



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 22 July 2025

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 August 2025

Appeal A Ref: APP/D1265/Y/25/3362891

Flat 6, Fordington House, Lancaster Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1NP

- 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 Harrison against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/LBC/2024/04361.
 - The works proposed are subdivision of first floor bedroom.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/D1265/Y/25/3362897

Flat 6, Fordington House, Lancaster Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1NP

- 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 Harrison against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/LBC/2024/05950.
 - The works proposed are subdivision of first floor bedroom.
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Decisions

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

Preliminary Matters

3. As the proposals are in a conservation area and relate to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
4. As set out above, there are two appeals on this site. Each relate to a separate application for listed building consent. I have considered each on its individual merits, however, to avoid duplication I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning, except where otherwise indicated.
5. 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.
6. The Council's decision notices refer to Policy ENV5 of the North Dorset Local Plan. However, the Council has indicated that this policy reference was incorrectly applied and should have instead referred to Policy ENV4 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015. The appellant has highlighted this error in its appeal statement. Therefore, my acceptance of this updated reference would not prejudice any parties.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the proposals would preserve a 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 relates to Flat 6, which occupies the western portion of Fordington House. Fordington House is a two-storey Grade II* listed¹ building dating from the mid-18th century. The building is two-storey with attic space. Its external elevations comprise stucco facing and red brick, with an ordered design of large sash windows and glazing bars. Architectural features include eaves cornice with modillions and egg-and-dart moulding. Since its listing in 1950, Fordington House has been subdivided to create 6 individual residential flats.
9. Internally, Flat 6 retains some good examples of historic panelling, timber joinery, panelled doors and fittings. The main reception rooms and entrance hallway to the ground floor have high ceilings with elaborate decorative cornice features and mouldings, giving them a sense of grandeur. These features are physical evidence of the listed building's design reflecting the social history of the era in which it was constructed.
10. Pertinent to the appeals, the layout of the first-floor rooms in Flat 6 appeared generally unchanged, and it was possible to appreciate many remaining historic features such as the historic sash windows and panelled doors, decorative cornice features, picture rails, and deep skirting boards. While linear cornice features were present in some of the first-floor rooms, I observed that the design of the decorative cornice feature for the appeals bedroom included a leaf pattern design that was unique to this first-floor room.
11. Although many adaptations to the property have occurred, some historic fabric survives, as does some of the historic plan form. Given the above, I find the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to these appeals, to be related to its historic and architectural interests. These are drawn from its illustration of a former high status dwellinghouse, as well as the historic fabric and features that survive from the physical origins of the listed building, connecting the past character and interest of the building to the present.

Proposal and effects

12. The appeal proposals seek listed building consent for the subdivision of a first-floor bedroom to create two separate bedrooms. The subdivision of the existing bedroom would include timber studwork partitions being erected to create two private spaces. Appeal A would include a new doorway opening into the existing wall, to give access from the landing. Whereas Appeal B would use timber studwork partition walls to create a small lobby space inside the existing doorway.
13. The appeal bedroom is a sizable room, which is larger than the other first-floor rooms. The proportions of the room and the space it provides is visible evidence of how the room functioned historically, thereby providing an ability to experience and

¹ List Entry Number: 1119036

understand the historic social functions of the building. The proposed partition to the first-floor bedroom would introduce a non-original division which would disrupt and blur the functional hierarchy that exists between this principal bedroom and the smaller rooms on the first floor. This would result in considerable harm to the significance of the listed building.

14. The appellant implies that sections of the existing walling in the appeal bedroom may not have originated from when the building was constructed. However, beyond this assertion there is no compelling evidence or structural detail before me as to determine which area of the internal walls may not have historical value. As such, I cannot be certain that the proposal to include a new doorway into the existing bedroom wall would not result in the loss of historic fabric.
15. Additionally, a scheme for access via the partition wall is suggested (Appeal B). While this scheme would preserve the existing bedroom wall by not inserting a new opening into it, the room would still be sub-divided. The general grand impression of the bedroom and its openness and aesthetic quality would be undermined by the addition of the partition wall. Moreover, the creation of the lobby area would prevent views of the sash windows when entering through the existing doorway and would block natural light, resulting in a small dark space.
16. I observed during my site visit that the appeal bedroom's historic leaf design cornicing was continuous and uninterrupted around the room. A partition wall would disrupt this balance, making the design appear awkward or imperfect. While there was an inclusion of an additional section of linear cornicing within the 'set back' wall, there is no substantial evidence before me to indicate that this was carried out at a later date.
17. The appellant intends to replicate the historic cornice on the internal partition walls. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate how it would be fitted to the existing cornicing, or whether it would accurately reflect the existing cornicing, which has become slightly distorted over time due to historic layers of paint. On this basis, I cannot be certain that the insertion of such a feature would not undermine the authenticity and integrity of the asset or confuse the onlooker as to the building's narrative. Furthermore, due to the lack of detail in respect of fixings and the materials to be used, I am not satisfied that the proposed works would be reversible in the future.
18. The appellant states that a condition could be imposed to mitigate impacts in respect of the proposed works to be carried out around the historic cornicing. However, conditions would not overcome or adequately mitigate the effect of the partition wall which I have found to be harmful to the character and special interest of the listed building.
19. I acknowledge that the listed building has undergone alterations in the past and some changes to the building's historic floorplan have occurred. Nonetheless, there is no compelling reasoning provided as to why these previous works would justify the proposals before me.
20. Drawing the above together, I find that the proposals would fail to 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

21. 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 proposals, 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.
22. In this case, economic benefits would be delivered through the construction phase and the general investment into the property. However, these would be moderated by the extent of the alteration.
23. The appellant is of the opinion that the proposals would be beneficial because it would provide additional private sleeping accommodation for family and guests. However, these are private benefits, particularly taking into account that the large bedroom already provides a generous amount of bedroom and internal living space. Even accepting that the significance of the listed building has diminished by previous interventions, the benefits do not outweigh the harm that I have identified. In any event, the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposals as the listed building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease if the appeals were to fail and 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.
24. On balance, in giving considerable importance and weight to the harm to the significance of the listed building, I find that this would not be outweighed by the minor public benefits arising from the proposals.
25. I conclude that the proposals 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 ENV4 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015. This policy, amongst other things, seeks to ensure proposals conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets.

Other Matters

26. The listed building is located within Dorchester Conservation Area (CA). Mindful of the statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Act, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance. The CA includes Fordington, the area where the appeal site is located. The special interest and significance of the CA stems, in part, from the variety and architectural richness of its 18th and 19th century buildings, and former industrial and agricultural buildings, that denote its evolution and distinct form. The appeal listed building largely retains its overall external historic character and detailing and therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and thereby to its significance as a designated heritage asset.

27. The appearance of the external elevations of Flat 6 would be unchanged by the proposals. Therefore, due to the internal nature of the proposed works, it would preserve the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and would not harm its significance as a designated heritage asset. I note the Council raised no concerns in this respect either.

Conclusions

28. **Appeal A:** For the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal A should be dismissed.
29. **Appeal B:** For the reasons given, I conclude that Appeal B should be dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR