



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 November 2024

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F0935/D/24/3352072

20 Wampool Street, Silloth, Cumbria CA7 4AA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Kayleigh Varcoe against the decision of Cumberland Council.
 - The application Ref is HOU/2024/0117.
 - The development proposed is erection of front and rear flat roof dormer extensions (retrospective) (resubmission of HOU/2023/0204).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As the proposal is in a conservation area I have had special regard to section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
3. The application form indicates the development was started without consent in October 2022 and it was completed in July 2023. At the time of my visit, I observed that the dormer extensions appear to correspond to the submitted plans. Therefore, I have determined the appeal on the basis that planning permission is sought to retain the development that has been implemented.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Silloth Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The Conservation Area (the CA) extends from the coast and it encompasses The Green and the Victorian townscape beyond. Criffell Street forms a strong frontage to the Green, with its wide cobbled street and imposing 3-storey terraced dwellings and hotels finished in stucco with distinctive architectural details and slate roofs. The townscape to the rear is laid out on a grid pattern of wide, tree-lined streets and modest 2-storey terraced dwellings with regular facades and simple pitched roofs. Notwithstanding alterations including fenestration and the introduction of rooflights, the terrace that includes No 20 contributes positively to the coherent character and appearance of the townscape. Given the above, I find that the significance of the CA, insofar as relevant to the appeal, is related to the cohesive historic terraced roof forms.

6. The development consists of substantially similar flat-roofed box dormers to the front and rear roof slopes. Notwithstanding their set in from the edge and sides of the roof, they are substantially large features that dominate the roof of No 20. The plans illustrate that they are set slightly below the pitched ridge line of their host. However, they finish so close to the ridge that viewed from street level they protrude upwards above the roof line of the terrace. Consequently, the dormers are overly large, discordant and visually obtrusive features that overwhelm the roof of their host and disrupt the harmonious and otherwise unbroken roof of the terrace.
7. The dormers are finished in dark grey composite cladding boards with white uPVC windows. While the existing windows are uPVC, the central dormer windows would be poorly related to the alignment and vertical emphasis of the windows in the 2-storey elevations. Moreover, the composite cladding is a contemporary material that is markedly out of keeping with the traditional materials that characterise the CA. By virtue of their scale, design and modern materials, the dormers are inauthentic and unsympathetic to the surrounding historic built environment. The development does not make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness or sense of place.
8. From the front, the dormer is screened in part by street trees, at least when they are in leaf. However, the front dormer is readily visible looking along the street, including from Criffell Street and The Green. It will also be conspicuous overnight due to the height of the window relative to the roof and the associated artificial light spill. While the rear dormer is not visible in the street scene, it is visible from the back lane that serves the rears of Wampool Street, Eden Street and Criffell Street and it will be visible from the rears of the Eden Street properties. Consequently, the development is prominent in the townscape and therefore it does harm the CA as a whole.
9. While modern box dormer extensions may be a feature of town centres elsewhere, they are not characteristic of this location. The similar box dormer extension to the front of 51 Wampool Street does not benefit from planning permission. While it may now be lawful due to the passage of time, it remains a discordant and incongruous addition to the townscape. Even if No 51 was seen in visual juxtaposition with the appeal development, it would not integrate it into its surroundings but rather the harm would be compounded. Box dormers elsewhere do not provide a justification for the development.
10. Given the above, I find that the development fails to preserve the significance of the CA. Taking into account the scale of the development, I find the harm to the designated heritage asset to be less than substantial but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of the appeal.
11. Paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 206 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification. Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 208 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

12. The plans illustrate that No 20 had 3 first floor bedrooms and a loft bedroom, albeit this required alterations to meet building regulations. While the appellant considers that the 2 dormer bedrooms have improved the dwelling, this is primarily a private benefit. I note that the Council considers that similar benefits could in any case be achieved by the conversion of the loft without dormer extensions. When the planning application was made, the appellant apparently indicated that the development provided an opportunity to foster children. While this would be a social benefit, no substantive evidence has been provided in this regard. On the basis of the evidence, the benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.
13. Given the above, I conclude that, on balance, the proposal would fail to conserve or enhance the character or appearance of Silloth Conservation Area. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, paragraph 205 of the Framework and conflict with policies S27, DM14 and DM15 of Allerdale Local Plan (Part 1) Strategic and Development Management Policies Adopted July 2014. These require, among other things, that development conserves and enhances heritage assets, reinforcing and respecting the distinctive qualities of the area and contributing to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place. As a result, the development conflicts with the development plan.

Other Matters

14. The Town Council recommended the planning application should be approved. However, it does not elaborate on its reasons for finding the development acceptable and its support for the development does not weigh in its favour.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the development conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict.
16. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR