering all of the above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest and significance of the listed buildings. Therefore, the expectations of the Act are not met. Paragraph 199 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 200 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of those assets and any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. I find the harm in the context of the significance of the heritage assets as a whole, in the language of the Framework, to be less than substantial in this instance. This commands considerable importance and weight and is not to be treated as a less than substantial objection to the proposal.
18. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 202 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use. The appellant is of the opinion that the proposal would be beneficial because it would provide an improved family room and better circulation within the building. It would avoid the need to collect items from outside storage areas and the cellar could be properly used and be maintained as a heritage feature. The appellant considers that the scheme balances enhancement and preservation and secures its optimal viable use as a dwelling for future generations.
19. Whilst the additional accommodation provided by the extension would clearly be beneficial to the appellants, I regard this as a private rather than a public benefit. Moreover, I have been given no evidence that the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling or its maintenance is dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence.
20. It is suggested that the proposed extension would be of good quality, use durable materials and would be an energy efficient extension to a room which is difficult to heat. Whilst energy efficiency could reasonably be considered a public benefit it has not been demonstrated that such an improvement could be achieved through alternative means, thereby avoiding the harm identified to the heritage asset. As such I consider that little weight can be given to this limited benefit.

21. Although the proposal would be hidden from public view, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether public views or access of the building can be gained. Equally, the significance of a building is not just focussed on frontages and the main elevations and in the context of this appeal several listed buildings are considered as well as their interrelationship. Furthermore, whilst theoretically the proposal would be reversible, due to the financial outlay and facilities to be provided it would be unlikely to be removed.
22. The great weight assigned by paragraph 199 of the Framework applies to all designated heritage assets and the fact that the listed buildings are Grade II rather than higher grades does not diminish their significance or the weight attached to their conservation. Whilst the buildings do not lie within a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site this is not relevant to this appeal which concerns the proposed impact on the special interest/significance of listed buildings. An absence of local objections cannot override a proposal which has been identified as being harmful to a heritage asset.
23. Given the above, I conclude that there are no public benefits that would outweigh the great weight to be given to the harm to the Grade II listed buildings. As such, the proposal would not comply with paragraph 202 of the Framework. In addition, there is no clear and convincing justification for the harm to the significance of the listed buildings.
24. The proposal would fail to preserve the Grade II listed buildings and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that they possess. Harm would therefore be caused to their significance. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 199 of the Framework. Insofar as it is a material consideration, it would also conflict with Policies 29 and 41S of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (2020) which seek, amongst other things, to protect and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

Conclusion

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

G Bayliss

INSPECTOR