

61 Fountainhall Road EH9 2LH

Planning Application 21/00920/FUL

OBJECTION from Grange Association

1 April 2021

This application involves internal alterations to a B-listed villa, with the installation of double glazing and a new door. It includes the repurposing of the present garage and car port to form habitable accommodation comprising a gym and a cinema (“AV / recreation room”), the work for which is understated in the application as “reclad garage”.

We offer no objection to the structural work proposed to the listed villa, other than to challenge the siting of the flue from a wood-burning stove. Our principal objection is that the anachronistic buildings that have served as a garage and car port are well forward of the building line and are manifestly unsuited for modern habitable accommodation. Any new habitable accommodation should be behind the building line. Our secondary objection relates to the effect of the proposals on parking in Fountainhall Road.

1. New habitable accommodation proposed to be forward of the building line

The property at 61 Fountainhall Road is a wing of a fine B-listed villa, whose frontage is disfigured by a grossly unsympathetic and unattractive garage and infilled car port.



Figure 1: 61 – 65 Fountainhall Road EH9 2LH – B listed villas (Google streetview Apr-2009)



Figure 2: 59 and 61 Fountainhall Road EH9 2LH – 61's garage and car port forward of building line



*Figure 3: 61 Fountainhall Road EH9 2LH – Garage and car port forward of building line
(Google streetview Jun-2008)*

The rear garage appears to be a substantial building and the applicant's Design Statement shows it to have a timber lining.

The front (car port) section, however, appears to be a ramshackle affair, apparently created in stages with a timber-framed roof supported on iron columns with subsequent infilling of the sides with timber to the east and front, on top of the site boundary walls, and with red brickwork infill to the west. There can be no question of the present structure being suitable for habitable accommodation.



Figure 3:- Street-facing portion of garage (car port) (Applicant's Design Statement)

The proposal is not for some minor refitting of existing rooms. The application includes “new blockwork wall with timber studs, insulation and plaster board to internal face”, and “raise and insulate floor”. Essentially, this will be a new build with major building work required with damp-proof membranes, insulation to modern standards, ventilation and utilities, including underfloor heating.

The work proposed will conceal and possibly damage irreversibly the listed boundary wall to the east, by building a new blockwork wall against it.

We therefore assert that this application should be treated as a new build proposal, within the curtilage of a listed building, and the presence of the current garage and car port should be disregarded in assessing the acceptability of the proposals.

New development should always be set back from the original building line of the main house to avoid interfering with oblique views of the listed building and disrupting formal approaches. Development to the front of a listed building which breaks its relationship to the street is not acceptable. This is particularly destructive of character, not only to the building, but to the area, especially where the building is part of a unified group.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (Feb-2019) (page 22)

The Council's Householder Guidance specifies (page 11):

Extensions that project beyond the principal elevation line are not generally allowed unless this fits in with the local character of the street.

and (page 15):

buildings in front gardens will not usually be acceptable, because of the damaging impact on the appearance and amenity of the street and the surrounding area;

The Householder Guidance also makes specific reference to villas (page 10) and those special guidelines include:

Distances from the main facades to the boundaries being at least 12.5m

Those special guidelines apply specifically to extensions and alterations to villas. We consider that the current proposal should be regarded as a 'detached extension' and that these guidelines should apply.

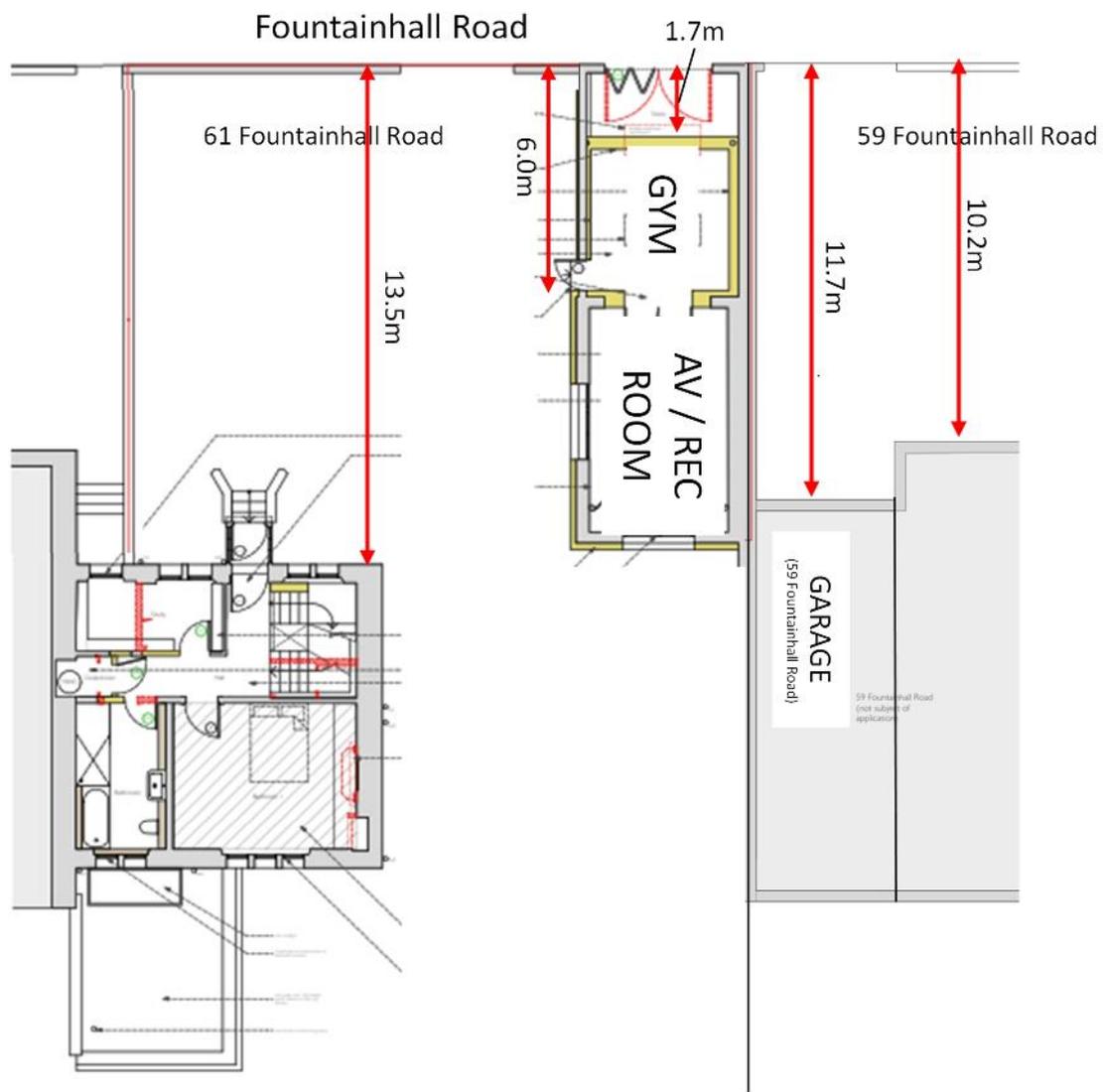


Figure 4: Proposed site layout

The proposed new habitable rooms would be forward of the building line and would come within 1.7m of the street boundary.

We consider that the land forward of the building line in a conservation area should be occupied, in descending order of acceptability and preference, by:

- Soft landscaping;
- Open hard standing with porous surface for off-street parking;
- Renovation of (where already authorised and in place) open-sided car port, preserving glimpse views through the sides;
- Renovation of (where already authorised and in place) enclosed garage for vehicle storage (not for habitation).

We do not consider habitable accommodation forward of the building line to be acceptable in any circumstances in the conservation area.

We request that this application for habitable accommodation forward of the building line is refused and the applicant is encouraged, in descending order of preference, to:

- Demolish the car port and garage and return the land to soft landscaping; or
- Demolish the car port and renovate the hard-standing and entrance gates such that at least one vehicle can be stored regularly off-street.

2. Effect on parking in Fountainhall Road

The present arrangement does not appear to be used for the regular off-street parking of vehicles. As a result, cars will be parked habitually on Fountainhall Road, including overnight, degrading the visual amenity of the street. If any structures are to remain forward of the building line, these should be used for the storage of vehicles to avoid any need for on-street parking.



Figure 5: Fountainhall Road – On-street parking in Residents' Priority Parking Zone B1

The street outside 61 Fountainhall Road currently has a protracted length of dropped kerb, encompassing the vehicle entrances to 59 and 61 and the pedestrian entrance to 61. This has an advisory white line painted to indicate that parking would obstruct the entrances. Parking is not prohibited, however, and so the owner can park vehicles across his entrances, effectively providing exclusive use of this stretch of road.

If the present applicant does not wish to use the off-street parking that is currently available within 61 Fountainhall Road, but wishes to forgo that use of the land for other purposes, then the length of street outside the property can no longer be reserved for exclusive use by the property owners and should be restored to open public use, with the restoration of the kerb to full height and the erasure of the advisory white line. This should be a condition of any grant of planning permission that removes off-street parking.

Our preference, assuming that restoration of soft landscaping is not an option, is that the applicant should use the area of the car port and garage for vehicle parking and, ideally, demolish the car port to leave open hard standing to improve the appearance of the property.

Noting our order of preference in (1) above, we request that, unless the proposal is amended to create additional soft landscaping, the proposal to remove off-street parking should be refused.

3. Flue from wood-burning stove too close to neighbour

The plan drawings submitted with the application show a “new stove in garden room” and “new flue for wood burning stove”. This flue will be within 700mm of the site boundary. The elevation drawings omit this flue and so its proposed height is unknown. The applicant should be required to resubmit the elevation drawings to show the flue, its materials, colour and height so that any non-compliance can be assessed.

Notwithstanding the omission from the drawings, we consider a new flue from a wood-burning stove should not be installed so close to a neighbour’s boundary and only a few metres from the neighbour’s rear windows, where smoke and fumes could enter the house when the windows are open. The smell and pollution that would arise from this flue would be unacceptable. We request that permission for this flue be refused.

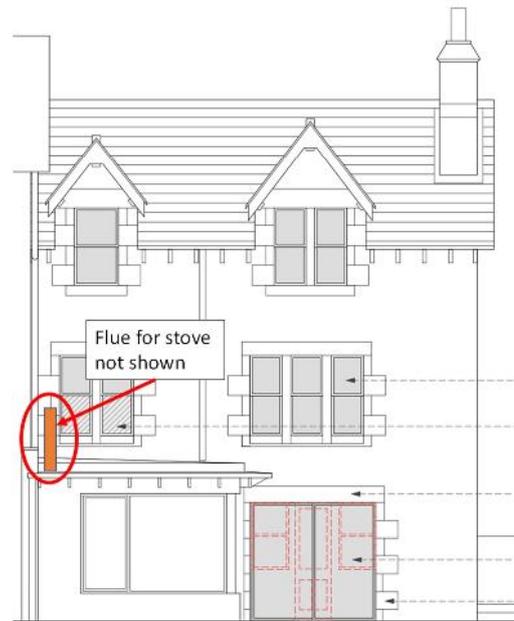


Figure 6: South elevation – flue omitted

Grange Association
01 April 2021