



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 November 2010

by Brendan Lyons BArch MA MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 26 November 2010

Appeal Ref: APP/K3415/E/10/2127006

Colton House, Bellamour Way, Colton, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 3LL

- 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 Ron Lawrence against the decision of Lichfield District Council.
 - The application Ref 08/01361/LBC, dated 3 December 2008, was refused by notice dated 21 October 2009.
 - The works proposed are the replacement of 9 existing windows in the curved part of the rear of the house.
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Decision

1. I allow the appeal, and grant listed building consent for the replacement of 9 existing windows in the curved part of the rear of the house at Colton House, Bellamour Way, Colton, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 3LL in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 08/01361/LBC, dated 3 December 2008, and the plans submitted with it and the later plans numbered 3A, 5A and 6A, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works hereby authorised shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.
 - 2) Notwithstanding any details indicated on the approved plans, no works hereby authorised shall be commenced until a full-size sample window has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The sample frame shall include both horizontal and vertical glazing bars and the sliding mechanism for the sashes. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed window replacement on the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

Reasons

3. Colton House is an imposing wide-fronted house that stands facing the street in a rural village. The building dates from the first half of the eighteenth century and is listed Grade II*. Its symmetrical front comprises a central block and two slightly lower flanking wings, one of which has been split off to form a separate dwelling. The remainder of the building, which makes up the appeal property, is now in use as a guest house. The surrounding core of the village has been designated as a conservation area.

4. The rear of the building faces the garden and is less formal than the front. Consent is now sought to fit three sliding sash windows on each of the three floors of the projecting bowed element that is a prominent feature of the rear elevation. The sashes would be fitted with thin double-glazed units held in the frames by putty.
5. In considering a proposal for listed building consent, the duty imposed by section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
6. National policy guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement 5: *Planning for the Historic Environment* (PPS5) advises that the particular significance of any element of the historic environment likely to be affected by a proposal should be identified and assessed. There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of 'designated heritage assets' such as listed buildings, whose significance can be harmed or lost through alteration. The more significant the asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be.
7. In this case, the house's Grade II* listing confirms that it is of very high significance. Sash windows are a highly characteristic feature of the building, particularly on the front elevation, and contribute greatly to its significance. The preservation of their special interest is highly desirable. The bowed bay to the rear, which is recorded in the list description, is a later addition to the house, said to date from around 1800. As a consequence, the original window frame sections are finer than those of the earlier parts of the house.
8. Repairs have already been carried out to the stone window surrounds. There is no dispute that the windows would also benefit from sensitive replacement of the existing frames, some of which are relatively modern insertions. In particular, the reinstatement of correctly proportioned curved frames in the ground floor openings would be a major benefit of the proposal.
9. The ability to reproduce the fine profile of the frames is critical to the success of the proposal. The appellant has given a clear statement of his intention to match the profiles of the probably original second floor windows, and has provided some amended details to show the proposed frame sections. He had earlier submitted as part of the application manufacturer's details and a sample frame piece, photographs of which have been provided. These give some confidence that the fine glazing bars, which would need an exceptionally slender tongue to the front to accept the slightly faceted panes, could be achieved.
10. However, in order to confirm this, consent could be made subject to a condition as suggested by the Council, requiring submission for approval of an actual complete frame. This would need to be for either a first or ground floor window, to show the treatment of the horizontal glazing bars, and to include the sliding mechanism, to show that traditional sash weights could be used as proposed.
11. Achievement of these details would demonstrate that the additional weight of double-glazed units could be accommodated successfully. This is one of three areas of objection to double-glazing raised by English Heritage (EH) and supported by the Council. The other areas are the authenticity of double-glazing and its appearance.

12. Appreciation of a building of this quality should be rewarding at every level, from its overall appearance to its fine details. As well as adding to the character of the exterior of the building, the windows are also appreciated from inside. As recorded in the list description, the rooms enlarged by the addition of the bow have later plasterwork ceilings. The windows would therefore contribute to the appreciation of each room as an entity.
13. Seen at very close quarters, double-glazed units, even those as slender as now proposed, would be identifiable as an anachronistic feature. However, their impact would be considerably reduced by the correct choice of finish of the spacer bars between the panes, and this could be covered as part of approval of a sample. From inside, there would not in my view be any problem of intrusive reflections from the double layer of glass. From outside, I consider that the polished flat finish of modern glass would give a highly reflective finish irrespective of the double layer.
14. PPS5 supports the mitigation of climate change by seeking the modification of heritage assets so as to reduce carbon emissions. The comparison provided by the appellant between the U-values for the proposed windows and conventional single-glazing, and given the windows' large size as a proportion of the external wall, suggests that the windows would make a significant contribution to the house's energy performance. EH promotes secondary measures but acknowledge that there is insufficient structural depth for built-in shutters. While heavy curtains would be useful and in keeping, it is difficult to envisage how secondary glazing could be made to have less impact on the character of the building than the proposed glazing.
15. I accept that enhanced ventilation could be the key to minimising the risk of excessive condensation. However, I acknowledge the appellant's view that paying guests could not be expected to adhere to any strict regime of opening windows at night and that any condensation would be seen as unwelcome.
16. The use of the building as a guest house is an appropriate one for a house of this size. There is considerable public benefit in keeping the building in such active use. The proposal would allow important rooms to be brought back into proper use.
17. On balance, I consider that the less than substantial harm caused to the special interest of the building by the insertion of double-glazing would be outweighed by the benefits of replacing inappropriate and degraded frames with well considered and potentially well made substitutes that would go some way towards reproducing the original character of the bay. There would also be sustainability benefits, both in terms of energy use and in the viability of the listed building. Overall, I consider that the proposal would comply with national policy guidance, as also reflected in regional and local development plan policy.
18. For the reasons set out above, and having taken account of all representations made, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed and listed building consent granted subject to conditions.

Brendan Lyons

INSPECTOR