

Warrens Croft is, with its attached neighbour Lyndhurst, one half of a handed semi-detached pair of late 19th/early 20th century houses located on Hickmans Lane within the Lindfield Conservation Area. The pair are attractive, and retain a number of original features typical of their period including two storey canted bay windows set under projecting bracketed gables to either end of the building façade, a shared lean-to running across the centre of the elevation incorporating originally open recessed porches to each house, paired dormer windows to the tiled roof, polychrome brickwork with hung tile to the feature gables, and painted timber sashes. The house pair make a positive contribution to the street scene of Hickmans Lane, and to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

The current proposal relates to the retention of a replacement door set with side lights which has been installed to the front of the porch to Warrens Croft. The door itself is a solid planked door, the side lights are solid timber at their base with glazing above. The door and framing are in a stained light oak finish.

Prior to these works, the porch was enclosed but by a glazed door with flanking full height glazed sidelights. The framing to the door and sidelights appears to have been of dark coloured uPVC. Although this previous door set was not original, and was not particularly sympathetic in design to the period or style of the house, it did have the benefit of being fully glazed both to the door and side lights, so that the originally open character of the recessed porch could continue to be appreciated, and the position of the original front door still be seen. The dark uPVC, although not matching the majority of joinery to the house, and not of a material which would today be positively viewed in a Conservation Area context, was at least visually recessive due to its dark colouration. This previous arrangement therefore continued to allow some appreciation of an original feature of the building's elevation, and preserved to some extent the original symmetry of the house pair in this respect (Lyndhurst retains its recessed open porch).

In contrast, the door set as installed is largely solid- the door itself is entirely solid wood, and the side lights are glazed only to their upper halves. This has an adverse impact on the character of the porch, as its originally open nature can no longer be appreciated to any significant extent, and the position of the original front door behind this (assuming a door is retained) cannot be seen. The light coloured stained wood is also not sympathetic to the original painted timber joinery to the elevation, and being both lighter in colour (and therefore more eye-catching) and greater in extent, is arguably more obviously out of keeping in this respect than the previous less extensive dark uPVC framing. The design of the door itself, which is of a planked door in a loosely vernacular style, is also not particularly sympathetic to the period or style of the house, in which context a panelled door such as that which appears to survive to Lyndhurst would be likely to be regarded as more appropriate.

Timber will usually be considered a more sympathetic material than uPVC in the context of a traditional building within a Conservation, and it is acknowledged that the previous porch enclosure was not ideal, and would be unlikely to gain consent in today's policy context. However, for the reasons set out above the replacement door set as installed is in my opinion

unfortunately unacceptable in terms of causing further adverse impact to the appearance of the house, the symmetry of the house pair of which it is part, and the character and appearance of the wider Conservation Area. This will be contrary to the requirements of District Plan Policy DP35. In terms of the NPPF, I would consider that the proposal results in less than substantial harm, towards the lower end of that scale, such that the balancing exercise set out in paragraph 215 will apply.

In coming to this opinion I am mindful that the Lindfield Conservation Area is covered by an Article 4 Direction which has been imposed by the Council to withdraw certain permitted development rights including replacement of doors and windows to street facing elevations- this Direction is a reflection of the importance that the Council attaches to the careful preservation of the character of these aspects of the buildings within the Conservation Area.

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