



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2024

by O S Woodward BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 March 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/Y/23/3324544

6 Church Street, Saffron Walden CB10 1JW

- 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 Richard Porch against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref UTT/23/0320/LB, dated 8 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 31 March 2023.
 - The works proposed are the formation of a gip door to master bedroom to form dressing room from adjacent bedroom and link to existing ensuite.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Because the appeal relates to a refusal to grant listed building consent, I have had special regard to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
3. In late 2023, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was released. The changes are not material to the proposed works and I therefore did not need to go back to the main parties for comments.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed works on the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II listed building, '6, Church Street'¹.

Reasons

Significance

5. The building has a mixture of 17th and 18th Century origins. It has a particularly attractive Georgian façade which, in conjunction with the neighbouring properties to the east, forms an elegant frontage along the street. This is a replacement façade in front of an older original building.
6. Within the older part of the building the plan form has retained much of its original layout. As relevant to the appeal proposal, at first floor level there are a number of bedrooms including, taking up the full depth of the building, the principal bedroom, Bedroom 1. Adjacent to this bedroom is the smaller

¹ List entry number 1196149

Bedroom 3, which has an internal access to a late insertion shower room. Bedroom 1 has a high, vaulted ceiling, a decorative cornice, tall skirting with moulding detail and a dado rail. Bedroom 3 has lesser detailing and does not include a dado rail, vaulted ceiling or fireplace. This further emphasises the hierarchy of the rooms. Although there has been some loss of the original plan form from the shower room, the original layout and hierarchy of the rooms is still clearly legible.

7. The primary significance of the building therefore lies both in its handsome Georgian façade but also its retained internal historic fabric, plan form and hierarchy of the two bedrooms.

Proposed

8. It is proposed to create a jib door between Bedroom 1 and Bedroom 3. This would involve removing some of the existing wall, cornice, dado rail and skirting in Bedroom 1, and the cornice and skirting to Bedroom 3. The door would enable Bedroom 3 to be used as a dressing room and then the shower room would become an en-suite. The proposed door would be without a frame or surrounds and there would be a continuation of the existing dado rail and skirting across the door itself. It would be flush to the wall to Bedroom 1 and would be inset within the wall to Bedroom 3. It would be located on the intervening internal wall on the far side of both rooms from their main entrances to the landing.

Assessment

9. The proposed works would result in the loss of historic fabric in the wall and to the skirting to both rooms and the dado rail to Bedroom 1. The amount of fabric to be lost would be limited because the size of the proposed door is small. The cornices to both bedrooms would not be affected.
10. The new door would not appear incongruous because it would be flush to the wall to Bedroom 1 and would not have a frame or any other detailing to draw attention to the insertion. This would be re-enforced by the continuation of the dado rail and skirting detailing to Bedroom 1. It would be more visible from Bedroom 3 where it would be inset into the wall. However, it would not have a frame or other detailing to draw attention to the door and it would remain visually subservient to the main entrance door to this room from the landing.
11. The proposed works would alter the plan form because the landing would no longer need to be used to access Bedroom 3 and it would become ancillary to Bedroom 1. However, Bedroom 3 is already a subservient room to Bedroom 1, due to its smaller size and lesser detailing. The contemporary shower room is already only accessible from within Bedroom 3. There would therefore be no material change in this now also being accessible from Bedroom 1. The main entry to both rooms would remain as the existing internal doors leading from the landing. Even if Bedroom 3 became a dressing room, the original plan form and doorway would still clearly be legible and circulation pattern of the house would be retained.

Conclusion

12. The proposed door has been designed as a modest and subservient addition and the changes to the plan form of the building would not be significant in itself. Nonetheless, there would be some harm arising from the proposed loss

of historic fabric. This harm would be less than substantial. The proposed works would therefore harm the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II listed building. They conflict with Paragraph 203 of the Framework, which highlights the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets. They also fail to comply with Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 and Policy SW3 of the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036, which reflect the Framework.

Other Matter

13. The site is within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area but as the works are all internal and would not alter the use or the intensity of the use of the building, the proposed works would have no impact on the character or appearance of this heritage asset.

Planning Balance

14. Paragraph 208 of the Framework states that where there would be less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
15. In this regard, although there would be less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building through the loss of historic fabric, this would be very limited. The benefit of the proposed works would be securing a layout more conducive to a dwelling of this stature and size by allowing for an en-suite. However, there is no substantive evidence or reason to believe that such improvements are necessary to secure the ongoing viable use of the property. This is therefore a purely private benefit. There would also be some economic benefits from the construction of the proposed door. These would be a public benefit but would be negligible given the small scale nature of the works.
16. Therefore, whilst there would be very limited harm to the significance of the building, this would not be outweighed by the extremely limited public benefits.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons above, the appeal is dismissed.

O S Woodward
INSPECTOR