
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 September 2025

by A Oyebade MSc FCILT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/W/25/3366705

27 Cobham Street, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0SB

- 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 Quota Limited against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 20250064.
 - The development proposed is retrospective application for the replacement windows at ground and first floor.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have noted from my site visit that the development had already been implemented and found no obvious differences between this scheme and that shown on the appeal plans. For the avoidance of doubt, I have determined the appeal from both my observations on the ground and the plans before me.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Darnley Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. Based on the submitted evidence and my site visit observations, the significance of the Darnley Road Conservation Area (the Conservation Area), in part, derives from its architectural and historic interest associated with the suburban expansion of this part of Gravesend during the 19th century, including the spatial arrangement of the buildings and the evidence it provides of the architectural style and building techniques of the time.
5. The streets within the Conservation Area contain semi-detached and terraces of two- and three-storey mainly 19th century houses, many of which display elaborate architectural detailing. Distinctive detailing includes yellow, red and brown stock brick, stucco render across facades or for details such as window surrounds, round headed windows, and vertically sliding timber sash windows.
6. The Council's 2009 Darnley Road Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) explains that a principal positive feature of Character Area 2 where the appeal property is located are sash windows, with the retention of their original glazing pattern divided into small panes, giving a predominantly vertical emphasis. Hence, these attributes make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The appeal property shares

many of these characteristics and makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. Nevertheless, the CAA also acknowledges loss of original features such as sash windows and their unsympathetic replacements in some buildings on Cobham Street.

7. The Council's 2020 Conservation Areas Maintenance/Replacement Windows and Doors Guidance Supplementary Planning Document states that applications to replace traditional vertical sliding timber sash/casements windows with standard UPVC units (i.e. side hung, top hung, bottom hung, horizontal pivot, vertical pivot or louvre) will be refused.
8. Albeit many of the properties on Cobham Street have retained original features of their street facing windows, including shape, proportion and detailing, I observed a few buildings whose windows have slightly broad sashes, openable side or top panels and trickle vents, like that of the appeal development. The fitted trickle vents on the first-floor window rail of the appeal building and reasonably wide window frame, would mirror those found on a few of the neighbouring properties, although they are not traditional window features.
9. However, while the other buildings witnessed maintain the shape of their original windows, the appeal development simply has fitted rectangular window casings in the existing arched fenestrations and complementary frames, thereby leaving the top part of its half-oval to stand out. This fundamental departure from how the original windows on the first floor follow their arched fenestrations and corresponding frames, compounded by the extended window sashes, is clearly noticeable and is an incongruous feature which undermines the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
10. The UPVC frames are markedly thicker which contrasts negatively with the properties which have retained the traditional timber framed sliding sash windows. Also, the windows have a lack of architectural detailing compared to the original windows typical to the area.
11. These disparities are even more pronounced when the new first-floor windows of the appeal building are compared with those on its second floor, the 2 upper floors of the attached semi-detached dwelling at no 26 and the first floors of the adjacent 28a and 29 Cobham Street. The development therefore fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and causes harm to its significance.
12. Hence, it conflicts with Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (Adopted September 2014) and saved Policy TC3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (Adopted 1994). Together these policies state that new development will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment and make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

Other matters and planning balance

13. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the harm that I have identified would be within the lower end of less than substantial. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

14. The appellant has described certain public benefits associated with the development encompassing alternative means of escape in the event of fire, prevention of harmful indoor damp and mould formation, feel of security, energy efficiency, sustainability due to it being recyclable and much lower maintenance cost compared to timber frames.
15. Nonetheless, in my opinion, all these attributes can be incorporated into well designed windows that would safeguard the characteristic style of fenestration and accompanying window frame of the appeal dwelling and ultimately the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
16. I give the harm I have identified great weight in line with paragraph 212 of the Framework, which establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset. In this context I find that the limited public benefits of the proposal are not sufficient to outweigh the degree of harm identified.
17. The appellant has stated that the Council's conservation officer has not commented on this application and the Council should have compared the development to the current appearance of the Conservation Area and, has pointed out certain properties on Cobham Street that do not have traditional windows. The Council provides an explanation for some of these examples, which do not appear to be directly comparable to the appeal development, and I do not have clear evidence about the circumstances for others including whether they were installed before the Article 4 Direction came into effect.
18. In addition, the appellant has cited an appeal decision (Ref: APP/K2230/W/24/3348786) that acknowledged that some properties in the vicinity had been fitted with UPVC windows. However, in that case, the building was detached and the windows, which were sliding sash, would be fitted onto a secondary elevation. That contrasts with this current appeal where the windows, which are not sliding sash, are on the front elevation and viewed in the same context as the sliding sash windows on the upper floor and those of the adjoining property. I have in any event decided this appeal on the evidence before me and my site observation on whether the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and causes harm to its significance, in conjunction with the pertinent development plan and Framework policies.

Conclusion

19. The appeal development conflicts with the development plan as a whole. Overall, none of the other considerations material to the development indicate that this appeal decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Oyebade

INSPECTOR