



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 21 January 2025

by **H Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 February 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/W2845/W/24/3352532

Bumblebee Cottage, 26 Main Street, Little Brington, West Northamptonshire NN7 4HS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs G. Pearson against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/1430/FULL.
 - The development proposed is extension of existing chimney stack to 1.6m above ridge, new clay pot to provide 1.8m from ridge to top of chimney. Removal of internal flue liner and replace with insulated flue liner.
-

Appeal B Ref: APP/W2845/Y/24/3352533

Bumblebee Cottage, 26 Main Street, Little Brington, West Northamptonshire NN7 4HS

- 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. Pearson against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/1431/LBC.
 - The works proposed are extension of existing chimney stack to 1.6m above ridge, new clay pot to provide 1.8m from ridge to top of chimney. Removal of internal flue liner and replace with insulated flue liner.
-

Decisions

1. **Appeal A** is dismissed.
2. **Appeal B** is dismissed.

Applications for costs

3. Applications for costs were made by Mrs G. Pearson against West Northamptonshire Council, and those are the subject of separate decisions.

Preliminary Matters

4. As the proposal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act).
5. The two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation. I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning.
6. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) was published in December 2024 after the Council made its decisions. I have had regard to the revised Framework in reaching my decisions.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the 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 forms part of a pair of thatched cottages of modest scale, 26 and 27 Main Street. The two cottages are Grade II listed¹ and date from the early 18th Century. They are constructed from squared coursed lias set under a thatched roof with red brick chimney stacks.
9. The appeal cottage is a small single-storey dwelling with attic roof living space. The front elevation has leaded single pane timber windows at ground floor level. At attic level the windows are set into the thatched roof.
10. Pertinent to the appeals, the listed building's central chimney and the northern chimney (the subject of these appeals), remain matching and unaltered with a similar short, squat appearance. The two chimneys at the southern end of the listed building appear to have undergone extension. Thus, the traditional features of the shorter, squat chimney stacks make an important contribution to the heritage merit of the building.
11. Given the above, I find that the special interest and significance of this heritage asset largely derives from its historic and architectural interests. These are drawn from its illustration of early 18th century rural thatched cottages, as well as the historic fabric and features that survive from the physical origins of the historic building.

Proposals and effects

12. The proposal would replace the existing chimney flue liner and increase the height of the chimney stack on the appeal cottage, including a new clay pot, to achieve 1.8m above thatch. The existing chimney has a short squat appearance with a functional and unobtrusive design that appears proportionate to the size of the building and the thatched roof. Extending its height would make it appear overly tall and out of proportion, causing it to visually dominate the cottage's otherwise modest appearance. It would also upset the balance and symmetry with the building's adjacent chimney stack that also has a short squat appearance, resulting in a detrimental effect on the historic roofscape. Consequently, the proposal would disrupt the building's historic character and undermine its architectural integrity.
13. My attention has been drawn to extended chimney stacks at the neighbouring dwellings, which includes the Grade II listed building's cottage at 27 Main Street that adjoins No 26. However, I have not been presented with substantive evidence demonstrating that these development and works have been carried out with the benefit of planning permission and listed building consent. On this basis, while I acknowledge the presence of previous chimney extensions, they do not justify the proposal before me.

¹ List Entry Number: 1367039 – Grade II listed

14. While there are chimney stacks in the locality that are of a greater height, these tend to be where the host property is of an overall larger scale, where the gable end stacks are taller with the central/in-between stacks being shorter, or where the roof covering is slate or tile. At present the cottage maintains that informal hierarchy which would be disrupted by the proposal.
15. The existing chimney's small scale harmonises with the property's overall proportions and accentuates the gently sculpted thatched roof. As highlighted in the Heritage Statement (dated February 2024) at paragraph 5.16, the topography of the surrounding land would mean that the proposal's harmful effects would be visible and perceived from nearby public routes.
16. Although the appellant's structural survey report (dated 30 December 2023) indicates that the existing chimney was in a good structural condition at the time of the survey, there was no visual inspection inside the flue, such as a CCTV inspection, as the chimney was covered up. As such, there is no evidence before me to confirm if there are any internal defects present, whether the chimney's internal dimensions and layout are compatible with the proposed insulated flue liner, or whether the removal of the existing flue liner and its replacement with an insulated liner would cause any structural damage to the property. It is also not clear if the proposal would require the thatch to be cut away from the chimney before any development and work is commenced to the stack. This raises concerns about the practical feasibility of the chimney to accommodate these changes. Thus, I cannot be certain that the proposal would not result in the loss of or damage to the listed building's historic fabric.
17. Furthermore, there is no substantive evidence before me, by way of a fire officer's report or an experienced heating engineer's survey, to confirm that the proposed chimney modifications would comply with the existing stove manufacturer's operating instructions.
18. While the proposal would re-use existing materials where possible and the stack would be extended using reclaimed bricks, which could be reasonably secured through the imposition of conditions, this would not justify the harm identified above.
19. Drawing the above together, I find that the proposal would not preserve the Grade II listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. In doing so, it would harm the significance of this designated heritage asset.

Public benefits and balance

20. With reference to paragraphs 214 and 215 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 215 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.
21. In this case, economic benefits would be delivered through the construction phase and the general investment into the property. The provision of additional heating to

the property could also be a social benefit in terms of improvement to the local housing stock. However, these outcomes would be moderated by the extent of the scheme, but still weigh in favour of the appeals.

22. In Historic England's guidance², its fundamental recommendation is that wood burning and multi-fuel stoves should not be used in thatch roofed buildings, as recent studies have shown that these types of stoves are more likely to cause fires in thatch roofs than traditional open fires. Thatch fires often result in the total loss of the building, and in this case, it could result in the loss of a designated heritage asset.
23. The appellant points to the benefit of ensuring the long-term safety of the building due to vastly improving fire safety relating to the existing heating installations. I acknowledge that the building already has an existing wood burning stove fitted and the raising of the chimney would enable the homeowners to comply with the building regulations and obtain full house insurance cover to enable them to continue using the existing wood burning stove. On this basis, the extension of the chimney would generate a heritage benefit of reducing the risk of fire to a heritage asset and weighs in favour of the appeals.
24. Whilst paragraph 8.6.2 of appellant's statement suggests that they have explored alternatives to the chimney extension, there is no information before me on this, or that the appellant would not have a functional and insurable heating system in the absence of extending the chimney and not using the stove. Therefore, I am not persuaded that the only way of securing the benefits identified would be via the appeals proposal.
25. Additionally, it has not been demonstrated that the property would not be usable or viable as a dwelling or that its future would be at risk if the appeals were to fail and the development and works as proposed were not implemented. There is also no substantial evidence that the discontinued use of the stove would lead to any deterioration of the condition of the building fabric. In these respects, the identified harm to the significance of the listed building has not been clearly and convincingly justified as required by paragraph 213 of the Framework.
26. On balance, in giving considerable importance and weight to the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, I find that this would not be outweighed by the moderate weight I attach to the public benefits arising from the proposal.
27. I conclude that the proposal would not preserve the Grade II 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 BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (adopted 2014), and Policies ENV7 and ENV10 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) for Daventry District 2011-2019 (adopted 2020). Collectively, these policies amongst other things, seek to ensure developments conserve and enhance heritage assets, including their settings, and are of high quality design which reinforces local distinctiveness.

² Historic England Guidance - <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/emergency-and-fire/fire-advice/reducing-fires-in-thatched-roof-properties/>

Other Matters

28. Representations were received from neighbours in support of the appeals. I also note that Historic England did not make any objections. Nevertheless, these are neutral considerations and do not weigh in favour of the proposal.
29. The appellant suggests that the Council made no mention of the replacement flue lining and consider that there were no issues with this part of the scheme. However, I find that the Council did refer to this in paragraph 9.12 of the Officer's report for Ref: 2024/1431/LBC.
30. The appellant states that they have a right to a functioning and insurable heating system. Nevertheless, for the reasons given, the proposal would harm the significance of the listed building.

Conclusions

31. **Appeal A:** The proposed development would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no material considerations which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.
32. **Appeal B:** For the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR