



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 April 2025

by A James BSc (Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/Y/24/3350082

Leeds Meade, Leeds Lane, Five Ashes, East Sussex TN20 6JX

- 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 and Mrs N G Noble against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application reference is WD/2023/2274/LB.
 - The works proposed relate to replacement windows and repairs to the bay/oriel structures.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the proposal description from the decision notice and appeal form, as they more accurately reflect the nature of the proposal.
3. As the appeal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
4. Since the Council issued its decision notice, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been revised, with the latest version published on 12 December 2024 and updated on 7 February 2025. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal remain broadly the same. As a result, I have not sought further submissions on the revised Framework and I am satisfied that no party has been prejudiced by my approach.
5. Following the Council's determination of the application, which is the subject of this appeal, the Council granted listed building consent on 7 October 2024 for 'repairs and refurbishment of the two storey windows and first floor oriel on rear south elevation of the house' (Ref: WD/2024/1836/LB). The consented scheme includes structural repair works to the oriel window and the two bays. New steel frames and subframes were also consented where the leaded-lights are fixed directly to the timber frame. The Council advises that the consented scheme allows for the retention and repair of the existing windows and their window furniture. Given that the Council has granted consent for new steel frames and subframes, this appeal decision focuses on whether the replacement windows would preserve the special interest of the listed building.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether the replacement windows would preserve a Grade II listed building, known as 'Leeds Meade' (Ref: 1353603) and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Reasons

7. Leeds Meade is a large, detached, timber-framed dwelling, which dates back to the early 17th century. It is two storeys high and constructed of red brick, with some tile hanging at first floor level. The building has a tiled roof. It features casement windows, with diamond pattern leaded lights. The building was originally L shaped, but a matching wing has been added and it now has a half H-shape plan form. The building was once owned by Her Imperial Highness (HIH) Princess Blücher. The building is sited in an elevated and exposed position. There are far-reaching views available from the rear of the building of the surrounding countryside.
8. The rear elevation of the building features two full height bay windows and a central oriel window at first floor level. With the exception of the central door, the glazing on the rear elevation is more uniformed and symmetrical than the windows on the rest of the building. Based on the evidence before me, it appears likely that the windows on the rear elevation were installed in the early 20th century as part of a major phase of renovation works, which was carried out by HIH Princess Blücher. However, the windows themselves are considerably older and it is estimated that they date back to the 17th or 18th century.
9. Based on my site visit and the evidence before me, I find that the listed building's special interest insofar as is relevant to this appeal is derived from its historic and architectural interest as an illustration of early 17th century domestic architecture. The building's pleasing architectural design, the symmetrical form of the rear elevation, the presence of traditional materials and fenestration and the building's association with HIH Princess Blücher make important contributions in these regards.
10. The building features a variety of window sizes and styles; however, the windows are typically single glazed, with leaded lights. While I observed the presence of double glazing and applied lead to some windows, such glazing is the exception, rather than the norm. Furthermore, it demonstrates the harm that can be caused by such glazing due to its more modern appearance and different reflective qualities.
11. Although, the windows on the rear elevation of the building were installed in the early 20th century, they have been in place for some time and form part of the historic and architectural evolution of the building. The existing windows complement the other windows on the building and make a positive contribution to its special interest.
12. In addition to the works already consented by the Council, the appeal scheme seeks to replace the existing windows with 12mm thick, double glazing, which would have lead applied on both sides. The use of double glazing has different reflective qualities to single glazing. Although slimline double glazing is proposed, it would have a chunkier profile and the applied lead would fail to appear authentic. Overall, the proposed windows would appear more modern in their appearance than the existing windows and would erode the special interest of the listed

building. Furthermore, the proposal would result in the loss of historic fabric, which makes a positive contribution to the special interest of the listed building. The historic fabric is also associated with a major phase of renovation works carried out on the building in the early 20th century, which is likely to be associated with HH Princess Blücher.

13. The appellants propose Crittall-style windows and consider that they would be more authentic to the date of installation. However, in the early 20th century, such windows would have been single glazed and would not have had applied lead. Consequently, I give this argument limited weight in my decision.
14. It appears from the evidence before me that the water ingress and structural issues are being caused by the detailing of the bays and the oriel structures, rather than the windows themselves. The appellants advise that water ingress may be caused by the weathering of lead flashing or by movement of the steel frames within the timber sub-frames. Consequently, any issues of water ingress, may be addressed by the consented scheme or repairs to the lead flashing. While I observed that the sub-frames were rotten, there are only minimal signs of water staining internally, including on the windowsills.
15. The appellants have suggested that the proposal would not harm the listed building because it is sited to the rear of the property and would be screened from public views. However, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
16. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and would harm the significance of this designated heritage asset.
17. Paragraph 212 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 advises that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should have clear and convincing justification. I find the proposal would result in less than substantial harm; however, this should not be equated with a lesser planning objection and is still of considerable importance and weight.
18. Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing the asset's optimum viable use.
19. Given the building's exposed position, the rear elevation receives the full force of the prevailing winds. The proposal would provide a more hospitable internal environment and help to reduce drafts and condensation, which are private benefits.
20. The proposed double glazed windows would improve the thermal efficiency of the property and contribute to the government's goal of achieving net zero. However, there is no compelling evidence before me that the windows could not be made more energy efficient through alternative works, such as secondary glazing, which would enable the existing windows to be retained. The appellants consider that

condensation would remain an issue with secondary glazing and that any water would run off down the inside of the windows and cause water staining and damage to the fabric. However, there is no substantive evidence before me that condensation would be a particular issue that would cause damage to the historic fabric.

21. Nevertheless, there is a consented scheme before me, which demonstrates that the existing windows can be retained, whilst addressing the structural and water ingress issues. While I acknowledge, the appellants concerns regarding some of the conditions attached to the consented scheme, the appellants have the option to submit an application to discharge these conditions or submit an application to vary or remove the conditions, which the Council could then consider further.
22. Any improvements to the building's thermal insulation and energy efficiency from the proposal have not been quantified. Given that the proposal relates to a single property, any environmental benefits which would flow to the public at large are likely to be minimal. It is clear that the benefits which would accrue would primarily be of a private nature. Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence before me to suggest that the use of the building would cease in the absence of the proposed changes. As a result, I do not find them necessary to secure the viability and long-term conservation of the building.
23. The proposal would result in investment into the property and provide employment for local craftsmen or women, which would have a small economic benefit, which I give limited weight in my decision as a public benefit.
24. Overall, I give the public benefits limited weight in my decision. Consequently, in attributing great weight to the harm that would be caused to the significance of the designated heritage asset, I find that there would be insufficient public benefits arising from the proposal to outweigh this harm.
25. Given the above, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building. The proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the historic environment policies of the Framework. The proposal would conflict with Policy SPO2 of the Wealden District Core Strategy Local Plan February 2013. This policy among other things seeks to ensure that the intrinsic quality of the historic environment is protected.

Other Matters

26. I note the Parish Council's support for the proposal; however, this does not alter my findings set out above.
27. While the appellants have stated that they would compromise on double glazing if that were a barrier to approval, I have determined the appeal based on the plans before me.
28. The Council and appellants have drawn my attention to a scheme at Ledston Hall from 2021 (Grade I listed building), which included the replacement of metal windows with either mano-laminated glass or slim profile double glazing. This case is referenced in Historic England's Advice Note 18¹, along with the caption: *'replacement of windows which do not contribute to the architectural or historic interest of a building with double-glazed windows of appropriate material and*

¹ Historic England Advice Note 18 - Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency

pattern, will generally be acceptable. I have found that the existing windows in the appeal property make a positive contribution to the architectural and historic interest of the listed building. As a result, the appeal scheme is materially different.

29. My attention has also been drawn to a consented scheme for replacement windows at Laughton Place, which is a Grade II* listed building². Full details of the circumstances of the other cases at Laughton Place and Ledston Hall are not before me and I therefore give them limited weight in my decision.

Conclusion

30. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A James

INSPECTOR

² Application reference: WD/2024/0077/LB