

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made 24 May 2022

**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 1 June 2022

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## **Appeal Reference RR/2022/013**

**10 Norton Way North, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 1BX**

- The appeal is made by [REDACTED] against refusal of consent under the Scheme of Management of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for the application submitted on 24 June 2021.
  - Consent was refused by the Heritage Advice Service on 22 July 2021. It was reviewed by the Advisory Management Committee on 11 November 2021 and the decision to refuse was upheld. This was upheld by the Householder Applications Committee on 10 December 2021.
  - The development proposed is a two-storey front extension, dormer window and new chimney to side elevation.
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## **Decision**

1. The appeal against the refusal of an application for a two-storey front extension, dormer window and new chimney to side elevation is dismissed.

## **Main Issue**

2. The main issue in this case is the impact the first-floor front extension would have on the surrounding area and on the terrace of houses.

## **Reasons**

3. 10 Norton Way North is the north easterly end property of a terrace of three designed by Robert Bennett and Benjamin Wilson Bidwell in 1913. The firm of architects is cited by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation as a firm that maintained a remarkably high and consistent design standard between

1905 and 1939. The house lies in a Heritage Character Area and is a property listed as one of special interest.

4. The terrace is located at the junction of Norton Way North and Common View and is splayed, number 12 in the middle faces the junction, number 14 is cranked so that the principal elevation faces Norton Way North and number 10 is similarly angled to face Common View.
5. The site of the terrace falls to the south and the ridgeline is stepped at the party wall between numbers 12 and 14. The pattern of fenestration and eaves line are irregular. The two end properties have different roof lines, number 14 has a side gable and number 10 has a secondary front-facing gable which descends to the ground floor eaves line and is clad in clay plain tiles, matching the roofs of the terrace.
6. The informality of the grouping is held together with four white-painted gables. The centre two have only a nominal projection from the elevation of number 12, the two larger side gables, angled to face the roads, extend a room depth from the two end houses. This lends a strong symmetry to the group and is a defining feature of this important terrace within the Garden City.
7. The terrace is screened from the road by an evergreen hedge to number 12 and 14 but the gables are still visible above this. The front gable to number 10 remains clearly visible from the adjacent roads.
8. The original context of the terrace shown on the 1918 estate plan relative to the houses to the north along Norton Way North, has been lost with the construction of St George's church in 1963, whose striking triangular form asserts a strong presence on the road junction. Its location restricts views of the terrace when approaching from the north and disrupts the original informal building line of the houses which are set back from Norton Way North, and which was originally picked up by the front gable on 10.
9. The houses to the north of the church are now well screened by hedges and trees and their relationship to the road obscured, and the presence of the church ensures that any visual link with 10 Norton Way North is permanently lost.
10. It is not known where the gothic-style church originally proposed, was to be sited. It too may have dominated the junction, obscured views of the terrace and broken the visual link between the houses across the junction. The premise adopted by the appellant that that the original intended street layout was lost with the later construction of St Georges is not supported by any drawn or written records made available to me.
11. It does not appear that it was ever the intention for 10 Norton Way North to extend forward to the building line on Common View as shown on the 1918 plan.

12. The proposal is to bring forward the second tile-hung front gable to number 10 to form a two-storey front extension. The intention is to form a strong visual element at this end of the terrace to reassert the presence of the tiled gable from Norton Way North and re-connect the front door of the house to Norton Way North.
13. The proposed extension would disrupt the strong symmetry of the four white gables that defines the group. It would assert a dominance over the remainder of the terrace. The appellant identifies an unfortunate relationship between the secondary gable and the principal white rendered one, but the proposal only reverses the hierarchy between the two gables without improving the uncomfortable conjunction.
14. The issues of spatial context that the appellant describes caused by the dominance of the church both in form and location at the junction are overstated. The cultural and physical dominance of the church in its residential setting could be considered to justify the design choices made in 1963 and it is unclear that there is a historic basis for the allegation that the later church disrupted an intended street layout. There is no firm evidence that the original plans assumed the church would occupy a more retiring location relative to the junction.
15. The proposal would not achieve its stated objective to improve the spatial context of St Georges Church by creating a sense of enclosure, rather it would crowd the corner, disrupting the flow of residential properties around the corner into Common View.
16. In terms of the Design Principles for the Heritage Character Area, the proposed two storey front extension would be an unduly prominent form of development, disrupting the uniformity of the building line and the coherence of a terrace of houses.
17. The proposal is very well detailed and presented and it is of high design quality. The roofline replicates the existing tiled gable and is therefore consistent. The proposal also resolves some issues with the existing arrangement that has the bathroom and associated obscured glazing and drainage pipes on the front elevation. The new construction would also resolve the poor thermal performance of the original tiled hung gable.
18. The front door of number 10 is not visible from Norton Way North which can cause issues with deliveries, the proposed design would create a new porch facing this road with a diverted pathway to a new gate replicating the original that has been lost. The extension and new path and gate would result in the loss of the topiary hedge and with the high hedges of the neighbouring properties it is unclear if the proposal would significantly improve visibility of the front door from the road.

19. None of these characteristics and benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm to the coherence of the terrace that the front extension would cause. The dormer window and new chimney to the side elevation are integral to the front extension and, while they are attractive design features in themselves, they cannot be considered in isolation from the front extension which is found to be unacceptable in terms of the Design Principles.

## **Conclusions**

20. Having read the submissions and seen the site and its context I conclude that the proposed two storey front extension would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area and to the terrace. The proposal is not in accordance with the Design Principles for Heritage Character Areas.

*Ruth Reed*

Independent Scheme of Management Inspector