



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 May 2025

by **D Ellis MPlan MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B1930/W/25/3359607

Flats 3 and 4, 1 Hall Place Gardens, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 3SB

- 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 Alasdair McMillin against the decision of St Albans City Council.
 - The application Ref is 5/2024/1179.
 - The development proposed is replacement of windows to Flats 3 & 4 located at first and second floor level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The address given on the planning application form only referred to 1 Hall Place Gardens and not the individual flats. However, the proposal only affects two of the flats and not the whole building. Consequently, in the banner heading above I have taken the address from the appeal form and decision notice, which identifies the flats that are included in the proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the St Albans Conservation Area (CA) with particular regard to the locally listed building.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a two-storey property within a prominent location on a corner plot close to the junction with St Peter's Road. The buildings in this part of Hall Place Gardens were designed in the arts and crafts style by local architect Percival Blow. The historic nature, architectural detailing and traditional materials of these dwellings form a strong part of the character and significance of the CA.
5. Many buildings have timber windows of a traditional appearance that contribute to the CA's significance through, in part, their intricate detailing and historic origins. The appeal property, along with the others nearby, contributes positively towards the character and appearance of the CA and reflects the historic character of the CA, with its windows being a vital part of its architectural style and design.
6. Although the new windows appear similar in the submitted drawings to the existing timber windows, it is unlikely that the detailed design would be because of the nature of uPVC which would result in the frames having a thicker appearance than the existing timber frames. Moreover, the use of whole glass sheets within the

frame, with the glazing bars attached as decorative features as opposed to being integral to the design would not have the finesse of the existing windows with numerous sheets of glass found in the existing structural frames. The introduction of such a modern material, with the drawbacks set out, would appear contextually incongruous and would result in the loss of historic fabric to the host property, which would be noticeable in this prominent location.

7. Furthermore, the proposal would result in the building having uPVC windows at the first and second floors and timber windows at the ground floor. This inconsistent use of materials and different appearances of the windows would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the locally listed building. The mix of materials would also not reflect the fenestration of the surrounding properties.
8. A number of other properties in the street have uPVC windows. Even if these were installed under permitted development, I find such features do not make a positive contribution to the significance of the CA. Consequently, these examples do not provide justification for the proposal because of the identified harm that would be caused.
9. Overall, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the locally listed building and would erode the positive contribution it makes to the character and appearance of the CA. It follows that the replacement windows would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA and would result in harm to its significance.
10. The harm that would arise would, however, be localised and therefore, in the context of the approach in the Framework, the harm to the Conservation Area as a whole would be less than substantial. Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy 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 that the existing windows are in a poor condition and that new windows could improve the energy efficiency of the property. 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 great weight I am required to give the conservation of designated heritage assets.
12. The proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the area and the locally listed building, and would neither preserve nor enhance character or appearance of the CA. As such the proposal would conflict with Policy 69 of the City and District of St 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, and LPR Policy 87, which requires development involving locally listed buildings to preserve its architectural and historic interest.
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