

Design and Heritage Statement

Proposed Replacement of Timber Cladding to Dormer Cheeks with Code 6 Lead

30 Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1LA



1. Introduction

This Design and Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of proposed works to the existing dormer windows at 30 Bancroft, Hitchin, SG5 1LA.

The proposed works comprise the removal of rotting timber cladding from the sides of the existing dormers and its replacement with Code 6 lead sheeting fixed over plywood, with a ventilated space provided behind. The works are required because the existing timber cladding has deteriorated and is no longer performing adequately as a weathering material.

The proposal is limited to the external cladding to the dormer cheeks. The existing dormer windows are in good condition and will not be affected by the works. The internal plaster to the dormer cheeks and ceilings will also remain unaffected. The existing roof and cornice will be retained without alteration.

Where the existing cladding is removed, and where it is practically achievable without disturbing significant fabric, lambswool insulation will be added between the existing timbers to improve thermal efficiency.

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2. The Listed Building and Heritage Context

30 Bancroft is a Grade II listed building located on the west side of Bancroft, Hitchin. The Historic England list description reads:

“5255 BANCROFT

1. (West Side) No 30
TL 1829 SE 4/11 13.4.51. II GV
2. Mid C18 brick house of 2 storeys. A section to the North, with a large cross-gable, has been completely rebuilt. The main brickwork, excepting patches of restoration, is of header courses in blue seconds, dressed with red. Moulded wooden eaves below steep roof in modern slate with modern dormers. 5 windows (centre window blank). Modern door in simple old architrave with slight hood. Flush set sash windows, ground floor cambered arches, first floor glazing bars and flat arches. Porch with Roman Ionic fluted columns. Left central glazed door in architrave surround under dentil cornice on consoles.”

The building’s significance derives principally from its mid-18th-century brickwork, proportions, sash windows, eaves detail, door surrounds, porch and its contribution to the historic streetscape and group value of Bancroft.

The list description specifically identifies the roof as being of modern slate and the dormers as modern. The dormers are therefore not understood to be original historic fabric, although they form part of the current roofscape appearance of the listed building.

3. Existing Condition

The existing timber cladding to the sides of the dormers is rotting and has reached the end of its useful life. Its continued retention would risk ongoing deterioration, reduced weather protection and potential future damage to adjacent fabric.



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The works are therefore necessary as a repair and maintenance measure. The proposal seeks to address the defective material in a durable and appropriate manner while retaining the existing form and appearance of the dormers as far as possible.

4. Description of the Proposed Works

The proposed works are as follows:

- Carefully remove the existing rotting timber cladding from the sides of the dormers.
- Retain the existing dormer windows, which are in good condition.
- Retain the internal plaster to the dormer cheeks and ceilings without disturbance.
- Retain the existing roof and cornice with no alterations.
- Install plywood backing to receive the new leadwork.
- Provide a ventilated space behind the new lead cladding to reduce the risk of condensation and trapped moisture.
- Install Code 6 lead sheeting to the dormer cheeks, detailed in accordance with good leadwork practice.
- Where the existing cladding has been removed, and if physically achievable, install lambswool insulation between the existing timbers to improve thermal efficiency.

The proposed lead will be allowed to weather naturally. It will not be painted or given an artificial finish.

5. Design Rationale

Lead is a traditional and durable material commonly used on historic buildings for roof coverings, flashings, gutters, dormer cheeks and other weathering details. It is suitable for exposed roof locations and, when detailed correctly, provides a long-lasting and visually recessive finish.

The use of Code 6 lead is proposed to provide a robust and durable weathering solution appropriate to the exposed position of the dormer cheeks. The ventilated void behind the leadwork will help ensure that moisture is not trapped within the construction and will assist the long-term performance of the dormers.

Although the existing dormer cheek cladding is timber, the dormers themselves are specifically described in the Historic England list entry as modern. The proposed replacement of defective modern timber cladding with lead therefore does not involve the loss of historic fabric.

There are also examples of lead dormers opposite the building at 91 Bancroft. The proposed use of lead is therefore consistent with the established roofscape character of Bancroft and would not appear alien or inappropriate in this setting.

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The works are limited in scope and will not alter the scale, profile, position or number of the dormers. The proposal will preserve the appearance of the roofscape while providing a more durable and appropriate weathering detail.

6. Impact on Heritage Significance

The proposed works will have no adverse impact on the special architectural or historic interest of 30 Bancroft.

The main elements of heritage significance identified in the list description, including the brickwork, sash windows, eaves, roof form, porch, door surrounds and streetscape contribution, will be retained. The existing roof and cornice will not be altered. The dormer windows themselves are in good condition and will not be affected. The internal plaster to the dormer cheeks and ceilings will also remain undisturbed.

The affected dormers are described in the listing as modern. The replacement of failing timber cladding to their sides with Code 6 lead is therefore a change to modern fabric rather than to original or significant historic fabric.

The visual effect of the works will be modest and localised. Lead is a traditional material widely associated with historic roof construction, and examples of lead dormers are present nearby, including opposite the site at 91 Bancroft. Once weathered, the lead will have a subdued appearance and will sit comfortably within the existing roofscape.

The proposal will therefore preserve the character, appearance and significance of the listed building and will not harm its setting or siting within Bancroft.

7. Thermal and Building Performance Considerations

The proposal includes the possible installation of lambswool insulation between the existing timbers where this can be achieved following removal of the defective cladding.

Lambswool is proposed because it is a breathable natural insulation material, suitable for use in traditional and historic building contexts where moisture movement and vapour permeability need to be carefully considered.

The insulation will only be installed where it can be accommodated without disturbing the existing windows, internal plaster, ceiling finishes, roof structure or cornice. The ventilated space behind the lead sheeting will be retained to ensure the new external cladding performs appropriately.

This element of the proposal will modestly improve the thermal efficiency of the dormers while avoiding harm to significant fabric.

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8. Materials and Workmanship

The replacement cladding will be carried out using Code 6 lead sheeting over suitable plywood backing, with a ventilated void behind.

All leadwork will be installed in accordance with recognised good practice, including appropriate fixing, laps, joints and allowances for thermal movement. Care will be taken to avoid damage to the existing roof covering, cornice, dormer windows and internal finishes.

Any removal will be limited to the defective timber cladding and associated failed fixings or backing where necessary. Sound fabric will be retained wherever possible.

9. Conclusion

The proposed works are repair-led, modest and carefully limited in scope. They are necessary to replace rotting timber cladding to the sides of the existing modern dormers and to provide a durable, weather-resistant and appropriate alternative.

The dormers are identified in the Historic England list description as modern, and the proposal does not affect the building's principal historic fabric, existing windows, internal plaster, roof or cornice. The use of Code 6 lead is appropriate to the roofscape context and is supported by comparable examples of lead dormers nearby, including at 91 Bancroft.

The proposal will preserve the special architectural and historic interest of 30 Bancroft, will not harm the setting or siting of the listed building, and will support the long-term maintenance and weather-tightness of the property.

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