



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 June 2026

by **J M Tweddle BSc(Hons) MSc(Dist) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th July 2026

Appeal Ref: **APP/A2335/F/25/3376416**

Lancaster Golf Club, Ashton Hall, Ashton Road, Ashton With Stodday, Lancaster, Lancashire LA2 0AJ

- The appeal is made under section 39 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended (the Act).
- The appeal is made by Mr Aaron Williams of Lancaster Golf Club Ltd against a listed building enforcement notice issued by Lancaster City Council.
- The enforcement notice, ref. 2025/57, was issued on 27 October 2025.
- The contravention of listed building control alleged in the notice is the installation of two black painted and galvanized handrails to each of the external East and West staircases (four handrails in total).
- The requirements of the notices are to:
 - 1.1 Remove the two handrails to each of the external East and West staircases (four handrails in total)
 - 1.2 Fill the holes in the stone used to fix the handrails with lime mortar (using NHL or hot mixed lime mortar) and finish the mortar smooth and level with the stone surface. The mortar shall be mixed with sharp sand aggregate so that it matches the colour of the surrounding stone.
 - 1.3 Where the handrails have been fixed into tarmacadam, the holes should be filled level with the surface with new tarmacadam.
- The period for compliance with the requirements is 52 weeks.
- The appeal is made on the grounds set out in section 39(1)(e) of the Act.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and the listed building enforcement notice is quashed. Listed building consent is granted for the retention of the installation of two black painted and galvanized handrails to each of the external East and West staircases (four handrails in total) at Lancaster Golf Club, Ashton Hall, Ashton Road, Ashton With Stodday, Lancaster, Lancashire LA2 0AJ.

Appeal on Ground (e)

2. An appeal on ground (e) is that listed building consent ought to be granted for the works. Therefore, in pursuing this ground of appeal the appellant seeks to retain the handrails as currently installed.
3. The main issue is whether the works preserve the Grade I listed building, Ashton Hall, or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses.

Background

4. Following detailed pre-application discussions, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) granted listed building consent¹ in May 2021 for the installation of iron hand rails to the external East and West staircases of the appeal property (the 2021 LBC approval). Handrails to the East and West external staircases were subsequently

¹ LPA Reference 21/00411/LB

installed during the Summer of 2022. However, this installation differs from the 2021 LBC approval, and is therefore the subject of this appeal.

Special interest and significance

5. Ashton Hall is a 14th century tower house that was substantially rebuilt and extended in 1856 to create an expansive Gothic style mansion. It is considered to be the best example of a medieval tower house in the country and, with Grade I listed status, it is therefore a building of exceptional interest.
6. The building's significance is principally derived from its survival as an almost complete medieval tower with a distinctive plan-form. The later Victorian extension makes the whole into a picturesque castle with an abundance of turrets, towers and battlements. The external stone staircases to the East and West elevations form part of the Victorian Gothic extension and include decorative stone balustrading that emphasise the architectural style of this period, and form key focal points on the approach to the building. As such, these grand formal staircases are integral components of the building's overall character and historic interest.

The works and their effects

7. Section 16(2) of the Act requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works affecting a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses. I have therefore considered the appeal in light of this weighty statutory duty.
8. The works to the East staircase comprise the installation of a pair of handrails formed from slender tubular metal sections supported by simple tubular uprights. The handrails are set back from the historic stone balustrading and are finished in black with modest gold-coloured terminal finials. The handrails broadly follow the profile and geometry of the staircase, stepping down with the flight of steps and sweeping around the splayed sections of the stone balustrading before terminating adjacent to the front face of the stone newels.
9. An almost identical installation has been carried out to the West Staircase. Whilst the design, detailing and materials are consistent with those employed on the East staircase, the more regular profile of the western flight has removed the need for stepped sections, resulting in a simpler and more linear arrangement.
10. The handrails have been designed as lightweight and visually recessive additions. Their slender profile, simple detailing and dark finish ensure that they remain visually subordinate to the historic stonework. Furthermore, the handrails follow the line and curvature of the staircases, respecting the symmetry and formality of the entrance composition. As a result, they do not interrupt an appreciation of the Gothic Revival stone balustrading and so do not appear as overly dominant features.
11. The supporting vertical uprights have been leaded into the middle of the stair treads, thereby avoiding alterations to the decorative stone balustrading. Whilst this has necessitated holes being drilled into the fabric of the building, the limited number and scale of the fixings have resulted in a negligible loss of historic fabric. Moreover, the installation appears to have been undertaken to a high standard, with no evident cracking, spalling or other damage to the surrounding stonework.

12. The LPA's concerns relate principally to the use of galvanised steel rather than wrought iron, which it considers to have been required as part of the 2021 LBC approval. However, neither the approved drawings nor the conditions attached to that consent specify a requirement for the handrails to be manufactured from wrought iron. Whilst the description of approved works refers to the installation of "iron handrails", no distinction was made between wrought iron and other iron-based materials – steel is essentially a form of iron. In the absence of any such requirement, the use of galvanised steel is not inconsistent with the terms of that earlier consent.
13. In any event, the handrails are a discreet intervention, introduced to meet modern safety standards. Their slender profile, simple detailing and visually lightweight appearance ensure that they remain visually subservient to the host building and do not obscure, detract from or diminish the architectural composition of either staircase. While wrought iron may have represented a more historically authentic material choice, in this case, the use of galvanised steel does not result in any harm to the character, appearance or significance of the listed building. The handrails are experienced as a sympathetic and proportionate addition which respects the special interest of the asset whilst addressing modern functional requirements.
14. Therefore, the works do not harm the special interest and significance of the listed building.

Conclusion

15. Bringing all these points together, I find that the works preserve the Grade I listed building, Ashton Hall, and its features of special architectural and historic interest. Therefore, the works satisfy the statutory duty set out in section 16(2) of the Act.
16. The works would also comply with the relevant policies of the development plan, which is a material consideration in this instance. Specifically, there is compliance with Policy SP7 of A Local Plan for Lancaster District 2020-2031, Part One: Strategic Policies and Land Allocations Development Plan Document (climate emergency review) and Policies DM29 and DM37 of A Local Plan for Lancaster District 2020-2031, Part Two: Development Management Development Plan Document. Together, amongst other things, these policies seek to achieve good design, secure the conservation and enhancement of listed buildings, and to maintain Lancaster District's unique heritage.
17. Consequently, the works would also accord with the National Planning Policy Framework's aim to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Overall Conclusion

18. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal on ground (e) succeeds. Therefore, I shall quash the listed building enforcement notice and grant listed building consent for the works as described in the notice.

J M Tweddle

INSPECTOR