



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 July 2024

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/Y/24/3341086

River Cottage, 85 Little Ann Road, Little Ann, Hampshire SP11 7NW

- 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 Mrs Sophie Cleaver-Rice against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 23/02338/LBWN.
 - The works proposed are described as "to change three upstairs windows for new timber framed, double glazed windows which will look as the current ones."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. River Cottage is a grade II listed building within the Abbots Ann Conservation Area. As required by Sections 16 and 72 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 is whether the windows would preserve a listed building and its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and linked to that whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

4. River Cottage is one half of a pair of semi-detached cottages positioned between Little Ann Road and Pillhill Brook. They are constructed of timber framed brick infilled walls under a long thatch roof, with eyebrow detailing above the first floor windows. The modest heights of these cottages and their construction from local vernacular materials is part of the special architectural interest of these listed buildings. In addition, their relationship to the highway and to the brook, along with their humble forms reflects their origins as agricultural workers dwellings, and this is also part of their special interest.
5. These cottages form part of a long, linear group of mostly historic houses that front the road whilst backing onto the brook. Several of these houses are

listed and the repetition of their similar heights and forms, their materials, such as thatch, tiled or slate roofs, timber framing, brick and / or flint filled panelled walls, and their traditional windows, all combine to give an attractive visual cohesion to this part of the village, as well as creating a harmonious linear setting for these historic houses. The presence of this distinctive linear row reflects the development of the village over time. The humble vernacular forms and styles of these homes is part of the character and appearance of the conservation area, particularly as they reflect the links of the former occupiers with the surrounding agricultural land.

6. The appeal property and the attached listed cottage make a positive and harmonious contribution to this group, and this cohesion contributes to the settings of this pair of listed buildings. Although the principal elevation of the cottage is onto its side garden, it can be clearly seen within the street scene, including from some distance away. The vernacular form and materials of the cottage, along with its modest height and the eyebrow thatching above the upper floor windows, not only contributes to the settings of the nearby listed buildings but also to the distinct character and appearance of the conservation area.
7. Both first floor windows show a variety of idiosyncrasies that belie their age, including their style, detailing, and also the presence of glazing that does not have the smooth regularity of modern glass. In addition, the glazing bars on the landing window are offset from each other, visible timber repairs are also apparent, whilst internally there are wrought iron fasteners and stays. All these features give the casements an aged and unique appearance that reflects and contributes to the special interest of this listed cottage, as well as making a positive contribution to the cohesion of the row of historic houses.
8. From my site inspection it was clear that the windows are in a poor state. There is rot within the cills, some joints have separated, and there is some gapping between the frame and the wall. However, the replacement of both windows with identical double-glazed timber units would have a harmful impact upon the historic appearance of the cottage. Rather than replicate the subtle irregularities and detailing of each window, the replacements would have a paired uniformity that would be at harmful odds with the aged, vernacular appearance of the listed building. Moreover, given the differences between the windows on the ground floor, the installation of an identical pair of windows on the upper floor would give a confused appearance comprising a variety of modern windows.
9. The use of slimline double-glazed units would serve to exaggerate this harm. The new glass would not only have a flat, smooth appearance but would have a conspicuous double reflection. The submitted drawings also show the windows would have trickle vents, features that would have a conspicuously modern and clumsy appearance, and particularly so if constructed of plastic. Taken as a whole, the replacement windows would appear overtly modern, uniform and pristine, and this would be at harmful odds with the special interest of this listed building. In addition to eroding the historic appearance of the cottage, the windows would also detract from the contribution the cottage makes to the conservation area and to the settings of those listed buildings nearby.
10. The windows have defects, albeit no detailed survey of their condition has been provided to demonstrate that replacement rather than repair is the only option

for both windows. Such an assessment should include whether any replacements could incorporate the existing glass. It was also apparent that cracking of internal walls has occurred. Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that it is the windows causing the walls to crack and the paint to shell. Definitive exploration and assessment to why the cracking is occurring would be particularly important in informing any works to the windows so as to minimise unnecessary damage to historic fabric.

11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of works upon 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 windows would harm the special interest of the listed building, the settings of those nearby, and the character and 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.
12. Under such circumstances, where works would lead to less than substantial harm this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The windows would reduce heating expenses and condensation, which would be personal and also public benefits through reducing carbon emissions, albeit such benefits could occur through the installation of secondary glazing. However, the support of a councillor and the absence of any objection to the works from local residents are not in themselves public benefits. On balance, the public benefits would not outweigh the significant harms to the heritage assets, and the continued viable use of the property is not dependent on the works as the building has an ongoing residential use.
13. For these reasons the works would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building, the settings of those nearby, nor would they preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. This would conflict with requirements of the Act, and the harms would not be outweighed by public benefits, contrary to objectives of the Framework. Although not determinative in listed building cases, Policy E9 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan (2016) has been brought to my attention. As it requires, amongst other things, that works should make a positive contribution to sustaining or enhancing the significance of the heritage asset, including that significance of the asset has informed the proposal, the works would fail to accord with these objectives.

Other Matters

14. The side elevation window is a post 1960 addition to the house, inserted within a former chimney. The glass is cracked and the window has a bulky frame and top-hung opening, and the Council have raised no objection to its replacement. This window would be in a prominent position and a trickle vent would be harmfully conspicuous. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I have not pursued this matter further with the parties.
15. The appellant has provided evidence of other examples of slimline double glazing. Where these windows have been installed and in what sort of building is not clear. Given this, the weight that can be attributed to such comparisons is limited.

16. Finally, the appellant's concerns regarding the Council's handling of the application and appeal, including the use of consultants, and the consistency of decision making, relate to procedural matters and have no bearing on my consideration of the merits of the case.

Conclusion

17. For these reasons, the works would neither preserve the special interest of the listed building nor the settings of those nearby, and linked to that the works would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The public benefits that arise would not outweigh these significant harms, and the works would thereby fail to accord with requirements of the Act, objectives of the Framework and requirements of the above referenced development plan policy. Thus, for the reasons given above, and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR