



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2024

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2114/Y/24/3339378

9 Castle Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight PO31 7QY

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Richard Ottaway against the decision of Isle of Wight Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01777/LBC.
 - The works proposed are replacement of wooden sash windows with matching wooden double glazed sash windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The windows have been replaced. I am therefore considering the appeal retrospectively.

Main Issues

3. The effect of the proposal upon the significance of the grade II listed building known as Providence House¹, and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Cowes Conservation Area (CCA).

Reasons

4. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Additionally, section 72 of the LBCA requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
5. 9 Castle Road is also known as Providence House, and dates from circa 1830. It has a simple form, with a primary classical façade facing north and perpendicular to the street. In this respect it differs from most other buildings in the area that have tight terraced forms, and thus sets itself apart as something of a more genteel character than its neighbours. Its front façade is symmetrical, with paired sash windows to either side to the main floors, and a single sash over the front door, which is emphasised by a pediment and columns. Pilasters and a cornice frame this classical arrangement.

¹ List Entry Number: 1222703

6. In contrast, its rear and road facing elevations are entirely plain and without openings. Its significance therefore is primarily derived from its formal front façade.
7. The building is within the Town Centre Character Area of the CCA. This area makes up the core of the settlement which developed particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries. The area is characterised by small plots and narrow streets. The building is a significant contributor to the character and appearance of the area as a result of its classical façade and the atypical way it breaks the density of the street by its perpendicular siting; the green and natural appearance of its garden is welcome in an area with limited trees and open space.
8. All the windows on the primary façade of the building have been replaced, apart from the blind window at the easterly end of the first floor. Evidence relating to the removed windows exists in the form of a photo from 2000 that is held in the Historic England Archive and was taken as part of the Images of England Project. This shows a traditional arrangement of finely glazed sash windows over the front of the building, complete with details to confirm their authenticity as historic fittings such as the considerable misalignment of the first floor sash closest to the road. This image also shows a distinctive curve or bow to the profile of the dormer windows.
9. It is suggested that the windows may have been replaced following extensive bomb damage that occurred nearby. There is however no firm evidence relating to the extent of damage to the appeal building, other than evidence that some of the finishes associated with the dormers could be post-war. In other respects, the upper sashes are without horns, which are typically associated with later sash windows; and the deformation and uneven arrangement associated with the previous windows as evidenced in the 2000 photo would be unusual if the windows were mid-20th century replacements.
10. The single pane lower sashes are however highly unlikely to be original to a building that dates from the 1830s. Although, based on the evidence before me it is reasonable to conclude that the upper small paned sashes were likely to have been original, and they certainly retained a degree of authenticity derived from their fine detailing and aged misalignment. Thus, I can reasonably conclude that the previous windows were important contributors to the building's significance, particularly as this is largely focussed on the classical arrangement of its front elevation of which the windows are the main component.
11. It is suggested that the previous windows were rotten and beyond repair. The evidence for this is however limited to photos of the dormers, which are mounted in an exposed location and may have suffered from issues such as water building up in the valley behind the parapet that would be unique to their position. There is no evidence before to support the suggestion that the windows to the floors below were in a similarly poor condition. Furthermore, sash windows are inherently repairable. The bottom rail of the lower sash, cills and the bottom of sash boxes are common areas of decay; beyond this sash windows are usually capable and worthy of repair, which can include the skilful piecing in of new timber. Therefore, unless the building had suffered a period of neglect, it is highly unlikely that all the windows were beyond repair.

12. As such I find that there is insufficient justification for the full replacement of the windows. Their loss has caused considerable harm as a result of the loss of primary historic fabric that made up the building's classical façade.
13. Considerable effort has gone into trying to replicate the dimensions and detail of the previous windows. However, the replacement windows have a crisp and lifeless appearance. The modern glass provides a bland reflectance and elements such as the meeting rails appear moderately thicker than they do in the 2000 photo. Additionally, and contributing to the plainer appearance of the façade following the work, the new windows appear to be set further forward than they were previously. These differences are all discernible from the road, and therefore, although subtle, they are appreciable when enjoying an overall view of the building and sufficient to constitute a downgrading of its architectural and historic interest and a failure to preserve the character and appearance of the CCA.
14. On closer inspection there are a considerable number of differences that also erode the appearance of the new windows, and their success as accurate copies of the previous windows. The use of a timber bead around the glass is readily apparent, especially as a clear line is visible between the front face of the bead and the frame. The bead is thicker than a triangular wedge of putty, and lacking the subtle variations of a traditional putty surface. The additional thickness may account for the thicker overall appearance of the meeting rails.
15. Additional harm to the appearance of the new windows arises from the modern appearance of the metal spacer for the sealed unit, the use of plastic strips, the addition of horns to the dormers and the loss of their curved or bowed profile. When taken together, along with the harm arising from the loss of the previous windows, the impact of the work is considerable. The integrity of the historic asset has been eroded considerably, and the works have had a significant adverse impact on the historic character and appearance of this primary element of the building.
16. It is suggested that it might be possible to replace the plastic strips with a timber fillet. No details of this are before me however, and this is not formally submitted as an amendment to the current windows. I therefore cannot take this change into account.
17. I accept that Historic England (HE) advice does not preclude the upgrading of historic windows as a matter of principle. The extracts provided from published HE guidance suggests that such changes may be possible without harming significance, and reference is made to replacement windows that do not contribute to the significance of a building. I have found that the previous windows contributed to the building's significance, and that the new windows are harmful for the reasons given. Therefore, my finding of harm accords with HE advice.
18. The harm is considerable. In terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) the harm would be less than substantial but would nevertheless be of considerable importance and weight. Paragraph 208 of the Framework establishes that any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
19. The appellant submits that the replacement windows have made the property dry, draught proof and warmer; and that the energy savings that result from

the introduction of double glazing contribute to tackling the Island's declared climate emergency. Keeping the building dry is a conservation related public benefit which attracts reasonable weight.

20. In terms of the improved thermal performance of the building, similar benefits are commonly achieved by fitting secondary glazing to existing windows. This enables the retention of historic joinery, is additive and easily reversed, and effectively relies on a second window system and is therefore less prone to mechanical failure. There is no evidence before me to suggest that this was considered as an alternative to full replacement. Although improving the thermal performance of a building is a clear public benefit, the weight I give to this in the context of the Framework balance should be limited in light of this less harmful alternative approach.
21. Together the public benefits carry some weight. In the context of paragraph 205 of the Framework which states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, the public benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the harm.
22. In summary, the proposal would fail to meet the requirements of the LBCA as it would harm the special interest of the listed building and would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the CCA. It would also fail to accord with Policies DM2 and DM11 of the Island Plan 2012, which seek to ensure that proposals are of a high quality of design that conserves the historic environment.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

A Tucker

INSPECTOR