

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Mark Simmons.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/02728/LBC	Installation of timber French door to rear elevation following removal of existing window and internal alterations. Replace existing UPVC soil vent pipe with cast iron.	21 Lytton Avenue Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3HT

Submitted Plan Nos

A105 A100 A010

1.0 Policies

HE1	Designated heritage assets
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SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment
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2.0 **Site History**

2.1 **24/01344/GEN - Internal renovation work** **Email response 08.10.2024**

24/01751/LBC - Removal of double-glazed uPVC windows and reinstatement of original style single glazed casement windows.
CCON 10.10.2024

3.0 **Policies**

3.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024):

- ☐ **135 c)** (*sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment*),
- ☐ **207** (*local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting*)
- ☐ **210** (*desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*),
- ☐ **212** (*great weight should be given to the asset's conservation*),
- ☐ **213** (*clear and convincing justification*), and
- ☐ **215** (*harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*).

4.0 **Representations**

4.1 **Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation – No comments received.**

Press and site notices – No comments received.

5.0 **Planning Considerations**

5.1 **Site & Surroundings**

5.1.1 Nos.19 to 25 Lytton Avenue form one entry on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and are grade II listed and were exhibited alongside nos. 7 to 17 Lytton Avenue (also grade II) in the 1907 Urban Cottages and Homesteads Exhibition. Whereas nos. 7 to 17 Lytton Avenue was awarded first prize in class III of the Urban Cottages Competition, nos. 19 to 25 received no prize and are described in the list entry as:

1907 by Courtenay Crickmer. Terrace based on cottage vernacular models. Exhibited in the 1907 Urban Cottages Exhibition. Two storeys. Two windows each. Symmetrical facade with jettied, paired bays to first floor. Tiled roofs with roughcast stacks. Roughcast wall with tile string at first floor level. Tile-hung, bracketted jetties. Two and three light casement windows with glazing bars. Boarded doors. Included for group value.

- 5.1.2 Dr Mervyn Miller (regarded as an authoritative voice on Garden Cities) assessed this terrace saying:

Four cottages with twenty-foot frontages but only two bedrooms. Large front living room and rear scullery (with folding bath). Externally rather fussy – particularly the scatter of subsidiary windows on the front elevation. By contrast the rear elevations are bold and basic.

- 5.1.3 It is noted that C.M. Crickmer's original drawings of the terrace are available at the Letchworth Collection and that extracts of these are included with the application and show the building's original design.

- 5.1.4 It is noted that the rear of this terrace has been affected by several changes including:

- **No.19** – a rear conservatory in association with erection of 3.2m boundary wall under refs: 15/01714/1HH & 15/01810/1LB;
- **No.23** – some windows previously altered;
- **No.25** – front and rear doors replaced under ref: 09/02024/1LB. In my report on this application I said: *"Whilst I am reluctant to support the retention of the rear door, I am mindful that the rear elevation has previously been altered and double-glazed, Upvc windows installed Whilst not forming part of this application, the rear windows were either installed pre-listing (07/09/79), therefore, did not require listed building consent or were installed post-listing, in which case there is no history of listed building consent having been granted and the windows would, therefore, be unauthorised"*.

5.2 Proposal

- 5.2.1 The proposal is to ***'Installation of timber French door to rear elevation following removal of existing window and internal alterations. Replace existing UPVC soil vent pipe with cast iron.'***

5.3 Key Issues

- 5.3.1 The main issue is to consider the impact of the works on the special character of the listed building and the character and appearance of the Letchworth Conservation Area.

- 5.3.2 As noted at 2.1 above, listed building consent has been granted to replace two double-glazed uPVC windows with original style single-glazed casement windows thus is not an alteration based on seeking to improve the property's thermal performance but rather to address unauthorised previous alterations in a sympathetic manner. The proposed windows will have a beneficial impact on the property and on the listed group, which will enhance its significance.

- 5.3.3 The Heritage Statement submitted with the current application provides the following justification for the installation of French doors to the rear elevation:

To increase light and access into the existing lounge area It is proposed to remove the existing double casement window to the rear of the room, cut out the existing masonry at low level to receive a new painted timber French Door. The existing lintel and tile creasing above it will be retained. The new door will be timber framed with flush casements, Georgian bars and single glazing in keeping with the existing retained original window

5.3.4 It is noted that during the last two decades, NHDC has granted LBC on no less than 30 occasions for French Doors on listed buildings. This does not itself justify approval in this case as each application is considered on its own merits.

5.3.5 There is one case where the replacement of a ground floor rear window with timber French doors was refused and related to 217 Icknield Way, Letchworth (appn ref: 08/02238/1LB). The subsequent appeal was dismissed on 14 May 2009 and the following extracts from the Inspector's report are noted (my emphasis in bold):

*2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed works on the special architectural character and historic interest of the building, which is listed Grade II. The dwelling is a **remarkably unaltered example of one of the first cottages built in Letchworth as part of the Cheap Cottages Exhibition in 1905, in which it received a prize.** It retains its external appearance and many of its internal features including joinery and fittings. **All the original windows remain in place.** The main living room, where it is proposed to replace one set of windows with a 'French' door, has a pleasing sense of symmetry around the central hearth.*

*3. The double doors would appear quite different to the existing windows in detailing as well as size. More importantly, the rear elevation would change in character. In my opinion, this would be to the extent that the special architectural interest of the building, **which derives largely from its unaltered state, would be substantially diminished.** Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 Planning and the Historic Environment advises at paragraph C.2 that the characteristics of distinct types of building should be retained, especially those that are particular to the locality. It further states at paragraph C.9 that door and window openings should not be altered in their proportions and details.*

5.3.6 The Heritage Statement offers the following justification for the removal of internal walls at ground floor & formation of bathroom at first floor:

The existing cottage is by today's standards very small. The kitchen area in particular is too small to fit all the appliances and storage required for modern day living. To form a bigger kitchen area, it is proposed to remove the internal walls forming the rear lobby and the wall between the existing kitchen and bathroom, some of which is not original. The kitchen will then be extended into the existing bathroom area. The smaller rear bedroom will then be repurposed as a family bathroom. The original building fabric will not be altered at first floor. New sanitary ware and finishes will be installed. The existing soil vent pipe will be replaced with a new cast iron soil vent pipe and new connections made for the bathroom.

5.3.7 It is considered that the proposed internal alterations are not considered harmful to the listed building's special character.

5.4 **Alternative scheme**

5.4.1 Not applicable.

5.5 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

5.5.1 Not applicable.

5.6 **Conclusion**

5.6.1 The significance of this terrace is that it is designed by Courtenay Crickmer, formed part of the 1907 exhibition and possesses group value. The front elevation is

considered more significant than the rear due to its position in the streetscene. However, the rhythm of original openings at the rear is retained even though several original windows and doors have been lost from the Crickmer designed scheme.

- 5.6.2 It is acknowledged that the proposal will result in the loss of some original fabric and there is a case to say that the loss of the ground floor rear window and enlarging the opening will occasion harm to the listed building's special character. Having said that, the proposed French doors would be discretely located and at 5.1.4 above it is noted that the rear elevation of this terrace has been altered over time, so this is a more on-balance decision.
- 5.6.3 It is concluded that no.21 Lytton Avenue is different to the case considered at no.217 Icknield Way and that the case for resisting listed building consent is marginal. On balance, it is considered that the proposal will neither harm the listed building's special character or harm the character or appearance of the Letchworth Conservation Area. The works are considered to be **UNOBJECTIONABLE** and satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031.
- 5.6.4 Finally, the award-winning terrace of nos. 7 to 17 is more intact and a favourable recommendation on this application should not be regarded as setting a precedent for similar alterations to this terrace should consent be sought.

6.0 **Recommendation**

- 6.1 That listed building consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following condition:

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 4 February 2025	