
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 15 December 2025

by **N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th March 2026

Appeal A Ref: APP/E2205/W/25/3373507

60a High Street, Rolvenden, Kent TN17 4LN

- 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 K Johnson against the decision of Ashford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PA/2025/0720.
 - The development proposed is for an extension and alterations including creation of car parking.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/E2205/Y/25/3373513

60a High Street, Rolvenden, Kent TN17 4LN

- 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 K Johnson against the decision of Ashford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PA/2025/0743.
 - The works proposed are for an extension and alterations including creation of car parking.
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Decision

Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. There are two appeals on this site. They relate to the planning application and listed building consent for the same scheme. To avoid duplication, I have dealt with them together, except where otherwise indicated.
4. As the proposal relates to a listed building, I have had special regard to sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) ("the Act").
5. An Arboricultural Rebuttal Statement was submitted with the appeals, it provides information on root growth, root protection areas, and proposed mitigation; it also confirms that all trees would be retained on site. The Council have seen this statement and confirm that, subject to planning conditions, they would no longer object in this respect. I have read the statement and the Council's comments, and I find no reason to disagree with these findings.

6. Given the Council has seen and commented on the statement, I do not consider that any party would be unfairly disadvantaged by my acceptance of the statement. On this basis, I do not need to consider reason for refusal two further as part of this decision.
7. During the appeal, a draft version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published for consultation. Having regard to the matters in dispute between the parties and the draft status of the document with the possibility of change following consultation, I attach limited weight to it. I am therefore satisfied that the interests of the parties would not be prejudiced by proceeding to determine the appeal without inviting further comments.

Main Issues

8. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building known as 60 and 62, High Street (Ref:1362905) (“the appeal building”), and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses, and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Rolvenden Conservation Area. (“the CA”), and the setting of nearby listed buildings (both appeals); and
 - The effect of the proposed development on highway safety. (Appeal A)

Reasons

Designated heritage assets (both appeals)

9. The appeal building is circa seventeenth century with tile hanging and red brick walls under a steeply pitched half hipped tile roof. The appeal site forms one part of the appeal building and is known as 60a High Street. This part of the appeal building is a later addition, and the evidence suggests that No 60a was erected in the mid-twentieth century, with further alterations in the early twenty-first century.
10. The proportions, materials and architectural detailing of the appeal building are reflective of its age, and these contribute to its historic and aesthetic value. The appearance of No 60a closely matches the historic sections of the appeal building. While it is a later mid-twentieth century addition, its modest design and appearance ensure the significance and authenticity of the older part of the appeal building is maintained.
11. The appeal building bookends a row of pleasing Kentish vernacular listed buildings known as 52 and 54 High Street (Ref:1070922) and 56 and 58 High Street (Ref:1115661). Both these buildings and the appeal building are identified as having Group Value.
12. Both Nos 52 & 54 and 56 & 58 are finished in facing bricks and weatherboarding under tiled roofs. Individually each building is a strong example of Kentish vernacular. This allows an appreciation of how earlier generations lived and constructed buildings; for instance, the use of weatherboarding providing a waterproof, durable, and aesthetically pleasing skin which protects structures from weather conditions.

13. Collectively, the appeal building and Nos 52 & 54 and 56 & 58 are a group of distinct period properties whose setting is enhanced by their set back from the frontage and spacing between each building. The significance of these listed buildings, in so far as it relates to the appeal before me, is largely derived from their age, form, siting, historic fabric and architectural detailing. These attributes mark them as important survivals of period dwellinghouses.
14. This part of the CA features historic and mixed vernacular building types which contribute to its character as a classical Wealden village. Despite the number of buildings, the open countryside which surrounds the village, its green entrances, and the built vernacular, give a sense of rurality to this village.
15. The immediate streetscape has a strong north/south axis, and to the eastern side of the High Street a long terrace of vernacular cottages stands proudly next to the pavement. The western side, which includes the appeal site, offers a contrast with more spacious blocks of buildings set back behind soft landscaping. This contrast is complementary and visually welcome as it gives relief while adding interest and value to this part of the CA.
16. Given the above, the significance of the CA, as far as it relates to this appeal, is primarily associated with the arrangement of buildings and the spacing around them, their architectural detailing, and the harmony of green landscaping between and around these buildings. The appeal building together with the buildings in its immediate vicinity and their curtilages, are a key part of the significance.

Effect of the proposal (both appeals)

Extension and wall

17. It is proposed to erect a single storey side extension, a replacement garden wall, and internal alterations to No 60a which include a loft conversion. Other proposals include the replacement of the existing front windows, insertion of a new second floor flank window in the gable wall, and creation of a new gravel driveway with tandem parking to the existing garden frontage.
18. The single storey addition would extend into the side garden area toward Nos 56 and 58. It would have a flat metal roof, brick walls, and glazed bifold doors to the street facing elevation with a further timber door. It would be set back behind the principal front wall of the appeal building and its height would be lower than the host building including its existing porch. However, the proposed extension's footprint would be considerable in width and would significantly close the gap between the appeal building and No 56 and 58, leaving just a limited gap between its flank edge and this neighbour.
19. Listed buildings are safeguarded for their inherent architectural and historic interest irrespective of whether public views can be gained or not. In this case, the extension would be visible above the proposed wall from public vantage points as well as from within the appeal site and from other third-party viewpoints.
20. While the increase in overall floorspace may be moderate, its width in combination with its depth would result in a significant extension to No 60a when viewed externally. It would as a result fail to be subservient and would overwhelm the proportions and architectural detailing of the host building. This would be harmful to the appeal building's historic and aesthetic value.

21. I accept that modern contrasting materials and design can sometimes respond positively to listed buildings, however this approach must be applied with care. In this case the footprint of the extension does not adopt a sensitive approach as set out above. Accordingly, the combination of the flat roof, detailing, fenestration and proportions pay little regard to those of the host building. This would present an awkward addition which fails to satisfactorily integrate with the listed building.
22. While the space between the buildings would be maintained at first floor and above, there would be a considerable reduction of spacing between the appeal building and No 56 & 58 at ground floor level. This would erode the spacious and atmospheric relationship between buildings at this lower height, and this would be harmful to the understanding of each building's separate and group identity as well as their historical relationship. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, the ability to understand and appreciate the special interest and value of these listed buildings both individually and their value as a group, including the contribution they make to the significance of the CA would be unacceptably diminished.
23. The existing scalloped wall effects the spacing between the buildings but its current height and scalloped design tempers its impact. The erection of a taller wall would exacerbate the loss of space and would have a similar effect to that described in the preceding paragraph. I appreciate it would feature hit-and-miss perforated brickwork in a diamond pattern inspired by traditional Kentish brickwork, however, this would not overcome its physical presence, particularly its height coupled with its width.
24. I note other buildings elsewhere in the wider streetscape do have low rise side projections which link to or are close to adjacent buildings. However, I do not have the planning history or any clear detail before me to explain how these may have been justified in the past or whether they are heritage assets in their own right. From my own observations, these examples sit in different contexts wherein the buildings do not have the same group value, sense of spacing between them, or the features of the host building are not identical. From what I saw on site, and from the evidence before me, these are not identical to the appeal proposal. I therefore have considered the appeal on its own merits. These other examples therefore have limited bearing on my overall findings.

Internal works and fenestration

25. There are no proposed changes to the seventeenth century internal layout of the appeal building. However, there would be at least some proposed works to the party wall and this would have the potential to result in the loss of, or unacceptable alteration to historic fabric. The overall heritage impact of internal alterations has not been adequately explained or evidenced in the Appellant's submissions. This absence of information does not show how the proposal would preserve the special interest and significance of the appeal building.
26. Windows are often a key feature of a historic building and make an important contribution to their character. Limited evidence has been submitted to show that the proposed window in the gable end would be sympathetic to the existing window pattern. Additionally, the Appellant's evidence suggests the replacement windows to the front elevation would be painted timber double glazed units to the same pattern as existing windows. However, there is limited detail before me to confirm these would adequately match the existing windows. I cannot therefore be certain

that the proposed windows would not be harmful to the special architectural or historic interest of the appeal building.

27. I have considered whether these matters could be resolved through planning conditions, however, this would not be appropriate as these details are fundamental to the acceptability of the proposal. Given the nature of these works are unclear, I cannot be certain that imposing planning conditions would successfully mitigate any impact on the special interest of the appeal building.

Parking

28. The proposed gravel driveway and parking area to the frontage would include the removal of a modern front boundary wall. The appeal building currently sits behind soft landscaping, and this includes further landscaping to the boundaries with the frontage predominantly laid to lawn. While some parking exists to the other side of the appeal building, this is accessed from Regent Street and does not occupy the frontage of this part of the appeal building.
29. The proposed parking and access area would occupy a considerable width and depth of the frontage of No 60a. Access would also be to the front rather than the side and all these factors would accentuate the appearance of the parking area. Because of the limited width of No 60a, the visual presence of parked cars and the parking area would interrupt and reduce the ability to appreciate the building in its landscaped milieu setback from the High Street. This would be harmful to both the special interest of the appeal building and the CA.
30. The Appellant suggests that other buildings have parking and vehicular access to the front of them, and during my visit I noted this within the street scene. However, in the cases I observed, they either did not occupy a considerable width and depth of the frontages in the same way as No 60a, or they sit in a different context. In addition, heritage assets are designated for their own unique interest and significance; the impact of proposals therefore must be robustly assessed on their own merits. I have no evidence before me to suggest other dwellinghouses in the locality are identical to the appeal before me. This therefore does not alter my overall findings as set out above.

Heritage balance

31. The proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed buildings, and the significance of the CA. Paragraph 212 of the Framework advises that, when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 goes on to say that significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of those assets and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification.
32. Given the scope of the works, I find the harm I have identified in this instance would be less than substantial and at the mid-point of this category. Nevertheless, this is of considerable importance and weight. Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.

33. I acknowledge that internal space is limited and the Appellant would like to extend their property. However, this is broadly a private benefit and accordingly does not constitute a public benefit which would overcome the less than substantial harm identified.
34. I note a number of environmental enhancements are proposed which include an electric vehicle charging point, green sedum roof, landscaping, permeable paving, and double glazing. However, considering the emphasis of the Framework on sustainability, it is not unusual for works to be designed to high environmental standards. For these reasons, I give moderate positive weight to these benefits.
35. The Council suggest that two on-street parking spaces would be lost as part of this proposal and from the evidence before me and what I saw on site, this is a reasonable conclusion. Therefore, the parking provided off street would balance that which would be lost on street. Consequently, this would be neutral in the balance. There is also no compelling evidence to show that the existing on-street parking is adversely hazardous, and its removal would be of public benefit.
36. Further landscaping could be used to soften the works or screen them; however, listed buildings are safeguarded for their interest irrespective of whether views can be gained or not. For similar reasons, while the proposed extension may screen some of the appeal building's 21st century additions, it would not remove them, and they would still be visible. Therefore, any benefits in these respects would be limited.
37. The proposal would also introduce an accessible ground floor double bedroom. While limited evidence has been submitted about the need for accessible floorspace, this is a personal circumstance to which I attribute weight in favour of the appeal. I have had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which sets out the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. I have also had regard to rights conveyed within the Human Rights Act.
38. I am also mindful of the advice contained in the Planning Practice Guidance that in general planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. Therefore, while I acknowledge the personal benefits of accessible floorspace, it has not been demonstrated that these benefits could not be achieved by an alternative scheme which does not involve harm to designated heritage assets or that the harm identified is justified. This matter therefore can only attract limited weight.
39. Tying these considerations together, the public benefits either alone or in combination would be insufficient to outweigh the great weight attached to the heritage harm identified. Accordingly, the proposal would fail to preserve the special historic interest of the listed buildings and the significance of the CA.
40. This would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, the Framework and conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies SP6, HOU8, ENV3b, ENV13 and ENV14 of the Ashford Local Plan 2019 ("the LP") and Policies RNP1 and RNP6 of the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan 2019. These, amongst other things, seek to preserve and enhance heritage assets.

Highway safety. (Appeal A)

41. It is proposed to create a new vehicular access from the appeal site onto the High Street with tandem gravel topped parking provided to the frontage. While a snapshot in time, during my visit the High Street was well trafficked in both directions.
42. The Appellant has not provided evidence to show that achievable visibility splays can be provided from the proposed site access. In the absence of clear evidence showing acceptable visibility splays, I cannot be certain that safe and suitable vehicular access to the site can be achieved.
43. With tandem parking, as shown on the proposed plans, one car would be parked directly in front of another. This would create a scenario where the inner car would need to wait for the outer car to move onto the highway before it could leave the site. It has also not been clearly shown that vehicles could enter and leave the site in forward gear. Therefore it would be highly likely that vehicles would have to either reverse onto site from the highway or reverse off the site onto the highway when entering or leaving. Both these methods would introduce risks to users of the highway as visibility of oncoming vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians would be reduced when reversing.
44. The act of reversing into or off the road also requires other vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists to stop and wait while the manoeuvre is completed. This creates pressure to perform the manoeuvre quickly, increasing the likelihood of accidents in a situation where appropriate visibility splays have not been demonstrated and visibility is reduced when reversing.
45. Finally, it has not been robustly shown that gravel would not migrate onto the public highway. Increased gravel on the highway can be kicked up by car tyres leading to vehicle damage and harm to road users. It can also cause issues such as increased skid risk, blocking of drainage systems, and premature wear of the highway surface. It is also suggested that the removal of on street parking would be a benefit, however, there is no compelling evidence that shows the existing on street parking is adversely hazardous.
46. I have considered whether a planning condition could be imposed to mitigate these harms, however, this would not be appropriate, in this case, as these highway safety details are fundamental to the acceptability of the proposal. These would need to be clearly understood before planning permission is granted, I therefore cannot rely on conditions to address this matter.
47. As a result, the proposed development would unacceptably compromise highway safety and would fail to accord with the relevant provisions of Policies TRA3a and TRA7 of the LP. These look to, amongst other things, ensure that development would not be detrimental to the safety of the highway network.

Other Matters

48. The appeal site lies within the High Weald National Landscape ("the NL"). Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 includes a requirement to seek to further the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes. The proposed works would have effects on heritage assets which I have considered above, however, this harm would not affect the natural or

scenic qualities of the wider landscape given its localised impacts. Therefore, the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the NL and would conserve its natural beauty. The absence of harm in this regard is, however, a neutral factor in my assessment and does not alter my overall findings.

Conclusion

49. I have concluded that the harm to the heritage assets would not be outweighed by the public benefits in both appeals. In addition, I have found harm relating to highway safety in Appeal A. I also consider that there are no material considerations of such weight to lead me to the conclusion that Appeal A should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan as a whole. For the above reasons, and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that both Appeal A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

N Praine

INSPECTOR