

Item No: 17 Reference: B/07/01688/LBC
Parish: Boxford
Location: Quills Cottage, 27a Swan Street, Boxford.
Proposal: Application for Listed Building Consent - Insertion of 1 no. door to side elevation;
2 no. roof lights to rear elevation; Internal alterations.
Applicant: Mrs. P. E. Lane
Case Officer: Ben Woolnough Date for Determination: 12 December 2007

This application is reported to Development Committee as the applicant is an employee of the Council.

THE SITE

1. Quills Cottage is a 19th Century two storey brick building fronting onto and on the back edge of the footpath of Swan Street in the heart of the Conservation Area. Accommodation is provided on two floors with ladder access to storage in the attic space at present.

THE PROPOSAL

2. The Proposal is to convert the attic space to provide a third bedroom to the property. This will entail boxing in of the existing stairs at ground floor within the living room and re-opening of a doorway to the side elevation to meet building regulations. In addition a new stair is to be provided to rise from the existing first floor to the attic space.
3. Within the attic space itself, works include a new partition wall, alterations to the roof structure and insertion of two roof lights in the rear roof slope.

RELEVANT HISTORY

4. There is no history relevant to this proposal for this site.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

5. PPG15: (1994) Planning and the historic environment
- Annex C – Paragraphs C. 27 and C. 35.

PLANNING POLICIES

6. The following Development Plan policies are applicable to the proposal:

Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No 2) 2006 - policy CN06

This report only includes policy references. For further details please see Page 4.

OBSERVATIONS

7. PC – No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

8. None received.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

9. The main considerations in this proposal are the effects of any external alterations on character of the Listed Building and the impacts of any structural alterations on the Historic fabric of the building, especially components which contribute to the special interest and understanding of the original building.
10. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15) states that in judging the effect of any alteration it is essential to have assessed the elements that make up the special interest of the building in question. Annex C states that the roof is nearly always a dominant feature of a building and the retention of its original structure is important; furthermore, roof lights may be acceptable but not on prominent roof slopes.
11. The Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No. 2) states in Policy CN06, that proposals for the alteration of Listed Buildings should, inter alia, preserve the historic fabric of the building and ensure that all proposals to remove by alteration any part of the building are justified in terms of preserving the special character of the building. They should retain all components which form part of the buildings special interest; should include proposals for fenestration which respects the character of the building; and should comply with Annex C of PPG15.
12. The proposal involves the conversion of the attic space to provide a third bedroom to the property. This will entail boxing in of the existing stairs at ground floor within the living room and re-opening of a doorway to the side elevation to meet building regulations. In addition a new stair is to be provided to rise from the existing first floor to the attic space.
13. In this instance a safe secure route to an external door to meet building regulations and the insertion of a staircase can be achieved without detriment to the character of the Listed Building.
14. Within the attic space itself, works include a new partition wall, alterations to the roof structure and insertion of two roof lights in the rear roof slope.
15. The insertion of roof lights in Listed Buildings can be problematic given that one of the principal characteristics on historic buildings is the solid and uninterrupted character of the principal roof slopes (i.e. both front and rear). The insertion of roof lights whether on the front or rear roof slope is to be avoided given the harm this has to the visual character of the building.

16. In this instance there is the ability to insert a window in the gable end at attic level. Consequently any proposal for roof lights in this Listed Building is not justified given the ability to insert a casement window in the gable which would not affect the character of the building. This revision would need to be accompanied by the omission of the proposed partition wall in the attic space (to provide the required natural light to the attic space) and its substitution with a door on the first floor landing area.
17. Such a revision has been requested of the applicant who has declined this suggestion as being unacceptable to their requirements, citing the existence of roof lights on the adjoining Listed Building. This adjoining Listed Building known as Kingsbury House, was the subject of a report to committee in 1998 where upon it was outlined to members that 3 no. roof lights of unsympathetic design had been inserted into the rear roof slopes of the Listed Building without consent by the owner previous to that which existed in 1998. Members determined to take no further action in this instance at the time but this today would be contrary to policy in both principle and in terms of the design of the units inserted.
18. In addition to the unsympathetic rooflights, the applicant is also proposing to alter the roof structure to accommodate an additional room. PPG15 is quite clear that retention of the original form and components of the timber roof structure is important. In this instance the existing roof comprises a clasped-purlin type structure typical of the period when the cottage was first built. The proposed scheme requires the removal of two collars which are principal components of the original roof structure. Whilst a number of the secondary components (i.e. the common rafters) have been replaced in the recent past it is imperative to the character and special interest of the building that the two collars remain in their existing and original form and position.
19. There would however be no objection to the use of the attic space as an additional room which left the two collars undisturbed. This request has been put to the applicant but it is undesirable to them given the obstacle they would represent in their current position. However this common problem is a frequent reason, amongst many others as to why loft conversions are not always possible in Historic buildings.
20. In conclusion the proposed alterations are contrary to both PPG15 and CN06. The introduction of roof lights would represent an intrusive feature to the prominent rear roof slope and would not preserve the special character of the building. The proposed works to the original roof structure would result in an unacceptable loss of components which contribute to the special interest and understanding of the original building.

REASON FOR REFUSAL

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15) was issued in September 1994 and remains the main document for Government advice and guidance to the Local Planning Authorities on the operation of the planning system in relation to the historic environment. It states that in judging the effect of any alteration it is essential to have assessed the elements that make up the special interest of the building in question. Annex C states that the roof is nearly always a dominant feature of a building and the retention of its original structure is important; furthermore, roof lights may be acceptable but not on prominent roof slopes.

The Babergh Local Plan (Alteration No. 2) was adopted by the Council in 2006 and provides a detailed level of guidance for the control of development. It provides, in Policy CN06, that proposals for the alteration of Listed Buildings should, inter alia, preserve the historic fabric of the building and ensure that all proposals to remove by alteration any part of the building are justified in terms of preserving the special character of the building. They should retain all components which form part of the buildings special interest; should include proposals for fenestration which respects the character of the building; and should comply with Annex C of PPG15.

Quills Cottage is a 19th Century two storey brick building with prominent original roof slopes to the front and rear. Whilst there is no objection to the use of the attic space for further accommodation the alterations proposed to facilitate this would involve the loss of components of historic interest and the introduction of elements detrimental to the character of the Listed Building. The proposed roof lights represent an intrusive feature to the prominent rear roof slope and do not preserve the special character of the building. The proposed works to the original roof structure would result in an unacceptable loss of components which contribute to the special interest and understanding of the original building. As such the proposal for the Insertion of 1 no. door to side elevation, 2 no. roof lights to rear elevation and Internal alterations is contrary to PPG 15 and policy CN06 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006).

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse Listed Building consent.

DECISION

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