

ITEM NUMBER: 5f

20/01014/FHA	Replacement front door
Site Address	65 Charles Street , Berkhamsted
Applicant	Mr Anthony Downie
Case Officer	Nigel Gibbs
Referral to Committee	The recommendation to support the application is contrary to Berkhamstead Town Council's view

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED**

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The proposed replacement door would preserve the Berkhamsted Conservation Area .It would be in accordance with Policies CS12 and CS27 of the Dacorum Core Strategy (2013) and saved Policy 120 of Dacorum Borough Local Plan (2004) which are generally consistent with the expectations of Part 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 No. 65 is a mid-terrace 3 bedroom Victorian two storey dwellinghouse located on the south western side of Charles Street midway between its junctions with Kitsbury Road and Boxwell Road. The site is located within Berkhamsted Conservation Area. This part is subject to an Article 4 Direction which restricts permitted development rights including the right to alter the front doors.

3.2 No.65 features a timber blue finished part glazed timber front door which is not the original.

4. PROPOSAL

4.1 The application seeks planning permission for the replacement of the existing front door with a dark grey composite grained finish.

4.2 The supporting statement explains that the door is of a poor design causing the house to being energy inefficient and draughty. Cold air draughts affect the hallway, kitchen, ground floor living room and a staircase to the first floor. There are also security issues.

4.3 It is confirmed that a composite door has a range of benefits:

- A made-to-measure door would provide far better insulation and also not warp over time unlike timber.
- Provide a far better level of security due to the strong composite door structure.
- In appearance it would be indistinguishable from the finish on a painted wooden door.
- It will last for a very long time.

4.4 The statement confirms the approach to design, being in keeping with the character of the property and the surrounding area:

- It is of a traditional Victorian style with four panels; two wooden panels at the bottom and glass panes at the top, matching the period style.

- The dark grey/black colour would complement the existing piping and guttering at the front of no. 65.
- Other similar dwellings in the surrounding area also feature composite doors at the adjoining no. 67, 19a, 21, 32a, 57, 81 and 95. There is also reference to an allowed Appeal for a front door at 10 Shrublands Road under 4/00014/13/FHA.

5. **PLANNING HISTORY**

4/02338/05/FHA- Single storey rear extension
GRA- 3rd January 2006

4/01746/05/FHA - Single storey rear extension
REF- 10th October 2005

4/00405/05FHA – Two storey rear extension
WDW -25th April 2005

4/00606/97/FHA – Demolition of ground floor rear kitchen/ toilet, construction of two storey rear extension
GRA – 16th June 1997

Appeals

4/01746/05/FHA- Single Storey rear extension – DISMISSED 28/04/06

6. **CONSTRAINTS**

Conservation Area: Berkhamsted
Article 4 Direction
Residential Area (Town): Residential Area in Town Village (Berkhamsted)

7. **REPRESENTATIONS**

Consultation responses

7.1 These are reproduced in full at Appendix A.

Neighbour notification/site notice responses

7.2 These are reproduced in full at Appendix B.

8. **PLANNING POLICIES**

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

National Planning Policy Guidance

National Design Guide

Dacorum Borough Core Strategy 2006-2031 (adopted September 2013)

Policy NP1 - Supporting Development
Policy CS1 - Distribution of Development
Policy CS4 - The Towns and Large Villages
Policy CS10 - Quality of Settlement Design

Policy CS11 - Quality of Neighbourhood Design
Policy CS12 - Quality of Site Design
Policy CS 27 - Heritage
Policy CS29 - Sustainable Design and Construction

Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1999-2011 (adopted April 2004)

Policy 118- Important Archaeological Remains
Policy 120- Development in Conservation Areas

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Area Based Policies: Berkhamsted Conservation Area

9. CONSIDERATIONS

Main Issue

- 9.1 The main planning issue in the determination of this application is the effect upon Berkhamsted Conservation Area.

Principle of Development

- 9.2 Policies CS1 and CS4 are supportive of new development within Berkhamsted.

Quality of Design / Impact on Berkhamsted Conservation Area

- 9.3 Dacorum Core Strategy Policies CS11 and CS12 require that new development is compatible with the established streetscape. This is reinforced by the design expectations for the Conservation Area as expressed through Policy CS27 and saved Dacorum Borough Local Plan Policy 120.
- 9.4 These policies reflect S72 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
- 9.5 Policy CS27 seeks to protect, conserve and if appropriate, enhance the integrity, setting and distinctiveness of heritage assets which reflects the statutory duties defined in the Act. Accordingly CS27 clarifies 'development will positively conserve and enhance the appearance and character of conservation areas'. This reinforces the expectations of saved DBLP Policy 120.
- 9.6 The NPPF's Para 193 confirms that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). NPPF's Para 194 confirms that any harm to or loss of, should be with reference to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) and should require clear and convincing justification. This is set against the NPPF's overarching emphasis upon achieving well designed places through Parts 12 and 16.
- 9.7 No.65 makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the street scene. The proposal has been carefully considered by the Design & Conservation Team (CT). This assessment has addressed the role of the existing Article 4 Direction, with reference to the quality of no. 65's existing door –albeit modern 'it is of a reasonably traditional design and

does not look out of character within the street scene'. In carrying out this assessment the CT has requested the Applicants to consider whether they would be able to install a timber door of the design selected instead of a composite door which they are unable to do. It is confirmed:

'Firstly, in relation to replacing the wonky pane of glass above the current front door, they say that *'conservation would want to see the fanlight remain and match the others in the terrace'*. We confirm that we intend to replace the fanlight to match the others in the terrace (which are also rectangular in shape above the front door).

Secondly, the conservation team asks if we would consider installing a replacement timber front door, rather than a composite one. We have looked at the option of a replacement timber door but, for the reasons explained in our supporting statement, after weighing up the various factors, we decided that a composite door was the best option. As a young family, the cost of a timber is of course a factor in this decision for us, as this was comparatively much higher than an equivalent composite door. However, we have also been advised that the composite door will look like a timber door - we have selected a design in keeping with the area, and we see from the conservation team comments that they do not object to the proposed design of the door. We also understand that composite doors offer some useful practical advantages over timber doors including in relation to security, durability and insulation as detailed in our supporting statement'

9.8 Fundamentally and very significantly CT's consideration has been in the context of the Planning Inspectorate's Appeal decision 4/00014/13/FHA to allow the installation of a composite replacement front door at no. 10 Shrublands Avenue in 2013. With due weight given to this decision the CT has advised in its 2nd Response that the proposal 'is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the property and the Berkhamsted CA in accordance with policy CS27, recommend approval'.

9.9 In allowing the Appeal, the appointed Inspector provided a very comprehensive analysis of whether the use of a composite door in replacing the non original door at No. 10 Shrublands Avenue which requires a full explanation. Key observations from the Inspector included:

-The original application was for a composite door of typical Edwardian style, similar to a small number of other replacements in the street. The Council had no objection to the design of the door but they, together with third parties, including the Town Council, considered that any replacement should be made of wood since this would have been the material traditionally used. It was considered that a composite material would introduce falseness to the building fabric and doubt was expressed that a composite door could ever look like a painted door. Planning permission was therefore granted but subject to a condition that the door be constructed of solid wood.

-In abstract the most appropriate door would be a timber door of Edwardian design. However, in this case where the original door has been lost and the replacement is not in keeping with the dwelling or the street scene, a balance needs to be struck between the benefits of a traditional material and achieving a replacement that is sympathetic in appearance, energy efficient and reasonable in cost.

- In my view the proposed door, notwithstanding the use of a composite material, would be more in keeping with the host dwelling than the existing door. From the street it would reinforce the Edwardian qualities of the dwelling and enhance the uniformity of the street scene and the proposed finish would be almost indistinguishable from the finish on a painted wooden door. On inspection it would be apparent that it was not solid timber but I consider that this would be acceptable given the overall enhancement that would be achieved.

- The Council also suggests that if one composite door is allowed then it would be difficult to resist others. However, there are already a number of composite doors in the street. Moreover, each application must be judged on its own merits. This will include an assessment of the door to be replaced. Where original doors remain there should thus be no difficulty in resisting their replacement.

- I therefore conclude on the main issue that there would be no materially detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the host dwelling or Shrublands Avenue, and that the character and appearance of the Berkhamsted Conservation Area would be preserved or enhanced if the approved replacement front door was constructed of the proposed composite material rather than of solid wood.

9.10 At the time there was a shared local consensus (the LPA, Berkhamsted Town Council and Berkhamsted Citizens Association) that a timber door should be installed. The CT was of the view in 2013 that:

‘The use of non traditional materials introduces a falseness to the building fabric and the use of composite joinery would reduce the opportunity of accurate detailing for the moulding within the door. The purpose of the article 4.2 direction is to maintain and encourage original detailing to the frontages of the house and it is considered the introduction of the front door using a composite material would diminish the architectural integrity of the building contrary to the aims of the article 4.2’.

9.11 Since PINS 2013 decision the NPPF has been updated with considerable emphasis upon the importance of design as expressed through the aforementioned Parts 12 and 16 and the National Design Guide. Although each case must be considered upon its individual merits, the implications of Appeal decision 4/00014/13/FHA should be given very significant weight. Although timber is the preferred replacement door material, the use of composite material is considered to be an acceptable alternative.

9.12 Also significantly as in the case of no.10 Scrublands Road, the current proposal is not to replace an original timber door. In this context there will be cases where it would be inappropriate to replace an original timber door with a composite alternative.

9.13 With due regard to the above considerations based upon its individual merits the proposal is considered to preserve the character or appearance of the Berkhamsted Conservation Area.

Other Matters

9.14 There would be no harm to the residential amenity of adjoining dwellings.

9.15 The applicants have identified energy and security benefits.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 There are very strong objections from Berkhamsted Town Council and Berkhamsted Citizens Association Townscape Group due to the type of door.

10.2 These should be considered in the context of the Council’s Design and Conservation Team’s response which supports the proposed change. This is in the full knowledge of the Conservation Area’s special architectural and historic interest, PINS 2013 decision, the relevant policies, with no harm to the significance of this heritage asset, as expressed through the National Planning Policy Framework.

11. RECOMMENDATION

11.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans subject to the retention of a fanlight above the replacement door:

Site Location Plan

Design Access Statement : Appendix 2 showing replacement new door

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Informative:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2015.

APPENDIX A: CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Consultee	Comments
Berkhamsted Town Council	Objection The property is subject to an Article 4 direction. The replacement door should not be a plastic replica but instead be of a suitable template in wood, a traditional style and painted

Conservation & Design (DBC)	<u>1st Response</u> 65 Charles Street is a mid to late 19th century terraced property and makes a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Berkhamsted Conservation Area in which it lies. An article 4(2) direction also applies to a number of properties on Charles Street, restricting permitted development rights, such as replacing doors and windows, thereby ensuring the special interest of properties in the Conservation Area can be maintained. The existing front door is modern, timber with 2 leaded and glazed panels in the upper part and a letter box - it is of a reasonably traditional design and does not look out of character within the
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street scene. The rectangular glazed fanlight above the door is crooked.

There is no objection in principle to the replacement of the door. The replacement door will be similar in design terms but with a plainer style of glazing in the upper panels; however instead of timber, a composite door (grp plastic with a wood grain effect) is proposed. In conservation areas, and particularly with properties that are covered by article 4(2) directions the use of traditional materials is strongly encouraged - and timber would be a far more sustainable option than a composite door.

The Design and Access statement states the fanlight above the door would be of similar proportions to the existing / that of the neighbours -conservation would want to see the fanlight remain and match the others in the terrace. Can this be shown on an elevation drawing.

In summary, whilst there is no objection in principle to the replacement of the existing door, the applicants are asked to consider whether they would install a timber door of the design selected instead of a composite door.

Conservation are however mindful of application ref 4/00014/13/FHA and subsequent appeal decision which allowed the replacement of a timber door with a composite door on a property covered by an article 4(2) direction within the Berkhamsted CA.

If the applicants were to pursue installation of a composite door we would not recommend refusal on this basis.

Response to Applicants E Mail (see the Report)

65 Charles Street is a mid to late 19th century terraced property and makes a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Berkhamsted Conservation Area in which it lies. An article 4(2) direction also applies to no. 65 and a number of properties on Charles Street, restricting permitted development rights, such as replacing doors and windows, thereby ensuring the special interest of properties in the Conservation Area can be maintained.

The existing front door is modern, timber with 2 leaded and glazed panels in the upper part and a letter box – it is of a reasonably traditional design and does not look out of character within the street scene. The rectangular glazed fanlight above the door is

	<p>crooked and it is proposed the fanlight is replaced to match others in the terrace (no objection).</p> <p>There is no objection in principle to the replacement of the door. The replacement door will be similar in design terms but with a plainer style of glazing in the upper panels; however instead of timber, a composite door (grp plastic with a wood grain effect) is proposed. Whilst a timber door would be preferred the applicant is keen to install a composite door. Although in terms of material choice this is not ideal in the conservation area we are mindful of the appeal at 10 Shrublands Avenue where the replacement of a timber door with a composite door on a property covered by an Article 4(2) Direction in the Berkhamsted CA was allowed.</p> <p>On this basis, the proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the property and the Berkhamsted CA in accordance with policy CS27, recommend approval.</p>
	<p>I write on behalf of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association Townscape Group of which I am Chairman. The Group wishes to object to the replacement of the front door of 65 Charles Street with a composite door, which is to say, essentially and detectably made of plastic. This house is part of a terrace which is protected by an Article 4 Direction and in the heart of Berkhamsted's Conservation Area. Thus any replacement front door, should it be deemed necessary or desirable, should both enhance and conserve the CA and not detract from it.</p> <p>The composite replacement proposed here would introduce falseness to the building fabric, open the 'wrong way' and have a built in letter box (see the picture), all of which would detract from the overall appearance of the house. The most jarring note would be that the plastic door shows its 'grain' whereas a wooden painted door does not.</p> <p>The applicant states that the present door is not original. This may well be true, as one can see from obviously restored original doors at nos. 73 and, most recently, 83. It is regrettable that the applicant is not seeking to emulate those rather than the egregious examples of plastic doors quoted at nos. 57, 67, 81 and 95.</p> <p>Those doors may or may not have been installed after the imposition of A4Ds, and no doubt Planning Enforcement may choose to look at those to compare them with the photograph record made at the time. Nos. 19A and 21 are not protected by an A4D; nor is no. 32A which is a modern, infill house and thus not relevant to this argument.</p> <p>A modern wooden door may be draught proofed and be secure. Security is about the quality of its locks. There are examples of replacement wooden doors at nos. 34 and 36 which could also be used as a pattern.</p> <p>The example of 10 Shrublands Avenue (4/00014/13/FHA, clause imposing necessity to build in wood removed on Appeal) is not strictly</p>

	<p>comparable.</p> <p>There it was to replace an existing door which was inappropriate to the dwelling, and thus there was seen to be an advantage in replacement. Here there is no such advantage proved; a restoration is perfectly possible and indeed desirable.</p> <p>A further perceived problem with the door is the 'unsightly pane of glass above it'. We presume this to be a reference to the fanlight above it which is 'wonky'. That is most probably not about the fitting of the door but because the brick arch above the door is not level, presumably owing to differential settlement after building, and therefore part of the character of the house. It begs the question, does the applicant intend to replace more than the door, and take in the fanlight? If so, the door would be proportionally wrong. To settle the question, there is a need for plans showing a front elevation, to</p>
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APPENDIX B: NEIGHBOUR RESPONSES

Number of Neighbour Comments

Neighbour Consultations	Contributors	Neutral	Objections	Support
4	1	0	0	0

Neighbour Responses

Address	Comments
Berkhamsted Citizens Association Townscape Group	<p>I write on behalf of the Berkhamsted Citizens Association Townscape Group of which I am Chairman. The Group wishes to object to the replacement of the front door of 65 Charles Street with a composite door, which is to say, essentially and detectably made of plastic. This house is part of a terrace which is protected by an Article 4 Direction and in the heart of Berkhamsted's Conservation Area. Thus any replacement front door, should it be deemed necessary or desirable, should both enhance and conserve the CA and not detract from it.</p> <p>The composite replacement proposed here would introduce falseness to the building fabric, open the 'wrong way' and have a built in letter box (see the picture), all of which would detract from the overall appearance of the house. The most jarring note would be that the plastic door shows its 'grain' whereas a wooden painted door does not.</p> <p>The applicant states that the present door is not original. This may well be true, as one can see from obviously restored original doors at nos. 73 and, most recently, 83. It is regrettable that the applicant is not seeking to emulate those rather than the egregious examples of plastic doors quoted at nos. 57, 67, 81 and 95.</p> <p>Those doors may or may not have been installed after the imposition of A4Ds, and no doubt Planning Enforcement may choose to look at those to compare them with the photograph record made at the time. Nos. 19A and 21 are not</p>

protected by an A4D; nor is no. 32A which is a modern, infill house and thus not relevant to this argument.

A modern wooden door may be draught proofed and be secure. Security is about the quality of its locks. There are examples of replacement wooden doors at nos. 34 and 36 which could also be used as a pattern.

The example of 10 Shrublands Avenue (4/00014/13/FHA, clause imposing necessity to build in wood removed on Appeal) is not strictly comparable.

There it was to replace an existing door which was inappropriate to the dwelling, and thus there was seen to be an advantage in replacement. Here there is no such advantage proved; a restoration is perfectly possible and indeed desirable.

A further perceived problem with the door is the 'unsightly pane of glass above it'. We presume this to be a reference to the fanlight above it which is 'wonky'. That is most probably not about the fitting of the door but because the brick arch above the door is not level, presumably owing to differential settlement after building, and therefore part of the character of the house. It begs the question, does the applicant intend to replace more than the door, and take in the fanlight? If so, the door would be proportionally wrong. To settle the question, there is a need for plans showing a front elevation, to show how the new installation would impact overall.

To sum up - this is a Victorian house and Victorian houses are inherently draughty. This can be alleviated but not eliminated. Indeed, elimination is undesirable as houses of this era are built to breathe. The best way to treat unwelcome draughts in historic houses is by draught-proofing and heavy curtains. If a hermetically-sealed box is your wish, buy a modern house.

Composite doors are not indistinguishable from wood. Wood will last a long time and there is no difference in security. Cost should not be a factor in planning decisions. If a replacement door is agreed as the only option, wood should be the material of choice.