



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2023

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/Y/23/3320651

Wistaria Cottage, North Street, Bradford Abbas, Dorset DT9 6SA

- 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 Anthony White against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/LBC/2022/06262, dated 10 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 21 December 2022.
 - The works proposed are to remove the current thatched porch roof and replace with aged red clay tiles.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Wistaria Cottage, Cross Cottage, Glynn Cottage and 1, 2 and 3 Yew Tree Cottages are listed buildings within the Bradford Abbas Conservation Area. As required by Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) I have paid special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is whether the works would preserve a listed building and its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, and linked to that whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

4. Wistaria Cottage is the middle property within a two storey terrace comprising three houses. Positioned to the western side of North Street, this terrace is set back from the public highway behind a shallow front garden. Constructed of coursed local stone walls under a thatched roof, the terrace is one of several along North Street, and the presence of numerous thatched terraced dwellings is a feature of the area. These houses create an attractive visual cohesion to the street scene, particularly as many are positioned close to the public highway, and they are part of the distinct character and appearance and thereby the significance of the conservation area.

5. The appeal property is within one of the historic terraces that forms a visual focal point within the street scene. The long lengths of these terraces draws the eye as one travels along the road. Their repeated use of local materials along with their similar vernacular forms creates a harmonious cohesion within which no one building dominates. This is particularly so given the modest heights of the terraces, which along with their warm coloured stone walls and long expanses of thatch, create an attractive, intimate enclosure to the street.
6. The terrace which comprises Wistaria Cottage has a linear continuity of form that is part of the special historic and architectural interest of this listed building. The cottages are constructed from coursed rubble stone under a continuous thatched roof, and they are a fine example of the area's vernacular style. The limited palette of local materials and the mostly consistently sized upper floor casement windows tucked under the thatch on the front elevation are also indicative of the vernacular style. The ground floor windows demonstrate a greater variety of size, showing evidence of the changes that have occurred to the building over time. All these features, along with the modest height of the cottages, are part of the special interest of this listed terrace.
7. To the front door of Wistaria Cottage is a thatched porch that was constructed in the 1980s. The use of red engineering bricks gives the porch a legible contemporary appearance, and this along with the generous breadth of the porch, and its centralised position upon the front elevation of the terrace is such that it draws the eye. The porch forms a prominent feature upon the building, particularly so as there are no other porches upon the front elevation of the terrace. Notwithstanding this, the use of thatch creates some harmony with the palette of materials found within the front elevation of the building.
8. The replacement of the thatch with red clay tiles would be an incongruous addition to the host building. The tiles and the timber boarding would introduce further materials into the limited palette that characterises the front elevation of the terrace, and these materials would harmfully interrupt the cohesive appearance of the terrace. Even if aged tiles were used, the size of the roof and the timber panel would combine to exaggerate the prominence of the porch as it would make a strident contrast to the modest, simple appearance of the host building and its strong linear emphasis.
9. Within the conservation area there are historic properties with tile roofs and others with slate roofs, as well as porches with roofs of these materials. Nevertheless, along North Street many of the nearby thatched cottages have no porches, and of those that do, they are mostly thatched roofed with plain timber supports, and have much smaller dimensions than that on the appeal property. There are also a few with simple canopies over the doors, such as that found in the listed terrace of Yew Tree Cottages. In each case the legible subservience of the nearby porches to their host, along with their modest sizes and forms, all serves to create a recessive appearance, and one which thereby retains the long, linear dominance of the terraces.
10. The size of the roof when combined with the proposed materials would not only erode the harmony of the listed terrace, but also detract from the cohesive appearance that derives from the presence of so many similar terraces along North Street. In an area characterised by vernacular terraces of thatch and stone, the presence of such a porch would appear overly dominant, eroding the

cohesive, historic, character and appearance of the conservation area.

Although Yew Tree Cottages are set back from the public highway, their simple vernacular appearance contributes to the cohesive harmony of North Street and the conservation area. It follows therefore, that the increased prominence of the porch would also detract from the setting of these listed cottages.

11. The appellant's thatcher and an architectural designer consider thatch to be unsuitable for the porch, as the pitch is shallower than the functional minimum required. This is due to the size of the porch and its consequential proximity to one of the upper floor windows. Remedial measures have been undertaken to sustain the porch's roof, including guttering and a lead ridge. However, the guttering is open ended which in itself would concentrate water to drip in certain areas, and whether such measures have improved the longevity of the thatch has not been demonstrated. In addition, I saw at my site inspection that within the front elevation of the terrace there is evidence of weathered stone and mortar particularly in the lower courses of stonework, and also that algae is present elsewhere on the walls, not just by the porch. Moreover, the existing porch is a modern addition to the building, and as alterations to it would not result in a loss of historic fabric it could be that other alternative solutions could be undertaken.
12. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. This is irrespective of whether any harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Given my findings, the works would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building, the setting of those nearby, nor would it preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The harms would be less than substantial as the works would affect only part of the building, the settings, and the conservation area, although these harms would be of considerable importance and weight.
13. Under such circumstances, the Framework advises that where development would lead to less than substantial harm that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant considers the use of locally resourced tiles would provide a long-term solution to the ongoing problem of water damage. However, it has not been demonstrated that the existing situation is causing damage to the historic fabric, and no longer having the ongoing cost and inconvenience of thatch repairs would be personal benefits for the appellant rather than public ones. Given this, the limited public benefits would not outweigh the harms that I have identified, and the continued viable use of the property as a dwelling is not dependent on the works as it already has an ongoing residential use that could occur irrespective of the porch.
14. For these reasons the works would fail to preserve the special interest of a listed building, the setting of those nearby, and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The harms would be contrary to the requirements of the Act, and they would not be outweighed by public benefits, thereby failing to accord with objectives of the Framework. Although development plan policies are not determinative in listed building cases, the parties have drawn my attention to the requirements of Policy ENV4 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015), and I have taken this policy into account in my determination of the appeal. As this policy seeks, amongst other things, that development should conserve and

where appropriate enhance the significance of designated heritage assets, the works would fail to accord with this requirement.

Other Matters

15. Finally, the appellant's concerns regarding the Council's handling of the application, including the site visit, relate to procedural matters and such concerns fall to be pursued by other means separate from the appeal process and are not for me to consider.

Conclusion

16. Given my findings, the works would fail to preserve the special interest of a listed building, the setting of those nearby, nor preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Thus, for the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR