

---

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2021

**by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 19 January 2022.**

---

**Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/D/21/3279451**

**The Gatehouse, 28 George Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 2EG**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Ms Mary Flynn against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 21/01313/RET, dated 22 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 June 2021.
  - The development proposed is retention of works, overcladding gable end wall of the property.
- 

### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for retention of works, overcladding gable end wall of the property at The Gatehouse, 28 George Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 2EG, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 21/01313/RET, dated 22 March 2021, and the plans submitted with it.

### Procedural matter

2. The development is described on the application form in a lengthy and narrative form. The description set out above is as it appears on the Council's decision notice and the appeal form. It is simpler and accurately describes the development.

### Main issue

3. I consider that the main issue in this case is its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

### Reasons

4. The development has already been carried out.
5. 28 George Street is a two storey end of terrace house which backs onto the Grand Union Canal. It is constructed of brick with a tiled roof and prior to the development the subject of this appeal, its gable end wall was rendered and painted white. It lies within the Berkhamsted Conservation Area.
6. There is a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (the Framework) states that in the consideration of development proposals great weight should be given to the

- conservation of heritage assets in accordance with the significance of the asset and any harm should require clear and convincing justification.
7. I consider that the policy relevant in this case is CS27 of Dacorum's Local Planning Framework Core Strategy 2006-2031 (the Core Strategy). It seeks to protect the integrity, setting and distinctiveness of heritage assets including conservation areas.
  8. The conservation area covers most of Berkhamsted. George Street is part of an area which was constructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century along the north side of the canal. This part of the street is relatively narrow and characterised mainly by terraced houses of a modest scale and form, typical of Victorian artisan cottages. Further north there is a terrace of larger two and a half storey houses of brick and roughcast render, and the street widens with a mix of houses of a similar period and some modern houses.
  9. No. 28 is the end house of a terrace of four and is typical of the modest brick cottages built for workers between the canal and the railway. It retains its original brick front elevation. The other three have their front brick elevations painted white and the immediate neighbour, No. 26, has the brick window surrounds in strong relief contrasting with the white painted brickwork.
  10. The weatherboarding on the gable end replaces a render finish which I understand had been failing for some years and allowing the ingress of water, manifesting itself as damp within the house. This is a common problem with render used to protect outer walls built of traditional materials including brick and stone, particularly where this is a single skin. Over time, the render cracks and loses its bond with the original wall, allows water in which then freezes and thaws through the winter and further damages the render.
  11. Rendered finishes are not uncommon elsewhere in the immediate vicinity and can be seen in a variety of colours. In this context, the replacement of the old render with new would have been acceptable. However, I am persuaded by the appellant's argument that this would not have been practical as the removal of the render would have been likely to damage the brickwork and cause it to break away. The new render would have been subject to the same thermal stresses because it faces south and is exposed to high levels of sunlight and would be at risk of cracking and breaking away again.
  12. I accept that weatherboarding is not commonly used in the surrounding area and that it is more commonly used in outbuildings. Its use in this context is not in keeping with the traditional building materials prevalent in the area. However, I consider that it is important to maintain the viable use of this cottage to a standard which is consistent with modern requirements in a time of climate change and there is a social and economic benefit in providing a more energy efficient dwelling. The use of composite boarding will provide a higher degree of thermal insulation and protection from weather, together with fire safety in respect of the vehicle parking area immediately adjacent.
  13. Its impact on the character and appearance of the street is limited because in public views, the gable wall is visible in its entirety only from immediately south of it from the street. It is only partially visible from further south along the street and not at all from the north. It is seen in the context of a mix of gable wall finishes, including a number of rendered walls some of which do not make a positive contribution to the street scene.

14. I conclude that the weatherboard cladding causes less than significant harm to the conservation area because it is not a traditional material reflecting the character and appearance of the Victorian cottages. However, weighed against this harm is the benefit of its continued use as a dwelling in keeping with the traditional residential character of the conservation area. In this respect it is consistent with the advice in the Framework.
15. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

**Conditions**

16. I have considered the condition put forward by the Council, having regard to the tests set out in the Framework. Since the development has been completed no conditions are necessary.

*PAG Metcalfe*

INSPECTOR