
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2015

by Mr JP Sargent BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 11 March 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/R2520/E/14/2222998

11 Church Street, Heckington, Sleaford NG34 9RF

- 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 Mrs Kirsty Malone against the decision of North Kesteven District Council.
 - The application Ref 14/0274/LBC, dated 4 March 2014, was refused by notice dated 8 May 2014.
 - The works proposed are the installation of a Schrijver Damp Control System along the external walls.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the works on the special architectural or historic interest of this Grade II listed building and its significance, and whether they preserve the character or appearance of the Heckington Conservation Area and its significance, and, if any harm would be caused, whether that would be outweighed by public benefits.

Reasons

3. 11 Church Street is a double-fronted 2-storey dwelling with a shop front on one side, which stands close to the back of the pavement behind a narrow open forecourt. It dates from the early 19th Century, and is of a simple style and design with a brick finish. Despite various alterations over time, it still has a character and an appearance that reflect its age, its relatively humble status and its former retail use, and these factors contribute to its significance as a designated heritage asset.
4. Moreover, the site is in the Heckington Conservation Area, which comprises a mix of dwellings and associated buildings that demonstrate the evolution of this historic rural settlement. In my opinion, the appearance and form of the appeal property make a positive contribution to this conservation area.
5. The proposed damp control system would require the introduction of ventilation units approximately 0.35m above the ground every 0.5m or so along the front, side and rear elevations. Each unit would have a ceramic vent projecting forward of the face of the brickwork. To assist in my assessment the Appellant referred me to a dwelling elsewhere in the village on Eastgate, where an identical system had been installed already (the Eastgate property).

6. Due to its position and its open forecourt, the front of this building is prominent when passing along the pavement, while the side wall can also be seen if the gate is open. Although each of the vents would be small, their regular linear arrangement means they would not be seen in isolation but rather a number of them would be apparent in a row. In my opinion, even though some vents would be partly concealed beneath the cill of the old shop front, this cumulative effect would emphasise their presence on the property and highlight their discordant nature and arrangement. As a result, their poor relationship to the character and appearance of this listed building would be apparent, and its historic significance would be harmed.
7. I accept the vents could be painted, and I acknowledge that, for this reason, the vents on the Eastgate property were difficult to see from across the road. However, that property is rendered and so a strong colour match between the vents and the wall behind was possible. On the Appellant's property though the brickwork has a varied, textured colouring typical of bricks of this age, and so a strong colour match would be more difficult to achieve.
8. Furthermore, whilst the vents on the Eastgate property might have been less apparent when on the opposite side of the road, they were noticeable when walking along the pavement past the house as they projected forward of the wall in a regular and consistent manner, and this impact is not dependent upon their colour. Therefore, painting the vents and what I saw at the Eastgate property do not allay my concerns.
9. Reference was made to an appeal decision from 2007 in Littlebourne¹ where such a system was accepted. However that property was also rendered and so again a match of colouring was more likely, while I am unclear as to whether the Inspector in that case had the benefit I did of seeing the system in situ. I was also referred to other cases where listed building consent had been granted for this damp control system, but I had little knowledge of the circumstances that led to those decisions. Therefore these other examples do not lead me to different findings
10. For these reasons the system would fail to preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the building, causing harm to its significance. By adversely affecting the prominent elevations of a listed building it would also fail to preserve the character or appearance of the surrounding conservation area. While harm to these designated heritage assets would be less than substantial, it is nonetheless a level of harm to which great weight should be attached.
11. In the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) one of the core planning principles is the need to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. Paragraph 132 says great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset, and any harm requires clear and convincing justification. In paragraph 134 it goes on to state that where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of such an asset that harm should be weighed against the proposal's public benefits.
12. There are 2 related areas of possible public benefit in this case, namely the provision of a damp proof course to safeguard the listed building, and the desire to make such a provision in a way that does least harm to the property.

¹ Appeal Reference APP/J2210/E/07/2047257 concerning 10 Nargate Street, Littlebourne, dated 3 October 2007

13. It was not questioned that the house had a problem of damp, and clearly that needs to be appropriately addressed to ensure the residential use of the building and its on-going maintenance can continue. I also accept that other damp proof systems may affect the fabric in different ways, and could well need renewing or refreshing over time. However, the effects of those other systems on the historic fabric and character of the property were not before me, and so I cannot come to the view that the system now proposed, whilst being harmful, would be less so than the alternatives. I accept that some systems would require the drilling of holes into the brickwork at regular intervals, but those would not extend forward of the brick face and so would not have a comparable impact to this scheme. Consequently, the need for the damp to be addressed in this way is not, in itself, a public benefit that is sufficient to outweigh the harm identified.
14. Accordingly I conclude that the works would fail to preserve the special architectural or historic interest of this listed building and would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the Heckington Conservation Area, causing less than substantial harm to the significance of these 2 heritage assets. In the absence of any public benefits to outweigh this harm I conclude the works would conflict with the Framework and, insofar as it is relevant to this appeal for listed building consent, Policy HE6 in the *North Kesteven Local Plan 2007*. I therefore dismiss the appeal.

J P Sargent

INSPECTOR

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