



Adroddiad

Ymweliad â safle a wnaed ar 12/05/03

Report

Site visit made on 12/05/03

gan/by Clive I Cochrane DipArch MSc RegArch MRTPI

**Arolygydd penodwyd gan Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol Cymru**

**an Inspector appointed by the National
Assembly for Wales**

Dyddiad/Date **07-11-2003**

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990
SECTION 20

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
SECTION 78

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

APPEALS BY GRYPHON CORPORATION

Appeal building: Central Wing, Trawsgoed Mansion, Crosswood, Aberystwyth

Cyf ffeil/File refs: APP/D6820/E/03/1112977 & APP/D6820/A/03/1112964

Site address: Central Wing, Trawsgoed, Aberystwyth

Appeal A - Ref: APP/D6820/E/03/1112977

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- The appeal is made by Gryphon Corporation against the failure of Ceredigion County Council to determine an application for listed building consent within the prescribed period.
- The application (Ref: A021385LB), dated 26/11/02 is for works comprising a new external entrance door and new internal party wall.

Summary of Recommendation: That the appeal be allowed and listed building consent granted

Appeal B - Ref: APP/D6820/A/03/1112964

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- The appeal is made by Gryphon Corporation against the failure of Ceredigion County Council to determine an application for planning permission within the prescribed period.
- The application (Ref: A021384) is dated 26/11/02.
- The development proposed is a new external entrance door.

Summary of Recommendation: That the appeal be allowed and planning permission be granted

Procedural Matters

1. At the accompanied site visit arranged for 12/05/03, I was met by Mr R Renwick representing the appellants, but the Council's representative failed to attend. As the appellants had arranged for the building to be opened up, I carried out an unaccompanied inspection of the ground floor interior and exterior of the central section of the building.
2. Following the site inspection, the Council sent in written objections regarding the conduct of the site visit and the late submission of a statement by the appellants. The Inspectorate gave the Council time to respond to the appellants' statement within a reasonable period, but nothing further has been received from the Council since the completed questionnaire and documents. The time given to the local planning authority to deliberate on the matter has seriously delayed the production of this report.
3. As the proposal involves a material alteration to this Grade II* listed building, section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The Site and Surroundings

4. Trawsgoed is a large historic mansion within a landscaped parkland setting. The house has developed since the 17th century as the seat of the Vaughan family, later to become the Earls of Lisburne. The site is more ancient however, as it was a grange of Strata Florida Abbey. The main block to the south is later 17th century, and was remodelled before 1756 by reversing the main entrance front. There were lavish improvements in mid-19th century to the principal rooms, notably the library. The house was greatly extended to the north in 1891, including extensive service accommodation. In 1946 it was leased to the government in lieu of death duties and was occupied by the Welsh Agricultural Advisory Service until recently.
 5. The Central wing is a forward-projecting link between the main run of the Victorian wing to the right of the main elevation and the original Georgian wing to the left, which has a
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symmetrical composition and a central pediment and projecting portico of its own. Like the Victorian wing, the Central wing is part of the 1891 version of the French Gothic style, with a steep hipped gable roof and chateau style dormer windows. It has a further projecting Bathstone bay window at ground floor level. The 2-storey plus attic elevations comprise tall windows with Bathstone surrounds, banding and some pediments, set in a stucco façade with incised mock ashlar coursing.

6. The location of the proposed new external doorway is on an otherwise blank stucco area on the left-hand return wall of the Central wing projection, above a short flight of steps to the projecting external platform of the “piano nobile”. The proposed new internal party wall would separate two parts of a ground floor hall at a stepped change of level, on the line of the division between the Central and Georgian wings.

Planning Policy

7. The Council draws attention to Policy EN1 of the Dyfed Structure Plan (Including Alterations No 1) November 1990, which states that it is the policy of the County Council “that there shall be a presumption against development which would reduce the amenity or historic value of listed buildings of Grades I, II*, and II or Scheduled Ancient Monuments”.
8. This policy is mirrored in Ceredigion Local Plan Policy ENV18 on listed buildings. Local Plan Policy ENV06 aims to protect the character, appearance and setting of landscapes, parks or gardens included in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens. General planning requirements are set out in Local Plan Policy P01. These are reiterated in similar form in Policies GEN4.1, ENVB1.7, ENVB1.11 and ENVB1.12 of the Deposit Version of the Ceredigion Unitary Development Plan.

Planning History

9. In 1996 a number of applications were submitted for development of Trawsgoed. These comprised the conversion of the Victorian wing to 6 self-contained residential units, the demolition of the office buildings and the erection of 8 new dwellings in the grounds, the conversion of outbuildings to 2 self-contained residential units, and the construction of new office/workshops.
10. Planning permission and listed building consent was granted for the erection of only 5 dwellings at the rear of the mansion in May 1997, and in March 1999 consent was granted for the conversion of the outbuildings to form 2 dwellings.
11. A 1997 listed building consent application for the demolition of the Victorian wing was refused in 1998. In September 1999 planning permission and listed building consent were sought for the conversion of the Victorian wing to 5 apartments, and this was approved in July 2000 and that work is now complete. An application for listed building consent for the alteration of a window to a door on the front elevation of the Victorian wing was allowed on appeal in June 2002.
12. Consent was sought for the conversion of the Georgian wing into 2 separate dwellings in 2000. Following amendments, this was approved in 2001 with an entrance door to the dwelling from the front of the Central Wing, via an existing doorway.

The Proposals

13. These applications seek planning permission and listed building consent for the installation of a new doorway into the flank wall of the Central wing projection and the insertion of an

internal party wall where the existing pilaster flanked steps are situated in the hall between the Georgian and Central wings. The proposal is an amendment to the earlier listed building consent and planning permission of December 2001 for the conversion of part of the Georgian wing of Trawsgoed into a separate dwelling.

The Case for the Appellants

14. The restoration and refurbishment of Trawsgoed is well underway. The poor quality post-war office/laboratory block has been removed from alongside the mansion and internal partitioning, industrial type light fittings, electrical ducting, signs and modern door treatments have been rectified. The restoration and conversion into 5 apartments of the Victorian wing is now complete, and includes the alteration of a window to form a new doorway, granted consent on appeal. The Georgian wing will be restored and refurbished to provide 2 or 3 apartments, and the lavish library room would be retained intact and let for weddings and other functions.
15. Notwithstanding the approved plans for the conversion, the owners now wish to construct a ground floor party wall between the Georgian and Central wings, which would reflect the natural and historical division between these two phases of the mansion. The approved 2001 conversion scheme for the Central wing would have used the existing doorway into the Georgian wing as its new entrance. This would deprive the Georgian wing unit of a secondary entry/exit door and require the erection of a new partition wall to form an entrance lobby into the Central wing, thus taking space from the dining room in the Georgian wing. In the appeal proposals, the new door would mirror the existing doorway into the Georgian wing in appearance. There would be no lobby created in the Central wing living room, which would remain as it is with a curtained-off new doorway.
16. The entrance, as approved, would create a “flying freehold” with the basement accommodation below the new lobby. This would be an unnecessary arrangement that would restrict available floorspace, and extend the Central wing unit into the Georgian wing, adding a corridor to the pilaster flanked steps that would be functionally and aesthetically unsatisfactory. The pilasters are considered to be part of the unfortunate Victorian remodelling of the older building, but submitted sketches indicate that the proposed decorative treatment for the new party wall could incorporate mirrored glass and decorative pilasters to frame the retained steps, if this is considered desirable.
17. With regard to the criteria for listed building consent applications set out in paragraph 70 of Welsh Office Circular 61/96 on historic buildings, the list description indicates that it is the interior of the building that is of the greater interest. The proposed alterations would not affect the character of the mansion as a whole or the Victorian wing in particular, and the provision of a doorway and steps would complement a similar arrangement elsewhere in the wing without causing harm to the setting of the building. In terms of overall benefit, the proposals are essential to the viability of the conversion scheme and aid the funding of the remainder of the works to Trawsgoed mansion. The success of the new residential use for the future well being of the building and the creation of modern living spaces would be assisted by the small alteration of a door and the addition of a short section of interior party wall.
18. The present proposal would meet the objectives of the relevant policies set out in the Structure Plan and Local Plan. The proposed section of party wall would make better and more attractive use of the floor space with an appropriate degree of privacy, and the doorway and steps on the side of the Central wing are sensitively designed so as not to harm the appearance, character or setting of the listed building.

The Case for the local planning authority

19. Had the appeal not been made, these applications would have been refused consent by the Council on grounds that the proposed alterations would adversely affect the character and appearance of the Grade II* listed building. In particular the insertion of a ground floor party wall on the line of the pilaster-flanked steps would detract from the integrity of this important feature linking the Georgian and Central wings. A new section of party wall closing off one wing from the other would neuter this important and attractive space, relegating it to an insignificant and incongruous alcove.
20. Whilst the creation of a new doorway in place of an existing window on the front elevation of the Victorian wing was allowed on appeal, the current proposal is significantly different in that a completely new opening would be introduced, rather than a revised form of opening, and the new party wall would cause the loss of the pilasters and steps.
21. The issue of the creation of a “flying freehold” situation was noted by the local planning authority, but it is not considered to be insurmountable in legal terms, and it does not outweigh the harm that would be caused by these alternative proposals.

Written Representations by Cadw

22. Cadw objects to the proposals on grounds that the Georgian wing is the ‘jewel in the crown’ of Trawsgoed, and its successful conversion to residential use will be affected crucially by the redevelopment of the Central wing. The conservation and repair of the fabric of the Georgian wing following extensive decay is a matter of considerable concern to Cadw.
23. The proposed division of the building along the line of the pilaster-flanked steps is considered to be arbitrary and without reference to any consideration of the future re-use of the Georgian wing. The introduction of a section of party wall in the hall is considered incongruous and detrimental to the special character of the house and the significance of its historical development. It is considered possible to achieve access via part of the Georgian wing, as approved.
24. The proposed new doorway into the corner of the living/dining room of the Central wing is acceptable in design terms as matching the character of the original openings, but it would not be necessary if the appellants followed the approved conversion scheme. The creation of this opening would have more impact on the interior, because the room is symmetrical in form, which would be disturbed by the proposed opening. The proportions, character and details of the room could be placed at risk. There would be pressure for the addition of a lobby, due to the innate inconvenience of the proposed layout.
25. The earlier approval of a new doorway into the Victorian wing does not set a precedent in this case, because that door was essential for the layout, and it did not affect the internal layout of the Georgian elements of the original building, as it would in this case.
26. In summary it is considered that the approved scheme would be less harmful or prejudicial to special character of the Grade II* listed mansion than the current revised proposals.

Appraisal

27. As reported in the previous appeal (Refs: D6820/A/01/1072774 & E/01/1072776), the Victorian frontage of the mansion is not one of the main architectural assets of the listed building, which is primarily listed for its Georgian origins and the fine interior. Nevertheless,

it is important to assess whether the proposed amended entrance and internal alterations would preserve the intrinsic qualities of the building as a whole.

28. Although it was clearly remodelled during the 1891 enlargement of the original house, the Central wing already existed as an integral part of the building. Its external appearance and style was remodelled to match the additional Victorian wing, but as Cadw point out, this wing is a combination of styles internally and it forms part of the extensive range of principal rooms.
29. The central corridor with its steps and staircase was a continuous link between the original and 19th century enlargements, but it will be interrupted by the approved residential conversion scheme and only a section of it would be preserved. Whilst it is vital to find a viable future use for the whole building, the approved conversion into new residential units needs to be carried out with minimal disruption to the historic fabric and architectural style of the building.
30. The approved scheme would introduce a new entrance corridor through part of the Georgian wing from the existing doorway on the front façade. This corridor would meet the link corridor between the wings. The appellants object to this arrangement on grounds of legal inconvenience and simplicity of layout, rather than because of any harmful impact on the character or appearance of the interior of the wing. As I saw on site, the addition of the approved corridor link would clearly disrupt the layout of the rooms in the Georgian wing and affect the architectural composition of that room. On the other hand it would utilise an existing doorway without disrupting the main façade.
31. The appeal proposals require the breaking through of a new door opening on the existing blank flank wall of the projecting front of the Central wing. The submitted drawings indicate in detail that the new doorway would be carefully and sensitively designed with bathstone surrounds and hardwood door to fit into the architectural style of the wing, and it would not look out of place in the context of the front façade of the mansion or with the internal decoration of the room. I do not doubt that externally and internally, the doorway could be created in a manner that would be in keeping with the building.
32. Cadw express concern that the new entrance through the side wall of the projecting bay would inevitably lead to future demands for an internal lobby within the living room of the Central wing, which would disturb the balance and character of the existing room. However, this is not part of the proposed alterations and such a radical departure from the scheme would require further approval from the local planning authority and Cadw. Consequently, the authorities would have control over, and the powers to refuse, any further alterations to the proposed entrance, which would fail to preserve or actually harm the special architectural interest of the interior of the listed building.
33. The revised entrance would provide significant benefits for the overall conversion and re-use of the listed building. It would allow the residential unit in the Georgian wing to retain its own secondary access door and a more useable floorspace on the ground floor, and the division between units would occur in a logical position along the line of the party wall. This would also give greater clarity to the layout of the new residential units. I take the view that it is important to assist the conversion scheme so as to secure the future use and well being of the historic building.
34. The design indicates that this minor amendment to the access and layout of the unit would be carried out in a sympathetic manner. The new entrance would blend happily with the Victorian elevation and the interior of the living room would retain its style and character.

35. I do not agree with Cadw's comment that the proposed division is arbitrary and without consideration for the future use of the Georgian wing, because it would follow the vertical division between phases and styles of different parts of the building. It would also provide more privacy for the occupants of the separate units at ground floor, and in my view, the simple solution of dividing the staircase passage between the units at the change in level would be neater and less obtrusive than the approved partitioned corridor through the Georgian wing.
36. The decorative double pilasters and plaster panel beam could be retained as part of the lobby around the staircase, with the new partition wall built at the top level of the 3-step flight. However, the precise position of the new wall in relationship to the pilasters and steps and the design of the surfaces of the wall need further detailed consideration. I note that the appellants have submitted sketches of alternative treatments of the party wall, and I consider that this could be resolved satisfactorily through a condition requiring further approval.

Conditions

37. The Council has not suggested any conditions in the event of listed building consent and planning permission being granted, although there are a number of relevant conditions attached to earlier consents for conversion of the building that will still apply. I consider that the following conditions should apply to both applications: -
- 1) The development/works hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development/works hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers 2590(99)111/B and 2590(99)113.
 - 3) No development/works shall take place until details of the location and treatment of the new party wall hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development/works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 4) Upon completion of the works hereby approved, any damage caused to the building by the works shall be made good.

Recommendations

38. Subject to the imposition of the conditions set out above, I recommend that these appeals be allowed and planning permission and listed building consent be granted for a new external entrance door and new internal party wall.

C. I. Coomane

INSPECTOR