

Dear Ms Reed,

We are writing to formally appeal the Heritage Foundation's decision to reject the proposed colour of our new door. The proposed change of colour is within the Design Principles, was accepted by their pre-advice service, is in line with the rest of Letchworth and another property on our street. At no point have the Heritage been able to provide us with a reason why our proposed colour has been declined.

Issue:

We live in a 1980's build property, the original wooden door, like the vast majority of properties on our street, was replaced a few years ago with a uPVC door. We would like to replace this uPVC door with a wooden door to reflect the original material.

We had selected a style that was very similar to our current door, and indeed to others on the street, and we selected this in the colour of French Grey, RAL7032.

We carefully read the "Design Principles for the Modern Character Area" and were confident that the proposed door was in line with the policy. We also knew it was consistent with the rest of Letchworth (in fact, a neighbour on the parallel road has the same door in the same colour). However, we followed the guidance and contacted the Heritage for their pre-advice service to confirm this. The pre-advice service emailed us to say that our proposal was "acceptable".

The guidance said we should be sure of all our design choices before submitting the application as changes may not be allowed after it had been submitted. As such we tried several different paint samples on our current uPVC door to ensure it suited the property. Once we were happy with it, we painted over the paint swatches with our desired colour and submitted the formal application requesting the new door in this colour.

However, to our surprise both the colour and design of the door was denied by the Heritage.

This was later partly reversed by the Heritage Foundation's internal appeal service, where they accepted the design of the new wooden door, noting it was in line with the policy, however they refused the colour stating it must be brown.

This refusal to allow us to change the colour is not in line with their guidance, their advice service or with what others have allowed others to do, as detailed below:

Design Principles:

The Heritage Foundation states that properties in Letchworth are characterised by the Heritage Foundation as "Heritage Character Properties" or "Modern Character Properties". These are the only two types of properties noted, and they are not broken down further into sub-categories. We fall within the Modern Character Area.

The statement regarding the colour of doors in the Modern Character Area states: "External doors shall be finished in a solid single colour to respect the character of the original house and its context".

This guidance for doors differs from the Design Principles for window, fascias etc where it states it must be the “original colour”. The fact the Heritage have chosen to not state it must be the original colour is an intentional decision to allow different coloured doors, and they have followed this through by allowing owners in both the Modern and Heritage areas to change the colours of their doors throughout Letchworth – namely by not requiring the original colour and thus allowing neighbours to have different coloured doors, including in terrace/semi-detached properties.

“Respecting the house and its context” is very subjective and broad, however the subjectivity principle should be adopted equally and fairly amongst all residents. The Modern Design Principles is for all properties in the “Modern Character Area” and as such all Modern Character Properties should be held to the same rules, and standards. The fact other properties (including terrace and semi-detached houses) in the Modern Character Area have been allowed different coloured doors shows that the Heritage are interpreting this statement differently based on the street your house is situated on.

If the Heritage wish to base their guidance on a street-by-street basis then the area Design Principles should be re-written to reflect this, and streets such as Woolston Avenue, which seem to have different rules applied should be highlighted as such. However, we are requesting this under the way in which the rules are currently written and as such it should be permitted, in line with all other streets in Letchworth.

#### Advice Service:

We contacted the Heritage, following their guidance online, to try and have a meeting regarding understanding changing our door. The website had noted this was advised before putting in any application.

When contacted they stated no one was available to meet, but we were given an email address. We sent an email detailing our address and the changes we wished to make to the door. This included a whole paragraph on the colour including images of the current brown door and a photo of the colour of door we wished to have.

We received an email from the Heritage stating that what we had proposed would be “acceptable”. We would be happy to forward on this email to yourself.

We have spoken to a neighbour on Woolston Avenue who changed their door and windows last year. They also followed the guidance and spoke to the Heritage before putting in an application. They were told they could have her door in “...any colour, the Heritage do not stipulate what colour a person’s front door should be”. This was different to the windows where they were told it must be brown, in line with the original windows. They happened to choose a brown door, however the advice they were given was consistent with what we were told, with the rest of Letchworth and the guidance as currently written. They are happy to corroborate this with yourself.

#### Woolston Avenue:

Woolston Avenue was built in the 1980s. The properties were built to all be different from one another. They are all detached properties and have used different brick colours, tiles, cladding, different designs, layouts, different sizes, different landscaping/garages etc. to make each house look

unique. We assume this was to reflect the Arts and Crafts ethos of the original houses in a modern context.

Over the years several of the properties have had extensions (including garage conversions), new front gardens etc. so the frontage has changed even more. The vast majority of the windows and doors have been replaced and as such there is no longer a unified design here either. Most of the doors are currently uPVC brown, i.e. they are no longer original wooden doors in the old design. However, one of neighbours changed their door to a black door a few years ago, as such they aren't even the same colour.

Trying to force the street to keep the same coloured door is not in keeping with the rest of Letchworth, the Arts and Crafts ethos, the Design Principles, or the way the street was devised. The properties are not cookie cutter versions of one another, and Woolston Avenue is being held to a different standard than the rest of the town who have been allowed to express their individuality.

We recently hired a Letchworth based architect, he told us when we informed him of our address that the Heritage had "a thing" against Woolston Avenue and it was very hard to do anything with the properties there, regardless of if it was in line with the Design Principles as they would always focus on the subjective part of the guidance to refuse applications on our street. He noted he had struggled with applications on our street where on other streets he had had no issues.

The Heritage are a charitable foundation whose function is to protect the properties and residents of Letchworth, they should be unbiased and use the Principles fairly across the town. They should not choose to interpret the Principles differently because they have "a thing" against a certain street.

#### Other properties in Letchworth:

Every street in Letchworth has different coloured doors, it is part of the charm of Letchworth showing the individuality of the properties. We could fill this letter with hundreds of examples of this, however walking/driving down any street in Letchworth will show this.

Woolston Ave is a cul-de-sac off Lawrence Avenue, another street in the Modern Character Area. We have attached photographs of the properties on Lawrence Avenue, as you can see almost every house on that street has different coloured doors. Unlike Woolston Avenue, Lawrence Avenue's properties are mostly semi-detached and built in the same style as one another. Logic would suggest these all once had the same coloured doors. However, even these semi-detached properties all have different coloured doors now. Over the last 3 years we have seen several of these doors repainted and replaced. This is typical of the streets in Letchworth.

Woolston Ave also joins on to Berkley, this street is of a similar age to Woolston Avenue and is filled with bungalows built in an identical style to one another. Again, over the last few years the doors have been replaced with different coloured doors.

Parker's Close is probably the most similar to Woolston Avenue in terms of style. The properties are the same design as those on Woolston Ave. Most doors on this road have been replaced and now have different coloured doors from one another.

We have also attached images of the "original" properties on Neville Road. These are the original Garden City properties that have the plaques on them noting their "Special Interest". From the images you can see all these properties have different coloured doors too, including semi-detached properties.

We have also attached an image of the new build terrace town houses on Neville Road, these are terrace houses and originally had the same-coloured doors however recently residents have changed the colour of their doors.

You can also go on Rightmove and see the array of different coloured doors on Letchworth properties. Properties up for sale have been approved by the Heritage for sale.

We have many friends in Letchworth, several of these friends have changed their door, including the colour, over the last few years. Some of these were the original wooden doors on the Heritage Character Properties. None of them came up with any resistance from the Heritage when making the changes even when their semi-detached neighbours had a different colour.

Regardless of whether you are one of the oldest properties in Letchworth, one of the newest, in the "Heritage Character Area" or "Modern Character Area" the Heritage have allowed all the residents to change the colour of their door. Singling out Woolston Avenue is unfair, the Heritage have been unable to give any explanation for why this road has been treated differently from the other streets and why they have chosen to interpret the guidance differently for this road. All houses within the Modern Character Area should be treated the same, as per the written policy.

#### Special Interest:

We would also note that since asking for our case to be raised to yourself we have received a letter informing us we must change our current door back to the previous brown. This was not an issue (it has been that colour for almost a year) until we asked to bring our case to an independent review.

#### Conclusion:

The purpose of putting the Design Principles in writing is so it is clear to everyone what the rules are. It is also to ensure that regardless of the individual they are treated equally. We do not believe the decision to reject our new coloured door is fair or in line with the Design Principles.

The Design Principles are being interpreted differently by the Heritage for our request than from what they have in every other street in Letchworth. Woolston Avenue is being held to a different standard than the rest of the town, including the original houses. The Heritage should be an unbiased organisation that look to fairly protect the properties and people within Letchworth, they should not use subjective wording to single out an individual or street.

Our current door is a uPVC door, that is not similar to the original door in any way. There is no "heritage" to protect here.

The fact other properties on our street have changed their door colour shows that the Heritage are not even being consistent to those within Woolston Avenue.

We are not asking for special treatment; we are merely asking that the Heritage are consistent with their rules throughout Letchworth and that we are not discriminated against.

Yours sincerely,