



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 October 2025

by R E Jones BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/Y/25/3358629

11 The Terrace, Wokingham RG40 1BP

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Matthew Norbury against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 242156.
 - The works proposed are described as: 'To form a new doorway between bedroom 1 and 3 at a point close to the front wall of the property in order to access the dressing room and ensuite in which bedroom 3 will be remodelled into'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. As the proposal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act).

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve a Grade II listed building, St Clements (11 The Terrace), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is an end of terrace, Grade II listed building, that forms part of a row of historic domestic properties close to the centre of Wokingham. The official List Entry¹ describes St Clements as dating from the 16th century with alterations following in the late 18th century. It comprises a part timber framed building encased in painted stucco and rendered brick. The OS mapping accompanying the appeal indicates that the building was further extended during the late 19th century through a side addition incorporating, in part, an entrance lobby with bedroom above (Bedroom 3).
5. The submitted drawings and my inspection of the site indicate that the initial phase of the building is largely intact with limited alteration being carried out to the plan form of the ground floor living room and Bedroom 1, above. The later 19th century side extension which includes Bedroom 3 is separated from Bedroom 1 by a dividing wall, which, in the Councils' view, forms part of the building's earliest phase. Although the appellant speculates that the dividing wall is part of the later

¹ List Entry Number: 11180012

side addition, the clear division between the rooms and the external appearance of the side addition, in my view provides, evidence that the cellular form and layout of Bedrooms 1 and 3 relate to different phases of the building's evolution.

6. Given the above, I find the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, to be primarily associated with the legibility and coherence of its built phases and the interest derived from the early historic fabric of the building.
7. The proposed works involve part removal of the dividing wall between Bedroom 1 and 3, to create a doorway leading to a new dressing room and bathroom. The creation of the doorway through the internal wall would remove the clear separation between the 16th and 19th century phases of the building. In doing so it would harmfully erode the single cellular form of Bedroom 1 which embodies the earliest plan form of the building, and which is key to understanding its evolution and special interest. Accordingly, the legibility of the building's internal layout and historical narrative would be partially lost through the new doorway.
8. There would also in the Council's view, because of the new door, be a loss of historic fabric relating to the building's initial 16th century phase, such as the timber frame elements.
9. The appellant disputes this and refers to a small 10cm² examination of the wall separating Bedrooms 1 and 3 that did not uncover any evidence of a timber frame. It also revealed the use of lime mortar and horsehair in its construction. According to the appellant, these materials would have been typical in the construction of buildings up until the late 19th century. It is therefore argued that the internal wall could relate to the building's 19th century side addition and was possibly a replacement of the more historic former outer wall relating to its earlier 16th century phase.
10. The appellant also contends that the depth of the dividing wall between Bedroom 1 and 3 is not as thick as the extant outer walls of the property and is too thin to include a timber frame. Thus, suggesting it was not part of that earlier 16th century phase. However, there is little analysis presented to substantiate this. For example, there is no comparison provided indicating the comparative depths of the two walls, while no similar inspection of the outer wall's fabric has been undertaken through a keyhole examination.
11. The appellant's dating of the construction material, revealed through the keyhole examination is not in dispute, yet the historic period when those materials were in use is somewhat broad. Moreover, the area of examination of the wall's fabric was relatively small as a proportion of its total area. In my view more diagnostic investigation of the building's fabric could be undertaken, through, as suggested by the Council, thermal imagery technology. This would be non-invasive and could identify timber framing within the wall and whether it likely formed part of the earlier phase of the building.
12. The appellant does not disagree to carrying out such an assessment and has suggested that it should be a condition of the consent. However, given the degree of uncertainty relating to the findings of that assessment, the use of a condition would not be reasonable in this case.

13. In the absence of a more detailed analysis of the internal wall's construction I cannot rule out that the section of the wall to be removed dates back to the earlier 16th century phase of the building. If that was the case the proposed removal of the wall and the creation of the new doorway would significantly harm the legibility and integrity of the building's historic fabric and its plan form.
14. Even if the internal wall dividing Bedrooms 1 and 3 was, following a more detailed analysis, likely found to be part of the 19th century addition, there would still be a harmful loss of historic fabric and legibility, albeit relating to a later phase of the building.
15. It is acknowledged that the proposed new doorway would be a minor intervention, yet it clearly breaks the largely intact cellular form of the most historic phase of the building, such that its interpretation would be significantly undermined. Moreover, whilst the proposed works would only be seen from inside the building, listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained.
16. The Council have also raised concerns regarding the proposed loss of the apparent 19th century door currently linking the bathroom lobby and Bedroom 3. From my inspection of the plans and the building, the bathroom lobby area appears to relate to a different phase of the building which is marginally wider and contains a different roof profile, compared to the flat roof side addition containing Bedroom 3. Therefore, I am satisfied that the blocking up of the door to create a new internal wall would not in my view harm the legibility of that part of the building's development or any important parts of the building's fabric. Therefore, in relation to those works the special architectural and historic interest of the building would be preserved.
17. Drawing all the above together, I find that the proposed internal door through Bedroom 1 would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building, St Clements (11 The Terrace). This would be contrary to the requirements of sections 16(2) of the Act.
18. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework, (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation. Paragraph 213 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset and that this should have clear and convincing justification.
19. With reference to Paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. The extent of the works, where I have found harm, would be relatively modest and localised. Therefore, I find the harm to the heritage asset to be 'less than substantial' and at the lower end of that spectrum in this instance but, nevertheless, of considerable importance and weight. Under such circumstances, Paragraph 215 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes securing the asset's optimum viable use.
20. The appellant is of the view that the proposed works would address the poor circulation space that currently exists between first floor rooms and resolve the inconvenience of having to access one of the bedrooms via a WC/bathroom. Whilst I recognise that the current arrangement of rooms is somewhat impractical

and that the proposed works create a more convenient circulation route, the changes largely amount to personal rather than public benefits. They would not therefore clearly outweigh the possible loss of the building's early historic fabric and the legibility of the important phases of its construction. In any event, the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence.

21. Having regard to the above and in the absence of any significant public benefit, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the Grade II listed building. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 215 of the Framework.

Conclusion

22. For the above reasons I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

RE Jones

INSPECTOR