

Planning Application 23/07469/FUL - 30 Mansionhouse Road EH9 2JD

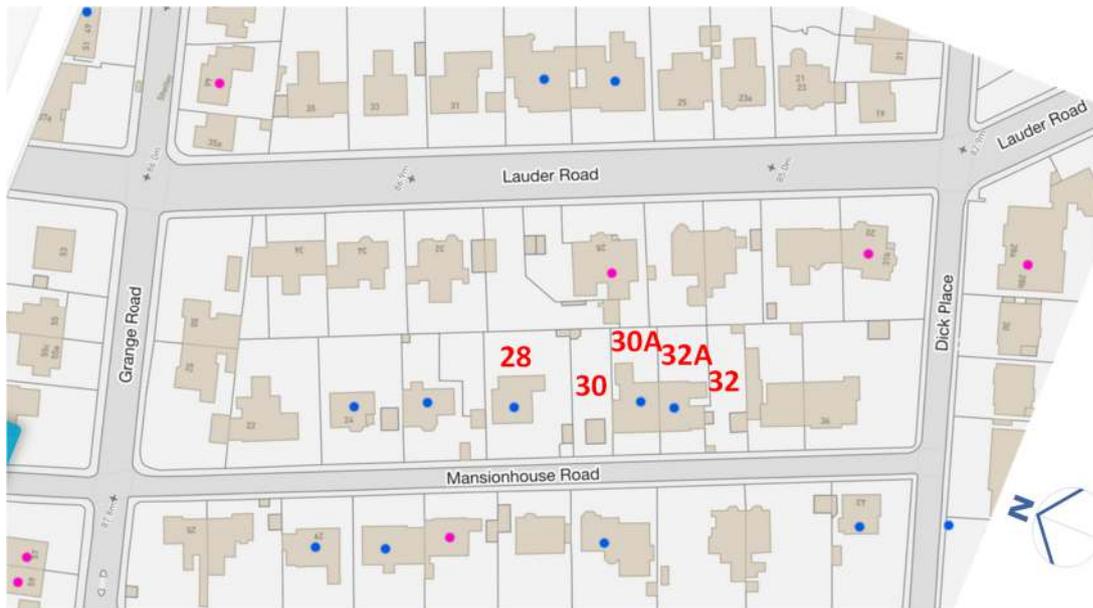
OBJECTION from Grange Association

26 February 2024

The Grange Association has reviewed application [23/07469/FUL](#) and submits this objection.

1. Site background and history

The property that forms 30 Mansionhouse Road is the upper flat of a semi-detached villa, forming part of a row of fine B-listed villas that epitomise the historic character of the Grange Conservation Area.



Feuing layout – Mansionhouse Road and Lauder Road (Source: HES portal)

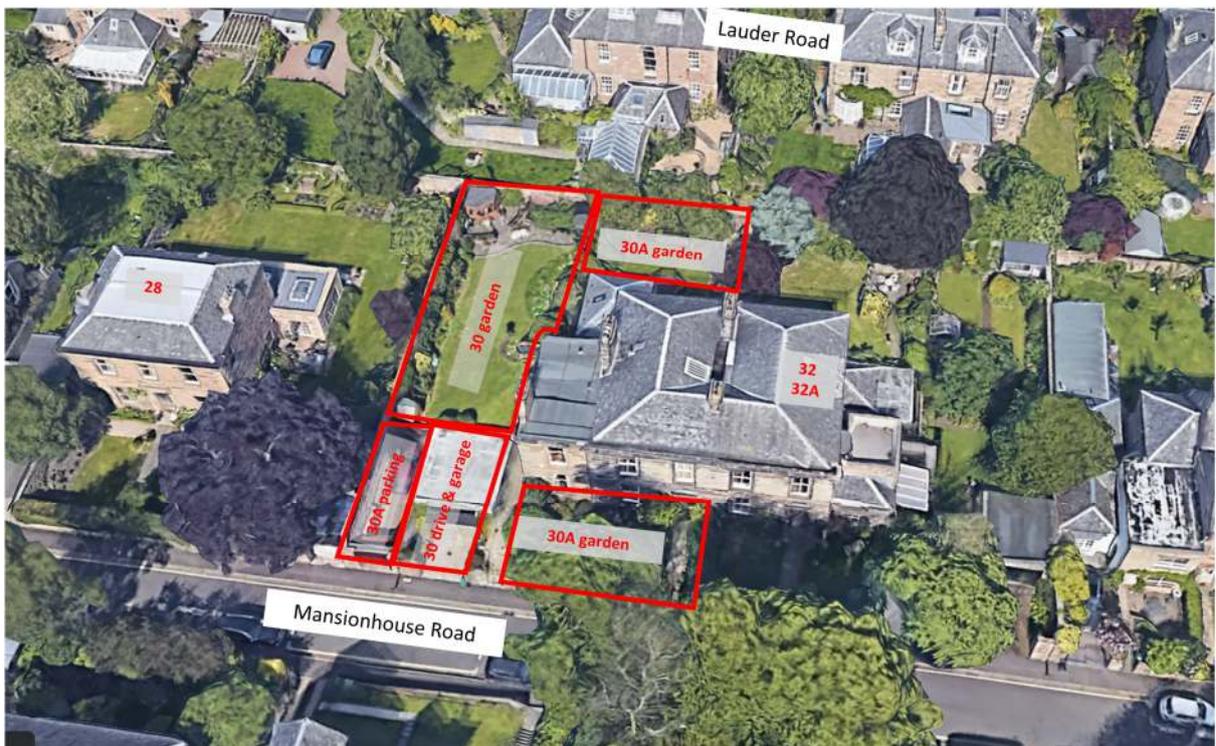
Although some of the villas in Mansionhouse Road and Lauder Road have been subdivided, there are few two-storey or habitable lateral extensions. The block layout therefore remains largely unchanged from the original feuing plan, with substantial spaces between the villas providing a characteristic rhythm to the streets.

30 Mansionhouse Road lies on the East side of Mansionhouse Road, between Dick Place and Grange Road, backing onto 26-28 Lauder Road. The existing building was built in 1853 as one of a pair of semi-detached villas which share their [B-listed building](#) status. 30 Mansionhouse Road was extended to the north in 1900 with a matching two-storey bay – visible in the streetview below, and an exception to the observed conservation of the original forms of the houses in the road. The building was then divided in 1945 into two flats, with No 30A becoming the ground floor flat and No 30 the upper flat. At time of the subdivision, part of the original garden walling was lowered and a double garage built on ground allocated to the upper flat, at No 30. Alongside, a separate piece of ground was allocated for parking or garage space for the ground floor flat, at 30A, but was not formed until the 1990s. This maintained the height of the then original high stone walling, still characteristic of other parts of the street and much of the Grange.



30 Mansionhouse Road EH9 2JD: Google Streetview July 2019 – gaps between buildings with views to distance

The gardens provide a valuable respite from the line of buildings in Mansionhouse Road and reflect the character of the Grange Conservation area, providing “glimpse views of rear and side gardens”.



Aerial view of site, showing existing site boundaries (Google Earth)

The gardens and gaps between the buildings and their contribution to the feeling of spaciousness are critical elements of the character of the area, as described in the [Grange Conservation Area Character Appraisal](#) (GCACA). Despite the unattractive garages, the sense of space remains above and around them with views to the distance.

The separation of dwellings creates a characteristic rhythm and solid-void repetition between precisely-sited structures of similar scale and massing. The spacious gardens provide an important setting for the buildings and mature trees within.

The gaps between buildings are important in maintaining the dominant green character, a sense of generous space, and glimpse views of rear and side gardens.

Grange Conservation Area Character Appraisal (page 15)

2. Proposed new development

The present application is for a new house to replace the double garage of No 30. The new house (30B) will extend to the rear and consume much of the garden of No 30.



Proposed street view – 30A parking, and 30B Mansionhouse Road



30 – 30B Mansionhouse Road EH9 2JD: Proposed site layout

The street elevation of the new house would be of a modern style, wholly different from the consistent form of the two-storey Victorian stone villas in the street. This would introduce an alien single-storey block form to the street, where there are no modern elevations visible from the street. Moreover, the frontage would be entirely paved. The application is unclear whether this to provide parking for vehicles but, in any case, the barren frontage is inappropriate for a house in this street and in the conservation area. If this proposal is to progress, some soft landscaping (other than the token tree and shrubs indicated) should be incorporated into the frontage to soften the effect on the streetscene, reduce water runoff, and attempt to match neighbouring properties' front gardens.

The site of the original villa would be further subdivided as shown above, leaving the present No 30 (top floor flat) with a much-diminished garden space and no off-street parking. The whole site would become a patchwork with small garden plots divided by fencing.

3. NPF4 Policy 7: Historic assets and places

NPF4 includes relevant [policies 7c and 7d](#):

.....Development proposals affecting the setting of a listed building should preserve its character, and its special architectural or historic interest.

NPF4 policy 7c

Development proposals in or affecting conservation areas will only be supported where the character and appearance of the conservation area and its setting is preserved or enhanced.

Relevant considerations include the:

- i. architectural and historic character of the area;*
- ii. existing density, built form and layout; and*
- iii. context and siting, quality of design and suitable materials.*

NPF4 policy 7d

In assessing the acceptability of proposals for development within the curtilage of the listed villa, the Council's [Guidance on listed buildings and conservation areas](#) (page 23) gives clear guidance:

Where new development within the grounds of a listed building is acceptable, the siting, design, scale, form, density and materials should be sympathetic to the listed building, including ancillary buildings. **The feeling of spaciousness of the grounds in relation to the main building should be protected** for the amenity of the property. The scale of new development should be controlled so as not to crowd or obscure the house. [...]

Views

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. [...] The principal elevations should remain visible in their entirety from all principal viewpoints. [...] Distant views of features and landmarks which may have been exploited in the design of the building should not be obstructed by the development.

Landscape

The landscape setting of the building should be analysed as the loss of garden ground can seriously affect the setting of a listed building. Planting which forms part of the original landscape should be retained and, where appropriate, the original landscape restored. New landscaping should be used imaginatively to screen and enhance new development and to retain the landscape setting of the building. Immediate surroundings should be maintained communally, **avoiding individually defined gardens. Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest which have a character and appearance which is desirable to preserve or enhance.**

Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (page 23)

We acknowledge that the demolition of the unsightly garage will bring planning gain. Nonetheless, the opportunity should then be taken to restore the site to a condition more appropriate to the original villa.

The present proposals contravene NPF4 Policy 7 because they would harm the “*feeling of spaciousness of the grounds*”; the new house is not “*set back from the original building line*” of No 30, and is well forward of the building line of No 28. The proposed patchwork of small gardens does not “*avoid individually defined gardens*”. The proposals would harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In considering compliance with NPF4 policy 7, it is instructive to refer to a previous planning application nearby, at 42 Grange Road EH9 1UN: [18/10070/FUL](#). That too was for a new property to be built in place of an unattractive garage that was in a gap between villas. In that case, the villas were not listed. Nonetheless, the application was refused and the Case Officer was explicit in the Handling Report:

This part of the conservation area is characterised by large villas in substantial garden grounds. Building an additional house within the garden area of the application property would be at odds with the urban grain of the area. The proposals would result in the erosion of the established character of the area of large houses with leafy garden spaces between those houses, a risk identified in the GCACA [Grange Conservation Area Character Appraisal], and to the detriment of the character of the conservation area.

.....
...the gradual diminution of the traditional urban grain of large houses separated by garden grounds is occurring as a result of [] new developments. The cumulative impact of these types of developments is adversely impacting the character of the Grange Conservation Area.

The proposed dwelling will have far more visual impact from Grange Road than the existing structure [the garage] and will adversely impact the appearance of green gardens and sense of generous space that is highlighted in the GCACA. The proposed new dwelling is contrary to Policy Env 6 of the LDP in that it neither preserves nor enhances the special character and appearance of the conservation area, is inconsistent with the relevant CACA and does not demonstrate a high level of design suitable to its historic environment.

18/10070/FUL Handling Report, refusing planning consent – 42 Grange Road EH9 1UN

Here in Mansionhouse Road we have the major additional factor of the proposals affecting adjacent B-listed properties which militates against any more lenient approach in this case. We therefore assert that the observations of the Case Officer in 18/10070/FUL apply to the present application which should be refused on the same grounds.

The refusal at 42 Grange Road was subsequently overturned by the Local Review Body, citing the unique circumstances and disability of the applicant (*“the LRB were sympathetic to the needs to transform a residence for health purposes”; “it was important that the applicant was able to stay within their community”*).

We note that the applicant in this case is also citing personal grounds for requiring ground-floor accommodation, given restricted mobility. However, as the Case Officer for 18/10070/FUL noted: *“Considering the Grange contains a number of subdivided villas with ground floor flats, the argument, that the applicant requires this new house in order to stay in the area, is not considered of sufficient merit to justify the construction of a new dwelling that is not acceptable in other respects. This is not a material consideration that outweighs other points.....”*

After receiving the grant of planning permission, on appeal, to create a new dwelling at 42 Grange Road, the site was offered for sale undeveloped at the end of 2019 as two separate lots and the original applicant moved away. There have then been a series of variation requests and new planning applications to augment the scale of the consented new house in Grange Road. There would be no constraint on the applicant for this proposal at 30 Mansionhouse Road doing the same as this application will create two separate planning units which can be sold separately.

4. Edinburgh Design Guidance

The [Edinburgh Design Guidance](#) (Jan 2020) makes the following provisions relating to “Historic Environment” (page 13):

Development should relate to the historic context in terms of the following principles:

- *New developments should be sensitive to historic character and attain high standards in design, construction and materials.*
- *[...]*
- *Facades should respond to the rhythm, scale and proportion of neighbouring properties.*
- *Development should respect the established building line.*
- *The density and architectural style of new development should respect the scale, form and grain of the historic context.*

[...]

- *The use of materials should respect and strengthen local traditions, reflecting the naturally predominant material.*

[...]

- *Development should retain significant gaps or open spaces which contribute to the street scene or provide the setting for buildings of architectural or historic importance.*

Edinburgh Design Guidance (page 13)

The proposed development:

- is not sensitive to the historic character of the street in its use of design or materials;
- does not respond to the rhythm, scale and proportion of neighbouring properties;
- does not respect the building line of No 28;
- has an architectural style that does not respect the scale, form and grain of the historic context of the street;
- does not retain the significant gaps and open spaces that contribute to the street scene and provide the setting for the adjacent listed villas which are of architectural importance.

Therefore, the proposed development contravenes the Edinburgh Design Guidelines.

5. Conclusions

We note the marked similarities between the present proposal in Mansionhouse Road and the 2018 proposal at 42 Grange Road EH9 1UN. The comments of the Case Officer for that application [18/10070/FUL](#) appear very relevant to the present application with similar factors creating similar incompatibilities with LDP Policies and the Edinburgh Design Guidance.

A new dwelling in the garden grounds of the villa would be inappropriate in terms of positioning and would fail to contribute positively towards a sense of place and would be damaging to the character and appearance of the area around it. It would be incompatible with the original building. It is therefore contrary to Policies Des 1, Des 4, Des 12 and the Edinburgh Design Guidance.

.....

The loss of the existing unattractive garage structure is not justification for the building of a new dwelling in this area.

18/10070/FUL Handling Report, refusing planning consent

The situation of 30 Mansionhouse Road is even more marked, as it is a proposal to infill a gap between two B-listed villas and is on a quiet residential street that has seen few post-war lateral extensions or new properties (other than by sub-division). We therefore consider the case for refusal to be stronger than for [18/10070/FUL](#).

In summary, we request that the application be refused because it contravenes:

- [NPF4 Policy 7](#) – Historic assets and places; and
- [Edinburgh Design Guidance](#): Integration with existing buildings and spaces.

**Grange Association
26 February 2024**