



The Planning Inspectorate

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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 December 2017

by Michael Evans BA MA MPhil DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 22 December 2017

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**Appeal Ref: APP/V2255/D/17/3183399**

**28 High Street, Queenborough ME11 5AA**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Dale Blake against the decision of Swale Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 17/502840/FULL was refused by notice dated 8 August 2017.
  - The development proposed is insulation and timber cladding to the rear, side and front of the property.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is whether the development has preserved or enhanced the character or appearance of the Queenborough Conservation Area.

### Reasons

3. The buildings within the Conservation Area vary in matters such as their design details, form and materials. However, the architectural quality of the buildings is, nevertheless, an important element in the special interest of the Area. The appeal concerns a two storey property at one of the ends of a small terrace. Prior to the alteration the subject of this appeal, which has already taken place, the overall terrace of three properties had a particularly cohesive and unified appearance. This derived from the significant degree of consistency with regard to matters such as the facing brickwork, front building line and the arches above the windows, as well as the hipped roof form. As a result, the terrace made a positive contribution to the architectural quality of the Area, despite not being a Listed Building or designated as a locally listed building.
  4. However, the timber cladding provides an abrupt and discordant contrast with the brickwork of the other two properties. The obscuring of the brick arches over the windows at the front has further exacerbated this mismatch. This has resulted in the terrace being unbalanced, with an undue loss of cohesion. The altered dwelling is an incongruous presence in the context of the host terrace to the detriment of the streetscene, regardless of the varied design and timber cladding found elsewhere in the Area. Measures such as painting the cladding or adding detailing would not prevent the adverse unbalancing impact. In any case, it is the development that has already taken place which is the subject of this appeal.
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Appeal Decision APP/V2255/D/17/3183399

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5. The Appellant has indicated particular buildings on a plan, including a terrace where the three dwellings have different materials at the front, comprising painted brickwork, render and timber cladding. That with timber cladding differs from the others due to having a dormer addition and higher roofline, distinguishing this overall building from the host terrace in this case. In any event, I do not have any evidence to show that a comparably uniform original terrace has been unbalanced due to decisions made by the Council, either in relation to this other terrace or any other properties. It has not therefore been shown that the Council's decision making has been unreasonably inconsistent.
6. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development has been detrimental to the architectural integrity of the host terrace and diminished the positive contribution that it made to the Conservation Area. In consequence, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area has been adversely affected and not preserved or enhanced.
7. There is conflict with Swale Borough Local Plan 2017 Policies CP4, DM14, DM16 and DM33. This arises in relation to matters such as the intention to secure high quality design, conserving and enhancing the built environment, preserving architectural features of interest and paying special attention to the use of materials. There is also conflict with advice in the Council's supplementary planning guidance, Conservation Areas, that alterations should respect existing materials and match them in texture and colour.
8. In relation to designated heritage assets, the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) indicates that where there would be harm that is less than substantial, it must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Although less than substantial harm would arise, considerable importance and weight must still be attached to it. This is necessary to reflect the statutory duty of paying special consideration to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.
9. My attention is drawn to subsidised regeneration works carried out in the Borough to improve poor levels of energy efficiency. However, this is said to have not happened in Queenborough where residents have had to undertake their own works. It is claimed that the insulation and cladding has made the host property significantly more thermally efficient. Despite policy support for this in order to mitigate climate change, the extent of the improvement has not been quantified and there is no evidence that this could not have been achieved in a less visually damaging way by other means such as loft insulation, for example. I therefore afford this consideration relatively limited weight so that it is significantly outweighed by the resultant harm and the development is contrary to the policies of the Framework in respect of heritage assets.
10. The Appellant has expressed concern about the Council's handling of this matter and an unwillingness to negotiate. However, neither this nor matters such as the absence of complaints or objections can confer acceptability on the development which I must consider strictly on its own planning merits. Because of the detrimental effect on the Conservation Area and taking account of all other matters raised it is determined that the appeal fails.

*M Evans*

INSPECTOR