

REPORT FOR INDEPENDENT INSPECTOR

28 South View



1. Matter for Consideration

- 1.1 The applicant subject of this appeal sought consent for - External Wall Cladding.

2. Background

- 2.1 The subject property is a freehold property. The surrounding area is designated as Heritage Character Area.
- 2.2 28 South View forms part of a group of four detached houses by Bennett and Bidwell in 1924. It is as such considered to be a Home of Special Interest –

Nos. 24, 26, 28 and 30, four detached houses. Architects: Bennett and Bidwell (1924). Generically similar to other Bennett and Bidwell types, a simple but good-mannered original design somewhat modified by alterations in several of these. All are the types, with a feature gable projecting from a quieter hipped-roofed block, but only No. 28 retains its original natural finish pebbledash. This house is largely unaltered and is a marker against which the alterations on the others can be assessed for their impact. It appears to retain its original timber small paned casement windows, the hipped margin tiled roof of the canted bay window can be seen as an original detail, the

porch was originally recessed under a broad segmental arch to the left of the feature gable. On No. 24 and No. 30, the porch has been brought forward under a margin roof, not very successfully on the latter. The UPVC replacement windows on Nos. 24, 26 and 30 do, by and large, match the subdivisions, if not the subtleties of the original designs. The tile-creased corbels at eaves level on the feature gable are retained on all four of the houses, as is generally the clay plain tiled roof form, with ridge tiles on its hips. Chimneys are generally well detailed, with projecting brick bands below the setback cap, with a variety of original pots. Given their group value, these are all Buildings of Local Merit.

Homes of Special Interest are important in identifying and respecting the overall estate development. Bennett and Bidwell were prolific local Architects, contributing to the character and appearance of the new developing Early Garden City. South View sits within the core of Letchworth and the majority of the houses have been identified as Homes of Special Interest.

2.3 The property has been the subject of the most recent applications:

Nature of Works	Outcome
Single storey side extension plus detached single garage	Approved June 2009
Replacement windows and rear door	Approved September 2009
Loft conversion with dormer window to rear plus replacement roof	Approved November 2013
PV panels to garage roof	Approved June 2021
Porch to front elevation	Approved June 2024

2.4 A Certificate of Proposed Lawful Use or Development ref 24/02603/LDCP was refused in January 2025 for:
Infill existing covered porch area. Erection of front porch canopy and installation of external insulation and re-render as existing.

2.5 Location plan and Photographs are available in **Appendix A**.
Supporting documents referenced in the report are included in the supporting documents folder

3. Application

3.1 Following pre-application advice, an application was received for: - porch to front elevation and external wall cladding in April 2024. Following advice, the application was split and dealt with under different application numbers. The front porch was approved in June 2024 and does not form part of this appeal.

- 3.2 The information provided for the external cladding was a computer-generated plan and specifications prepared by the owner. There were many omissions on these specifications, and we advised the owner in an e-mail on 17th April that further information would be required. A second version of the proposals was submitted on 22nd April 2024
- 3.3 Following team discussions, on 3rd May 2024 the Case Officer reached out to request further information and advised that it may be beneficial to have a survey carried out and a scheme proposal drawn up by a professional from the industry.
- 3.4 On 21st May 2024, the applicant wrote to the Head of Property querying the request for further information.
- 3.5 On 6th June 2024, the Head of Property responded and advised that the application would be considered in its current form, in line with their wishes.
- 3.6 The application was refused on 6th June 2024.
- 3.7 The homeowner sought a review by the AMC on 4th September 2024. The AMC unanimously upheld the decision of HAS and it was refused at the Householders Application Committee on 18th October 2024.

4. Design Principles

- 4.1 The Scheme of Management under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 in the covenants section at point 6 states:

Restriction on further development

6. Any owner shall not carry out any development redevelopment or alteration materially affecting external appearance of the enfranchised property or of any building or structure thereon save with the written consent of the Corporation (which shall not be unreasonably withheld) and in accordance with plans drawings and specifications previously submitted to and approved by the Corporation. Any such development redevelopment or alteration shall be made in accordance with the approved plans drawings and specifications and shall be carried out in a good substantial and workmanlike manner with sound and proper materials.

- 4.2 The Design Principles for the Heritage Character Area state –

Pg 4 – Homes of Special Interest

This study identified over 1,700 Homes of Special Interest based on their current attributes such as:

- Exceptional design.*
- Historic value - for example a competition or exhibition cottage and homes designed by important architects.*

- *A Heritage Character Area home that retains many original features.*
- *Properties located in areas which reflect the town and country ethos of the Garden City.*

These Homes of Special Interest, in many cases have individual design features, making it difficult to apply general Design Principles. Furthermore, the importance of these homes warrants special attention when it comes to considering and implementing exterior alterations. Throughout these Design Principles you will notice many notes highlighting where Homes of Special Interest may be subject to different criteria.

A full list of these homes can be found on pages 38-43. If your property is included, we strongly recommend you seek advice from the Heritage Advisory Team prior to planning your external work.

We will work with you and your architects and contractors to ensure we reach a solution that is sympathetic to your unique home, whilst seeking to meet your requirements. Contacting us early may help save you time and money.

Pg 20 – External Wall Insulation

External wall cladding can also have a negative impact on the appearance and character of a historic building.

Heritage Character Area homes are often characterised by detailing, for example stringcourses, window head and cill detailing, cornicing and decorative plaques. Applying wall insulation externally can cover up these important features or alter reveals and the relationship of the roof with the house. Therefore, present systems are normally damaging to the character of the property and its context.

Even the appearance of a relatively plain house can be affected by deeper window and door reveals. Present external wall cladding systems are approximately 50mm thick. When applied to a single house in a pair of semi-detached, a terrace or a group, the effect can be detrimental to the appearance and cohesion of the group.

Therefore, external cladding of Heritage Character Area homes will only be supported when:

- *the detailing and features of the property, including the brick and render finish, string courses, window and door reveals, are maintained or carefully recreated.*
- *the house is detached.*
- *all of the properties in a pair of semi-detached, terrace or group, collectively and simultaneously implement the works.*
- *External cladding is not acceptable on Homes of Special Interest.*

5. Issues

- 5.1 The information provided for the external cladding was a computer-generated plan and specifications prepared by the owner. There were many

omissions on these specifications, and we advised the owner in an e-mail on 3rd May 2024 requesting further information to aid with our consideration of the application as well as suggesting that it may be beneficial to have a survey carried out and a scheme proposal drawn up by a professional from the industry.

5.2 The applicant was also of the view that architectural detailing such as drip moulds, corbelling etc were unnecessary and as such this raised concerns over how well the proposals would respect and replicate the original appearance of the property.

5.3 The original design as suggested in the description at 2.2 is

“Simple but good-mannered”

the architectural detailing used as such plays an important role in elevating what is a very simple design. From the chimney corbelling to the stack, the drip mouldings over windows and the tiled creased corbels to the roof gable, detailing to the door and window openings and around the bay window all add to the overall design. The application gave no thought to such design features which would have resulted in a very stark characterless and bland building which would not respect this Bennett and Bidwell house design.

5.4 Whilst trying to negotiate the scheme, the applicants objected to the requests for more detailing and as such the application was considered on its merits and it was felt that the proposals did not override the central Design Principle that external wall cladding is not acceptable on Homes of Special Interest.

5.5 The application was refused on 6th June 2024.

6. AMC Comments

6.1 The Committee sympathised with the homeowner’s concerns but agreed that the proposed works are contrary to the Design Principles.

6.2 The Committee advised the homeowner on site that more detailed drawings would be required, due to the importance of the property and the group value of the four properties.

6.3 The Committee felt that this proposal has highlighted the requirement to progress our advice on sustainable products.

6.4 The Committee members were unanimous in supporting the decision to refuse consent, made by the Heritage Advice Service.

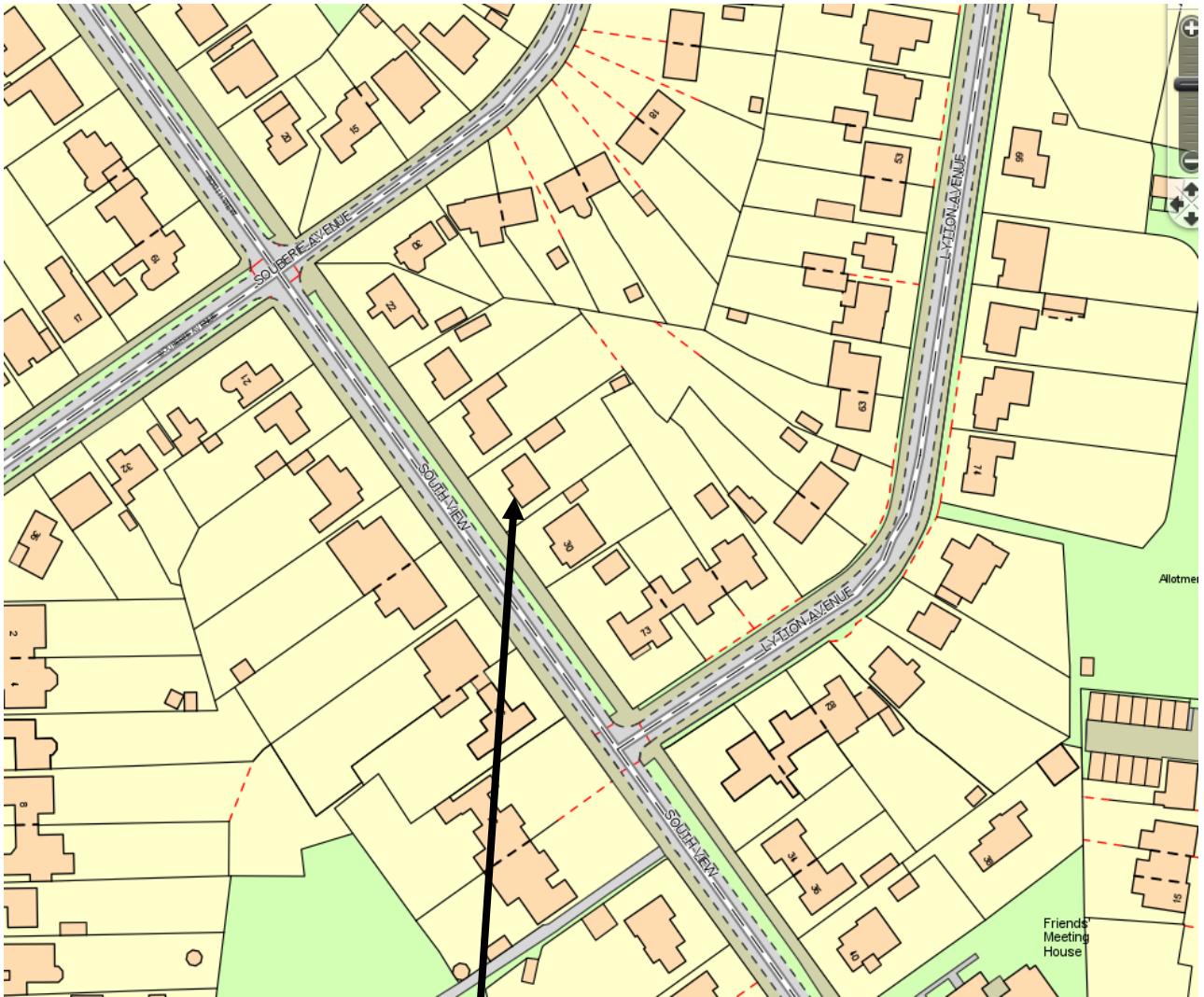
7. HAC Comments

- 7.1 The Committee carried out a site visit to the property and met with the agent.
- 7.2 The Committee noted the AMC's comments and recommendation.
- 7.3 One member of HAC declared an interest and did not partake in the site meeting or discussions.
- 7.4 The AMC chairman reported to the Committee that they were of the view that the applicant had not considered the implications of the proposed cladding; or the loss of the property's original architectural features; and felt the proposal to be unacceptable, due to these reasons.
- 7.5 The HAC agreed with the AMC and upheld the refusal.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The Heritage Foundation appreciate the desire of the homeowner to install insulation as part of a push towards more sustainable living but remain concerned about the impact that such a drastic and poorly thought-out scheme would have on this Home of Special Interest. If consent were granted for such works, it would also have a cumulative impact on the character and appearance of other Homes of Special Interest and the Heritage Character Area itself.
- 8.2 Overall, it is our view that the application represents a clear breach of the Design Principles, which have been carefully formulated to avoid this type of alteration. The application fails to preserve the character and appearance of the existing property and the Heritage Character Area.
- 8.3 It is therefore respectfully requested that this appeal is dismissed.

Appendix A – Location plan and photographs



Applicant

