



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2025

by **N Armstrong BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0734/D/24/3355398

58 Thornfield Road, Middlesbrough TS5 5DB

- 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 Brian Hodgson and Mrs Wendy Hodgson against the decision of Middlesbrough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/0368/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the proposed removal of 3 existing defective timber window frames to the front elevation of the property and their replacement with new purpose-made PVCu timber replica window frames.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Linthorpe Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within the Linthorpe Conservation Area, a residential suburb to the south of Middlesbrough town centre. The property is one of a group of terraced residential properties that front Thornfield Road and that are located towards the northern boundary of the Conservation Area. The surrounding area is characterised by two-storey terraced properties with variations in the design of the front elevations. The appeal property and Nos 60 and 62 adjacent differ from others in the row as they feature timber windows and distinct, wider front door openings. This group of dwellings has a pleasing architectural harmony.
4. The officer report highlights that the overall significance of the Conservation Area lies in its village origins which have grown into high quality late nineteenth and early twentieth century suburbs with areas of planned architectural consistency, being characterised through the properties, the greening within the area and the street scene character. The Linthorpe Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan (CAAMP) highlights that the boundary of the Conservation Area was extended in 2006 to include this area of Thornfield Road, despite alterations to properties and the loss of some original features.
5. From my observations walking around the Conservation Area and having regard to the CAAMP, I concur with the Council's assessment of its significance as set out above. Due to the architectural consistency, the character of the appeal property and the terrace that it sits within, particularly the group formed by Nos 58, 60 and

62, contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area for the reasons set out above, albeit I noted the windows of No 62 were in a poorer external condition. This is reflected in Map 6 of the CAAMP, which identifies the terrace as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

6. There are many properties on Thornfield Road that have timber framed windows and doors. However, the use of PVCu in differing designs on many other properties is also evident in the street scene and around the wider Conservation Area. Such replacements have diminished the character and architectural consistency of the respective properties and thus eroded the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This is particularly notable when modern PVCu windows are viewed alongside more traditional timber windows.
7. The officer report states that the use of PVCu has been shown to cause harm to the significance of conservation areas, which resulted in the introduction of the Article 4 Direction in the Linthorpe Conservation Area in February 2010. Planning permission is therefore required for replacement windows in this designated area.
8. The proposal would see the replacement of three existing white painted timber framed windows to the front elevation, two of which are larger bay windows, with PVCu window frames. The appellants' Design & Access & Heritage Statement (DAHS) refers to the existing windows as being original to the property. The existing windows all feature stained and leaded glass in the top glazing panels. The glazing in the lower panels of the first floor windows also has leaded detailing. The existing external front doors and fanlight above are white PVCu following previous replacement.
9. The plans and supporting information show that the existing windows would be replaced with purpose made, white "timber replica" window frames. These would be constructed with PVCu featuring a textured foil finish, which the DAHS states is intended to replicate a natural timber grain finish. There are no details within the appeal documents to indicate that the new windows would incorporate stained glass or other detailing to reflect the appearance of the existing windows of the appeal property, which I note has been incorporated into some other replacements. Although the proposal is intended to match the design of the original windows, it is not clear from the plans and information provided whether the windows would in fact fully match the size, form and appearance of the current windows, including glazing detail. The submitted details do not clearly demonstrate that the proposed use of PVCu as a material would be a suitable replacement for the painted timber frames in respect of their finished construction, profile and appearance.
10. From the plans and information before me, replacing the existing windows with PVCu as proposed, including the loss of timber frames and the decorative stained glass and leaded detailing, would be detrimental to the existing character and appearance of the property. As a result, the contribution that the property makes to the architectural consistency of the terrace and the significance of the Conservation Area would be eroded by the proposal. The development would therefore fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, and it would harm its significance.
11. As the proposed changes are localised in terms of the Conservation Area as a whole, the harm to its significance would be less than substantial. Regardless of

the level of harm, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 215 of the Framework requires the less than substantial harm in this case to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

12. Public benefits have not been specifically outlined by the appellants in the appeal documents. However, it would be reasonable to treat the improvements to thermal efficiency as being public benefits inasmuch that they would reduce energy consumption and improve the housing stock. Even so, these public benefits would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Conservation Area. I am mindful that it has not been demonstrated that the PVCu windows being proposed are the only means of securing environmental gains and a healthier living environment within the property.
13. I conclude that the proposed development fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Linthorpe Conservation Area, therefore the proposal would conflict with Policies CS5 and DC1 of the Middlesbrough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008). Amongst other things, these policies seek the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas, and that the visual appearance of development in terms of design and materials will be high quality.

Other Matters

14. The appellants have referenced examples of other replacement PVCu windows in the area, as well as the PVCu front doors of the appeal property. I do not know the circumstances under which these were installed or their status regarding planning permission. I therefore cannot draw any direct comparison with the development that would weigh in its favour. The Council indicates that some of these were in place prior to the Article 4 Direction coming into force and that others may be unauthorised, and it is actively undertaking enforcement action.
15. Allowing further harmful development would cumulatively erode the character, appearance and significance of the Conservation Area. Accordingly, the existence of PVCu windows and doors in other properties does not justify the harm that would be caused by the development.
16. The appellants have expressed concern in respect of the cost of alternative timber windows, whilst it is also suggested the proposal would be more appropriate in the Conservation Area compared to a standard PVCu product. The DAHS suggests that the selected window manufacturer has provided replacement PVCu window frames in conservation areas and listed buildings. However, I have no details before me of such cases.
17. I have taken account of the other matters raised in the evidence, including the appellants' purchase of the property prior to it being included within the Conservation Area and their concerns over the Council's handling of this application and previous enquiries regarding similar development at other properties. However, these matters do not alter my conclusions on the main issue.
18. Whilst I note the representation in support from the Ward Councillor, this is not sufficient to persuade me that the development is acceptable. Any subsequent

review of the development plan, the Conservation Area designation or Article 4 Direction would also be a matter for the Council.

Conclusion

19. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

N Armstrong

INSPECTOR