



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 February 2023

by R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/22/3304915

9 Lauds Road, Crick, Northamptonshire NN6 7TJ

- 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 Coxon against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref WND/2022/0449, dated 11 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is replacement of windows and doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the Crick Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. No.9 Lauds Road (No.9) is an attractive two-storey cottage that forms the end of a short terrace sited at the back edge of the pavement fronting Lauds Road, on its western side. It is within the Crick Conservation Area (CA). There is a statutory duty under S72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas.
4. The property has existing double glazed side casement windows in white painted timber, with a timber front and back door. The exception is a uPVC window to the kitchen on the rear elevation. It is proposed to replace the existing with white uPVC woodgrain effect casements windows and composite doors with a 'timber' appearance.
5. The recently adopted Crick Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2020) (CCAAMP) explains that the significance of the CA is derived, in part, from its traditional architecture and the survival and maintenance of historic features of value including its street pattern and vernacular buildings. It further identifies that threats to these traditional features and historic fabric include the replacement of traditional fenestration and doors with modern uPVC counterparts. Section 8.5 of the CCAAMP also advises that if replacement windows are necessary, they should generally be either timber or metal double

casement, and that uPVC is generally not an appropriate material for use in an historic property.

6. From my observations on site, all windows and doors of properties at No.9 to No.17 Lauds Road are timber and although either painted, or unpainted, their uniform appearance is an integral part of the design of the terrace. The windows and doors contribute to the architectural integrity and historic interest of the group, and their visual presence adds positively and distinctively to the character and appearance of the streetscene, a prominent terrace in the CA, particularly in views from The Marsh (to the north).
7. The proposed windows have been sensitively designed such that they are side hung casements with the same transom and mullion detailing as the existing. However, whilst they would have a foiled woodgrain effect and be of the 'best quality,' the replacement windows and doors would appear discordant, being a material that detracts from the traditional form of the building and character and appearance of the CA. uPVC is a synthetic material, with a consistent, modern appearance that does not satisfactorily capture the visual subtleties or depth of painted timber. I do not agree that uPVC is virtually indistinguishable from wood and find its use here, particularly on the front elevation so close to the pavement, would be very apparent and harmful to the character and appearance of the terrace and the wider area.
8. The appellant has provided examples of dwelling within the CA where uPVC fenestration has been used. I do not have specific details of individual circumstances before me, but I observed the examples to be of varying success and find the loss of traditional materials to represent an incremental or piecemeal erosion to character and appearance. Moreover, these do not justify or set a precedent for the appeal proposals before me.
9. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that when considering the impact of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Having regard to the size of the CA, the localised harm that would be caused by the proposal I find would be less than substantial. The guidance at paragraph 202 of the Framework is that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
10. The existing windows appeared tired and in need of repair or replacement and I have no evidence to dispute the appellant's argument that the cost of timber replacements would exceed that of uPVC replacements. Whilst I acknowledge these financial considerations, particularly at a difficult time for many given the cost of living, it does not justify the harm to the CA that I have identified. I am also not persuaded that uPVC replacements are the sole means of improving security.
11. The appellant has also referred to uPVC windows optimising energy conservation because they have better insulation than timber and require no ongoing maintenance. There is, however, nothing before me to suggest that improved insulation could be not achieved with a replacement timber casement window. I therefore find this, and the lack of ongoing maintenance, to be at best a modest public benefit of the proposal and it would not outweigh the less than substantial harm I have found to the CA.

12. I therefore find that the proposal would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. In addition to failing to meet the statutory duty at S72(1) of the Act, the proposal would conflict with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (2014) and Policy ENV7 of the Daventry District Council Settlement and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) (2020) (LP2) which seek to conserve and enhance designated heritage assets. It would further conflict with LP2 Policy ENV10 and Policy CRICK11 of the made Crick Village Neighbourhood Plan (2021) which together require high quality design that promotes local distinctiveness and local building traditions and materials.

Conclusions

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Jones

INSPECTOR