



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 May 2025

by **D Ellis MPlan MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/W/25/3360282

1-34 Latium Close, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 1XU

- 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 Latium Close Residents Ltd against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/2024/0909.
 - The development proposed is replacement of windows, doors, soffits and fascias.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including whether the proposal conserves or enhances the character or appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site consists of two 3-storey blocks of flats of a modern appearance with timber windows. The site is within Character Area 7a of the CA, which contains a range of building types, periods, materials and architectural styles. Fronting Holywell Hill immediately to the south of the appeal site are three buildings which have timber sash windows. The appeal buildings, and particularly the building for flats 1-9, are experienced in the context of these buildings fronting on to Holywell Hill. The buildings are also visible from the adjacent public footpath along the River Ver.
4. Although the Conservation Area Character Statement for St Albans was published in 2016, I have no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that the character or appearance of the CA, or Character Area 7a of the CA, has been significantly altered since 2016. This document states that the materials and detailing of the Latium Close development are traditional and of good quality.
5. Timber windows of traditional appearance are not uncommon in the surrounding area. The appeal buildings also have timber doors, soffits and intricate fascias. Whilst the windows under consideration here are, in places, showing some outward signs of deterioration, these elements all contribute to the significance of the CA through their architectural detailing and traditional materials. The appeal buildings, along with the others nearby, contribute positively towards the character and appearance of the CA.

6. A variety of different window designs and materials, including plastic installations, are in evidence in the wider area, which influence the character of the CA. The building immediately to the north along Holywell Hill has plastic windows, however this is visibly separated from the appeal site by the tree-lined River Ver. Nevertheless, in the vicinity of the site there is still a well-established presence of street-facing timber windows.
7. The proposed plastic windows would have a smooth finish, which would not replicate the natural textured finish of timber windows. Furthermore, the appellant acknowledges that, given the scale of the submitted drawing, it is difficult to conclude whether or not the proposed windows would be bulkier than the existing in terms of size and thickness of the frames. Overall, the loss of traditional materials and the introduction of plastic frames would be at odds with the nearby buildings and would have a noticeable and harmful effect in such a visible location.
8. Replacement doors, soffits and fascias are also proposed, however no details of these elements have been included in the submitted drawings. The appellant states that the replacements would replicate the profile and style of the existing doors and the design of the existing fascia and soffits, although the plastic would be smooth and would therefore lack the timber texture. However, with no detailed drawings before me, I am unable to properly assess whether these replacement elements would be acceptable, particularly given the intricate detailing of the fascias. As such, a split decision would not be appropriate, and conditions requiring the submission of sample panels of the proposed materials would not overcome the lack of detailed drawings.
9. Planning permission has previously been granted for plastic replacement doors and windows at Stable Court¹. However, Stable Court is in a different part of the CA and, furthermore, the Council concluded that plastic doors and windows were appropriate given the context of the site. I am therefore not persuaded that the Stable Court development is directly comparable to the scheme before me. In any event, this appeal has been determined on its own merits.
10. The harm that would arise would be localised and therefore, in the context of the approach in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the harm to the CA as a whole would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, any harm attracts considerable weight and importance. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
11. I acknowledge the concerns of the occupiers of the flats that, for various reasons including health, security and living conditions, the windows are in need of replacement. The replacement of draughty windows could result in insulation and energy efficiency improvements. However, I am unconvinced that replacement timber windows would not provide the same benefit as uPVC in those respects. I therefore attach modest weight to the public benefits, which would not outweigh the harm identified above.
12. The proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the CA. As such the proposal conflicts with Policy 69 of the City and District of St

¹ Planning application ref. 5/22/2585

Albans District Local Plan Review (1994) (LPR), insofar as it requires for development to take into account the character of its surroundings. The proposal would also conflict with LPR Policy 85, which requires development in conservation areas to enhance or preserve the appearance of the conservation area.

13. The Council's reason for refusal also cites a conflict with LPR Policy 72. However, this policy relates to extensions in residential areas. The appeal proposed is not for an extension, and as such Policy 72 does not apply in this case.

Conclusion

14. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

D Ellis

INSPECTOR