

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2017

by Graeme Robbie BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 29 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M0933/W/17/3170178

Flat 5, Ravenscourt, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria LA11 6EL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr J Smith against the decision of South Lakeland District Council.
 - The application Ref SL/2016/1099, dated 26 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 18 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is a dormer roofspace extension including balcony area & general external alterations at 2nd floor.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the Grange-over-Sands Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Ravenscourt is a large and substantially extended villa that has been converted into 5 apartments. It is set amongst mature trees on heavily wooded slopes alongside the entrance drive to the Grand Hotel towards the north eastern edge of Grange-over-Sands. The site lies within the Grange-over-Sands Conservation Area.
 4. The appeal property is approached from the southeast up a steeply sloping private drive. The rising ground levels towards the building give its southeast corner a dominant visual presence. Due to its elevated position glimpses of the various dormer and peaked roof extensions are visible above the eaves line, whilst the receding hipped and pitched roofs are largely invisible behind the dominant eaves.
 5. The southeast corner of the building and the over-sailing eaves dominant the view on approach from the southeast. Although the receding roofline of the hipped roof means that it is the eaves, rather than the roof, that is seen from this angle, ground level views of the southeast and northeast elevations reveal the line of the hipped roof.
 6. The proposed dormer extension would remove the last vestiges of the hipped roof from this corner of the building and would introduce further punctuation to Ravenscourt's roofline. Moreover, because of the rising ground levels that imbue this corner of the building with an enhanced visual presence and
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dominance, the proposed extension and balcony would be an exaggerated and discordant feature in a highly visible location on the building. Whereas the eaves line largely screens the existing, to-be-removed small dormer from view, the proposal would be clearly seen above the eaves. So too would the exposed flank elevation of the dormer extension and the awkward intersection between the higher eaves level of the proposed dormer and the existing southeast facing dormer.

7. When viewed directly facing the southeast and northeast elevations, the loss of the hipped roof would be equally evident, as would the introduction of the vertical flank elevation of the dormer extension. I accept that when viewing the northeast facing elevation the proposal would introduce a degree of symmetry to the roofscape from this aspect. However, there is little in the way of symmetry or balance left elsewhere on the building and it is only through the slightly recessed extension on the north-western side of the building and the hipped roof on the south-eastern corner that the original character and form of Ravenscourt can be determined. Any symmetry that the proposal might introduce at roof level would not overcome the harmful impacts that I have identified above.
8. The result would, I conclude, be an awkward juxtaposition of conflicting roof slopes and vertical faces at what is the building's most visible, prominent and dominant aspect and would relate poorly to the existing building and erode what character remains of the original building. I accept that the building has been substantially altered over time, with particularly large extensions to the side and rear of the original building. However, I have considered the proposal in the context of the building as it currently exists and, for the reasons I have set out I consider that the proposal would fail to properly take account of the character, details and proportions of the existing building. This would be in conflict with saved policy S2 (1, 2, 4 and 5) of the South Lakeland Local Plan 2006 (LP) and policy CS8.10 of the South Lakeland Local Development Framework: Core Strategy 2010 (CS). In so doing, it would fail to secure high quality design, contrary to one of the National Planning Policy Framework's core planning principles.
9. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) identifies the wooded hillsides around Grange-over-Sands as being of particular interest, with the presence and arrangement of large detached residences and hotels in amongst the trees on those slopes as being characteristic of the early development of the town. Ravenscourt is also identified¹ as being an unlisted building that has a largely neutral effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
10. Unlike larger and more grand buildings cited in the CACA, such as the Grand Hotel, Ravenscourt is not visible from Lindale Road or other public viewpoints along the main road or coastline. Whilst it is visible from the drive leading to the Grand Hotel, views are glimpsed through the dense trunks and canopies of the trees that characterise these slopes and I found that it does not have a particularly visible presence within these wooded slopes, something that the Council acknowledge. Whilst some of this screening may be expected to thin on a seasonal basis, not all are deciduous trees and views of the building and its setting would be glimpsed. This would not, in my judgement however,

¹ Grange Conservation Area Review – 2005 – Map A4 – Architectural Quality

amount to an adverse or harmful impact upon the fundamental character of the Conservation Area.

11. Therefore, although I have concluded that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building, it would not alter the neutral contribution that the building makes to the character and appearance of the Grange-over-Sands Conservation Area. However, this is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified that would be caused to the character and appearance of the building itself.

Other Matters

12. The parties agree that there would be no harm to the living conditions of neighbouring residents, access and parking or biodiversity and geodiversity arising from the proposed development. However, the absence of harm in these respects does not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the host property that I have identified above.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graeme Robbie

INSPECTOR