
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 4 November 2025

by Timothy C King BA(Hons), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 March 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/C1570/W/25/3370918

31 Parsonage Downs, Dunmow CM6 2AT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr David Tunmer against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/25/1146/HHF.
 - The works proposed are demolition of existing ground floor rear extension and erection of new two storey rear extension.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/C1570/Y/25/3370919

31 Parsonage Downs, Dunmow CM6 2AT

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr David Tunmer against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref is UTT/25/1147/LB.
 - The works proposed are demolition of existing ground floor rear extension and erection of new two storey rear extension.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

The appeal site and preliminary matters

3. Subsequent to the Council issuing its decisions the appellant submitted a revised drawing (ref BRD/24/052/003 Rev A) which showed an alternative scheme involving the creation of one rear dormer window rather than the two such features proposed, as shown on drawing no BRD/24/052/003). Given that the revised scheme would, to some extent, represent a small reduction in the built form from that development refused by the Council I am satisfied that neither the Council nor any interested parties would be prejudiced by the revision to any significant extent and I shall accept the revised drawing.
4. The two appeals concern the same scheme under different, complementary legislation. I have dealt with both appeals together in my reasoning. In reaching my decision I have had regard to the statutory duties under sections 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are whether the proposed development and works would preserve the listed building, its setting, or any features of special architectural and historic interest which it possesses and, with particular regard to Appeal A,

whether the character or appearance of the conservation area would be preserved or enhanced.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

6. No 31 Parsonage Downs is one of a pair of dwellings. Twinned with the attached building, no 29, they comprise a pair of Grade II listed cottages dating from the early 17th century. No 31 is currently in a poor state of physical repair and requires a fair degree of attention.
7. Both cottages are timber-framed and plaster rendered, and their frontages are of like appearance. The official list entry refers to the buildings' timber-frames and plaster render along with six, small gabled dormers which straddle their frontage. Mention is made in the list entry of red tiled roofs and also 20th century casement windows. Both these features are evident on the front facades of both cottages. The rear roof of no 31 has, though, been relaid with grey slates, and this contrasts starkly with no 29 whose roof appears to have remained in its original condition.
8. The appeal site also falls within the Great Dunmow Conservation Area (GDCA), of which Parsonage Downs is an extensive green that contains a number of listed buildings, some with thatched roofs, and others with tiled roofs of which nos 29 and 31, are particular examples. This part of the conservation area is characterised by its openness and the Council's document 'Great Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals', adopted in 2007, stresses the importance of retaining this aspect. To this end it advises that great care be taken in determining planning applications proposing extensions to properties within the GDCA.
9. The significance of this listed building relates to the value both cottage's hold in terms of their architectural or historic interest, the openness to both their front and rear, their limited footprint, and their characteristic form and appearance along with the materials used. In this respect, whilst no 29, at least externally, remains apparently unaltered, no 31 has been added to with a single-storey rear extension, along with the evident change in materials to its rear roof plane.

The proposal and its effects.

10. Both nos 29 and 31 prevail as traditional vernacular cottages, and they contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole. The appeals relate to the proposed demolition of an existing single-storey rear extension and its replacement with an uncharacteristic two-storey, gable-roofed, rear extension. Alterations to the rear roof plane are also proposed, involving the erection of an extension to create a small dormer window overlain by a gabled roof arrangement. Internal changes are also proposed involving a replacement staircase, the reconfiguration of the internal floor layout, which would result in a largely open-plan arrangement at ground floor level. Some replacement of existing fenestration is also proposed, but it is not clear which windows would be involved.
11. The building has undergone alterations in the past, most notably the addition of a similarly uncharacteristic flat-roofed rear extension. However, the scale and massing of the proposed replacement would represent a prominent and

conspicuous addition. Indeed, I consider that the extension's scale would be disproportionate to the cottage's original built form.

12. The existing floorplans show that the cottage has three bedrooms, although at first floor level, only the front of the building is naturally lit, hence the proposed rear dormer window. The proposed floor layout, facilitated by the two-storey rear extension, would open up the first floor, giving it dual aspect, and would allow for an upper floor bathroom and an additional bedroom with en suite facility.
13. I acknowledge that houses are for living in and that this property requires considerable work to make it suitable for habitable purposes, given its current dilapidated condition. It has not been maintained since its last occupiers vacated the premises. This lack of attention has clearly brought about its poor physical state, both externally and internally. Indeed, when inspecting the inside of the building I noticed a hole in its front wall which clearly has implications for damp and weather damage. The internal alterations would be consistent with the building's intended return to habitable use, but this does not in itself necessitate the extent of the increased floorspace.
14. The appellant considers that there is asymmetry between the cottages, citing the existing single-storey addition to no 31, yet this side-steps the fact that the degree of such would be exacerbated by the proposed two-storey replacement and dormer feature. Due to its size, relative to the small cottage, the intended extension would not be subservient to nor respect the original building. Contrary to the appellant's view I would consider, apart from the existing anomalous small, single-storey extension to no 31, there is largely symmetry between the properties.
15. If extending listed buildings a successful design will usually adopt a sympathetic approach that complements rather than dominates the building. Further, the intended two-storey extension and the rear dormer window would create a considerable imbalance and I must disagree with the appellant's view that the works would represent a clear visual improvement.
16. The proposed extension would not be readily visible from the public realm. However, harm to the historic environment or heritage assets cannot be concealed or limited to visibility therefrom. Besides, the proposed extension would be clearly visible to the occupiers of no 29, from its rear garden.
17. As a result of the proposed rear extension and, to a lesser degree, the rear dormer window, the scheme would fail to preserve the listed building and the proposed works would, for the purposes of the Framework, result in 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of this heritage asset.
18. The rear extension would not respect the authenticity of the listed building for the reasons identified. As regards its effect the works, as a whole, would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the GDCA as a whole given that the replacement extension would not be subordinate in scale, nor of sympathetic design.

Public benefits and planning balance

19. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) says that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's

conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of the considered level of harm that would arise.

20. The advice within the Framework is that firstly, it needs to be identified whether there would be harm, and the second stage is whether public benefits weigh against this harm, including 'securing the asset's optimum viable use' as a factor against which the less than substantial harm, as is the case here, has to be weighed.
21. In other words, the primary objective and starting point is to preserve the building's special interest, and a robust argument is required for any departure from that principle.
22. The planning practice guidance also says that heritage benefits may include securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation. This balances economic viability with heritage protection. It can involve requiring compromises to secure the building's future and is a key concept in heritage planning to keep significant buildings in use and prevent decay.
23. The building's renovation, and its return to habitable use can be seen as a public benefit but it does not automatically mean consent for the proposed alterations will be given. It is important that the special architectural or historic interest of the building should remain protected, but the current scheme would not ensure this. Indeed, the erection of an uncharacteristic, bulky and incongruous two-storey extension, of a disproportionate scale, would not be the only way of ensuring that this small dwelling is brought back into habitable use.
24. Instead, I take the view that the motive for the works goes beyond carrying out much needed repairs and the visual advantages of removing the existing extension, as it would seem more to do with increasing the internal floorspace and making the cottage more convivial in habitable terms. This is understandable but it does not mean that the harm identified should be downplayed.
25. In the absence of clear and convincing justification being provided for the intended works I am of the opinion that the building's conservation would be compromised to an unacceptable degree and this listed building would not be conserved in a manner appropriate to its significance. Further, the proposed works would impact to some extent on the characteristic openness of the GDCA.
26. Whilst I give moderate weight to the public benefit of renovating this listed building and bringing it back into habitable use to support its long term conservation, this is not sufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and weight I attach to the harm identified to the significance of this designated heritage asset.

Conclusions

27. I have found that the proposal would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building, 31 Parsonage Downs. As such, the proposal would be contrary to the requirements of sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the said Act, paragraphs 207, 208, 209 and 212 of the Framework, and policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (LP) which says that development affecting listed buildings should be in keeping with their scale, character and surroundings. Further, in view of the above, the proposal is also in conflict with LP policy ENV1 in

that it would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the GDCA.

28. More widely, the proposal and its effects would conflict with the LP as a whole, and there are no material considerations which indicate that the decision on Appeal A should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
29. Accordingly, for the above reasons, I conclude that both Appeals A and B should be dismissed.

Timothy C King

INSPECTOR