
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 March 2015

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28 April 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/F0114/Y/14/3001726

Barle House, 17 High Street, Chew Magna, Bristol BS40 8PR

- 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 Wendy Brettell against the decision of Bath and North East Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 14/02184/LBA, dated 12 May 2014, was refused by notice dated 15 July 2014.
 - The works proposed are the widening of the door opening between the existing kitchen and dining room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Barle House is a grade II listed building that lies within the Chew Magna Conservation Area. As required by Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I have paid special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses, and of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.
3. 17 High Street is also known as Barle House. Both the appellant and the Council refer to the address of the appeal property as being Barle House, 17 High Street, Chew Magna, and on the basis of the evidence before me, so shall I.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether widening the door opening between the existing kitchen and dining room would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of the grade II listed building.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a late eighteenth century two storey building occupying an elevated position above Chew Magna's High Street. Barle House is one of a number of historic properties along the street. The house comprises two distinct parts, one being covered with render to the front, and the other being a nineteenth century rubble stone addition, set back from the front elevation of the main house. Both are roofed with pantiles. The large and elegant sash windows to the front of the house contrasts with the mix of window types and

sizes to the rear of the building. This is an important element of its special interest and significance.

6. The rooms at the front of the house with their large elegant sash windows form the focal part of the building and historically would have been the areas used by the owner. The front door, opening into a central hallway and the staircase, with two rooms either side, would have been the status rooms on the ground floor. The kitchen and utility room with their smaller windows and lower ceiling heights, positioned to the rear of these rooms, would have been for the service functions of the house. The layout of the rooms and their hierarchy of function, form, and use, is part of the special interest of this listed building.
7. The proposed widening of the doorway between the kitchen and dining room would remove much of the wall. Although some of the wall would be left either side of the proposed opening, the size of it would link these rooms together. This would be at harmful odds with the clear separation between the status and service rooms, and would unacceptably detract from the special interest of the listed building.
8. I appreciate the house has experienced recent change, and that the existing doorway was inserted in the 1980s. However, these changes occurred before the building was listed. Whilst the appeal proposal may have local support, and the appellant considers the building should be adapted to suit modern ways of living, the existing door and opening retains the hierarchy of the building's layout and function, and the sense of separation and enclosure to each room. The substantial width of the proposed opening and the absence of a door would harmfully blur the distinction between the two rooms.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that where a development proposal would be less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The enlarged opening would result in less than substantial harm to the listed building due to the relatively small size of the proposed works compared to that of the house as a whole. The appellant considers the proposal would improve the energy efficiency of the house and provide a wider opening for those who are mobility impaired. Whilst these would be of some public benefit, the effects would be modest and would not outweigh the harm to the special interest of the listed building.
10. I have considered the proposal in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in the Framework. It is made clear in paragraph 7 that sustainable development has economic, social and environmental dimensions, which should not be undertaken in isolation. The Framework also advises that when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. For the reasons given above, I have found that the proposed wider opening would not preserve the listed building and its special interest. The proposed works would considerably harm the significance of this listed building and as such would be contrary to the advice of the Framework, and therefore would not constitute the sustainable development that it seeks.

Other Matters

11. The appeal property lies within the Chew Magna Conservation Area. The High Street is the main east-west route through the village, and Barle House forms part of the row of mostly historic houses along the road. Its attractive appearance and elevated position contribute towards the character of the conservation area. As the proposed works would comprise internal alterations to the listed building, they would have little impact on the conservation area and as such would preserve its character and appearance.
12. Finally, concerns regarding the Council's handling of the pre-application and application, including the consistency of decision making, relate to procedural matters and have no bearing on my consideration of the merits of the case.
13. When taken either together or separately, neither of these other matters would outweigh the harm I have found as regards the main issue.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR