



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 March 2025

by Stewart Glassar BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Z2260/W/24/3349261

48 Royal Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 9LF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Cotter against the decision of Thanet District Council.
 - The application Ref is F/TH/24/0588.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of timber sash windows with UPVC vertical sliding windows to front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to the location of the site within the Ramsgate Conservation Area (RCA).

Reasons

3. The RCA covers an extensive area which includes the main seafront and marina areas as well as the historic central parts of the town. The RCA is characterised by buildings from differing eras and of differing designs but is notable for, amongst other things, the numerous terraces that display strong architectural features.
4. These, together with the planned squares and open spaces, help to illustrate the growth and development of the town, particularly as a seaside resort. Therefore, insofar as is relevant to this appeal, the significance of the RCA is largely derived from the variety and architectural value of its historic buildings and spaces, which denote the town's evolution.
5. Royal Road is within a residential area, to the west of the town centre and within the RCA. The houses are two and three storey terraces with basements. Their appearance and styles are generally consistent with those from the late 18th/early 19th centuries. They have retained many original architectural features and contribute positively to the RCA.
6. The appeal property is a four-storey building and appears to date from a similar era. Its height gives it a prominence within the street scene whilst its bay windows add to the building's architectural interest. On each of the second and third floors there are three, eight over eight sash windows. The basement bay window contains smaller, simple sash windows.

7. This all reflects a traditional window hierarchy of buildings from this period and serves to reinforce the building's vernacular appearance and enhance its historic legibility. Consequently, even though it is not part of a terrace, it positively contributes to the architecture and history of the RCA and its significance as a heritage asset.
8. The proposed windows would, it is said, have a generally traditional design. I also note that there is no suggestion that the size of the openings would be altered. In this respect I acknowledge that when seen in long and medium distance views, uPVC windows might not be distinguishable from the timber sliding sash windows currently on the building.
9. However, in closer views, uPVC windows tend to be bulkier than timber and appear as more obvious modern additions to historic buildings. This is because they do not replicate the features, proportions or refinement of traditional frames and their associated joinery techniques. Even where slimmer or 'heritage' style frames are utilised, the crisper and more precise, uniform appearance of uPVC is usually evident and is discernible from the equivalent timber sash frames.
10. I note that whilst the application was accompanied by a manufacturer's brochure and some drawings, it is not possible to discern with strong accuracy what each new window frame, cill, glazing bar and detail would look like on the appeal building. In the absence of such information the concerns outlined above are reinforced.
11. I acknowledge that there are a couple of properties within the immediate vicinity of the site that have uPVC windows. The appellant also draws my attention to No.60 Royal Road, which has been granted permission for replacement uPVC windows. However, I do not know the circumstances in which the decision on No.60 was made nor the situation regarding the existing uPVC windows in the street.
12. Notwithstanding those limited examples, the traditional detailing and materials of fenestration on properties in the area has largely been retained. Furthermore, in contrast to these other examples, the appeal property is a four-storey building which has greater prominence and so its appearance is a more notable component of the street scene as a whole. Consequently, the presence of some uPVC windows does not in itself justify introducing further such windows.
13. Therefore, based on the information before me I find that the proposed use of uPVC windows would diminish the interest and character of the building. This would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the RCA as a designated heritage asset and so cause harm to its significance.
14. This erosion of the character and appearance of the area would conflict with Policies HE02 and QD02 of the Thanet Local Plan 2020 which, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development respects the character of the original building, preserves or enhances the significance of heritage assets, including through the use of appropriate materials and detailing, and retains features that contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
15. Owing to the scale and nature of the proposal, the degree of harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset, irrespective of

whether the harm to its significance is less than substantial. Where there is less than substantial harm, the Framework states that this should be weighed against the public benefits of the development. I deal with this in my heritage balance below.

Other Matters

16. I understand that the existing windows need replacing and that the replacements would be more energy efficient. However, there is no evidence before me to suggest that they could not be replaced or refurbished in a more sympathetic manner whilst also achieving energy efficiency improvements.
17. In a similar vein, the appellant notes that the proposed windows would have a life expectancy of 35 - 50 years. I acknowledge that the maintenance of uPVC windows would be more cost effective in the short and medium term than replacement timber windows which require on-going maintenance, such as painting. However, buildings in general need on-going maintenance and repair, including occasionally with uPVC windows and so this should not be considered an unexpected or unreasonable part of owning a building such as this one.
18. Furthermore, the longevity of quality timber windows can be effective in time, even in coastal areas, a view supported by the fact that older timber window frames are still in place on the appeal building and most of the other properties around it. Overall, I am only able to ascribe modest weight to these benefits.
19. Ramsgate Town Council did not offer any comments on the proposal. This absence of comment does not mean that there is an absence of harm and the Town Council's position would be a neutral factor in my decision.

Heritage Balance

20. The development would provide public benefits in the form of a contribution to the local economy during the installation of the new windows and there would be some, unspecified energy efficiency improvements once installed. There may also be some benefits to the buildings' maintenance schedule, but this would largely be a private benefit. For the reasons set out above, I give these benefits modest weight.
21. The weight I ascribe to the benefits would not be sufficient to outweigh the importance and weight that I attribute to the erosion of the significance of the heritage asset. The identified heritage harm is therefore unjustified in terms of the approach to heritage set out in the Framework.

Conclusion

22. I therefore conclude the development conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole. No other material considerations, including the Framework, have been shown to indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Consequently, the appeal should be dismissed.

Stewart Glassar

INSPECTOR