
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2025

by J Hills MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X1118/W/25/3369211

10 Rockcliffe Court, Capstone Road, Ilfracombe, Devon EX34 9BU

- 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 Mark Watkins against the decision of North Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref is 79728.
 - The development proposed is described in the application as *“Proposed replacement of rotten, decaying and unsafe painted softwood sash windows and door to front and back aspects. Due to efficiency of access these will be replaced with UPVC composite wood effect windows and door which will not need repainting seasonally and demand high maintenance due to weathering consistent with coastal areas. Regular road closures on a dead end road will not be needed regularly to facilitate repainting. Visually these will remain immaculate over time with no deterioration due to flaking paint. (Weathering impact over time will be minimised and windows will remain aesthetically pleasing for a long time). The design will be like for like, and visually from the road, above and below these will be identical to wooden painted windows and will appear to be so. The UPVC window replacement will have grained effect, and be in white. They will have a higher energy rating (A) than what is currently in place. These will be of good quality and not the UPVC smooth finish as installed by some of the other apartments in the building. The windows will be in keeping with the area and maintain the fresh, updated look as begun with the replacement of the ironworks last year”*.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for removal of single glazed softwood sash windows and door and replace with UPVC double glazed composite wood effect sash windows and door at 10 Rockcliffe Court, Ilfracombe, EX34 9BU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 79728, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of decision Ref 79728.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos NDC001 Location Plan received by the Council on 15/01/25; and NDC006 Proposed Elevation Master Bedroom Window; NDC007 Proposed Elevation Bedroom Two; NDC008 Proposed Elevation Bathroom; and NDC009 Proposed Elevation Lounge, all received by the Council on 12/03/25.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council issued a split decision where it considered parts of the proposal to remove and replace some north facing fenestration were acceptable. This element to the wider application was granted subject to conditions. The proposed south facing dormer windows were not regarded as being acceptable and it is this element the appellant wishes to contest.

3. It is however noted that with a split decision, the whole proposal is before me. I am therefore not restricted to dealing with only the elements which have concerned the Council.
4. The description of development set out in the banner heading above is lengthy and includes wording that is not an act of development. I have shortened it in the formal decision to reflect the description in the original decision.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Ilfracombe Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

6. The appeal site is located within the CA where there is a statutory duty to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework regards conservation areas as heritage assets and attaches great weight to their conservation. The significance of the large and diverse CA derives from its historic origins as a fishing port, along with the settlement's growth in the Victorian era.
7. The appeal building forms part of a larger 19th century terrace that makes a positive contribution to the significance of the CA through its architectural detailing and materials of construction. The style of building and wider terrace relates to the evolution of Ilfracombe as a seaside tourist destination.
8. Having paid regard to the Council's CA appraisal, and based on my own observations, it is acknowledged that many historic properties in the CA are characterised by their sash windows, with a good proportion retaining timber frames. Additionally, the cumulative effect of minor impacts on the CA can lead to a degradation of their character.
9. Numerous unsympathetic interventions have already been made to the appeal building's north elevation, which has eroded some of its period detailing. I do not agree that visibility from public spaces is very limited as much of the building can be seen from the adjoining coastal path. Even so, the proposed fenestration on this elevation would not stand out and for this reason, there would be a neutral effect on the CA.
10. In that context, the most prominent and characterful elements of the appeal building are found on its south elevation ground and first floors, where key architectural features include the arched windows and doors. The loss of some of the more delicate detailing achieved by timber framing to such openings would have a particularly noticeable effect on the overall character of this terrace.
11. However, the dormer windows are set high above a narrow street and are of very modest scale. Glimpsed and more distant views of some of the dormers along the terrace can be appreciated from the lower street, though from such vantage points it is difficult to tell their material construction. Their collective uniformity in design is a positive feature. Having said that, the sensitive replacement of timber sash windows with wood grain effect uPVC of the type proposed would maintain a characterful design feature and would barely be a noticeable alternative material. Thus, the proposal would keep a coherent appearance within this part of the terraced building without compromising local distinctiveness.

12. Overall, I therefore conclude that the proposal would have a neutral and thus preserving effect on the character or appearance of the CA. As such, there would be no conflict with policies ST15, DM04, and DM07 of the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan which, collectively in this respect, and amongst other things, seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets by promoting good design using appropriate and sympathetic fenestration, while reinforcing key characteristics of the area.

Conditions

13. I have imposed a time limit condition that reflects the original permission and one for the plans in the interest of certainty.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given, the appeal should be allowed.

J Hills

INSPECTOR