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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 January 2024

**by Geoff Underwood BA(Hons) PGDip(Urb Cons) MRTPI IHBC**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/23/3328638**

**Pethfoot Lodge, B6341 Blue Knox to New Moor, Cragside, Northumberland NE65 7PU**

- 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 Gill against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
  - The application Ref 23/01093/FUL, dated 23 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 16 June 2023.
  - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension, extend roof above and rear dormer addition.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey rear extension, extend roof above and rear dormer addition at Pethfoot Lodge, B6341 Blue Knox to New Moor, Cragside, Northumberland NE65 7PU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/01093/FUL, dated 23 March 2023, subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
  - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.
  - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

### Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Gill against Northumberland County Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

### Main Issue

3. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect the development would have on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area, including the significance of any designated heritage assets.

### Reasons

4. Pethfoot Lodge is a modest, attractive stone built lodge set on a steep bankside opposite an entrance to the National Trust Cragside estate. Its materials, situation, hipped roof and projecting chamfered bay floor plan mean it shows similarities with other lodges that are within the estate which raises the

architectural and historic interest of the building beyond the ordinary, although there is no evidence that it is itself, or part of, a designated heritage asset.

5. A single storey rear extension has already been constructed on the same footprint as the appeal proposal. The coursing of the stone on the flank wall has a more random pattern of that of the original building and the window surround does not replicate the substantial cills, lintels and quoins surrounding windows on the host building, nor its corner quoins. However, these effects, should they be retained or reproduced in the proposal, are unlikely to be perceptible from beyond the site and therefore have much less of an effect on the wider character and appearance of the area. The proposed hipped roof above would follow the pattern elsewhere on the building, but its form would create an uncharacteristic flat, crown roof that would erode the more intricate arrangement of the original modest lodge building hipped roof. The large, flat roof box dormer at the rear would be clumsy and at odds with the original design and form of the building.
6. Whilst a render finish is proposed for the rear wall, the drawings indicate that the side wall and roof, including the dormer cheeks would match the existing stone and tiles. For the above reasons, the use of render, although not consistent with the finish and appearance of the house, would not be visible from public vantage points and that particular harmful aspect of the building's appearance would not translate to an adverse effect on the wider character and appearance of the area.
7. Nevertheless, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host building. The existing rear dormer, although shorter than its replacement, is noticeable from the north but only to a very limited degree due to a combination of its rear situation, and the existing topography and alignment of the road. The proposal would largely replicate the arrangement, albeit set farther back into the site and the dormer component would be unlikely to be much more prominent as a result. From very limited locations the extended dormer would be noticeable projecting from the rear roof slope from the south. Some harmful effects on the building would therefore extend to the character and appearance of the area, but would be very limited in their extent due to the limits to where the adverse effects would be perceived from and the use of matching materials for walls, roof and dormer.
8. The site lies in close proximity to the grade I registered park and garden of Cragside (the RPG). The estate contains a number of listed buildings including the Visitor Centre, Tumbleton Ram House and Boat House<sup>1</sup>. The RPG covers an extensive area and includes gardens and pleasure grounds, parkland, natural and formed landscapes and water features surrounding Cragside House. These form an outstanding landscape associated with the artistic and engineering expressions associated with Lord Armstrong and his wife, where many of the buildings form an integral part of the overall landscape compositions.
9. Consequently, it is a designated heritage asset of the highest national significance. That significance relies largely on the natural and manmade landscapes and their interrelationships with the historic buildings within the RPG. This includes the composition of Tumbleton Lake which creates a picturesque setting for the Visitor Centre and the Ram and Boat Houses.

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<sup>1</sup> Listed in the National Heritage List as Cragside Visitor Centre - Tumbleton Stables, Tumbleton Ram House on West of Debdon Burn at foot of Tumbleton Dam and Tumbleton Boat House respectively.

10. This significance also relies to an extent on the RPG's setting within the Northumberland landscape. This includes that part of the Debdon Burn valley which lies opposite in which the appeal site is situated, and forms part of the picturesque landscape surrounding Tumbleton Lake. The similarities, and likely architectural and historic associations with, the Cragside estate mean that Pethfoot Lodge makes a contribution to the setting and hence significance of the RPG.
11. The Visitor Centre, the Ram House and the Boat House all derive significance from their architecture, age, materials, historic associations and their forming part of the overall built heritage of the Cragside estate, with the added technological significance of the hydraulics that served the estate represented in the Ram House. Although at some distance, there is a degree of intervisibility between Pethfoot Lodge and the listed Visitor Centre, and the Lodge forms part of the landscape panorama afforded from that building and its environs, thereby also contributing to its setting. Due to their situations set down within the landscape there is much less intervisibility between the site and the Boat House and Ram House.
12. An interested party considers that a heritage impact assessment should have been provided. However, in light of the scale and nature of development proposed, the lack of any formal heritage designation on the appeal site itself, and the evidence before me, the absence of such an investigation does not weigh materially against the proposal in this case.
13. Although the significance that the RPG and listed buildings derive from their settings is not wholly reliant on visibility, in this case the proposed alterations would be situated to the rear of the building and not be seen from the listed buildings. They would only be perceptible from a modest area in the vicinity of the visitor entrance road and the grassed area between it and the B6431.
14. The flank of the existing rear box dormer is perceptible projecting behind the hipped roof. In this location the change would be the effective moving back of the hipped roof and dormer arrangement given glimpses afforded from this area of the existing rear dormer projection, and crucially the dormer element would not be materially more prominent. Furthermore, the key architectural features of the lodge at the front would not be affected and the building would remain perceptible as a lodge associated with the estate and would not alter how the RPG would be understood or appreciated.
15. For this reason, although the proposal would be perceptible, there would be no material harm to the significance that the RPG, or the listed buildings within it, derive from their setting, which would in effect be preserved.
16. The appellant advises that the flat roof single storey extension that has been erected would benefit from permitted development rights and I note that this has not been challenged by the Council. The appellant also points out that an extension similar to that proposed, albeit with a slightly shallower rear dormer projection, could also be constructed under permitted development rights. This fall-back scenario has not been addressed in the Council's Delegated report and I have been presented with no reason to suggest that the appellant is incorrect.
17. Given the circumstances, there is a greater than theoretical possibility that such a fall-back development may occur should the appeal proposal not go

ahead. The fall-back scheme would be largely the same as the appeal proposal, albeit with a marginally smaller rearwards projection to the dormer. This weighs heavily in support of the proposal as the harmful effects, whilst not identical, would be very similar.

18. I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the settings of the listed buildings and found that their settings would be preserved. Similarly, I have given great weight to all the designated heritage assets' conservation but have found that the significance the RPG derives from its setting would be preserved.
19. As the proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the style and character of the existing dwelling, would not be of a high-quality design and would fail to contribute to a sense of place nor preserve the character of the area, it would be contrary to Northumberland Local Plan<sup>2</sup> Policies HOU 9 and QOP 2. However, the proposed dormer in particular would be a discreet element from the few limited vantage points from where it would be seen. Also, importantly, a fall-back situation exists where very similar effects would result. This means that despite its harmful appearance in respect of the host building, this would have very limited wider effects and those limited ones which would occur would be very similar to that of development which could be implemented without permission. Therefore, the proposal would be acceptable.

### **Other Matters**

20. There is no substantive evidence that any protected species are present on the site that might be affected by the proposal.
21. Concern has been raised that the additional accommodation may perpetuate or worsen issues with cars associated with the appeal site being insensitively parked on land outside the appellant's ownership. In its current configuration there would be space for two vehicles to be parked within the site and turn so that they can leave in forward gear. Consequently, there would be a reasonable space for any vehicles associated with the extended dwelling. I can see no reason why any permission for the proposal would negate or supersede any private legal rights in this regard and consequently this has not had any material bearing on my assessment of the planning issues in this appeal.
22. I have no evidence that any technical matters with regards to any increased sewage from the property could not be addressed through the Building Regulations. Nor is there any suggestion that any existing public health matters arising from the septic tank could not be addressed through the appropriate mechanisms. As such I have been presented with no reason why granting permission would prevent such appropriate considerations or actions being taken should the current or proposed sewage disposal arrangements prove to be unsuitable.
23. The planning application sought permission for just the extension, and the drawings and particulars show the area to the rear of the extension as unchanged, and makes no reference to excavations or landscaping. Therefore, any such proposals or works are not matters before me in determining this appeal. Should there be any other operations which require planning

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<sup>2</sup> Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036 (2022).

permission and have been carried out this would be a matter for the Council and the appellant to resolve.

### **Conditions**

24. Attaching a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings provides certainty for all parties. It is necessary to require the external materials to match to minimise visual effects on the character and appearance of the area.

### **Conclusion**

25. The development would harm the character and appearance of the host building and to a lesser extent that of the area. However, it would not materially harm the significance of any designated heritage assets on the Cragside Estate. Material considerations indicate that a decision should be made that is not in accordance with the development plan in this instance. The appeal is therefore allowed.

*Geoff Underwood*

INSPECTOR