
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2014

by Anne Napier-Derere BA(Hons) MRTPI AIEMA

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

Decision date: 13 March 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/E/13/2206334

Linton Village College, Cambridge Road, Linton, Cambridge CB21 4JB

- 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 Tim Darby (Linton Village College) against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/1041/13/LB, dated 8 May 2013, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2013.
 - The works proposed are described as 'to remove the existing single glazed metal Crittall windows and replace with double glazed metal Crittall windows; also to repair and redecorate as required the existing timber doors'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The site address details were not completed on the listed building consent application form and, consequently, the address used in the heading above is that given on the appeal form and the Council's decision notice. From the evidence before me, I am satisfied that this is an accurate description of the location of the site.
3. The evidence submitted indicates that the proposal has been revised to exclude the folding doors, annotated as W85-W89 on drawing No's 4202 and 5004 and W84-W88 on drawing No 5001, from the scheme. I understand that, in addition to the proposed replacement of the windows, as described in the heading above, it is proposed to refurbish these doors and the other external doors. I intend to consider the appeal on this basis.
4. National Planning Practice Guidance came into force, and various previous national planning guidance documents were cancelled, on 6 March 2014. The content of the guidance has been considered but, in light of the facts in this case, it does not alter my conclusions.

Main Issue

5. The appeal building is a Grade II listed building and a designated heritage asset. I am mindful of my statutory duty in this regard. Therefore, the main issue in this appeal is whether or not the proposal would preserve the listed building, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

6. The appeal school building is set back but clearly visible from the main road into Linton. It is located on the edge of the settlement and, together with the remainder of the complex, forms an important element within the streetscene. Due to its prominence, overall design, scale and setting, it makes a strong positive contribution to the character of the area. Despite the appeal building's physical proximity to, and close functional relationship with, the recently completed modern new building, the original building retains a visually distinct appearance, which contributes significantly to the overall character of the school complex.
7. From the evidence before me, Linton Village College is one of the first Village Colleges, designed in a Modern Movement style, and the significance of the listed appeal building is largely derived from its landscape setting and relationship to the village, its use, form and architectural features, which reflect a radical new approach to the provision of education at the time of its construction in 1937. From the details submitted, the incorporation of large areas of glazing was a critically important part of the ethos underlying this approach and, although it appears that a limited number of windows in one section of the building have previously been replaced, the remainder of the steel framed windows appear to be original or part of a slightly later Modern Movement extension to the building. As a result, the amount and type of glazing makes a substantial contribution, not just to the distinctive design and architectural interest of the building, but to its overall character and historic interest.
8. Most, if not all, of the existing windows proposed to be replaced are in a very poor condition, such that I have no doubt they currently compromise the quality of educational accommodation provided and are leading to damage to the fabric of the building. Nonetheless, whilst acknowledging the arguments submitted in relation to cost, secondary glazing and ongoing repair, a detailed survey of those windows has not been provided and there is little objective analysis of the range of potential options that may be available to address this issue. The wholesale replacement of the existing windows would lead to a considerable loss of the building's historic fabric which, for the reasons above, would be materially detrimental to its significance. I saw that the existing sliding doors, now excluded from the scheme, are also in a very poor condition, but it is now proposed to repair and refurbish these important original elements of the building, as no similar replacements are available. As such and on the basis of the limited evidence available, I am not persuaded that it has been demonstrated that the loss of the windows would be necessary and that other, potentially less damaging, alternatives would not be viable or feasible.
9. Furthermore, the windows are visually very distinctive and some retain the original associated ironmongery. There are inconsistencies within the submitted details, with some windows on site not appearing as shown on the existing elevation drawings and several discrepancies in numbering between drawing No 5001 and other drawings. Nonetheless, the submitted details indicate that the replacement windows would be made by the same manufacturer and would replicate the existing window size and opening arrangements. However, only limited details of the proposed replacement windows have been provided, such as a typical section detail and profile. It is also confirmed that the mullions, transoms and jambs within the windows

would be somewhat thicker than the existing and the depth, or set back, of the glazing would be altered.

10. The existing frames and sections include layers of paint and putty, which increase their visual width. Consequently, in this respect, the change to the design of the windows would be unlikely to materially alter their overall appearance. It is also suggested that the wholesale replacement of all the windows would result in the fenestration having a greater uniformity of appearance, which would maintain the crispness and sharpness integral to the original design. However, although the alteration to the set back of the glazing within the windows may achieve Building Regulations requirements, it would materially alter their definition, resulting in a flatter finish. Given the quantity of windows concerned, the extent of glazing involved and the importance of the fenestration within the overall design of the building, I consider that even a relatively small change in this respect would be detrimental to the appearance of the building and detract from the integrity of its original design.
11. In addition, I am not satisfied that the submitted details are adequate to provide sufficient confidence that, in other respects, such as ironmongery and profile details, the proposed windows would achieve a close replication of the existing. Whilst these and other matters requiring further clarification could potentially be controlled by condition, for such an approach to be reasonable it would be necessary to be confident that such matters could be satisfactorily addressed and suitable details agreed. On the balance of the evidence before me, I do not regard this approach as appropriate in this case, given the very limited details available, the sensitive nature of the building, the importance of the windows to its architectural and historic interest and the extent of works proposed.
12. Consequently, overall, I consider that the proposal would lead to an unacceptable loss of historic fabric and, even if this loss could be justified, I am not satisfied, on the basis of the details and assurances provided, that appropriately detailed replacement windows would be installed. As such I conclude the proposal would lead to considerable harm to the building and would not preserve it or these features of special architectural or historic interest. It would therefore be contrary to the *South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies 2007* Policies DP/2 and CH/3, which seek to protect local character and appearance, including that of the historic environment. Although the proposal would cause material harm, it would not lead to the loss of the building as a whole and so the harm caused to the designated heritage asset, whilst considerable, would be less than substantial.
13. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that, in the case of designated heritage assets, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. The main public benefits resulting from the scheme would be the improvement in educational accommodation and in energy efficiency, which would contribute to securing the long-term educational use of the building. There would also be benefits in terms of reduced future maintenance requirements. Given the support within the Framework for the development, expansion and alteration of schools, and the overall benefits to the long-term use of the building, I give these benefits great weight.

14. Paragraph 132 of the Framework advises that great weight should also be given to the conservation of a heritage asset in considering the impact of a proposal on its significance and, as heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. In addition, paragraph 131 of the Framework refers to the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. For the above reasons, I consider that the proposal would not make such a contribution. In addition, whilst the scheme would contribute to securing the optimum viable use of the building, on the evidence submitted, I am not satisfied that the proposed replacement windows would be the only way to achieve this and that the harm arising from the proposal could not be avoided. For these reasons, the benefits of the proposal would not be sufficient to outweigh the considerable harm identified to the significance of the heritage asset and the proposal would not meet the aims of paragraph 17 of the Framework, to achieve high quality design and conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Other matters

15. There is a limited timeframe for securing grant funding for the proposal. However, whilst I am mindful of the particular constraints likely to arise from this, it does not provide an adequate justification to allow a proposal that would cause harm.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, including the support expressed for the proposal by the local ward Councillor, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Anne Napier-Derere

INSPECTOR

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