

REPORT TO THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

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| Date of Meeting | 22 nd September 2010 | | |
| Application Number | 10/02546/LBC | | |
| Site Address | Brook Farmhouse, Frog Lane, Great Somerford | | |
| Proposal | Removal of 2.0m of Wall | | |
| Applicant | Mr T Sturgis | | |
| Town/Parish Council | Great Somerford | | |
| Electoral Division | Brinkworth | Unitary Member | Toby Sturgis |
| Grid Ref | 396587 183128 | | |
| Type of application | Listed Building Consent | | |
| Case Officer | Judy Enticknap | 01249 706 660 | Judy.enticknap @wiltshire.gov.uk |

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application has been referred to committee at the discretion of Officers to consider the impact of the wall on the building.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and to recommend that listed building consent be REFUSED.

No objections are raised from Great Somerford Parish Council. The consultation period has not expired at the time of preparing this report.

2. Main Issues

Brook Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building and the issue to consider is the effect of the proposals on the special character of the listed building.

3. Site Description and Proposal

Brook Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building which is reputed to date from the C16 (although the list description suggests a C17 origin). The building has been the subject of subsequent alterations. The most significant of these occurred in 1803. The Design and Access Statement advises that up to that date the north range was farm buildings, with a separate cottage to the south. In 1803 the buildings were linked in a scheme which included refronting of the west elevation, and introduction of early C19 internal detailing to the rooms which abut the new west elevation.

The proposal is to remove a 2m section of wall and associated doorway between a stair hall and what was until recently a sitting room, but which (following removal of the intervening wall) now forms part of an enlarged kitchen. The enlarged kitchen is in the north range, with the stair hall in the 1803 construction.

This is a secondary stair hall, but it contains good quality early C19 detailing. This includes corner cupboards each side of the west window, which abut the architrave /panelled doors to the rooms to the north (ie former sitting room) and the south (dining room). Another door opening between the hall and former sitting room of unknown date has been blocked. The section of wall to which the cupboard is attached would remain in position, and the door would be repositioned in the blocked opening, to form a cupboard.

| 4. Relevant Planning History | | |
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| Application Number | Proposal | Decision |
| 10/02196/LBC 10/02218.LBC | Removal of two modern partition walls Remove modern steel framed window and replace with French Doors | Approved Approved |

5. Consultations

Great Somerford Parish Council - No objections

Building Control Officer - Removal of the wall between the extended kitchen and the staircase would have a detrimental effect on the means of escape from the upper storeys. A fire in the kitchen/diner area would potentially smoke log the staircase enclosure seriously affecting escape.

6. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice and press advert.

No letters of letters of objection/support received as the consultation period does not expire until 15 September 2010.

7. Planning Considerations

When considering applications affecting a listed building consideration need to be given to guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement PPS5.

Policy HE7.1 and 7.2 requires the LPA to consider the significance of the part of the heritage asset (ie the listed building) which is the subject of the proposal, and to use this understanding to minimise conflict between the conservation of the heritage asset and any aspect of the scheme. Where a proposal has a harmful impact on the significance of a designated heritage asset which is less than substantial harm, Policy HE9.4 requires local planning authorities, in all cases, to weigh the public benefit of the proposal against the harm.

At a preliminary meeting the applicant explained the main purpose of the proposal was to increase light levels into the former sitting room area. The Design and Access Statement supporting the application also argues that the proposal will benefit the viability of the property by (incorporating) one of 4 ground floor inner halls into the living area. It also states that the proposal involves minimal loss of historic fabric, which is in any case has no significance to the original parts of the listed building.

The recently-approved alterations to the kitchen/former sitting room have created a sizeable family room approximately 8.95m x 4.2m, and the opening-up together with introduction of French Doors with margin lights has improved general light levels within this room. In order to improve this further, it was suggested that the existing solid six-panelled door could be replaced by a partially glazed door, but the applicant is unwilling to consider this compromise.

Although this building has earlier origins, the 1803 alterations make a significant contribution to its special character. Moreover, whilst this proposal may appear to imply a minimal loss of historic fabric, it will destroy the balance of the early 19th century detailing to the hallway; the appearance of the corner cupboard, attached to a small nib of masonry will appear particularly incongruous. It is not considered that the alteration will provide any worthwhile additional "living space", as it will still essentially be a circulation area. Moreover, removal of the wall will trigger the need for additional fire protection measures, as the hall will be considered part of the kitchen. Such measures will in turn require separate consents including Listed Building Consent. In summary, the benefits of this alteration are not considered to outweigh the harm done to its special character.

8. Recommendation

Listed Building Consent be REFUSED for the following reason:

The proposed alteration will cause harm to the special character of the listed building, and there is insufficient justification for the alteration to outweigh the benefit which would result. It is therefore contrary to requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and guidance in Planning Policy Statement 5 Planning for the Historic Environment.

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| Appendices: | None |
| Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report: | A4 site Plan and Ground floor plan received 21.7.2010; 1.20, 4.02, 5.01, 5.03, 6.02 |

