



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 May 2024

by H Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/Y/23/3331753

1 Cromwell Place, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 5JB

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against the refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Fred Caporaso against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02305/LBC.
 - The works proposed are described as “removal of an internal wall, to be replaced with a Victorian arch.”
-

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. Since the application was determined, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) was published in December 2023. However, as any policies that are material to this decision have not fundamentally changed, I am satisfied that this has not prejudiced any party. I have had regard to the latest version of the Framework and new paragraph numbers in reaching my decision.
4. The description of the proposed works set out in the heading above is taken from the application form. However, the proposed plans show the removal of the kitchen wall and chimney stack, infilling of internal doorway to WC and creation of new doorway to WC through the utility. Indeed, reference to these proposed works is clearly stated in the Council Officer’s report. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of these proposed works. As the effects of these elements of the proposal have been addressed by both parties in their respective evidence, I am satisfied that their rights have not been prejudiced by me taking this approach.
5. The submitted plans also show the removal of an external door to the courtyard, part infill of doorway opening with brickwork and the insertion of a window. These works were granted permission by the Council in a previous listed building consent (21/02633/LBC). However, the evidence states that the condition was not discharged within the time limit and so the consent is now void. Nevertheless, as these works were previously approved, there is no reason to conclude that the Council have an issue with these works. From my site observations and the evidence before me, nor do I. Therefore, I will focus

my considerations of the appeal on the proposed works shown on the submitted ground floor plan.

6. The appellant states that some of the internal walls and chimney breast within the appeal building have already been removed. At my site visit I saw that some of the walls had indeed been removed. Nevertheless, as I cannot be certain that what has been altered is fully in accordance with the plans before me, I have assessed the proposed works as shown on the submitted plans.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

8. The appeal site comprises an end of terrace dwelling (1 Cromwell Place) which forms part of a listed building that fronts Cromwell Place. It is a two-storey dwelling mainly constructed from gault brick and a slated roof, recessed sash windows with brick lintels, and a round-arched architraved doorway with fanlight and panelled style door to its front elevation. It is one of 8 properties within a wider terrace of dwellings with similar architectural style, that were likely built during the mid-nineteenth century. The group of terraced dwellings (1-8 Cromwell Place) were listed under a single entry in 1980 as a Grade II listed building¹.
9. The listed group of dwellings have an elegant regular form, repeated sizes, and a deliberately planned positioning, which creates a defined and attractive edge to the street. This and the presence of similar palettes of materials, window styles, and arched doorways, is part of the heritage merit of the listed building. As 1 Cromwell Place (No 1) is positioned at the end of the terrace, it has additional fenestration on its side elevation facing Oliver Road, creating an attractive frame to the end of the listed group.
10. The internal layout of No 1 consists of ground floor living and dining rooms accessed via a narrow hallway that contains a single flight of stairs to the first floor, beneath which is access to a cellar. The first-floor comprises a large bedroom to the front of the building and a second bedroom accessed off the landing. The evidence indicates that the rear wing of the building was a service wing with ground floor kitchen and scullery above at first floor level. The rear wing has been extended to create a rear bedroom on the first floor and a larger kitchen/utility area at ground floor. Therefore, although there have been some alterations internally, much of the historic layout and room use of this domestic building appears to remain largely intact, thus making a valuable contribution to the building's heritage value as a designated heritage asset.
11. From the evidence available to me, I consider that the special interest and significance of the listed building to be largely derived from its historic and architectural interests. Important contributors in these regards which are pertinent to the appeal are the building's surviving historic fabric, the legibility of its historic internal plan form, and its pleasing architectural style.

¹ List Entry: 1-8 Cromwell Place, 1330639 – Group value Grade II listed

Proposal and effects

12. The submitted plans show the proposed removal of an internal partition wall to the kitchen and a chimney stack, to be replaced with what is stated to be a 'Victorian arch' at ground floor level. This removal of historic joinery, a doorway, and the rear wall/stack of the service wing of the building would create a large open plan kitchen. However, these works would not only result in the loss of considerable historic fabric but would also obscure the understanding of the original layout, room use, and access patterns. This would diminish the plan form and layout of the dwelling, which as noted above, forms an important part of the building's special interest and significance.
13. The appellant indicates that the design of the proposed archway is relevant to the period in which the property was first constructed. However, in these respects, clear and detailed information for the proposed archway has not been provided. Specifically, it has not been shown that the proposed archway would restore the original floor plan or replicate any historic feature associated with the listed building. Indeed, there is no submitted evidence which demonstrates that it accurately reflects a Victorian arch design. On this basis, the insertion of such a feature would only serve to undermine the authenticity and integrity of the asset and confuse the onlooker as to the building's narrative.
14. Consequently, in the absence of substantive evidence to the contrary, I find that these internal works would erode the special interest of the property and have a harmful effect on its understanding and appreciation.
15. The plans show the infilling of an internal doorway to the ground floor WC and the creation of a new doorway to the WC through the existing utility room. Although there would be some loss of historic fabric, as these proposed internal works would retain sufficient wall and division to create an understanding of the historic internal plan form, I am satisfied that there would be minimal harm to the listed building in this regard.
16. Drawing the above together, I find that the proposal, by reason of its loss of historic fabric and loss of understanding of historic internal floorplan, would fail to preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II listed building. In doing so it would harm the significance of this designated heritage asset.

Public Benefits and Balance

17. With reference to paragraphs 207 and 208 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Given the extent and fairly localised nature of the proposal, I find that the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset assessed above would be 'less than substantial' but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 208 of the Framework requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimum viable use.
18. In this case, economic benefits would be delivered through the construction phase and the general investment into the property. Additionally, social, environmental and heritage benefits would be generated through improvements to the local housing stock, which the appellant asserts would be through the avoidance of condensation and damp and enhanced accessibility

and thermal efficiency. In respect of the latter, I am aware of the Framework's requirement to give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings (Paragraph 164), whilst also applying policies set out in chapter 16. Although limited information has been provided on these matters, they would represent benefits to the public at large that carry weight in favour of the appeal. Nevertheless, it has not been demonstrated that the only way of securing such benefits would be via the particular works proposed.

19. Whilst there are works proposed that would not harm the significance of the listed building, this is a neutral consideration in the balance. The primary outcomes of the proposal, namely the modification of the building to allow for open plan living, would be solely of private benefit to the occupiers of the property. Additionally, no compelling evidence is before me which confirms that the property would not be useable or viable as a dwelling or that its future would be at risk if the appeal was to fail and the works as proposed were not implemented.
20. On balance, in giving considerable importance and weight to the harm to the significance of the listed building, I find that this would not be outweighed by the limited public benefits arising from the proposal.
21. I conclude that the proposal would not preserve the listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. It would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the provisions within the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. It would also conflict with Policy LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (adopted 2019). This policy, amongst other things, seeks to ensure that proposals respect the historic form, fabric and special interest that contributes to the significance of the heritage asset.

Other Matters

22. The listed building is located within St Ives Conservation Area (CA). Mindful of the statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Act, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance. The CA includes the terraces fronting Cromwell Place and the buildings at Oliver Road being within the designation. The character and appearance and thus special interest and significance of the CA largely derives from the historic planned nature of St Ives and its relationship with the topography and River Great Ouse, including the focus of development near roads that lead to its town centre that appears to radiate from Market Hill. It is also the way the buildings of varying ages and styles reflect the evolution of the town. The appeal listed building largely retains its overall external historic character and detailing and therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and thereby to its significance as a designated heritage asset.
23. The external appearance of the front and side elevation of No 1 would be unchanged by the proposal. Therefore, due to the internal nature of the proposed works, it would preserve the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and would not harm its significance as a designated heritage asset. I note the Council raised no concerns in this respect either.

24. The appellant has raised concern regarding the Council's procedure with dealing with the listed building consent. Nevertheless, that is not a matter for my consideration in the context of this appeal.
25. I note the appellant's argument that the Council has been inconsistent with its approach to the adjacent dwellings. However, these are not matters of such substance to justify the harm I have found. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its own merits based on the evidence before me and my observations on site.

Conclusion

26. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR