



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2025

by **D J Barnes MBA BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/D/25/3364236

32 Searle Street, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB4 3DB

- 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 Mr Chris Gurney against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/04505/HFUL.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion including the construction of a new rear dormer and proposed Velux roof windows to the front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. It is considered that the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a 2-storey mid-terrace dwelling situated within a predominantly residential area which is also part of the Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area. There is a statutory duty to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas when making planning decisions. This duty is echoed in Policy 61 of the Cambridge Local Plan (LP).
4. The *Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area Appraisal* identifies that the heritage significance of the area arises from it being between the Roman settlement and Norman Castle with streets emanating off Castle Street. The Conservation Area also includes the 19th century residential terraced streets between Victoria Road and Chesterton Road which includes the property. These dwellings appear to date from the late Victorian period and are 2-storeys in height, sited at the back edge of the footways, constructed of brick with a mix of slate and tiled roofs and generally possessing sash windows. The form, height and siting of the terraced dwellings fronting Searle Street give the streetscene a visual unity, notwithstanding some rooflights have been erected within the front roofslope of some dwellings.
5. As identified by the appellant, at the rear of the dwellings there are variations in the elevations because of the extensions and alterations that have occurred, including

at the property itself. Although not a common feature, some of the alterations include the erection of rear dormer extensions of varying types and sizes. The rear elevations of the dwellings fronting Searle Street can be seen from other roads, including Hilda Street, and footways which access the rear gardens.

6. Although referenced by the appellant and viewed during the site visit, the detailed planning circumstances of the dormer extensions have not been provided. Some of these other schemes are not of a high quality of design and they visually disrupt the visual unity of the rear roofscape of the terraces within which they are located. Further, the council has indicated that consent for one scheme pre-dates the designation of the Conservation Area and the appellant identifies that another does not have planning permission. For these reasons, limited weight has been given to these other dormer extensions as precedents to support the proposed development which has, therefore, been assessed on its own planning circumstances.
7. The proposed development includes the erection of a large dormer extension with grey metal cladding which would occupy the majority of the property's rear roofslope. Although the appeal scheme would not project above the roof ridge of the property, the drawings do not clearly show that it would be set up from the eaves and there would only be a very limited setting back of its cheeks from the shared boundaries with the neighbouring dwellings. By reason of its scale and siting, when viewed from Hilda Street the proposed dormer extension would appear a bulky and box like addition to the rear roof slope creating the impression of an additional storey. This assessment about the impact of the appeal scheme has been informed by the effect of the other similarly sized rear dormer extensions on the roofscape of the terrace.
8. As identified by the council, from Hilda Street the existing chimney stack would be obscured. This matter alone would not be a reason for this appeal to fail but unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, has been identified, including by disrupting the unity of the terrace's roofscape.
9. The degree of harm caused to the heritage significance of the Conservation Area would be less than substantial. The National Planning Policy Framework identifies that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset then this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant has identified that there would be benefits associated with being able to work from homes and the family being able to stay in the locality. However, these are benefits accruing to the appellant rather than being public benefits and they are judged not to outweigh the harm caused to the significance of the designated heritage asset, in particular the disruption to the visual unity of the rear roofscape of the terrace.
10. For the reasons given, it is concluded that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the Castle and Victoria Road Conservation Area, and, as such, it would conflict with LP Policy 61. Accordingly, it is concluded that this appeal should be dismissed.

D J Barnes

INSPECTOR