

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Signed:	Officer:		Date:		Manager:		Date:	
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Application Ref:	3/2021/0039	 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk	
Date Inspected:	1/4/2021 and 21/5/2021 and 16/11/21		
Officer:	AD/JM		
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:		Decision	Approval

Development Description:	Replacement timber windows, proposed internal works and refurbishments.
Site Address/Location:	Back o'Thorn 25 Brookside Downham BB7 4BP

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
Clerk to Downham Parish Meeting/near neighbour supports application. Increases mix of properties available.	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
Historic amenity societies:	
Consulted, no representations received. LCC Archaeology: Significant impact on the character of the historic building. Work may reveal details of the original building which are concealed by e.g. wall plaster. The stripping of plaster internally will often reveal details that were not apparent for example. If minded to grant condition suggested.	
CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
Clerk to Downham Parish Meeting/near neighbour supports application. Increases mix of properties available.	

RELEVANT POLICIES:
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. 'Preservation' in the duties at section 16, 66 and 72 of the Act means "doing no harm to" (<i>South Lakeland DC v. Secretary of State for the Environment</i> [1992]). Downham Conservation Area Appraisal <i>Ribble Valley Core Strategy:</i> Key Statement EN5 – Heritage Assets Key Statement EN2 – Landscape Policy DMG1 – General Considerations Policy DME4 – Protecting Heritage Assets National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Relevant Planning History:

3/2021/0038 - Replacement timber windows. LBC granted 29/4/2021.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

'Back o' T' Thorn' is a Grade II listed (13/2/1967) "House, formerly cottages, c.1800" (list description) prominently sited within Downham Conservation Area and the setting of a number of other listed buildings including the adjacent 'Greengates' and nearby 'Fir Tree House', '35 Chapel Brow' and '36 and 37 Chapel Brow' (all Grade II).

The list description does not refer to the interior but identifies:

"House, formerly cottages, c.1800. Limestone rubble (the right-hand bay sandstone) with stone slate roof. 2 storeys, 3 bays. Windows have plain stone surrounds, those to bays one and 2 being of 2 lights with square mullions. Doors, to the left of each bay, have plain stone surrounds: the right-hand one is now blocked. The 2 doors remaining in use each have a hood of 2 pitched stone slates. To the left of each door is a straight joint, the right-hand one marking a break in the angle of the facade. Chimney to the right of each bay".

The submitted Heritage Appraisal identifies:

"The buildings' significance is derived from the its inherent special interest which goes beyond its initial reasons for listing, as an example of a modest, two storey cottage. The building, is one of three former cottages that were merged to form one larger dwelling; however, no.24 has since been returned to its state of a single cottage which the remaining two former cottages remain as a single dwelling. The exact time the cottages were merged is uncertain with little evidence to suggest when this occurred" (6.4.1).

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Existing windows to the front of the ground floor living room and first floor bedroom are to be removed and replaced with new openable windows (granted LBC in 3/2021/0038).

Interior works:

Ground floor ceiling timber cladding.

Removal of plaster and insulated timber cladding to walls and roof apex.

Excavation of existing stone flag floor and installation of new limecrete floor with reinstalled flags (originally proposed to install a concrete floor re: flooding).

Plan form alteration at first floor – enclosed bathroom.

New door between ground floor rooms.

Timber handrail to staircase

Internal timber window shutters.

Cleaning.

Impact upon the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, the setting of listed buildings, the character and appearance of Downham Conservation Area and the cultural heritage of the Forest of Bowland AONB:

Requests for information and negotiation have resulted in many initial concerns being assuaged. LBC was granted for proposed fenestration works (3/2021/0038) in April 2021. However, the following issues are harmful:

New ground flooring

The recent SPAB advice 'Caring for Old Floors' (and Historic England 'Making changes to heritage assets' paragraph 47 and 51) has been considered. The historic flag flooring is worn, uneven and has a 'patina of age' reflecting centuries of use which is authentic and intrinsic to the listed building's character. This authenticity and character will be lost by excavation and re-forming. The submitted Heritage Statement identifies "The archaeological interest of the building is derived from its plan form layout and extant historic fabric which provides tangible evidence of its past domestic use". In respect to historic interest, "the retention of internal historic features such as fireplaces, slop stone and the possible brick oven / stove is not entirely commonplace as such features are usually removed or significantly altered, as is the case to the adjoining No.25". In general, "the significance of the building is derived from, its extant historic fabric, its evidence of past historic alteration and its remaining internal domestic features which have only been retained in no.24".

Furthermore, the potential impact of damp proof membrane inclusion on building 'breathability' has not been explained.

Wall lining/cladding

Internal plaster to be removed is a combination of cementitious and traditional lime plasterwork. The impact of dry-lining (with insulation) walls on building 'breathability' has not been made clear. The appearance of walls will be changed – undulations, imperfections and variety to surfaces produced by centuries of ware will be replaced by overtly modern, regular and uninteresting surfaces (see 'Making changes' paragraph 50; IHBC 'Alterations to Listed Buildings' 2021 paragraph 3.12.2). Historic room proportions and shape will be affected by cladding to some walls and not others.

LCC Archaeology identify that proposals will have a significant impact on the character of the historic building. However, the harmful works affect only part of the listed building and are of 'less than substantial harm' (NPPF paragraph 202). Building repair leading to re-use and contractor employment are public benefits of the proposals. It is suggested that there are also energy efficiency and flood recovery (does this apply to the limecrete floor?) benefits to the works of concern. However, the submitted information does not consider whether there are less harmful works/technologies which would achieve the same energy efficiencies and flood resilience (has a holistic assessment been made; NPPF paragraph 200 requests that justification for harm is 'clear and convincing'). Therefore, proposed public benefits do not outweigh the harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

Head of Planning Services

Following a site visit and a review of the application additional details were provided with respect to detailing and retention of hatch reveal on the first floor. Noting the concerns of the case officer it was considered that the benefit of re-establishing a residential use in a previous vacant building and making improvements to enable a more sustainable unit outweigh the limited harm. It is considered sufficient public benefits exist in this instance and this view has regard to the duties at section 66, 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as appropriate) and in consideration to NPPF.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

RECOMMENDATION:

That listed building consent be granted