



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 December 2024

by **C Livingstone MA(SocSci) (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 January 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q9495/W/24/3351003

Greta Lodge, Southey Hill, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 5ND

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Struthers against Lake District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is 7/2024/2102.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of existing timber sash and casement windows with uPVC windows in 'heritage' georgina styles reproducing the appearance of the existing windows in keeping with the setting in Keswick Conservation Area.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised on 12 December 2024. As the changes do not materially affect the main issues in this case, the parties have not been invited to comment further. Where references are made to paragraph numbers of the Framework, these are references to the most recent version.
3. The appeal relates to a planning application that was not determined by the Council within the prescribed period. In response to the appeal, the Council has prepared an appeal statement outlining its view that permission should be refused. I have had regard to this statement and the suggested reasons for refusal within it in framing the main issue below.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of Greta Lodge, including whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Keswick Conservation Area (KCA) and whether it would preserve the setting of the Grade I listed Greta Hall¹.

Reasons

Significance and Setting

5. Greta Lodge is a large detached Georgian dwelling that occupies an elevated position on Southey Hill, within the KCA. The property is accessed via a private drive which is shared with three neighbouring properties, which are all set in established gardens which include a variety of mature trees.
6. The appeal site is located within Character Area 5 of the Keswick Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, 2022 (KAMP). The significance of the KCA is, in part, derived from the architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, which include a number of well-preserved listed and non-listed buildings of notable historical importance,

¹ Listing NGR: NY2652223789

including Greta Hall which neighbours the appeal site. These buildings include good examples of Georgian and arts and crafts architecture as well as early examples of planned social housing developments. The utilisation of local materials and preservation of period features reflect their historic origins, which includes window types and fenestration patterns. These factors all contribute positively to the architectural and historic significance of the KCA as a whole.

7. Neighbouring the appeal site is Greta Hall which is a substantial Grade I listed Georgian property. It was designed and constructed as an observatory and has connections to famous writers S.T Coleridge and Robert Southey who both lived there and were inspired by the area. The building is highly valued in terms of its architectural, historical and artistic heritage interests both in its own right and in terms of its contribution to the significance of the area as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the KCA, and it is identified as a key characteristic of the KCA within the KAMP.
8. There is some dispute between the main parties regarding the relationship between Greta Lodge and Greta Hall. Within the KAMP Greta Lodge is noted as originally being 'an ancillary building to the hall' but concedes that the erection of more recent dwellings on the grounds has weakened their relationship. Within their Appeal Statement the Council recognise that both properties date from the Georgian period and attribute their shared architectural style and design features, which include timber sash and case windows, as factors which unify them.
9. However, the appellant asserts that the buildings have always been in separate ownership. They note that the high boundary wall and planting between the two properties creates a distinct separation between them, and the appeal property is a standalone building. This stance is supported by a Planning Report relating to a previous development on the appeal site dating from 2017². The officer considered that Greta Lodge 'plays a limited role in the significance of the setting of the listed building.' Further, within the same report the officer stated that the appeal property did not have a significant role within the conservation area.
10. The 2017 Planning Report detailed above pre-dates the current development plan and the KAMP. The KAMP recognises the importance of Greta Hall as a heritage asset and its relationship with the appeal property. I am not certain that this information was before the officer to educate their assessment. There is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that Greta Hall and Greta Lodge were once a single unit or not. However, the early use and ownership of Greta Lodge is not a sole determining factor when considering its contribution to the setting of its neighbour. I also attach very limited weight to whether Greta Lodge was included in historical depictions of Greta Hall.
11. In the context of the appeal before me, shared architectural history, detailing and external materials as well as their extensive mature gardens, unify the appeal property and Greta Hall. In light of these factors Greta Lodge relates positively to the experience of Greta Hall and makes a favourable contribution to the setting of this listed building and, thereby, the understanding of its significance. The visibility and proximity of 20th century housing developments in relation to Greta Hall further emphasises the important positive impact that Greta Lodge has on its setting.

Effect of the Proposal

12. The majority of the existing windows on Greta Lodge are painted timber sash and case, with multiple panes and finely detailed slim astragals; all of which are compatible with the age and style of the building. In this regard they are a key component of the property which add to its architectural merit. The appeal scheme would result in the loss of the existing windows and allow their replacement with UPVC.

² 7/2017/2063

13. Most of the replacement UPVC windows would replicate Georgian windows with multiple panes, chamfered putty lines and astragal bars. The proposed windows would also have a wood-grain effect. It is acknowledged that in selecting this design the appellant aims to replicate the existing windows as closely as possible. However, in this instance the introduction of windows constructed from a man made material would not reflect the traditional palette of materials that define the KCA. Further, the wood grain effect would not truly replicate painted timber windows which would not have the same uniformity and would be unlikely to show the wood grain after being painted. There is also insufficient technical information to clearly demonstrate that the proposed windows would replicate the fine detailing of the existing windows which include delicate narrow astragals.
14. While not clearly visible from the public realm, as detailed above, the quality of the architecture is a defining feature of the KCA and this is not limited to buildings close to public vantage points. Although not listed, the appeal property is a well preserved example of Georgian architecture that utilises a palette of traditional local materials. As such, it makes a positive contribution to the KCA as existing. The proposal would erode the historical architectural character of the building and, in doing so, would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the KCA.
15. As noted above, the appeal property also forms part of the setting of Greta Hall the neighbouring Grade I listed building. The appeal scheme would result in the loss of the existing timber sash and case windows which are a key contributor to the historical architectural merit of the building and unifies the appeal property and Greta Hall. As detailed above the replacement of the windows with UPVC would harm the historical architectural character of Greta Lodge and as such would also fail to preserve the setting of Greta Hall and the contribution the appeal property currently makes to its significance.
16. As such, the proposal would harm the character, appearance and significance of the KCA as a whole and the setting of a Grade I listed building. Paragraph 215 of the Framework explains that where, as I find in this case, the harm to the significance of the KCA and Greta Hall through development within its setting would be less than substantial, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits. The proposed development may result in improved energy efficiency and lower maintenance and living costs, for the appellant there would also be economic benefits associated with the installation of the replacement windows. However, any specific public benefits there may be in this case, would be insufficient to outweigh the great weight I must attach to the harm I have identified to the designated heritage assets.
17. The Lake District National Park Authority Lake District Design Code, The Code 2023 states that high quality UPVC sliding sash windows are available that convincingly replicate traditional window types. However, it goes on to state that they would be considered on a case by case basis. It is acknowledged that there may be occasions where the use of UPVC in conservation areas is acceptable. In this instance, given the harmful impact of the development on the KCA and the setting of the neighbouring Grade I listed building the proposed use of UPVC windows would not be appropriate.
18. In conclusion I find that the proposed development would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the KCA and the setting of the Grade I listed Greta Hall. Therefore, it would conflict with s72(1) and s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy 07 of the Living Lakes Your Local Plan Lake District National Park Local Plan 2020-2035 which seeks to ensure that development affecting heritage assets should be sympathetic to the character, form, setting and original purpose. The scheme would also fail to respect the Framework insofar as it relates to achieving well-designed places and conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Other Matters

19. The current owners of Greta Hall have submitted representations which support the proposed development. While their support is a material consideration it is of insufficient weight to outweigh the harm to the identified heritage assets and the development plan as a whole.
20. In support of the appeal my attention has been drawn to examples where planning permission has been granted for the use of UPVC windows or other contemporary materials in the Conservation Area. The application to replace four timber windows at 87a Main Street Keswick with UPVC windows was approved prior to the adoption of the KAMP. Full details of the other planning applications referenced were not provided. Therefore, I cannot be certain that the circumstances in these instances were directly comparable to those before me.
21. I note that the appellant is aggrieved with the Council's handling of their application. However, this is a matter between the parties that does not fall within the remit of this appeal. I have therefore given it no weight in my determination.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

C Livingstone

INSPECTOR