



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2020

by H Porter BA(Hons) MScDip IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/Y/19/3227330

Whitegates, Longforward Hill, Allowenshay, Hinton St George TA17 8TB

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Screech against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00368/LBC, dated 6 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 April 2019.
 - The works proposed are porch and relocation of front door at Whitegates.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the Grade II listed building, including its features of special architectural or historic interest, would be preserved.

Reasons

3. The Grade II listed building known as White Gates is a detached cottage, once two cottages, dating from the 18th century or earlier. Situated in a prominent position within the small rural settlement of Allowenshay, it is a simple vernacular building of two storeys, constructed of rubble Ham stone under a thatched roof with brick end stacks and timber joinery.
4. Since the time of its listing, the appeal building has been sensitively converted into a single dwelling; while to its rear, the separately Grade II listed Church Room has been attached and converted into its living room.
5. In spite of changes over time, elements of the two former cottages can be found within the appeal building's front (south) façade and internal plan-form, illustrated on the submitted drawings. The significance and special interest of White Gates are derived from its unpretentious composition, simplicity and the well-preserved and authentic qualities of a modest rural dwelling. The building's historic plan-form is also of interest and, despite some changes, is legible through window and door positions and internal wall structure. These factors underpin the listed building's historic integrity and relationship with other historic buildings in Allowenshay, with which the appeal building shares a group value.
6. The proposal is to relocate the doorway to a roughly central position on the building's principal south elevation and introducing a duo-pitch roofed porch around it. This would involve adapting the existing middle-bay three-light

casement window and truncating the extant entrance to form a window, infilling in matching Ham stone.

7. The Appeal Statement refers to an historic photograph showing the windows and doors arranged symmetrically along the full length of the appeal building. However, the statutory list description indicates that, at the time of its listing in 1981, the building's southern elevation was comprised of irregular fenestration, with a part-glazed door between bays 1 and 2, and between bays 3 and 4. This description confirms my own observations and the Heritage Statement that the extant entrance door has ostensibly been the entrance to the west-side cottage; and the door to the east-side cottage is now a two-light casement window. This also indicates that the central three-light casement is an original opening.
8. The proposals would adjust the opening and fenestration pattern on the building's principal elevation and obfuscate legibility of its likely original form. Changing the point of entry into the building would also change the historic circulation and internal plan-form beyond the changes already made as part of the conversion works. The porch itself would be comparatively substantial, projecting further than the existing mono-pitched porch, and almost double its width. The apex of the roof would reach just below the cill of the first-floor window and would have an uncomfortable relationship with it. Moreover, the proposed use of slate would be a hard and stark contrast with the soft tones of the Ham stone façade and thatched roof.
9. Ultimately, the proposed works would have an awkward and dominating relationship with the historic structure, which would detract from its simple, unassuming character and undermine its integrity. The proposal would harm the simple, vernacular appearance of the cottage and cause disparity with the other modest, historic buildings in the locality. The group value that the cottage currently shares would therefore be weakened.
10. The proposed works would therefore fail to preserve the special interest and significance of the Grade II listed building. The degree of harm to the significance of the asset would be less than substantial. The appeal property is evidently in good condition and a well-appointed dwelling; the proposed works would therefore not be essential to achieve the optimum viable use of the building. The benefits of a larger kitchen space, convenience or increased value would accrue to the appellant, and not be of public benefit. Short-term economic benefits associated with the construction phase would not be significant. Therefore, there would not be public benefits sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm.
11. Conflict therefore arises with s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; the historic environment policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, revised 2019; and with Saved Policy EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028), adopted 2015, which seeks to safeguard and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

Conclusion

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

H Porter

INSPECTOR