
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 May 2017

by David Cross BA (Hons), PGDip, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 22 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/17/3168169

12 Warkworth Terrace, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 1LE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Caroline Thompson against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 16/03044/FUL, dated 22 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 December 2016.
 - The development proposed was originally described as "Replace existing aluminium windows at front of house with UPVC windows of a more appropriate design to suit style of house. Replace existing wooden front door with composite door of appropriate design to suit style of house. Colour to remain blue. Style options underlined on attached sheet".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Notwithstanding the description of development set out above, which is taken from the application form, it is clear from the details accompanying the appeal that the proposed development comprises "*replacement of existing aluminium windows at front of house with UPVC windows of a more appropriate design to suit style of house (as amended)*". In particular, I note that the appellant agreed with the Council to remove the door from the planning application¹. The Council dealt with the proposal on this basis and so shall I.
3. The appellant has requested that I consider the replacement of the door as part of the appeal. However, it is my firm view, in the interests of fairness, that this appeal must be determined on the basis of the details that were determined by the Council and which formed the basis of subsequent notification. To do otherwise could prejudice unacceptably the interests of interested people and/or consultees who would not have been notified of the reversion to the original description requested by the appellant as part of the appeal process and who may have observations to make.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the UPVC windows on the character and appearance of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area.

¹ E-mail dated 17 November 2016 from Caroline Thompson (the appellant) to Jon Sharp (Council Planning Officer).

Reasons

5. The appeal property is located within the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area (CA), and specifically within the Northumberland Avenue sub-area. The sub-area contains a number of terraces which have retained their coherence and regularity with many properties displaying matching windows, doors and other detailing. This gives the sub-area a pleasant suburban quality representative of early to mid-twentieth century development which contributes to the CA's significance as a designated heritage asset.
6. The existing windows to the front of the appeal property are of a modern design utilising aluminium frames. Whilst they are unsympathetic to the traditional character of the property, I saw that the dull finish of the frames and the simple glazing details means that the windows are relatively unobtrusive. Although the removal of these modern aluminium windows would be a benefit of the proposal, their replacement with UPVC windows of the design proposed would negate this benefit. The replacement windows would be of an unsympathetic design due to the use of UPVC material and a chunkier frame. Such a crude, heavy and overly prominent modern appearance would contrast significantly with the appearance of the host dwelling and traditional windows evident elsewhere in the CA. Attempts to replicate traditional glazing features, such as the use of smaller glazing panels in the upper frame, would not overcome this harm and would instead appear as an incongruous pastiche.
7. In support of the appeal, my attention has been drawn to 14 Warkworth Terrace which has been granted planning permission for replacement UPVC windows. However, although I do not have full details of this application, I note that the appellant states that this property previously had UPVC windows and I therefore consider that it does not represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal. In any event, the windows that I saw at No 14 served to confirm that UPVC windows can be at odds with the traditional character of the terrace due to a flat profile, heavy frames and the pivoting of the lower frame. I also saw that there are a variety of window designs in the terrace; however, this does not weigh significantly in favour of the current proposal which would further erode the character of the area.
8. I acknowledge that the replacement windows may offer the appellant improved insulation and weatherproofing, however there are other strategies to achieve this without the harm which would arise from the appeal proposal. I am also mindful that the proposal would also entail the removal of the existing unsympathetic modern aluminium framed windows. However, whilst the harm that would arise from the proposal to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial, that harm would still be sufficient to carry considerable weight against the proposal. There is no public benefit that would outweigh that harm.
9. I note the frustrations expressed by the appellant in relation to the advice from the Council leading up to their decision and differences between the consultations undertaken on her application compared to that of her neighbour. However, these are not matters for this appeal which I have determined on its planning merits.
10. I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the sub-area and the Conservation Area as a whole and would therefore be contrary to Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and

Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The proposal would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

11. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR