



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 March 2026

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 APRIL 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/Y/25/3374112

Lion House, 45 Bridewell Street, Clare, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 8QD

- 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 Ian Clarry against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref is DC/25/0673/LB.
 - The works proposed are 'alteration to master bedroom to include new ensuite shower room'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The proposal relates to a listed building within the Clare Conservation Area. I have therefore been mindful of the duties at sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the special interest of the Grade II listed building 'Red Lion Inn'.

Reasons

4. The appeal building was listed in 1974 and comprises a 17th Century timber-framed and plastered house which was refronted in the 19th Century, partly in brick. It includes sash windows and a hooded porch to the entrance door, a slate roof and two brick chimney stacks. Although now in residential use as a single dwelling, the building is listed as 'Red Lion Inn', and the list entry indicates that the probate inventory of John Turpin of Clare (1688), a brewer and baker of some substance included an inn of this name.
5. Although the use of the building has changed over time, it has been generally well-maintained, and insofar as it relates to this appeal, I find its age and the architectural and historic value of its surviving historic fabric, features and plan form to contribute to the special interest of the listed building.
6. The submitted plans show alterations within the master bedroom to provide an en-suite shower room and walk in wardrobe. These would effectively enclose part of the bedroom, including a chimney breast on the end wall of the dwelling. The chimney breast is currently obscured by fitted wardrobes which the appellant advises were present prior to their purchase of the property some years ago. However, the Council notes that there is no record of any consent having been given for the wardrobes and having regard to their relatively contemporary style

and condition, I consider it unlikely that they would pre-date the listing of the building in 1974 and there is no firm evidence before me to demonstrate otherwise.

7. Furthermore, the appellant commented at appeal stage that there is no evidence of a fireplace. However, neither is there definitive evidence to show that this has not been a feature, and I note that their Heritage Statement had referred to a fireplace, albeit filled in. This is clearly a principal room of the building where I would commonly expect a fireplace would be present, and while there may be only one chimney pot currently, I saw that this is offset, and the size of the stack would suggest to me that it could well accommodate flues serving both the ground and first floors. On the basis of the information before me in this appeal, I am not therefore persuaded that it can be assumed there is no fireplace behind the existing wardrobes which might be revealed in future.
8. In any event, I saw that the wardrobes step out into the room giving some indication of the presence of the chimney breast behind, even if they conceal any potential fireplace. Furthermore, they do not extend the full height of the room. The remaining gap affords some impression of the depth of space behind. Together with their nature, it also means that while the wardrobes may be fitted, it is apparent that they are furniture and they are read as such within the room.
9. In contrast, the partition walls to form the en-suite and walk in wardrobe would be of a far more permanent nature than wardrobes. Their presence would fully separate the chimney breast from the main part of the room. They would further lack the stepped-out alignment of the existing wardrobes which hint at the presence of the chimney behind. The proposal would therefore effectively sever the relationship of the principal room with the chimney breast and any potential fireplace which have historically been part of the building's arrangement, and the chimney breast would no longer be appreciable as an important architectural feature of the room.
10. The submitted plans additionally indicate that the partition walls would intrude further into the room than even the stepped-out section of the wardrobes to sit in relatively close proximity to the windows. Their full height would also leave no clear perception of the depth of the space behind from within the main part of the room. As a result, I find that there would be an awkward unbalancing of the proportions of the room which currently contribute to its status and the understanding of the overall hierarchy of spaces within the building.
11. The works may technically be reversible, but it seems to me that there would be little realistic prospect of reversion given the effect that this would have on the accommodation. In this context, the alterations would be likely to be permanent.
12. I acknowledge that the works would affect only the interior of the building. In my assessment however, they would diminish the legibility and integrity of the listed building, and I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and would cause it harm.
13. In addition, no firm details of any works to provide utilities, drainage or extraction for the bathroom have been provided. It is therefore unclear to what extent there may be loss of or other alterations to historic fabric which could exacerbate the harm to the special interest of the building.
14. The National Planning Policy Framework ('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. It goes on to advise that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

15. Having regard to the scale of the proposal and how it would affect the building as a whole, I find that harm to the significance of the listed building would be 'less than substantial' in the terms of the Framework, and at a low level. Nevertheless, this harm attracts considerable importance and weight.
16. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.
17. The appellant indicates that the dwelling currently has limited bathroom facilities and that the proposal would make it a better family home. Be that as it may, there is no firm evidence to suggest that the continued viable use of the appeal property as a dwelling is dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence. Accordingly, the proposal may enhance accommodation for occupiers, but this would essentially comprise a private benefit.
18. Moreover, there is no firm evidence before me to show that alternative options to provide an additional bathroom while avoiding the enclosure of the chimney breast have been considered and discounted. It is also unclear that any requirement for wardrobe space could not reasonably be accommodated with furniture rather than the proposed walk-in wardrobe which adds to the enclosure of the chimney breast and the degree of alteration to the layout and proportions of the room.
19. Even if I were satisfied that there would be justification for an additional bathroom, I am not therefore satisfied that harm to the listed building has been minimised.
20. In this context, I find that there are no public benefits sufficient to outweigh the harm to the listed building, and a clear and convincing justification for the proposed works has not been demonstrated.
21. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building, Red Lion Inn, and public benefits would not outweigh the harm. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the Act and the Framework.

Other Matters

22. Although I have found that there would be harm to the special interest of the listed building, the works would affect only the interior of the building, and I am satisfied that the character and appearance of the Clare CA would be preserved. However, this is a neutral factor which does not outweigh the harm to the listed building.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR