
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 January 2026

by **T C King BA(Hons), MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/Y/25/3375054

46 Monson Colonnade, Monson Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 1LR

- 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 Spurdawn Ltd against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/01488/LBC.
 - The works proposed are listed building consent – for the replacement of the existing 1st and 2nd floor single glazed timber windows on the front elevation with new double glazed timber units..
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

The appeal site and the proposal

2. No 46 is a three-storey property within a large building containing a number of units, dating from 1902. Traditionally, known as Opera Colonnade, it is Grade II listed.
3. There are many characteristic windows, of similar profile and appearance within the upper floors of the front elevation, which are of the single-glazed timber, sliding sash variety. The proposal seeks to replace a total of five of these on the first and second floors with double-glazed timber sash window units.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the significance of the listed building.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

5. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCAA) 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.
6. This listed building is visually prominent when travelling along Monson Road to which the building's principal, front elevation faces, and within which are the windows intended for replacement. Accordingly, they make a positive contribution to the heritage asset's significance.
7. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that, when considering the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to that asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost

through alteration of the heritage asset and, in instances where harm is identified, the degree of such is a matter for the decision maker's assessment. Further, this must be given considerable weight, and requires convincing justification.

Effect on the listed building

8. Any proposals within, adjacent to, or visible from the heritage asset, must ensure the listed building remains the focus of its setting. Here, the setting is essentially the wider building and its original fenestration within.
9. I note the various photographs submitted by the appellant which show that existing timber sash windows are in need of some attention and repair. My site visit was carried out from the street and it was obviously not possible to carry out a close inspection of such. Nonetheless, there is an absence of support for the appellant's case in that there is no report provided by a timber specialist to confirm that the existing windows have been personally examined and are considered to be beyond structural and thermal repair. Further, I have no information as to any attempt to consider more conservative ways in which to deal with the issues of energy performance. The submission is, therefore, incomplete.
10. In the event, the timber specialist could have provided firm recommendations. As such, I must agree with the Council that insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate the appellant's claim, and there has been no explanation as to what, if any, alternatives to full replacement have been explored.
11. I am also concerned as to the low-scaled plan (ref PL01 Rev C) submitted which, in depicting the building's existing and proposed elevations, along with a block and location plan (at scales of 1:100, 1:200 and 1:1250, respectively), represents the scheme's main drawing. Instead, for proposals involving heritage assets, it is normal that detailed drawings, illustrating the proposal to a scale of 1:20, are put forward. However, in this instance, the installation is not adequately explained and I am unaware as to the detailed type, profile, specification and appearance of the proposed glazing units.
12. It is insufficient for the appellant's Heritage Statement to merely say that *'the replacement windows will match the design of the originals so the aesthetics of the front elevation will remain the same'*. This is a sweeping statement, and is not substantiated by direct evidence.

Related considerations

13. I acknowledge that there is pressure to reduce heat loss and increase thermal efficiency which means that double-glazed units, in an attempt to achieve this, are often proposed. Double glazing creates an insulating thermal barrier, reducing heat loss during winter and keeping rooms cool during the winter months, thereby significantly improving energy efficiency by lowering the energy required for both heating and cooling.
14. However, as mentioned, for listed buildings, there is a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or any features of special interest it possesses.
15. In respect of fenestration, research by Historic England has shown that the use of secondary glazing with low emissivity coating can significantly reduce heat loss. Also double-glazed units are considerably thicker than the original glass. With

secondary glazing, the original window remains unaltered, and this can obviously be beneficial where they are historically significant.

16. In instances where replacement is unavoidable due to irreversible decay, the new windows should, ideally, match the originals like-for-like.

Public Benefits and Planning Balance

17. With reference to paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Having regard to the nature of the scheme and the impact on the significance of the heritage asset I find the harm to be 'less than substantial' for the purposes of the Framework. Nonetheless, it should still be given considerable importance and weight. In such circumstances, paragraph 215 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.
18. Whilst sustainability and energy efficiency are legitimate issues, where historic buildings are involved a balance must be achieved between this and avoiding damage both to the significance of the building and its fabric, and the visual impact of a renewable installation on the character and appearance of the historic building.
19. In accordance with paragraph 167 of the Framework I give marked weight to the need to support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings. However, apart from the photographs I have referred to I have seen no technical evidence to support the claim that the existing windows are beyond refurbishment. Also, the intended removal of a modern vent holds little weight.
20. There would be a loss of historic fabric resulting from the proposed installation and, due to the said shortcomings of the supporting material and the submitted drawings, I consider that the complete removal of the historic joinery has not been justified.
21. Although development plan policies do not strictly apply to applications for listed building consent, the proposal would not accord with the objectives of policy EN4 ('Historic Environment and Heritage Assets') of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan, adopted 2025.

Conclusion

22. I conclude that, through this proposal, the listed building would lose an important element of its historic fabric which would cause harm to the significance of the Opera Colonnade. This is not outweighed by any public benefits that might arise. Accordingly, the appeal does not succeed.

T C King

INSPECTOR