
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 9 June 2015

by Roger Catchpole Dip Hort BSc (Hons) PhD MCIEEM

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 13 July 2015

Appeal A: APP/P2935/W/15/3003432

5 Wansbeck Place, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1RF

- 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 Dr Kevin Yates against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 14/02986/FUL, dated 5 September 2014, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2014.
 - The development proposed is the installation of 4 no. roof lights to rear of building.
-

Appeal B: APP/P2935/Y/15/3003434

5 Wansbeck Place, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1RF

- 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 Dr Kevin Yates against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 14/02987/LBC, dated 5 September 2014, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2014.
 - The works proposed are the installation of 4 no. roof lights to rear of building.
-

Decision

Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. As the proposal is in a conservation area and involves a listed building I have had special regard to sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).
4. The works have already taken place and I had the benefit of seeing them in place.
5. The description of development refers to four roof lights and the appellant has indicated that a planning permission and listed building consent have already been granted for two of these lights. Although the planning history, included in the case officer's report, indicates that the installation of roof lights has been previously approved (Ref 14/01477/FUL and 14/01478/LBC) I do not have the

full facts before me to be able to substantiate which of the existing lights has been approved and whether or not they conform to any approved plans. Consequently, this appeal has been determined on the basis that it includes all four roof lights.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether or not the roof lights have preserved the Grade II listed building and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses and the extent to which they have preserved or enhanced the character or appearance of the Morpeth Conservation Area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site is in a residential area and comprises a three storey mid-terrace property. It is on the edge of the market town of Morpeth. Four roof lights have been inserted on the rear slope of the main roof of this property. These comprise two small lights situated either side of two larger lights that abut each other. The terrace, in which the host dwelling is situated, is a Grade II listed building within the Morpeth Conservation Area (MCA) which covers a small area situated towards the north-western extent of the modern settlement of Morpeth.
8. A variety of materials and architectural styles characterise the MCA with fine ashlar-faced buildings sitting amongst more vernacular buildings. Most of the historic buildings date from either the 18th or early 19th centuries. Terraced properties of varying height are the predominant architectural form. Considering the MCA as a whole, I find that the juxtaposition of polite architectural features with more vernacular buildings and the general absence of dormers and roof lights in the roofscape make a significant contribution to its special character.
9. The host property is part of a three storey terrace that was designated as a Grade II listed building in 1986. It dates from the late 18th century and is one of four adjacent dwellings that have been included in the listing. Overall, the terrace is characterised by its closely set, tooled sandstone façade and wooden sash windows of varying design. These are framed by simple ashlar lintels and cills. The south-western end of the terrace is formed from a larger dwelling giving rise to a higher ridge line and greater depth in comparison with the rest of the terrace. The pantile roof along the majority of the lower section retains its original appearance despite the replacement of some of the original pantiles. As such, it is part of the special historical interest of the listed building.
10. I observed from my site visit that the rear elevation of the lower section of the terrace has been extensively modified by a range of two storey extensions that differ widely in their design and materials. A number roof lights and dormer windows are present that are of no consistent design. Whilst these extensions have led to a significant loss of original features along this part of the terrace, the upper reaches of the pantile roof have remained more or less intact prior to the installation of the roof lights in the appeal property.
11. As the appellant notes, the whole of the terrace would have originally had a pantile roof. As such this is an important historical feature that predates the slate that has been used on the other parts of the terrace. Consequently, I find the replacement of this feature by four roof lights has been detrimental to the

listed building because of the way in which their combined extent dominates this part of the roof and has led to a loss of original building fabric. This has further eroded the architectural and historic interest of the building in my judgement. However, I do not find the roof lights to be detrimental to the MCA because the rear elevation is not visible from the public domain.

12. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of the asset. Given that the building would remain otherwise intact, I find the harm to be less than substantial in this instance.
13. Under such circumstances, paragraph 134 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, which includes the securing of optimal viable use. Whilst I acknowledge that the roof lights would allow the loft to be converted, the continued viable use of the property as a residential dwelling is not dependent on this feature as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in their absence. Bearing this in mind, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I find that the proposal has no defined public benefit.
14. The appellant is of the opinion that the roof lights are acceptable because the rear of the terrace does not contribute to local character and because they are in-keeping with the original character of the house. However, listed buildings should be safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether or not public views of the building can be gained. Moreover, I have no substantiated evidence before me to suggest that roof lights were an original feature. I also find this to be inconsistent with own observations of the MCA which indicates a low frequency of such features. Consequently, I am not satisfied that they are 'in-keeping' with the original character of the house and neither do I find the presence of other roof lights sufficient justification for the further harm that has been caused to the building.
15. Given the above, I conclude that the proposal has failed to preserve the Grade II listed building, as required by the Act, and that this would also be contrary to paragraph 134 of the Framework and saved policy H14 of the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan 1991-2006 (2003) that seeks, among other things, to ensure that alterations to dwellings do not have an adverse impact on their appearance.

Other Matters

16. The appellant has drawn my attention to the need for the roof lights to serve a previously successful planning application. However, I do not have the full facts before me and each case must be judged on its individual merits. Consequently, I am only able to give this matter limited weight in the balance of this appeal.
17. The appellant is of the opinion that the roof lights have been professionally installed and are of a 'conservation' design. Be that as it may, this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified to the heritage asset.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised I conclude that the appeals should be dismissed.

Roger Catchpole

INSPECTOR

If you require an alternative accessible version of this document (for instance in audio, Braille or large print) please contact our Customer Services Department:

Telephone: 0370 333 0607

Fax: 01793 414926

Textphone: 0800 015 0516

E-mail: customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk