

20 Mansionhouse Road

I write on behalf of the Grange Association. We are the amenity association which represents the Grange Conservation Area in south Edinburgh. This is an area of predominantly Victorian Villas with large trees and spacious gardens. There is considerable pressure on the garden space because of the need for car parking and this was highlighted in the recently re-written Character Appraisal. We are therefore keen to preserve soft landscaping and green space whenever possible. 20 Mansionhouse Road is a large prominent plot at the junction of Mansionhouse Road and Grange Road.

Since the current owner bought 20 Mansionhouse Road, there have been a series of planning applications which have threatened this soft landscaping and open green space. We suggest that these are material to the present appeal.

In 2013 an application was made for two extensions to this house (13/04161/VARY). We considered, inter alia, that the extensions covered too large a proportion of the plot but the plans were approved and the extensions built.

The City of Edinburgh's Householders' Guidance recommends that the combination of building and hard landscaping should not cover more than 40% of a plot. This is the recommendation throughout Edinburgh and one might expect a tighter restriction in a prominent site within a conservation area. But application 14/02371/FUL was made for hard landscaping at 20 Mansionhouse Road that would have covered 55% of the plot. This was considered at the City of Edinburgh Development Management Sub-committee on 27 August 2014 and continued to the next meeting because there was concern that too large a proportion of the plot would become hard landscaping. The developer reduced this proportion from 55 to 49% and this compromise was accepted by the committee, to the disappointment of the Grange Association. This work was completed and now virtually the whole of the frontage of the house onto Mansionhouse Road is paving and car parking, to the detriment of the conservation area.

In the process of landscaping the area, a tree marked for retention was removed and the vehicular entrance was enlarged by 180mm. These breaches of planning were considered not sufficiently significant to justify enforcement action (14/00629/ENCOMP).

The only remaining area of soft landscape garden was the lawn and flowerbeds to the south of the house. The majority of this remaining garden was then covered in drainage gravel and a thin layer of whin dust and artificial grass was laid. In addition an unauthorised area of decking was constructed with a sunken trampoline in the middle and a Wendy house was moved up against the boundary wall with Grange Road. These further breaches of planning regulations were reported to Enforcement (14/00709/ENCOMP). The owner refused access to the Enforcement team but after a delay a court order was obtained and an enforcement notice served on the owners to remove the artificial grass and return the area to soft landscaping.

The owner appealed to the Scottish Government against the enforcement notice but meanwhile put in two applications in retrospect for the unauthorised work (15/02190/FUL & 15/02191/FUL). In the application forms he gave no reason for carrying out the work before permission had been secured. The Grange Association and 14 local residents wrote objections to these plans. The application for the decking and trampoline was granted but the application for artificial grass and the Wendy house was refused. The Reported for the Scottish Government upheld the enforcement order on the basis that there had been a breach of planning regulations because the owner had not conformed with the notice served on him.

Now, the owner, having lost his appeal against the enforcement order, has made a further appeal to the Scottish Ministers against the refusal of planning permission in retrospect.

The Grange Association feels strongly that in this prominent corner plot, green space and soft landscaping is essential to maintain the character of this conservation area and its biodiversity. We agree wholeheartedly with the Council's refusal and can see no justification for overturning it.

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