



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2025

by Alison Scott (BA Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/Y/24/3344111

Saddlers, Burton Lane, Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 9JF

- 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 & Mrs M Sheerin against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - West Area (Wycombe).
- The application reference is 24/05401/LBC.
- The works proposed are described as 'Replacement of 5 x windows and 2 x doors on rear elevation.'

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been updated on the 12 December 2024 and after the submission of this appeal. The appellant was informed and asked for comments on the updated version.
3. As the proposal relates to a listed building and is within the Monks Risborough conservation area (CA), I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (the Act).

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II listed building described as Friars Cottage Saddlers (Ref:1125813) (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 Monks Risborough Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

Special interest

5. The listed building incorporates an adjoining property, Friar's Cottage, and dates from the 17th Century with late 18th early 19th Century alterations. The main building materials comprise local flint and red brick to the rear elevation. The use of natural materials specific to the Chiltern's area is a defining characteristic of the LB and visually connects it to all surrounding buildings along Burton Lane. The rear of the cottage is deceptively different in character to the front elevation. Constructed entirely from red brick with a very ordered fenestration pattern and different roof formation, nevertheless all openings are side hung timber casements that follow the same style and are a contributing factor to the LB's special interest.

6. Given the above, I find the special interest of the LB, insofar as it relates to the appeal to be primarily derived from its architectural value as well as its contribution as a grouping of well-preserved 17th century buildings that share a considered visual, historical and natural material cohesiveness.
7. The significance of Monks Risborough CA derives from its 16th century origins that grew organically from the 16th to the 19th century and forms a very tight cluster of ecclesiastical buildings, traditional farm buildings and cottages originally associated with the rural farming community. A pronounced materiality unifies all the buildings in the CA where traditional thatched cottages, natural tiled roofs, flint, chalk stone and fine quality limestone combine in a very limited palette of locally sourced materials. The cottages along Brunton Lane extol a rustic charm to their simple yet characterful appearance as the centrepiece of the village core and are of consistently high and coherent architectural merit.
8. Given the above, I find the significance of the CA, insofar as this appeal is concerned, to be the cohesive palette of traditional materials and their consistent use.
9. The appellant explains that the rear windows and doors are beyond economical repair and are not thermally efficient. They are seeking the wholesale replacement of all five windows and two doors, hand made to the same style. All units would incorporate slimline double glazing at approximately 12mm width to improve the energy efficiency of the LB.
10. From internal inspection, I observed that all timber is well painted, tight fitting, and those I opened were easily and fully openable, and maintained in a good overall internal condition with each piece of glazing within the glazing bars, intact. I could not detect any obvious signs of draughts radiating through the windows or evidence of signs of internal water ingress. I could see no obvious draught proofing remediation such as brushes or draught proofing strips fitted to the timber.
11. My external inspection demonstrated evidence of some level of weathering and decay to all windows. The first-floor windows I observed considerable paint flaking and some degree of decay in places, more prevalent to right angle joints. However, this had not penetrated the entire window and was identified in more localised places. I observed evidence where putty has been washed away leaving exposed gaps in the timber to allow water ingress through the timber. This has clearly contributed to timber deterioration although I could see little evidence of efforts to improve the condition of the more affected joinery. The external doors I inspected were in good order with minimal degree of timber decay.
12. The inclusion of double glazing will require reinforced frames and jambs and glazing bars of a thicker profile to support the extra weight. There would be a discernible effect on the existing reveals as a consequence of an enlarged profile. Without precise details, there is insufficient evidence before me to persuade me that modern replacements would successfully replicate the sections and proportions of historic joinery. This change in character would undermine the integrity of the LB.
13. The existing glazing has the properties of fine single glazing which has a delicate refinement to its appearance and appears historically accurate to the age of the LB and its context. This would be lost by the installation of modern double glazing and as a whole, would detrimentally weaken the authentic integrity of the LB. In

addition, the existing historic fixings of fasteners, catches and decorative handles adds to the character of the windows and has a historical value that would be lost in their entirety.

14. Historic England's guidance on traditional windows regards windows as the eyes of a building and advocates prevention and measures and repair before replacement. The appellants have provided no precise schedule of damage to the woodwork to fully evaluate the extent of decay that has arisen, and from my own assessment, there is no sound justification for wholesale replacement.
15. Whilst the appellants are of the view that the joinery to be replaced is not original to the LB, this has not been evidenced. The windows follow the same style, proportions and appearance as other casement windows I viewed in close quarters. This leads me to the view that they are historically appropriate to the origins of the LB. What is currently in-situ is of historic value and its loss would be significant and irreversible.
16. In terms of the impact upon the character and appearance of the CA, as the changes proposed would be localised from within the site they would not result in a wider discernible impact. On this basis the proposal would have a neutral effect upon the character and appearance of the CA and its significance would be preserved. Irrespective of my findings on this matter, and even though the proposal would affect the rear elevation with less exposed public views, has no bearing on me reaching my findings that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the LB. This is because listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained. I give this harm considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of this appeal.

Public benefits and balance

17. Paragraph 212 of the Framework advises 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 213 goes on to advise that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.
18. Given the scope of the works and development proposed, 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 215 of the Framework advises that this harm to the significance of the heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.
19. Considering the benefits of the proposal, the positives of replacement doors and windows would provide better thermal insulation to the dwelling thus reducing heat loss through apertures and improve energy efficiency is a wider public benefit. However, there is no evidence presented to demonstrate that this scheme is the only way to deliver those benefits or a measure of the positive contribution it would bring to the environment. Based on the scale of the proposal, the public benefits would be limited. The LB was occupied at the time of my visit and there is no evidence presented to indicate it was not already in its optimum viable use. There is nothing before me to suggest that by not permitting this proposal would compromise its optimum viable use.

20. Given the above and in the absence of public benefits that would outweigh the harm that would be caused, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural interest of the Grade II listed building. This is contrary to the heritage preservation aims of policy CP11 and DM31 of the Local Plan insofar as relevant.

Other Matter

21. Although the appellants points to inconsistencies pertaining to different Council's approach to the use of double glazing within listed buildings, there are no details before me to take into account. The appellants can refer to the Council in the first instance on this matter.

Conclusion

22. The appeal should be dismissed.

Alison Scott

INSPECTOR