OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00431/LBC Listed Building Consent

Proposal: Underpinning works to stabilise the cottage using a resin injection system and works to the render

Location: 2 Blacksmiths Lane Abbotsley St Neots

Applicant:

Grid Ref: 522886 256501

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

Blacksmiths Cottage is a Grade II Listed building, from the late 17th Century. It is timber framed, with white roughcast render and a thatched roof. The cottage is located on the Church Farm estate, in the village of Abbotsley and within the Abbotsley Conservation Area. The site is in a particularly sensitive location of historic significance within the settings of several Listed Buildings which include the Grade II* Listed St Margaret's Church, Grade II Listed tomb within the graveyard and Grade II Listed Church Farm including barn.

The proposed works are for underpinning works to stabilise the cottage using a resin injection system and works to the render.

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives – economic, social and environmental – of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)

LP12: Design Implementation
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):
* Place Making Principles – Part 3.8 Building Detailing

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

PLANNING HISTORY

1001229LBC - Internal works to upgrade existing kitchen and bathroom on ground floor level – Consent granted 10.09.2010
20/01068/FUL - Erection of three new family houses with associated landscaping and access – Refused – Appeal dismissed 02.12.2022
24/00742/FUL - Erection of a new single family dwelling with associated landscaping – Refused 24.10.2024

CONSULTATIONS

Abbotsley Parish Council recommends approval. It is noted that this building has given concern for some time and the Parish Council are pleased to see work being done.

HDC Conservation Team – No objections with the condition that the procedure is followed in line with the submitted documents.

REPRESENTATIONS

No objections received at time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
o Impact on Heritage Assets

* Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 state that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

Policy LP34 states that a proposal within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a conservation area should preserve, and wherever possible enhance, features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance and setting as set out in character statements or other applicable documents.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Para. 212 of the NPPF set out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'. Para. 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification…'.

Local Plan policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.

The Council will consider the significance of a designated heritage asset and where there is less than substantial harm, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Where there is deemed to be substantial harm, then the proposal would need to achieve substantial public benefits to outweigh that harm.

Listed building consent is sought for underpinning works to stabilise the cottage using a resin injection system and works to the render.

The Conservation Officer has considered the proposal and visited the site. The site visit indicated that the proposed chemical underpinning to the listed building might not constitute an alteration to the fabric of the building as there are negligible foundations and the injection process will affect the ground under the walls rather than the walls themselves. However, this technology is relatively new and appears to require Building Control input as it has implications for the structural integrity of the building. This may lead to a situation in that the proposal itself might not be an alteration but if the works are not undertaken correctly or there are other issues there may be consequences that would affect the special interest of the listed building in as much as it collapses. In this case it would be an alteration to the foundations of the building. The opinion of the Conservation Team is that Listed Building Consent has been applied for; the Local Planning Authority has a duty to protect the building and therefore consent should be granted based on the submitted details. There are no objections to the proposals on the condition that the procedure is followed according to the submitted documents. Due to the historic importance of the building and the nature of the works, these will be secured by condition.

Officers have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. It is considered that harm will not be caused to either of these designated heritage assets because the works will not have an impact on the special interest of the conservation area and will enable the survival of the listed building.

The proposal, therefore, accords with ss. 16, 66 & 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, paragraphs 202-221 of the NPPF (2024), Policies LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) in this regard.

*Conclusion
The proposed works are considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as they:

* Would not have a harmful impact upon the designated heritage asset.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that listed building consent be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Olivia Manton**