



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 May 2024

by I A Dyer BSc (Eng) FCIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/Y/23/3334368

The Brills, 20 Brook End, Weston Turville, Buckinghamshire HP22 5RF

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Paul Solbe against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application reference is 23/01562/ALB.
 - The works proposed are demolition of potting shed and erection of single storey rear extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the proposal is in a conservation area and relates to a listed building I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
3. The description of development given on the application form contained additional text that do not relate to the scope of the works. I have, therefore, used the description of the works as it appears on the decision notice, as this provides greater clarity in identifying the extent of the proposed works.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are: whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building, "The Brills" (Ref: 1118393) (the LB), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Weston Turville Conservation Areas (the CA).

Reasons

5. The CA has three discrete areas, two larger and a smaller one. This reflects the origins of the village as a series of discrete agricultural hamlets clustered around important road junctions and the cultivation of their immediate hinterlands. As the population of these grew during periods of prosperity, these expanded, and eventually 20th century development has joined the clusters to form the village.
6. The appeal site lies on the edge of the Main Street and Brook End Identity Area, the largest of the three areas forming the CA. Its linear form follows the alignment of the road. The wide verges and widespread hedged boundaries, together with the varying plot size and domestic architecture gives the area a settled, verdant, semi-rural character reflecting the organic expansion of the

settlement over time. Given the above, I find the significance of the CA, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the authenticity of the vernacular architecture, the informality of layout of the plots, the verdancy of boundaries and the way in which these contribute to the setting of the historic buildings.

7. The LB dates from the 15th century and is a timber framed, thatched hall house. The timber frame has render and brick infill which has been painted white. It has been altered during the 16th and 17th centuries and restored following a fire in the 1960s, yet still retains much of its historic fabric, including the original arch-braced base cruck hall truss. The fenestration of the LB varies with simple, multi-paned casement windows predominating, although these vary widely in configuration and size of panes. As such, it is a good surviving example of a 15th century vernacular dwelling which retains much of its original form and utilises traditional building materials. Originally a farmhouse, it has been used as an inn and an early quaker meeting house. Since that time, it has reverted back to a private dwelling. Given the above, I find the special interest of the building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be related to the example it provides of a rural vernacular dwelling constructed using traditional materials.
8. For the purposes of the Act, a listed building includes any structure that is within its curtilage which has existed since before 1st July 1948. As structures within the curtilage that have a principal and accessory relationship to the main building, the outbuildings are also consequently listed. Whilst not in the list description, listings are primarily for identification purposes and do not provide an exhaustive or complete description of the special interest.
9. The plot within which the dwelling sits contains several outbuildings, of modern appearance, including a flat-roofed brick-built structure attached to what appears to be a flat-roofed brick-built garage. This structure is glazed on two sides and is described in the application documents as a 'potting shed'. The proposal would demolish the potting shed and construct a single storey, flat roofed extension on the rear elevation of the dwelling.
10. Whilst the potting shed has a modern appearance, I have no definitive evidence of its date of construction. It is apparent from its form that it is a relatively modern addition to the LB and its appearance is at odds with the more traditional architecture of the dwelling. The setting of the LB, relevant to this proposal, is a verdant, domestic garden. As such, removal of the potting shed would have no adverse effect on the historic or architectural interest of the building that I have identified above. I note that both parties have taken a similar view on the removal of the potting shed.
11. Moving on to the proposed extension, this would require the removal of an existing casement window and enlargement of the opening to allow access through from the main house. During my site visit I observed that the window that would be removed is of a markedly different design to the general form of fenestration used in the building, being formed of a large central fixed pane with one single-pane side casement window and another, single pane fixed window topped by opening upper lights on each side. It appears to be of softwood and is showing signs of deterioration. I also observed evidence of movement in the brickwork around it. Generally, the dwelling has casement

- windows with varying numbers of smaller panes. From my observations, the window to be removed is a later, inauthentic addition to the building.
12. Whilst the kitchen range is believed to be of later construction, I have no little information before me to show when it was constructed. Nonetheless, the removal of the window and opening of the wall would entail the loss of historic fabric of the building which would have a degree of evidential value. This, of itself, undermine the interest of the LB.
 13. The extension would be a simple, block-like structure. It would be faced with a white painted render to all elevations, and this would acknowledge the finish of the host dwelling. However, its flat roof, and the ratio of window to wall would give the extension a heavy, utilitarian appearance. This would be further emphasised by the proposed use of black uPVC to form the fascia and wood-grain finish uPVC for the soffits, which would have a wholly alien appearance that would be at odds with the traditional materials that characterise the host dwelling. The material would also lack longevity and would not be in keeping with the craftsmanship associated with this nationally important asset.
 14. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with taking a modern approach to the design of the addition, seeking to contrast the new form to the old. However, in doing so a design should reflect the status of the building to which it is attached in order to achieve a good, high-quality addition. It should be clearly differentiated but not so different that it visually disrupts the architectural interest of the host building. In this case, the design and finishes fail to sympathetically respond to the existing building and would lead to the use of poor-quality materials. This would significantly erode the appearance of the LB and undermine its special architectural interest, thus harming its significance.
 15. The appellant has suggested that the proposal would be acceptable as it simply continues the evolution of the LB and the group, which has seen significant change over time whilst retaining its significance. The appellant views such change as contributing to the character of the asset. Whilst I accept that this has been the case, I do not find that the proposal would make a further positive contribution for the reasons I have already given.
 16. Turning to the effect on the CA I note that, as the works lie to the rear of the LB and its associated outbuildings, it would not be possible to gain views of them from the public realm. The site is well enclosed by existing planting on its boundaries and in neighbouring plots. Thus, despite the harm that would be caused to the listed building I do not find that the proposal would be detrimental to the character or appearance of the CA. This is because the proposed changes would not be visible from the public domain and only have limited prominence from the private domain. Under such circumstances case law¹ has established that proposals must be judged according to their effect on a CAs as a whole and must therefore have a moderate degree of prominence. Given the above, I find that the proposal would not be detrimental to the CA and thus preserve its significance.
 17. However, for the reasons set out above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building. Consequently, I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of this appeal.

¹ South Oxfordshire DC v SSE & J Donaldson [1991] CO/1440/89

18. Paragraph 205 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 206 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification.
19. Given the nature and scale of the proposal, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance. Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, paragraph 208 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.
20. I do not find that public benefits exist that are sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified in this instance. I also note that the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence.
21. Policy BE1 of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2021) seeks to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance and seek enhancement wherever possible, requiring development affecting a heritage asset to achieve a high-quality design which respects and complements the heritage context in terms of scale, massing, design, detailing and use. The proposal would thus be in tension with the aims of this policy.
22. Given the above and in the absence of public benefits that would outweigh the harm that would be caused, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the Grade II listed building. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 206 of the Framework and conflict with development plan policies in so far as these are relevant.

Conclusion

23. Given the above and considering all other matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

I A Dyer

INSPECTOR