



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2025

by **O S Woodward MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10th June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A1530/Y/24/3346084

102 Coast Road, West Mersea, Colchester CO5 8NA

- 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 Ms Margaret Sansom against the decision of Colchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 240713.
 - The works proposed are to replace 4 softwood box sash windows, 10 softwood casement windows and a softwood side door with the highest efficiency products currently available to match the existing.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have changed the description of development to remove elements that related to the assessment of the proposals, rather than simply describing what is proposed. This does not change the fundamental nature of the description and I have not, therefore, needed to go back to the parties in this regard.
3. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was released in December 2024 and further amended in February 2024. The changes were not material to the main issues for the appeal so I have therefore based my decision on the revised document without needing to consult the main parties for comment.
4. Because the appeal relates to a refusal to grant listed building consent and because the appeal site lies in the West Mersea Conservation Area (the CA), I have had special regard to Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

5. The main issues are whether or not the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building '102, Coast Road'¹ or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses and whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.

¹ List entry number 1266514

Reasons

Significance

6. The building is a house dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. It is partially weatherboarded and partially rendered. A particularly pleasing feature are the two main roofs, which are gabled gambrel in style. The roof form is complemented by the symmetry of the four matching sash windows (W1 to W4) around the simple timber front door. Whilst probably dating from the 1980's, the proportions and slim joinery of these windows contribute positively to the building character. There is a main part of the building and then a wing protruding from the rear both in the same architectural style, and largely unaltered. This helps to break up the bulk and mass of the home. These two parts of the house, especially the main roof and front elevation, positively contribute to the significance of the building.
7. It was extended in the 1980s and then, more recently, some of those extensions have been removed. However, there remains a further rearwards extension at ground floor level. This does not have the same roof profile, instead being a standard sloped roof. Nevertheless, it remains suitably subservient to the main part of the building and its unassuming appearance. Overall, this extension is a neutral contributor to the significance of the building.
8. The CA is largely defined by its relationship to the coast. The appeal building is set centrally within the CA, with properties overlooking the estuary as it follows Coast Road. Whilst the architectural styles vary, the mostly detached dwellings are of traditional form. They include features reflecting a maritime theme, including weatherboarding and balconies. Whilst set back from the road, the appeal property makes a positive contribution to the special interest and significance of the CA.
9. The appeal building is set centrally within the CA, which properties overlooking the estuary as it follows Coast Road. Whilst the architectural styles vary, the mostly detached dwelling are of traditional form. They include features reflecting a maritime theme, including weatherboarding and balconies. Whilst well set back from the road, the appeal property makes a positive contribution to the special interest and significance of the CA.

The proposals

10. The works proposed would replace the front vertical sliding sash windows (W1 to W4) with what are referred to as 'accurate copies' of the existing timber units, using sealed glazing units. A further 10 casement windows (W5 to W14) would be replaced with what are described as traditional casements, with sealed glazing units. The side door on the southern elevation would be replaced with a timber door with a sealed glazing unit.

Assessment

Box sashes (W1 to W4)

11. The evidence indicates that these windows were probably installed during the 1980s, notwithstanding the fact that the relevant planning approval included a condition requiring their retention. Nonetheless, their slim joinery and profiles are appropriate for the age of the building and broadly matches the style of the original windows. They are timber framed using appropriate softwood. Although there is some wear and tear to the windows, including some areas of rotten timber and

minor scratching to some glass panels, they continue to make a positive contribution to the heritage significance of the building.

12. The plans indicate that the dimensions of the proposed double glazing units of the replacement windows would be deeper and heavier with sturdier frames than single glazed counterparts. In addition, the proposed double glazing would change the way light reflects and refracts through the windows, harming the appearance of the property. Whilst a section has been provided of the relationship of the proposed double glazing to the glazing bars, it is not clear if these would be integral or applied. There would also be a shallower slope and reduced prominence of the externally visible part of the glazing bars. All these factors would cause further harm.

Casement windows (W5 to W14)

13. The existing windows are storm proof casements with plain rectangular profiles, thought to have been installed in the 1980s. They are timber framed using appropriate softwood and single glazed, however they have relatively thick frames which mean that the windows appear unnecessarily bulky. The combination of the style and design detail of these windows mean that they do not make a positive contribution to the significance of the building.
14. Their removal is therefore acceptable in principle. The Council notes that the proposed casement windows would be of sympathetic design, including slim profile glazing units and integral glazing units. However, whilst the plans provided include these elements, they lack the detail required to accurately compare and assess these proposals against the existing window profiles and sub-divisions.
15. In addition to the intrinsic harm of double glazing through change to the way light reflects and refracts, it often leads to reduced prominence of the externally visible part of the glazing bars. Without evidence to the contrary, I cannot be certain that an improvement to the appearance of the existing windows is achievable, even if the details were to be controlled by condition.

Side door

16. The existing side door is timber with single glazing. It includes an iron post box and brass handle. It is difficult to place an age on the timber of the door and the appellant has stated that it has been repaired many times due to damage. It also sits slightly uncomfortably within its frame and there are large gaps. However, its unassuming nature is appropriate for a secondary side entrance and its historically appropriate material, even if not actually that old, both positively contribute to the significance of the building.
17. Full details of the form and appearance of the proposed door have not been provided. This matter cannot be left to be controlled by condition because of the need to fully assess the details of the proposed glazing within the door. Therefore, I cannot be certain that an improvement to the appearance of the existing door is achievable.

Conservation area

18. The intrinsic architectural quality of the building positively contributes towards the significance of the CA. The listed building is a visible element of the local street scene, and so it follows that there would be some harm to the character and

appearance of the CA from the proposed works, particularly those to the front elevation.

Overall

19. Given the above, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the Grade II listed building and the character and appearance of the CA, thus failing to satisfy the requirements of the Act, Paragraph 210 of the Framework and development plan policies insofar as relevant. In this case the harm to the building and the CA would be less than substantial when considered in the context of the significance of the assets.

Heritage Balance

20. In accordance with Paragraph 212 of the Framework, I place great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets. Although less than substantial, I place considerable importance and weight on the harm that I have identified to the listed building. As set out at Paragraph 215 of the Framework, where there is less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
21. The use of accoya timber, which although a softwood is relatively durable, and double glazing would result in windows that would be more resilient to the weathering that currently occurs, exacerbated by the location of the building by the sea. The fenestration would likely last several times longer than traditional softwood and/or single-glazed solutions. However, this could potentially be achieved with a lesser loss of historic fabric through refurbishment of the existing doors and windows rather than wholesale replacement. I have not been provided with substantiated evidence or detailed comparisons with such alternative solutions.
22. The proposed double glazing would also improve the energy efficiency of the property. This is both a public and a private benefit, although only to a limited extent because windows and one small door are only part of the thermal efficiency of the building. In addition, although helpful in reducing energy bills and providing a more hospitable internal environment, the works are not required to secure the continued viable use of the property as a home. I therefore give limited weight to these benefits.
23. To conclude, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that the proposed works would not cause the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets. There are no public benefits that would clearly outweigh the harm identified.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons above, the appeal is dismissed.

O S Woodward
INSPECTOR