



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2024

by A Dawe BSc (Hons), MSc, MPhil, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/Y/24/3349242

Manor House, Pitmans Grave Crossroads to Junction Littlewindsor Farm, Littlewindsor DT8 3QU

- 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 Mrs G Palmer against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/LBC/2024/01669.
 - The works proposed are described as: Remove existing single storey lean-to garden room structure, install thermally efficient hardwood orangery.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The site address set out in the above header is taken from the original planning application form.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the significance of the Grade II listed building known as Manor Farmhouse (Ref: 1210266) (the LB), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

4. The LB derives its significance from being a circa 1700 former farmhouse, including, on its front elevation, dressed stone walls; metal casement windows with lead lights, stone mullions and, in the case of the two larger ground floor windows, transoms; and stone front porch. The front is a more imposing elevation, whilst that to the rear is of a simpler appearance, including two 2-storey rendered gables, thought to be Victorian, and traditional sash windows. Notwithstanding the later addition of the rear gable extensions, and that their rendering is suffering from some delamination from the building, these still represent significant historic layering.
5. There is a relatively modern mono-pitch single storey extension to the eastern side of the building, with modern external materials and windows, albeit rendered to match that on the rear of the main house and with a front stone wall, and window with lead lights and stone mullions. Its rear elevation is flush with that of the historic building to which it abuts, and includes fenestration to match, albeit I understand all of that fenestration to be unauthorised.

6. The existing conservatory is stated as comprising two additions to the property, a solid roofed veranda and later glazed lean to, thought to have been added in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The structure as a whole is constructed in timber with large, glazed sliding doors. It is positioned to the rear of what is annotated on the plans as the existing formal lounge, in a space to the side of the rearmost part of the main house comprising the two Victorian 2-storey gables.
7. The conservatory's main central section, comprising the glazed lean to element, protrudes to an approximate alignment with those gables, albeit with its roof slightly projecting beyond that line. With that rearmost elevation of the conservatory being set away from the nearest rear gable of the house, that small roof protrusion is not prominent or highly noticeable.
8. To the sides of the conservatory's protruding section are noticeably set-back elements, respectively abutting the high boundary wall on one side and the main house on the other. They are set back for reasons unknown, albeit speculated by the Appellant. Whilst creating breaks in the alignment of the dwelling's rear elevation at ground floor level, and forming areas claimed to be impractical, those set back elements are not prominent features. Instead, rather than creating dominant unsightly features, they allow a visual break between the rear of the historic house and the main central section of the more modern conservatory.
9. The glazed roof element of the existing conservatory gently slopes upwards towards the garden away from the otherwise flat roof of the remaining extension, with a prominent fascia. Although the conservatory therefore obscures a significant part of the corresponding rear elevation of the historic house, its highest part is set well away from that elevation. Furthermore, due to the upward slope of the garden away from the house, the first floor windows of the LB can still be fully seen from a significant area of that garden, albeit from towards the rear part of it.
10. The conservatory is not of a design that directly relates to the historic nature of the LB. As such, it makes little contribution to the significance of the LB. Nevertheless, the above factors together moderate the degree to which it competes with the historic rear elevations of the LB and give it a degree of subservience. As such, the LB generally retains a high degree of historic and architectural significance.
11. The conservatory shows some evidence of water ingress and rotten timber, and the sliding external doors are not fully functional. I acknowledge this restricts the extent to which it could be used as habitable space, and note that it is currently used for storage. Notwithstanding that, there is no substantive evidence of these factors causing damage to the historic main house or preventing the LB as a whole from functioning as a dwelling.
12. The proposed works would completely infill that space bound on two sides by the corresponding elevations of the main house, where the existing conservatory has those set back elements. As such it would abut and align with the existing rear gable elevation of the house. I note the claim relating to the presence of the existing single storey lean-to extension to the eastern side of that elevation, of it sitting well in the space it occupies. However, the space relating to the proposal would differ in being more intimately related to the rear of the house, being enclosed by the historic building as referred to, on two sides.

13. Furthermore, the proposed windows either side of the full length glazed central section of the proposal's rear elevation, would be of a similar size to those currently set back in the conservatory. There are also large modern windows to the east elevation of the side lean-to extension, albeit not relating to the rear of the house. However, those large proposed windows referred to above would be seen prominently, being flush with that existing rear gable elevation, and distinctly in contrast to the existing characteristically smaller windows of the main house's rear elevation.
14. For these reasons, despite the substantially glazed, and therefore transparent, exterior, and intention to be of a design sympathetic to that of the rear gables to the house, the proposal would have a dominating effect on the south elevation of the LB. The creation of an unbroken clean line to the ground floor rear elevation of the LB would therefore also not be a beneficial factor.
15. The proposed roof would be a similar height to the highest point of the existing conservatory roof and, together with its gentle slope and hipped design, would itself not be an overly prominent feature. That ridgeline of the glazed roof would be closer to the first floor windows of the main house than the current conservatory's highest point. However, it would still be set away from them and at a similar height as the cill level of those windows, following amended plans submitted at the application stage. As such, in this respect, the proposal would not significantly detract from the architectural integrity of those window features or that first floor elevation generally.
16. Furthermore, the proposals would be likely to allow some improved sight of those first floor windows from the rear garden, compared with the existing situation. However, that is in the context of those existing windows being currently visible from a significant area of the garden, as referred to previously. In any case, as referred to above, the highest point of the existing conservatory is set well away from those first floor windows and not noticeably higher than their cill level. As such, I also find that the proposals would not have a significant net positive effect on the LB in this respect.
17. All of the above factors relate to the integrity of the LB in its own right, regardless of the circumstances whereby the proposed works would not be clearly visible from vantage points outside of the site.
18. Like the existing conservatory, the glazed rear elevation doors of the proposal would allow clear, direct sight of the rear garden from the existing formal lounge, as would have historically been the case prior to the addition of the existing extension. Likewise, the proposal would allow the potential for direct access between the formal lounge and garden, which I have no substantive evidence to indicate is not currently possible, subject to positioning of furniture; albeit acknowledging the reduced flexibility of the current conservatory's internal space due to its irregular shape.
19. Furthermore, in any case, whilst the existing stepped back sections of the conservatory provide more restricted and less flexible space, and notwithstanding its current condition, it remains a large room with what is still a significant area comprising the central deeper element. I therefore have no substantive evidence to indicate that the proposed configuration of internal space would necessarily be required to enable effective functioning of that room, and the LB generally as a dwelling, and to ensure the building's longevity as a heritage asset.

20. The same applies to the intended more thermally efficient windows, doors, roof and floor to the proposal compared with the existing conservatory, whereby, again, there is no substantive evidence that this would be to the benefit of the main historic building and its historic integrity and longevity.
21. It is likely that the proposal, with its glazed roof, would increase the amount of daylight and sunlight into the adjacent formal lounge back to levels similar to before the existing extension was added to the house. However, that room has existing significantly sized windows to the front, albeit north facing. Also, whilst the conservatory currently presents a solid ceiling immediately adjacent to that lounge, the extent of glazing in the rear elevations and part of its roof still provide scope for significant sunlight and daylight into that space to the rear of the lounge. Even with reduced daylight and sunlight, for these reasons, together with scope to add to this with artificial lighting, I have no substantive basis to find that this lessens the scope for that room to currently function as habitable space or, again, that the integrity and longevity of the LB is threatened by this factor.
22. For the above reasons, notwithstanding my findings regarding the effect of the glazed roof element in its own right, including in relation to sight of the existing first floor windows, the proposed works would fail to preserve the special interest of the LB. For the purposes of the planning balance, which I shall come on to, this harm carries considerable importance and weight.
23. Paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 206 goes on to state, amongst other things, that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.
24. Given the nature of the proposed works in relation to the LB as a whole, the harm caused to that heritage asset would be less than substantial in this case. Having regard to paragraph 208 of the Framework, as I have found 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.
25. I have found, having regard to various factors, that the proposals would not be required to ensure the ongoing integrity and longevity of the LB. Those factors would inevitably have the benefit of contributing to improved accommodation for residents of the property. However, there is no substantive evidence that this would be to such an extent as to amount to a significant public benefit, such that I afford it limited weight.
26. The Appellant intends to renovate the rear rendering that has delaminated from the building. Furthermore, as previously referred to, the existing conservatory abuts the side of the LB's rear gable element, which has such rendering. As such, any removal and replacement of the existing conservatory would be likely to dictate the nature of that rendering work. However, there is no substantive evidence to indicate that such renovation would be reliant upon the proposed works. I therefore afford little weight to this factor.
27. It is claimed that the Council's Planning Officer had no issue with the application from a planning point of view. I also note that the proposal is

supported by the Parish Council and the claimed support by the local Councillor and member of the Planning Committee. Nevertheless, I have determined the appeal on its merits based on all of the submitted evidence and my observations.

28. For the above reasons, the public benefits would be insufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm that would be caused to the LB.
29. In light of the above, the proposed works would fail to preserve the significance of the LB and features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses. The proposed works would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Furthermore, for the same reasons, they would be contrary to policy ENV4 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015 (the Local Plan) which sets out, amongst other things, that development should conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets; that any harm to the significance of a heritage asset must be justified; and that applications will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal under various circumstances.
30. The proposals would also be contrary to paragraph 203 of the Framework which highlights, amongst other things, the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.
31. The Council, in its planning decision notice, also refers to policies ENV10, ENV12 and HOUS6 of the Local Plan. However, those policies relate respectively to the landscape and townscape setting, the design and positioning of buildings, and other residential development outside defined development boundaries, concerning development generally and not to specific considerations relating to heritage assets.

Conclusion

32. For the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Dawe

INSPECTOR