

Appeal Decision Notice

T: 01324 696 400
F: 01324 696 444
E: dpea@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Decision by R F Loughridge, a Reporter appointed by the Scottish Ministers

- Listed building consent appeal reference: LBA-270-2002
- Site address: Sydney House, 12 High Street, Cromarty IV11 8UZ
- Appeal by Mr and Mrs Matheson against the decision by The Highland Council
- Application for listed building consent 13/02527/LBC dated 3 July 2013 refused by notice dated 12 August 2013
- The works proposed: erection of a heated conservatory extension to the rear elevation
- Date of site visit by Reporter: 29 November 2013

Date of appeal decision: 11 December 2013

Decision

I dismiss the appeal and refuse listed building consent.

Reasoning

1. The determining issues in this appeal are confined to the acceptability or otherwise of the scale, design and materials proposed for the conservatory extension and the changes proposed in the building itself; and the consequent impact the proposal would have on the integrity of the listed building in question and its wider context. I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting, and any features of special architectural or historic interest which the building possesses. I am also required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area within which the building is situated.

2. The entry in the statutory list relating to 12 High Street describes it as a two-storey three-bay property with a shop entrance and flanking windows in the right bay. It also records that it is composed of coursed rubble with ashlar dressings, that its windows are 12 pane sashes and that its roof is of slate. The property is dated from 1819. The short terrace of which the building forms part fronts directly on to the High Street. The plot is of generous proportions and largely enclosed. The building already has had the benefit of a modern rear extension.

3. The conservation area within which the appeal site lies is characterised by its complex pattern of narrow streets and its mixture of grander properties and public (or formerly public) buildings set back from the roadway with humbler dwellings built to back of pavement. In the vicinity of the appeal site, the whole has a pleasing harmony of materials and style typical of the late Georgian or early Victorian period.

4. The proposal is for the erection of a conservatory extension to the rear or south elevation of the existing property. The conservatory would measure 5 by 4.1 metres (an internal floor area of 16.3 square metres), with a symmetrical dual-pitched roof. Predominantly glazed, formed of uPVC double glazed windows, each with a top opening light, on the south and west elevations, the conservatory would have French windows on the west elevation to afford access between the rear garden area and the interior. Where not glazed or of uPVC, the conservatory would be finished in roughcast. The east elevation (located close to the plot boundary) would be entirely roughcast below the roof. The south elevation would exhibit a stepped arrangement, the three eastmost of the six lights each being of different sizes, and the area of roughcast increasing in height from 0.75m to 1.2m to 1.7m to 2.2m west to east. Positioned against the gable end of a rear wing currently finished in roughcast, the existing ground floor window (a six over six sash and case) would be lost, being replaced by a door giving access to the conservatory from the present kitchen.

5. I accept that the rear of the property is not visible from the street, but I do not understand that fact to diminish the importance of maintaining the integrity of a listed building and preserving the character of the conservation area within which it lies. I appreciate that the extension as proposed would appear clearly as an addition to the older property but that by itself is not sufficient to outweigh the disadvantages I recognise in the proposal.

6. In my assessment, the rear elevation still retains much of interest and many of the features contributing to the building's qualifying for listing. The rear is clearly a subordinate elevation, but I do not consider it to be without merit, notwithstanding the modern extension. That extension presents clearly as an addition, and while it manifests a modernity somewhat unsympathetic to the original, its materials have been chosen with some care. Crucially, the scale of the original building remains apparent. In my view, a further extension, especially in the location and of the scale proposed, would overwhelm the original unacceptably, despite the apparent transience inherent in any conservatory.

7. In this connection, I note that advice from Historic Scotland on managing change in listed buildings emphasises the importance not only of protecting the character and appearance of the original building but also of securing that any extension should be subordinate in scale and form to the original. In my assessment it is important in this regard to consider not only the extension now proposed on its own terms, but also the cumulative impact it would have in conjunction with the already built extension. I consider the cumulative impact to be of altogether unacceptable proportions.

8. I do not accept the appellants' suggestion that the importance of the rear elevation is diminished because the remaining visible original windows are of different sizes; or that the

lack of “uniformity” is in any way a negative consideration. Differing window sizes are characteristic of the period in which the building was constructed, and the existing visible arrangement of window and their sizes contribute much to the building’s character and appearance. For such reasons I attach considerable importance to the loss of the remaining window at ground floor level. Removal of that window opening, in the way proposed, would certainly not contribute to preserving the building and its features.

9. The use of uPVC is widely recognised as unacceptable in listed buildings. It would appear uncompromisingly alien in this context. I agree with the Council’s critique that the proposal in this respect does nothing to replicate the materials used in the original building and fundamentally fails to respect the building’s architecture, historic character and visual appearance. As such the proposal conflicts with guidance from Historic Scotland on managing change in listed buildings. Such guidance attaches particular importance to securing high quality design and appropriate materials for any extension. The choice of uPVC in this instance conflicts with advice from Historic Scotland.

10. Moreover, apart from the materials proposed, the design in this instance is unsympathetic to the original and uncompromisingly modern. The treatment of the proposed east elevation and the stepped arrangement proposed to the south elevation is a somewhat crude solution to the proximity of the boundary which does nothing to reflect the scale and elegant proportions of the original building.

11. I have considered all the other matters raised in the submissions before me but find nothing which leads me to a different conclusion. The scale design and materials proposed, together with the loss of the window opening at ground floor level, would do much to dilute the remaining interest in the rear elevation of the building. Moreover, the proposal in these respects would contribute nothing towards preserving the building’s character and the features which it possesses. Accordingly I refuse listed building consent and dismiss the appeal.

R.F Loughridge
Reporter