

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 7 November 2018

ITEM NO. 14

Ward: Southcote

App No.: 181469/LBC

Address: Southcote Lodge, Burghfield Road, Reading, RG30 3NE

Proposal: Replacement of existing timber sliding sash windows with new white uPVC double glazed sliding sash windows to match in style and size and to be installed into the various existing opening apertures of the Grade II Listed Building.

Applicant: S Holmes, Housing and Care 21

Date validated: 3 September 2018

8 week target decision date: 29 October 2018

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse Listed Building Consent for the following reason:

1. The proposed changes would result in substantial harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building and features of special interest, notably the windows, contrary to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy CS33 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), national policy contained within the NPPF and associated practice guidance.

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE

1. Standard positive and proactive informative.
2. Refused drawings

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Southcote Lodge and garden walls to east and west are Grade II Listed, entry number 1321955. The list description reads as follows:

"Mid C18, incorporating parts of earlier building. Rectangular main block, 3 1/2 storeys to south, 2 1/2 storeys with flanking 2 storey wings to north. Entrance (north) front: main block silver grey brick with red window dressings. Modern, central dormer. Glazing bar sash windows, 3 on 1st floor and C19 glazed porch across ground floor between wings. Red brick wings projecting 2 windows (blind) in depth and with 1 hipped dormer each and 1 window at north end. Old tile roof. Flanking curved garden walls forming one side of small oval court. South side: originally 5 window front. Now has 5 window mid C19 full height bay to left. Half glazed late C18 door to garden with bracketed hood, stone steps. Interior: a number of good contemporary features (fireplaces and plasterwork, and staircase) retained. A good house and the house of John Blagrove (mathematician). To west is an 8 foot brick wall with chamfered capping about 50 yds long and returned to south along road. Partly C18, see one brick with grafitto "E B 1720"."



Site Location Plan



Site Photograph

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Listed Building Consent is sought for the removal of the existing timber sliding sash windows and replacement with uPVC sliding sash windows of similar frame design.

Submitted drawings

0/6474/18-00

0/6474/18-01

0/6474/18-02

0/6474/18-03

0/6474/18-04

0/6474/18-05

0/6474/18-06

0/6474/18-07

0/6474/18-08

0/6474/18-09

0/6474/18-010

0/6474/18-11

Supporting Documents

Planning, Design and Access Statement ref. 6474

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 161486/PRE - Pre-application Enquiry for "Replacement of existing windows with UPVC to match style and existing fenestration". Observations were sent on 19 January 2017 summarised as: *"The replacement of the existing timber sash windows with new uPVC windows is not considered acceptable and would be likely to be refused Listed Building Consent. It is recommended that refurbishment, weather stripping and/or secondary glazing are considered in order to preserve the special interest of the Listed Building."*

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 RBC Historic Buildings Consultant

The Council's Historic Buildings Consultant has visited the site and has provided detailed comments. These have been incorporated into the appraisal section of this report. The conclusion is *"Refusal is recommended for this application as the proposed changes would be substantially harmful to the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Buildings and features of special interest, notably the windows. This would be contrary to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the planning policy in the NPPF, the PPG and Reading Borough Planning Policies."*

4.2 Public consultation:

Letters were sent to addresses surrounding the site. A site notice was displayed on Burghfield Road opposite the site entrance.

One comment was received from a resident of Kenilworth Avenue as follows:

"This building is of a significant historical interest, it clearly has been altered in the past to either protect and maintain the building integrity. Whilst it would not be my preferred option, providing the window design including the profile of the windows are maintained it may be the best option to prevent the building deteriorating any further. My concern would be that if the design and profile would be significantly different from the existing windows in the property now. Every effort should be taken not to change the style or design."

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 5.2 Section 66(1) states that: "in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."
- 5.3 The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2018

National Planning Practice Guidance 2018

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)

CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

6. APPRAISAL

- 6.1 Before considering the merits of this particular proposal it is important to consider the legal and policy context. Importantly the decision on a LBC application, which is a designated heritage asset, is governed by different legislation to that which would relate to an application for planning permission.

Legal

- 6.2 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to "*have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*".
- 6.3 In the 2014 case of East Northamptonshire District Council v. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (known as the 'Barnwell Manor' case) the Court of Appeal held that decision-makers should give 'considerable importance and weight' to the desirability of preserving listed building or its setting as directed by the Act.

National Policy

6.4 The NPPF (2018) (paragraph 189) requires that:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”

Paragraph 191 states:

6.5 *Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.*

6.6 Paragraph 192 of the NPPF states that, local planning authorities should take into account:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

6.7 Paragraph 193 states that:

“When considering the impact of a proposed 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). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance”

6.8 Paragraph 195 states that:

“Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and

b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and

c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and

d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use."

6.9 Paragraph 196 states that:

"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."

6.10 Guidance on the implementation of the NPPF is provided in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

"In addition to the normal planning framework set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.....the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest.

Any decisions relating to listed buildings and their settings and conservation areas must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see in particular sections 16, 66 and 72) as well as satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan." (paragraph ID 18a-002-20140306)

6.11 The PPG states under 'Why is 'significance' important in decision-taking?' that:

"Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals."

6.12 Under the discussion of 'How to assess if there is substantial harm?' the PPG offers:

"What matters in assessing if a proposal causes substantial harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset. As the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."

Local Policy

6.13 Within para. 11.8 of the Core Strategy (supporting text to Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement) it specifies that:

"The Borough Council is committed to protecting and where appropriate, enhancing the Borough's historic environment. This includes ensuring that buildings and features of Local architectural and historic interest (which are not necessarily recognised components of the historic environment) are taken fully into account and safeguarded...".

Discussion

6.14 The original windows along the front elevation are vertical sliding sashes with glazing bars in a six-over-six pattern with a three-over-six pattern at the second floor. Sash windows from this period follow a particular style of detailing being built from timber joinery, single-glazed and usually constructed of slow-grown pine.

- 6.15 These historic windows are architectural features which make a particularly important contribution to the overall significance of the historic building. Whilst the windows in the (1989) extensions to the Listed Building include uPVC windows, timber windows have been retained throughout the principal Listed Building. The contribution of timber windows to the overall character and special interest of the Listed Building is considered to be significant.
- 6.16 Replacing timber sash windows with double-glazed uPVC windows would harm the significance of the Grade II Listed Building in terms of its aesthetic value and evidential value. This is because, despite the statement on the drawings that the detailing of the replacement windows would match the existing in all respects, there would remain the fundamental difference in the materials used. The difference in the use of a plastic for the replacement windows would be visually obvious, as demonstrated by the surrounding windows within the (1989) extensions. It is also apparent that the fine detailing of the existing sash windows, in terms of their glazing bars, thickness and mouldings, could not be reproduced in uPVC windows. uPVC factory-made facsimiles of historic windows would therefore detract from the aesthetic value and evidential value of the windows and the contribution they make to the significance of the Listed Building.
- 6.17 The appearance of windows has a substantial impact on the appearance of the building. Where timber windows are in a poor condition it is expected that they would be either refurbished or replaced like-for-like to retain the character of the Listed Building. Generally historic sash window frames are of better quality construction than comparable modern materials and if maintained have a much greater service life; this is due to slow growth rate and density of the pine used in pre-20th century windows.
- 6.18 As a general rule, windows in historic buildings should be repaired, or if beyond repair should be replaced 'like for like'. The existing windows should be retained, unless they are obviously inappropriate or in very poor condition. If new windows are to be accepted (due to the existing being beyond repair), it is important that their design, scale and proportion should be sympathetic to the character of the building. The thickness and moulding of glazing bars, the size and arrangement of panes and other details should be appropriate to the date of the building or to the date when the window aperture was made. In particular, for reasons of strength the thickness of frame members tends to be greater in plastic windows than in traditional timber ones. The insertion of factory made standard plastic windows therefore would be damaging to the character and appearance of the historic building.
- 6.19 Timber windows, naturally, require maintenance, and this involves periodically re-decorating them, which prolongs their longevity. It should be noted that as stated in paragraph 191 of the NPPF that where there is evidence of neglect of a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision. Visits to the site confirm that the existing windows are in need of maintenance and some repair. However they are not beyond repair.
- 6.20 In replacing timber sash windows with double-glazed uPVC windows, the applicant would substantially harm the significance of the Grade II Listed Building in terms of its aesthetic value and evidential value. Under the principles of the NPPF, applicants must be able to justify any harm to Listed

Buildings and no justification has been provided, or can be envisaged, for the removal of the original historic windows, which are specifically described in the statutory list.

6.21 The applicant's aspirations for improving the air tightness and thermal performance of the building are noted. It is considered that this does not necessitate removal of the existing windows. Weather stripping and draught proofing are visually more innocuous changes as well as thermally efficient and cost-effective. Secondary glazing in a removable inner frame is another acceptable option for some windows. It is relevant to note that English Heritage, following tests on timber sash window by Glasgow Caledonian University, reported in their 2009 publication *Research into The Thermal Performance of Windows: Timber Sash Windows* that:

- *"There are major opportunities for improving the thermal performance of existing windows by relatively simple methods, including traditional curtains, blinds and shutters.*
- *There is a good potential for improvement from draught proofing, with air infiltration through the repaired and draught proofed window being somewhat less than through a standard trickle ventilator.*
- *There is potential for further improvement where secondary glazing with a low-emissivity coating is used as well. This gives good performance in the daytime, and better still at night when curtains, blinds and shutters can be closed.*

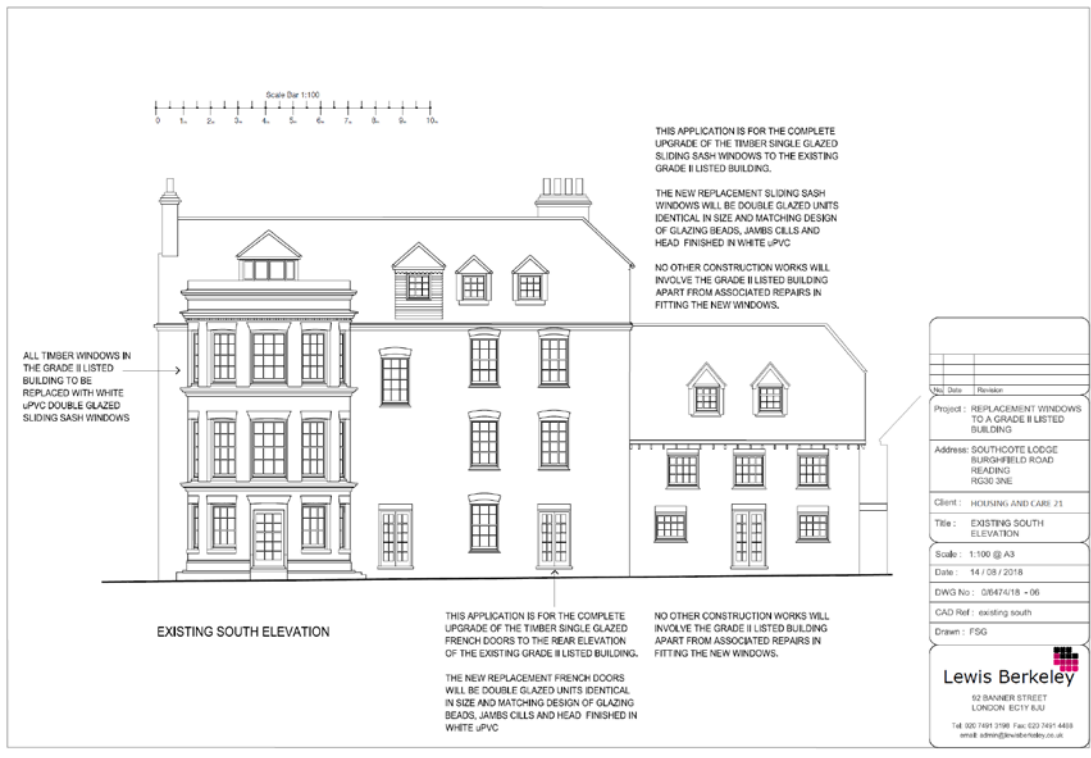
6.22 *However, when designing secondary glazing to avoid heat losses, it is important to ensure that ventilation is sufficient, and that the risk of condensation is minimised" (English Heritage, 2009, Research into The Thermal Performance of Windows: Timber Sash Windows).*

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 It is considered that substantial harm would occur to the heritage significance of the listed building as a result of the proposed changes to the windows, which are an important feature of the historic building. Approval of the proposed works would be contrary to the statutory duty on the Council to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and its features of special interest.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar

Drawings (selection only) - Full details at:
http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp



South Elevation (to rear garden)



North Elevation (to front driveway)



Rear bay