

Appeal Decision

Site visit made 30 May 2019

By Ruth Reed BA DipArch MA PGCertEd PPRIBA HonAIA FRIAS

An Independent Scheme of Management Inspector
Appointed by the Heritage Foundation Letchworth Garden City

Decision date 10 June 2019

Appeal Reference RR/2019/005

78 Howard Drive, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 2DG

- The appeal is made by xxxxxx against refusal of consent under the Scheme of Management of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for the retrospective application submitted in July 2018.
- Consent was refused by the Heritage Advisory Team in August 2018. It was reviewed by the Advisory Management Committee in November 2018 and the decision to refuse was upheld by the Housing Applications Committee in December 2018.
- The development is replacement windows.

Decision

1. The appeal against refusal of the as-constructed replacement windows is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The front porch and the front door do not form part of this appeal and have been decided separately.
3. The appellants have supplied extracts from The Design Principles for Heritage Character Areas in support of their case. The information about the relevant character area for the property is available to the appellants on the Letchworth Garden City website accessible to the general public. This identifies the property as being in a Modern Character Area. The documentation issued by the Heritage Foundation about the appeal was also made available to the appellants through the website. The appellants were provided with details of where to find this in the letter from the Foundation dated 3 May 2019.
4. Other matters raised relating to the process of the application and the appeal do not form part of my decision and should be referred to Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in this case is the impact of the replacement windows on the property itself and the character of the area.

Reasons

6. Number 78 lies on the north side of Howard Drive within a Modern Character Area. The house is one of a pair of semi-detached houses. The street has a mix of semi-detached and detached properties. Some of the semi-detached properties appear to have been designed and built as matching pairs, 78 and 76 were one of these pairs.
7. Almost without exception the original windows of the properties facing on Howard Drive have been replaced. However, from the historic photograph submitted by the Trust, it appears that the original windows to number 78 were of a pattern similar to the windows in number 76.
8. The replacement windows to number 78 differ from the originals in the way that they are subdivided. They have equally spaced mullions (vertical subdivisions) to all the windows and they all have transoms (horizontal subdivisions) dividing each window into top lights and lower casements. The original windows had a mixture of full-height panes, top lights and bottom lights and fixed wider panes as can be seen at number 76.
9. The replacement windows to number 78 have diamond pattern leaded panes to the top lights. The original windows were clear glazed.
10. The ground floor replacement window is a projecting bow window with a scalloped flashing to the bow roof. There is a flat brickwork panel beneath the bow window, set back from the plane of the front wall of the house. I have been told that this panel of brickwork is unfinished pending the outcome of the appeal. The intention is to render it.
11. The frame of original window to the ground floor extended to floor level and had a white obscured panel to the bottom pane. The level of the lower transom below the clear glazed windows would have been lower than that of the sill of the replacement bow window and would have been in line with the transom to the window to number 76.
12. The Design Principles for Modern Character Areas require that *'The design of replacement windows should match the original windows for the property.'* And *'Replacement windows should ideally match the style and design of the original windows of the property'*.
13. The replacement windows do not meet these principles in terms of the way they have been subdivided by transoms and mullions. The overall size of the first-floor windows is consistent with the originals, however, the bow window is a departure from the style of the original windows in form and size.

14. The Design Principles for Modern Character Areas also require that *'Windows should remain open glazed if this was the original design.'* The use of leaded lights is, therefore, not in accordance with the guidelines.
15. The Design Principles state that *'Windows contribute significantly to the identity and value of individual groups of houses and the street scene'*. They go on to say *'The group value of buildings is strengthened through a similarity in window type and colour, symmetry in the positioning of windows and adherence to the original proportions and design'*.
16. Howard Drive has a number of original house types and these have been extended and altered over time so that there is now a diversity of style that was not part of the original scheme. However, there has been a consistency of approach to replacement glazing. Generally, windows still have clear panes, and are the same size. However, within that overall consistency there is a range of approaches to the subdivision of the windows.
17. The different ways of subdividing windows are apparent between pairs of semi-detached houses. Where once the pairs were matching, the subdivision of first floor windows for many pairs now varies and this has become part of the character of the street.
18. The replacement windows to number 78 are a departure from the original style of window and make the property inconsistent with the pervading character of the area. The pattern of sub-division of the first-floor windows could be acceptable in the context of the diverse styles adopted on Howard Drive, however the use of leaded lights and the installation of the bay window are inconsistent with the original design and the character of the street today.
19. Mr and Mrs Bernard drew my attention to a number of properties that had aspects of the design of their replacement windows. These were on Howard Drive and on adjacent streets. They also directed me to other examples on Howard Drive at the site visit.
20. These examples fell into two categories. Some were original or in accordance with the original design for the building, for example I was directed to properties or group of properties that had bow or bay windows as part of the original design. The analysis of these examples is set out in the Foundation's report to me and I have no reason to disagree with its conclusions.
21. For the remainder of the examples, I am advised by the Foundation in their report, and by subsequent enquiry about the examples that I was directed to on the day, that the examples of replacement windows that were bow or bay windows where there had previously been a window in the plane of the wall are all known to the Foundation. Similarly, the Foundation is aware of where window bars or leaded lights had been incorporated where there had previously been none.

22. In each instance the owners of the properties had been contacted and, where appropriate, measures taken to ensure that the windows will revert to something similar to the originals.
23. Having considered the changes both in terms of the property and its immediate neighbour and in the context of the wider character of the area, I consider that the replacement windows to the front elevation of 78 Howard Drive do not uphold the design principles. The installation of leaded lights and the ground floor bow window are particularly harmful.
24. It is concluded that, in terms of the Heritage Foundation's remit to preserve the character of the Garden City by the measures set out in the Design Principles, the replacement windows are harmful to the character of the area and to the property itself.

Conclusions

25. Having read the submissions and seen the site and its context I conclude that the windows are not in accordance with the Design Principles. The appeal is dismissed.

Ruth Reed

Independent Scheme of Management Inspector