
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 July 2021

by Jillian Rann BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/E2734/Y/21/3267987

Flat 2, 2A Prospect Crescent, Harrogate HG1 1RH

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Paul McComb against the decision of Harrogate Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01635/LB, dated 12 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 August 2020.
 - The works proposed are replacement of 3rd floor fire escape balcony on rear of property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal relates to a listed building in a conservation area. The Council's reason for refusal refers only to harm to the listed building. However, I am mindful of my statutory duties under sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) and I have considered the appeal accordingly.
3. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021. I have given the main parties the opportunity to comment on this.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are whether the proposal would preserve the special interest of the grade II listed building, 1-10 Prospect Crescent, and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses; and whether it would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Harrogate Conservation Area (HCA).

Reasons

5. The appeal relates to a flat within Prospect Crescent, a Grade II listed building in Harrogate town centre and the HCA. It was built between 1873 and 1880 by George Dawson to a design by J H Hirst, a duo who were responsible for a number of buildings in the town. It is a large, prominent stone building with ornate detailing along its wide, curved frontage, which faces a public square. The ornate detailing continues along the building's side elevations. In contrast, its less prominent rear elevation is notably simpler in its detailing and appearance.

6. The building's rear elevation has been subject to a number of unsympathetic additions previously, which detract from its appearance at present. Those include metal fire escapes, extensions in various materials, fences and air conditioning units. However, its distinctly simple appearance, and the architect's contrasting approach to this rear elevation compared with the grander, more ornate and prominent front and side elevations, nevertheless remain legible.
7. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the special interest of the building is drawn from its historic interest as an example of a building by Dawson and Hirst, built during the Victorian growth of Harrogate town centre, and from its historic fabric and architectural detailing, including the contrast between its simple rear elevation and its more prominent frontages.
8. The site is within the HCA, which encompasses much of the town centre and some surrounding areas. Insofar as it relates to this appeal, the significance of the HCA is drawn from the historic buildings in the town centre and their architectural detailing. As one of several large, prominent stone buildings which surround and frame a small area of open space around the war memorial, and which has retained its distinctive architectural detailing and appearance, the appeal building makes a positive contribution to the HCA.
9. The proposed balcony would replace a metal platform on the top floor of the building, which is served by one of the existing fire escapes on its rear elevation. However, the balcony would be larger and deeper and would thus have an even greater prominence than that existing incongruous platform structure. The larger balcony would be an unduly prominent and discordant feature which, together with the likely addition of items such as outdoor furniture associated with its domestic use, would create additional visual clutter and further erode the simple appearance of the building's rear elevation. The balcony's fixings would require the drilling of further holes into the building's historic stonework and disruption to its historic fabric. The balcony would therefore cause further harm to the building's simple rear elevation and fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building.
10. Although it would be to the rear of the building, the balcony would be visible from public vantage points on Petergate, which provides vehicular access to buildings to the rear of the site and pedestrian access between Cambridge Street and James Street, two major streets in the town centre. Although it is the building's curved frontage and return elevations which are visible from the town centre's main street frontages and open spaces, its simpler, contrasting rear elevation also contributes to the building's interest and to the appearance of the HCA of which it forms a part. Although the works would be small in scale and their effects would be localised, the harm to this prominent listed building within the HCA would also result in harm to the appearance of the HCA.
11. Although there have been other unsympathetic additions and alterations to the rear of the listed building, the existing harm arising from those features does not justify the further harm that would arise from the works now proposed.
12. I have been referred to an outdoor terrace to the rear of 6A Prospect Crescent. At the time of my visit I observed that plants and outdoor seating were present on a platform at first floor level to the rear of that property. However, I do not have full details before me of that area or the circumstances in which it was created. Therefore, I cannot be certain that they were directly comparable to

those in the case before me which, in any event, I have considered on its own merits.

13. The works would harm the special interest of the listed building and the appearance of the HCA. In the context of the listed building and the HCA as a whole, the harm arising would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, I give considerable importance and weight to that harm and to the presumption that preservation is desirable. The Framework requires any such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
14. The balcony would provide a small area of outdoor amenity space for the occupants of the appeal property. I recognise the importance of access to outdoor space, which has been highlighted recently by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in this case those benefits arising would be private rather than public in nature, and do not outweigh the harm I have identified.
15. Given the above, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the grade II listed building, 1-10 Prospect Crescent, and would harm the appearance of the HCA. It would therefore fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework. It would also conflict with Policy HP2 of the Harrogate District Local Plan 2014-2035, which requires proposals affecting heritage assets to protect or enhance features which contribute to their special interest, and with the Heritage Management Guidance Supplementary Planning Document, which provides further advice in that regard.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jillian Rann
INSPECTOR