



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2025

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/Y/25/3359192

2 Park Mill, Mill Lane, Brereton, Cheshire East CW4 8AU

- 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 Andrew Bracewell against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/2748C.
 - The works proposed are to replace three single glazed windows at the front of the property, three single glazed windows at the rear of the property (two at the upper middle level), and two double glazed panels and double glazed door which provides access to the hallway at ground level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the proposal 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).
3. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) was published in December 2024 after the Council made its decision. I have had regard to the revised Framework in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve a Grade II* listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

5. The appeal site relates to 2 Park Mill (No 2), which forms part of a Grade II* listed¹ building known as 'Park Mill and Park Cottage'. The building dates from around 1840 and was originally constructed as a water-powered cornmill with an attached cottage. The mill was converted into 2 dwellings in the early 21st century, and the attached cottage was converted separately from the main building.
6. The mill building is constructed from brown brick with a clay tile roof and a prominent tapered square chimney at the north-east corner. It is of two-storeys fronting Mill Lane and three-storeys to the rear. The attached cottage is constructed from similar material but is smaller in height and form compared to the main mill building.

¹ List Entry Number: 1138830

7. The most notable architectural detailing is found on the upper floor of the mill building comprising 5 gothick cast iron casement windows and a former loading door opening which is now a glazed feature on the front elevation. To the rear of the building at upper storey level are 6 gothick cast iron windows with inset opening lights. The fenestration to the lower stories comprises primarily of traditional timber casement windows.
8. The evidence indicates that the main mill building retained much of its historic fenestration and at the time of its conversion, the existing windows were either refurbished or replaced with single glazed casements with integral glazing bars. Although some of the windows on the property were changed during the conversion, it was evident during my site visit that their form and some styling features had been influenced by the historic pattern of those they replaced. They are mainly single glazed and of traditional design, constructed from traditional materials such as timber with slender profiles and integral structural glazing bars. As such, they are important features of the building which positively contribute to its character, appearance and thus its heritage merit.
9. Given the above, I find the special interest and significance of this heritage asset is largely derived from its historic and architectural interests. These are drawn from its illustration of a 19th century mill building occupying a prominent position on Mill Lane. Its age, historic fabric, architectural form and design, including its fenestration, all make important contributions to its special interest and significance.

Proposal and effects

10. The proposal seeks to replace three single glazed windows at the front of No 2, three single glazed windows at the rear, and a double-glazed door with two double glazed panels at ground floor level.
11. Although the proposed replacement windows attempt to mirror the materials and method of opening, its overall design would not replicate the existing windows. In particular, the glazing bars available within the replacement windows would not be integral to the construction of the window itself. Due to their cosmetic nature, the proposal's glazing bars would be unlike the finer glazing bars found on the existing windows and would therefore lack the sense of delicacy and elegance in the listed building's fenestration. This would result in an undesirable detrimental effect on the architectural and historic interest of the listed building.
12. Furthermore, the timbers would be machine-cut and instead of multiple panes separated by integral glazing bars, there would be a factory double glazed pane, which would result in a highly reflective finish. Therefore, the form and design of the replacement windows would not replicate the existing and traditional joinery, which are characteristically handcrafted timber casement windows where glazing bars are a structural part of the window.
13. Joinery details have been submitted. However, there is nothing to demonstrate how the units would sit within the window reveals of the building. It is also not clear from the drawings if the existing window arches would be retained or replaced, and whether they would match the existing. Therefore, this degree of ambiguity and lack of detail does not allow for a valid and meaningful assessment of the form and appearance of the proposed windows.

14. The appellant has indicated that the proposed replacement windows would be similar to the replacement windows installed at Park Mill Cottage. However, I observed that the appeal building's existing windows sat deeper into the reveal than the neighbour's replacement windows at Park Mill Cottage. The frames were chunky, with some sub-divisions protruding, and the glazing bars were not integral and appeared to stick out more than those found on No 2's existing windows. These differences in window reveal and fenestration design was noticeable and made the replacement windows stand out.
15. While the cottage is attached, the two dwellings within the mill building (Nos 1 and 2) appear as one entity. The cottage was converted at a different stage to the main building, and its style, height and form is different. Furthermore, the loss of or replacement of the cottage's traditional windows does not justify further erosion of the building's integrity. Rather, I consider that the proposed replacement windows would exacerbate the proliferation of a non-traditional window style within the listed building, which would not be sympathetic to its character and authenticity.
16. The proposal would also replace the hallway door located to the rear of No 2. My observations were that the existing glazed timber door was unremarkable and did not contribute meaningfully to the significance of the listed building. The proposed door replacement would be constructed from timber and its design would be similar to the existing. Based on the information before me, I am satisfied that this element of the proposal would preserve the listed building. Nevertheless, this does not justify the inappropriate works identified above.
17. 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

18. 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.
19. The case has been made that the replacement windows would help keep noise and cold drafts out and prevent damp and condensation build up within the property. Improvement to the building's thermal efficiency and investment into its fabric, and economic benefits associated with the manufacture and installation phase would be public benefits. However, I have seen no detailed evidence regarding the thermal or noise performance of the proposed windows, nor why this could not be achieved using sympathetic joinery or window design. Indeed, noise and thermal insulation can be achieved in other ways, such as by the introduction of window shutters or secondary glazing.
20. I have also seen no evidence, such as a condition survey carried out by an appropriately skilled tradesperson, to convincingly show that the existing windows are beyond repair and incapable of being upgraded. Therefore, I cannot be certain

that the existing windows could not be repaired and refurbished by an experienced tradesperson, which may address some of the issues raised by the appellant.

21. I acknowledge that there is government aspiration for the energy efficiency of historic homes and for homes to reach EPC C rating, through insulation or other energy saving measures. Nevertheless, the Framework is clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, which I have found the proposal would not do.
22. I am not persuaded that similar public benefits could not be achieved by a proposal that would be less harmful to the significance of the designated heritage asset. Additionally, no compelling evidence is before me which confirms that the property would not be usable or viable as a dwelling or that its future would be at risk if the appeal was to fail and the works as proposed were not implemented. 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.
23. 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 minor public benefits arising from the proposal.
24. I conclude that the proposal would not preserve the 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 SE7 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010 – 2030 (adopted 2017), and Policies HER1 and HER4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (adopted 2022). Collectively, these policies amongst other things, seek to ensure development conserves and enhances heritage assets, including their settings, and make a positive contribution.

Other Matters

25. My attention has been drawn to previous permissions (refs: 21/6017N, 22/3991C and 23/2939C) at Park Mill Cottage. However, these previous approvals concerned works that would replace windows that were not original to the building, and their replacement was considered to be beneficial. This is different to the proposal before me, which is to replace existing windows that serve the character of the listed building. I observed that these other replacement windows were instantly recognisable because they did not match the fine detailing, such as integral glazing bars, of the historic joinery. Moreover, I have treated this appeal on its own individual circumstances and merits.
26. The appellant claims that the timber windows are rotten, draughty, and beyond economic repair. Even if the windows were beyond repair, the proposed replacements would not be suitable for the reasons given.
27. The appellant indicates that it is not possible for the proposed windows to be of traditional construction with integral glazing bars. Nevertheless, I have not been presented with substantial evidence to show that the proposal would perform significantly better than the existing windows and there is no evidence to suggest

that alternative options for sympathetic window replacements have been considered.

28. There were no objections to the proposal from neighbouring occupiers. However, this would be a neutral consideration and does not weigh in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

29. For the reasons given above, and considering all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR