



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 May 2025

by J Davis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/D/25/3364084

21 Cornwall Road, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 4TQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Southall against the decision of St Albans City & District Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/24/2100.
 - The development proposed is roof dormer for loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling which the Authority recognise as an undesignated heritage asset, and on the Harpenden Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal concerns a two-storey, mid terraced dwelling located in the Harpenden Conservation Area (CA). Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. The dwelling is also identified as a locally listed building and is therefore considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.
4. The Conservation Area Character Statement for Harpenden (2008) identifies several 'Identity Areas', with the appeal site falling within Identity Area J – The Poets. This area is described as an enclave of late Victorian and Edwardian houses, to the east of the railway line and now almost surrounded by recent development. Cornwall Road is a short street characterised by three terraced rows of generally similar design, one of seven houses and two of six which, with some semi-detached houses between them, create a street of small-scale, intimate quality. These elements, together with the mostly uniform, well-preserved appearance of the dwellings, make up the local character and distinctiveness of the locality. Many of the buildings within this part of the CA are also locally listed, including 1-33 (odds) and 2-18 (evens) which reflects the positive contribution such properties make to the heritage value of the overall CA.
5. The appeal property, along with the remainder of the terrace, has retained many original features and contributes positively to the CA. The rear elevation of the

terrace is also relatively well preserved, including its roofscape, which, despite the original roofing material having been replaced at some point with concrete tiles, largely retains its original scale and form.

6. Planning permission¹ was granted at the appeal property for a 'roof dormer for loft conversion' in September 2024. The approved dormer, which has not yet been implemented, would be of a similar scale and appearance to an existing dormer on the adjoining dwelling, 23 Cornwall Road and to a consented (but not yet implemented dormer) at 19 Cornwall Road.
7. The appeal proposal is for a wider rear dormer than that which has consent. The proposed dormer would effectively extend into the space between the flank wall of the consented dormer and the existing outrigger. The depth of the proposed dormer would be staggered, with the newly proposed element having a shallower depth than the remainder of the dormer. Notwithstanding this, the dormer would extend across much of the width of the roof slope and would represent an overly dominant, prominent addition to the building which would leave only limited parts of the roof visible or legible. Due to its size, scale and design, the dormer would appear incongruous with the original scale, character and appearance of the dwelling and the remainder of the terrace.
8. I acknowledged that the proposed dormer would not be readily visible from public vantage points and that it would be partly obscured when viewed from the rear garden of the host dwelling by the existing outrigger. However, angled views of the dormer would be gained from the rear garden environment of other dwellings along the terrace and from the rear elevation of dwellings to the rear, in Stewart Road. The proposed dormer would stand out as a prominent and incongruous addition which would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the terrace and the wider character and appearance of the CA.
9. I find that the proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the CA. In accordance with paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework), where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. No public benefits have been identified which would outweigh the less than substantial harm which has been identified. Furthermore, I have no evidence to suggest that without the proposed development, the dwelling would not continue in its optimum viable use.
10. Paragraph 216 of the Framework states that applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. As previously outlined, I find that the proposed dormer would appear overly dominant on the roof and due to its size and design, would have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling, a locally listed building.
11. The appellant has highlighted that the proposed enlarged dormer is necessary to meet current Building Regulations. I also acknowledge that the proposal would improve living space within the dwelling which would be of benefit to the appellant. However, these considerations do not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the CA.

¹ LPA ref: 5/2024/1215

12. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be contrary to Policy 69 of the St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994 (LP) which requires development to take account of the scale and character of its surroundings and Policy 72 of the LP which requires compatibility with original buildings particularly in CAs. It would also be contrary to LP Policy 85 which requires development in CAs to pay attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, and to Policy 87 which specifically relates to locally listed buildings and states that planning permission will not be granted unless features of architectural or historic interest are preserved and Policy 85 is complied with.
13. There is also conflict with the design and heritage aims of Policies ESD1 and ESD2 of the Harpenden Neighbourhood Plan and the Framework which seek amongst things to ensure that developments are of good design and that the historic environment is protected.

Conclusion

14. I have found that the proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole, and material considerations do not outweigh that finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Davis

INSPECTOR