



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 August 2024

by Tom Bristow BA MSc MRTPI AssocRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/Y/23/3326307

The Long House, Salisbury Road, Breamore SP6 2EA

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended (the 'LBCA Act') against a refusal to grant listed building consent ('LBC').
 - The appeal is made by Michael Johnson against the decision of New Forest District Council ('NFDC').
 - The application is ref. 22/11207.
 - The works are described on the application form as 'removal of internal walls and replacement of existing French doors and individual window with double glazed timber window'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

Statutory and policy context

2. The Long House is grade II listed and sits within the Breamore Conservation Area.¹ I have therefore approached the appeal in the context of sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the LBCA Act. Those provisions require that I have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses, and pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
3. Similarly, reflecting that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (20 December 2023, the 'NPPF') sets out how 'great weight' should be given to their conservation relative to their importance. Policy DM1 of the New Forest District Local Plan, Part 2 (adopted on 14 April 2014) is similar to the foregoing.

The works undertaken

4. This appeal relates to LBC application ref. 22/11207, made on 18 October 2022, relating to works completed by 1 July 2022. There are only two plans before me, a location and site plan (no. 326-01B) and another entitled 'Proposed plans & elevations' (no. 326-05A). Although each proposal turns on its merits, there is nonetheless some relevant planning history that has some bearing on the present nature of the listed building.

¹ List entry no. 1350944.

5. Application ref. 23/10447 was made on 20 April 2023, NFDC granting LBC via decision dated 5 July 2023. That subsequent application was also supported by the location and site plan before me (no. 326-01B). It was, by contrast, supported by another plan entitled 'Proposed plans & elevations' (no. 326-06). The difference between plan no. 326-05A and its successor, plan no. 326-06, is that three alterations affecting the exterior of the listed building are illustrated.
6. In that context, and notwithstanding the description of development in the banner heading above, the acceptability of works affecting only the interior of the listed building are not in dispute between NFDC and the appellant (the 'main parties'). Those internal works did not relate principally to historic fabric, but rather to a section of blockwork wall, ply cupboards and plasterboard. The officer report in respect of that application described those internal works as preserving significance.
7. For comprehensiveness, albeit incidental to the scheme before me, via decision of 9 December 2015 NFDC granted permission for a 'single-storey extension; demolition of existing store' (to the south of the property).² There have also previously been applications related to a car port.³ There also appears to have been an application made in April 2024 for some form of alleged emergency repair works, albeit neither the outcome nor details of that are before me.⁴
8. As reflected in NFDC's decision notice in respect of application ref. 22/11207 of 16 May 2023, the dispute between the main parties is in respect of the acceptability of the additional works affecting the exterior of the property shown on plan no. 326-05A compared to plan no. 326-06. Even if I were of a different view to NFDC in respect of the other works shown on plan no. 326-06, that would be by the by; those works were authorised.

Evidence

9. Against the foregoing context plan no. 326-05A illustrates the works as they stand, not what was there before. Surprisingly there is no substantive information in that respect in appellant's Heritage Statement or otherwise. Moreover, in contrast to the expectations of NPPF paragraph 200,⁵ the Heritage Statement does not in any sense address the significance of the Long House or substantiate how the works would relate to that. The appellant's case, articulated in that document, is little more than 'the significant heritage asset involved is not damaged within the proposed development' (sic.). My decision could legitimately end there.
10. Nevertheless I now turn to address what I consider to be the significance of the listed building and its relationship to the Conservation Area, along with the implications of the works undertaken. In doing so, in light of the paucity of evidence before me, I can only effectively be guided by the works as they stand; plan no. 326-05A containing little detail about how works have been undertaken (noting that there is nothing by way of a schedule of works either).

² Refs. 15/11466 and 13/11125.

³ Refs. 22/10010 and 24/10064 (notwithstanding unsuccessful application ref. 22/11076).

⁴ Ref. ENQ/24/20135/ELB.

⁵ Which guides that the onus is on an applicant to 'describe the significance of any heritage assets affected...'.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

11. The Long House was first listed on 13 February 1987. The list entry describes the listed building as follows: 'terrace of three, now one dwelling. C18 with C20 alterations and extensions. Brick walls of Flemish bond, with blue headers at the north side, cambered ground-floor openings. Two storeys, five above six windows. Cast-iron early C19 casements C20 boarded door within a gabled wood porch. C20 single-storeyed extensions at each end'. That description alludes to 3 points particularly relevant in this instance.
12. Firstly, the Long House was once a run of modest properties, consistent in that respect with many rural properties of comparable era. Such properties were, principally, created for function rather than being conspicuously architecture. Internally rooms are also, where the historic planform has been maintained, comparatively small. Ceilings are low. Those characteristics reflect the intimate, hand-made, human scale of the building's origins. They also attest to the practicalities of historic construction, working principally with the structural limitations of timber and brick.
13. Secondly, the list entry reflects the relative importance of brickwork, albeit summarily. The principal elevation of the property facing towards Salisbury Road, the A338, includes brickwork in Flemish bond with (burned) blue headers. That is characteristic of similar age buildings nearby, and in a broad swathe of southern England. Reflecting that Flemish bond was seen as more refined than other patterns, there is some variety in brickwork to the rear. Nonetheless brickwork again, in its embodied materials and craftsmanship, honestly conveys the history to the building in the present.
14. Thirdly, the list entry refers to early nineteenth century cast iron casement windows. Although not original, those windows were nonetheless historic (and significance may not be embodied solely in the original form of a listed building). Windows in the principal elevation of the property remain historic. There is, as with brickwork, less formality within the rear or east-facing elevations of the listed building (in which certain windows have evidently been replaced at different times). Nonetheless a traditional style of windows prevails which, along with an historic arrangement of openings, contributes to integrity.
15. Notwithstanding certain later alterations, as a whole the Long House possesses a clear historic coherence. In its form, materials and craftsmanship it is consistent with many nearby properties.⁶ That is also true of its rural context,⁷ its rear plot extending to a winding watercourse to the east (one of many nearby through water meadows around the River Avon). There appears to be a longstanding relationship between historic buildings and the landscape context here, little changed for many years (if not centuries).
16. Consequently, insofar as relevant to this appeal, the significance of the listed building derives from its form, materials, craftsmanship and relationship to its surroundings. Those characteristics attest in physical form to the context in

⁶ Including the grade II listed Old Post Office obliquely opposite, and neighbouring grade II listed Merryfields.

⁷ With the notable exception of the A338.

which the listed building, and Breamore, emerged and evolved in conjunction with its surroundings and historic forces.

The nature of the works

17. In the absence of any real detail as to the pre-existing nature of the listed building it is challenging to establish precisely what has been undertaken. Nonetheless what are described on plan no. 326-05A as 'new double glazed timber doors' have been installed, as has a new window (also timber, finished white, and of understated design). Between the two what is described as an 'existing window' has been removed and bricked up. As in the application form, the works are stated to have been 'completed' by 1 July 2022.⁸ It is therefore fair to take the position that what is now present is what the appellant contends is represented on plan no. 326-05A, in effect the finished article.

The effect of the works

18. As referenced above in respect of brickwork and windows, I acknowledge that there is less formality to the rear of the property than in respect of its principal elevation. As also reflected above, the listed building has been successively altered over time. Historic buildings inevitably need to evolve somewhat to remain in active use (and are best conserved by being so).⁹ I also note, notwithstanding that significance and visibility are different concepts, that the works undertaken are essentially occluded from public view. All told they are relatively minor relative to the listed building as a whole.
19. The installation of the new door and window is, however, poorly executed. In respect of the door there is a visible gap between its frame and surrounding brickwork. Existing brickwork appears to have been insensitively altered there; various surrounding bricks are damaged. There is mortar missing from bricks above the door. Some patching of mortar has been undertaken, but is often slapdash or crude (in contrast to the intricate craftsmanship of the listed building described above). It is also ostensibly with cement-based mortar. Setting aside any potential structural implications in terms of composition, visually that jars with the appearance of the elevation otherwise.
20. In respect of the new window, it is unclear whether its installation has resulted in the loss of historic fabric. The brickwork either side of the window appears to have been sawn; brick widths there are irregular and their edges sharp. That is strongly suggestive that some historic fabric has been altered, as is the presence of six bricks arranged above that window arranged in header bond set within recent mortar. Again it appears that cement-based mortar has been used, potentially with a higher sand content than around the door, also finished relatively crudely compared to pointing elsewhere.
21. Where what is annotated as an 'existing window' on plan no. 326-05A has been infilled, that has inevitably disrupted the ability to understand the historic arrangement of window openings (which alludes to the listed building formerly being 3 properties). It is unclear whether what has been removed was historic; there must have been something there. Bricks used for infilling also lack the richer polychromatic appearance of historic elements of the properties, and again mortar inconsistent with an historic character has been used.

⁸ The appellant's appeal statement confirming that the works have been 'already undertaken'.

⁹ As noted in the planning practice guidance (Reference ID: 18a-002-20190723).

Consequently the works can only rationally be described as detrimental to significance.

Consideration

22. It is for the decision-taker, having established that harm results, to gauge its extent. As set out in paragraph 18 above, there are several moderating factors in that respect such that the extent of harm arising to the listed building may fairly be described as 'less than substantial' with reference to NPPF paragraph 205 (and towards the lower end of a spectrum within that categorisation).¹⁰ NPPF paragraph 208 guides that, in such circumstances, the extent of harm should be weighed against any public benefits. That is a balance to which I now turn, noting also that NPPF paragraph 206 establishes that any harm, not just that which is substantial, should require 'clear and convincing justification'.

The heritage balance

23. The appellant has not expressly articulated any public benefits to the scheme. Nonetheless, as referenced above, typically historic buildings need to evolve, and be maintained appropriately, to be preserved. Considered through that lens, the works may be said to be intended to be positive in terms of maintaining an optimum viable use (with reference to NPPF paragraph 208). Clearly modern double-glazed windows and doors, and the infilling of an existing opening, if executed well, will improve thermal efficiency and security. Similarly, in the abstract, replacing windows or doors in a poor state of repair will assist in safeguarding an historic structure against the elements.
24. However, fundamentally, in the absence of substantive evidence as to what existed here previously, I cannot accord those benefits any significant weight. Many people accept quirks and compromises as the logical corollary of living in a property with a rich history. With that in mind there is nothing to indicate, nor argument put to me, that the works were either necessary or beneficial to historic integrity (as opposed to representing a particular preference). There is also no evidence before me to indicate that comparable benefits as those set out above could not have been achieved, nor could not now be achieved, by virtue of an alternative and less harmful approach. There is therefore no clear and convincing justification in favour of the works.

Conclusion

25. Notwithstanding the gradation of harm that has occurred and the context to present circumstances, the works for which LBC is sought do not preserve the listed building. They are instead contrary to the clear expectations of statute and relevant provisions of the development plan and NPPF referenced above. There are neither public benefits, nor other considerations, sufficient to justify allowing the appeal. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tom Bristow

INSPECTOR

¹⁰ Logically even more diffuse, tending towards negligible, in respect of the Conservation Area as a whole.