



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 12 October 2021

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 October 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/W/21/3275374

Rydal House, 22 St Johns Hill, Wimborne BH21 1DD

- 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 Mr Alan Reynolds against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref 3/20/0404/FUL, dated 18 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 20 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is replacement windows and doors from timber to heritage type upvc.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have used the description of the development from the appeal form, as it more accurately describes the proposal than that given on the application form.
3. The Council's reason for refusal refers to paragraphs 184, 193, 194 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019). During the appeal, on 20 July 2021, the Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). In the revised version the paragraphs are renumbered 189, 199, 200 and 202, but otherwise remain unaltered. The appeal timetable has allowed both parties the opportunity to make comments relating to the updated Framework.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wimborne, St. John's (Rowlands Hill/St. John's Hill) Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal site lies within the CA, which comprises the former Victorian suburbs of Rowlands Hill, St John's Hill, and Avenue Road. It is characterised by substantial buildings set back on either side of tree-lined roads in spacious verdant plots. The buildings are generally of red brick construction with slate roofs, and display high-quality period architecture and detailing, including ornate barge boards, ridge tiles and finials; stone quoins; decorated window heads; and decorative chimney stacks. Windows are generally vertically proportioned sliding sash, with elegant detailing. Some have been replaced with upvc, but a significant number of original timber windows still prevail. The strong Victorian building legacy is a key feature of the significance of the CA,

and the high level of surviving architectural detailing from that era gives it a distinctive and authentic character.

6. Rydal House is noted in the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal¹ as being one of the largest surviving houses in St John's Hill, which was sensitively converted to flats in the 1980s. It is a substantial Victorian building that sits in a large, landscaped plot. It displays the architectural quality, and retains many of the period details, that are characteristic of the CA. It is of red brick construction with a slate roof and decorative clay ridge tiles, and has rusticated render bays on its south-facing elevation. Its vertically proportioned timber windows appear to be well-maintained and in good condition. The scale, layout, architectural quality, and surviving period features of the building mean that it makes an important positive contribution to the significance of the CA.
7. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
8. It is proposed to replace virtually all of the windows and doors in the building with double-glazed units. The drawings show that the basic configuration and proportions of the windows and doors would be replicated. However, they would be made of upvc, which is not a characteristic material of the Victorian era architecture that is so important to the significance of the CA.
9. I am mindful that the specific products proposed have been designed to replicate, as far as possible, the appearance of traditional timber windows and doors. I also note the Appellant's comments that some authorities have allowed this specific type of window to be used in Conservation Areas. However, I have no indication relating to the circumstances in which they were approved. I have therefore considered the proposal on the evidence pertaining to this particular proposal.
10. The submitted brochure details and technical drawings show that the proposed doors and windows would be double glazed with 28mm thick units. The different material and method of construction required to support these units would result in a noticeably different appearance to traditional timber windows. The spacer strips that would be necessary between the widely spaced windowpanes would be readily evident, and would accentuate the heavy appearance of the windows, when compared to the elegance of the existing windows. The artificially manufactured putty lines would lack the subtlety and variation to be found in a traditional timber window. Overall, the upvc replacements would lack the finesse and craftsmanship of the traditional timber windows in the area, which make such a positive contribution to the CA.
11. Some of the windows to be replaced would require bespoke solutions that are not covered by the standard brochure and technical details submitted with the application. For example, Windows 19 – 22 have curved heads, and, in the case of 19 and 20, a curved mid-rail. The timber frames for these windows have intricate mouldings that follow these curves. It has not been demonstrated how the finesse and craftsmanship of these fine traditional details could be replicated in upvc. Indeed, it is noted on the drawings that the replacements for Windows 19 and 20 would have a straight midrail, perhaps

¹ East Dorset District Council Policy Planning Division Supplementary Planning Guidance No.11 April 2006

illustrating the limitation of the material, and means of construction, in reproducing the authenticity of the original windows.

12. Similarly, although “R9” casement windows are specified for the cantilevered bay on the West elevation, no details have been submitted to show how these would be installed within the existing timber frame, or whether a more wholesale reconstruction of the bay window would be required. Either way, it has not been demonstrated that the character and appearance of this highly individual and prominent feature could be authentically replicated in upvc.
13. Although the building is set back, and there is some screening along the roadside boundary, it is visible from public viewpoints through both accesses. It is also open to close inspection from the communal circulation areas that are used by visitors to the flats and the dwellings to the rear. It would be readily apparent from these vantage points that the windows and doors would be modern replacements, in a material that would be inappropriate to the period architecture of the building. They would, therefore, be discordant with its prevailing historic character and would diminish the positive contribution that it makes to the significance of the CA. The proposal would, therefore, fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the heritage asset.
14. The harm to the heritage asset would be limited to the area immediately surrounding the building. Consequently, it would be less than substantial for the purposes of paragraph 199 of the Framework. That does not mean that less than substantial weight should be afforded to the harm. Paragraphs 199 and 200 state that great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation, and that any harm to, or loss of, its significance should require clear and convincing justification.
15. Paragraph 202 requires that, where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this regard, reference is made in the appeal submission, and in representations, to the improved energy efficiency of the building through the installation of double glazing. Whilst I recognise that this would be a significant public benefit, it has not been demonstrated that the same result could not be achieved through internal secondary glazing, or through replacement windows in a more authentic material. I therefore give this benefit limited weight. Consequently, it does not outweigh the great weight that the Framework gives to the conservation of heritage assets.
16. My attention has been drawn to other upvc windows in the CA. Those in Rydal Cottages and Rydal Mews, to the rear of the site are in buildings of more recent origin, and are less visible within the CA. I also saw that the properties at 9, 11 and 20 St John’s Hill have had some or all of their windows replaced in upvc. These examples illustrate, to varying degrees, the harm that such modern replacements can cause to the authenticity of historic buildings and, incrementally, on the significance of the CA as a whole. I am not aware of the circumstances behind these replacements, or whether any consent was required. However, none of them is so directly comparable that it alters my conclusion on the case before me, which must, in any event, be considered on its own merits.
17. For the reasons given, the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the CA, which is not outweighed by public benefits. It would, therefore, be contrary to Policies HE1 and HE2 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan

Part 1 - Core Strategy (2014), which seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets and to secure high-quality design that reflects local distinctiveness. The proposal would also be contrary to the Framework's aim to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Conclusion

18. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR