

Statement in support of the front extension to 10 Norton Way North, for the Advisory Management Committee's review into the Heritage Foundation's refused application for consent

In the illustrated design statement submitted with [REDACTED] application, we set out in detail the reasons why [REDACTED] feel our proposed extension should be considered an exception to the policy of discouraging front extensions. [REDACTED] respectfully ask for a careful reading of that document.

The letter informing [REDACTED] of the refusal of [REDACTED] application gives the reason, "Front extensions are discouraged."

The "Design Principles for the Heritage Character Area" makes clear that although front extensions are discouraged, there can be exceptions. It goes on to list the qualities such exceptions should possess, as follows:

"Front extensions should be consistent with the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and matching materials, and have balanced proportions and scale."

"Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the appearance of a building and the street scene. Therefore, all proposed roof pitches and design of the roof and roof line should be consistent with the original roof design of the house."

"Design shall respond to and harmonise with the individual qualities of the host building and its setting."

[REDACTED] proposal for an extension would preserve the Arts and Crafts character of the house utilising materials and detailing consistent with this objective. The roof pitches and design of the extension could not be more consistent with the original roof design of the house; it will simply appear as an extrusion to part of the existing roof. The design restores the balance of the terrace and gives it renewed relevance in response to the change in its context, due to the construction of St. George's Church.

The Foundations letter goes on to say, "it is the loss of the principal elevation that cannot be supported."

The value of the principal elevation of our terrace lay in it being the focal point closing off the vista coming down from Eastholm, which was lost in 1963 with the construction of St. George's Church. Prior to this, the tile-hung gable of 10 Norton Way North (NWN) clearly balanced the asymmetries at the other end of the terrace.

The positioning of St. George's was a clever but disruptive piece of urban design that blocked the 10-14 NWN terrace from the space it had created. By doing so, it made the splayed space in front of the terrace subservient to the dominant scale of the church (see Design Statement, Figure 11). The space that had faced north towards the traffic going to the town centre now faced south towards the traffic leaving the town centre.

The new church compromised the legibility of the terrace, giving restricted views of 10 NWN and its tile-hung gable, and giving it an ambivalence within the minor road of Common

View. ■■■ believe the original design objectives of Bennett and Bidwell have been undermined to such an extent that the current form of the terrace is ill-suited to its radically changed context. Modifying the elevation, as ■■■ propose, will give new relevance to the terrace and be a positive piece of restorative conservation.

The refusal letter continues: "The terrace is balanced throughout by the strength of the simple rendered gable projections and the proposal would challenge this balanced design, unsettling the whole." ■■■ disagree with this assertion. The rendered gables do provide a dominant framework but, while they are symmetrical in plan, they are on a sloping site, which prevents the symmetry from manifesting in three dimensions. Bennett and Bidwell's solution to this was to introduce counterbalancing asymmetries. The asymmetries finally give balance to the entire design, and the tile-hung gable is the sole asymmetry to the left of the line of symmetry centred on the front door of 12 NWN. By restricting the views of the tile-hung gable, St George's diminished the balance of the elevation Bennett and Bidwell sought. ■■■ proposal restores the balance of the elevation by giving the tile-hung gable greater prominence within its new context.

Although the house and its terrace are noted by the Heritage Foundation as being of special architectural or historical interest, it is not a listed building. It is certainly a building with character, and ■■■ are very pleased to live in it, but it has flaws, particularly in those parts associated with the tile-hung gable (see Design Statement, "Flaws in the Diamond"). By moving the tile-hung gable forward, ■■■ will not only be improving and repairing the urban fabric, ■■■ will also be eliminating the historic flaws in the building which manifest in the elevation.

Before submitting ■■■ proposal to North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and the Heritage Foundation, the views of the other residents of the terrace and of 1 Common View were sought. None raised any concerns. Indeed, another neighbour knocked on ■■■ door after seeing the proposal on the NHDC's website to compliment ■■■ on a proposal that improved rather than detracted from the character of the area. ■■■ is an architect we had never met before but who nevertheless offered to write a letter in support of the scheme.

The NHDC's planning consent to ■■■ scheme was given after receiving no comments from the public or consultees. One of the consultees was the Heritage Foundation. No requests were made for any changes to the proposal, and, notably, the house is in the NHDC's conservation area. The Development and Conservation Manager therefore signed their consent.

■■■ sincerely believe that this proposal will benefit ■■■ house, the terrace, the church, and the local townscape. ■■■ therefore ask the committee to examine the Heritage Foundation's refused consent in light of the reasons outlined in this statement and the design statement included in ■■■ proposal.

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