

MC/18/3164

Date Received: 1 November 2018

Location: 272 St Margarets Banks Rochester Kent ME1 1HY

Proposal: Replacement of existing sash windows with UPVC to front

Applicant Mr & Mrs Nick Walker

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Ward: River Ward

Case Officer: Amanda Grout

Contact Number: 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 24th April 2019.

Recommendation - Refusal

- 1 The development would result in the unnecessary loss of original sound timber sliding sash windows that have been handcrafted to be stylistically in keeping with the aesthetic attributes and context of the property and would be replaced with modern upvc sash windows that would be out of character and in conflict with the objectives of Policies BNE1 and BNE14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraphs 193 and 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

For the reasons for this recommendation for refusal please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

This is an application for the replacement of 11 existing sash windows with UPVC to front.

Relevant Planning History

MC/17/3338 Application for replacement windows and doors
10 January 2018
Approval with Conditions

In addition to the individual site history, the following is material to the consideration of this application.

MC/15/2987 10 Love Lane Rochester ME1 1TN
Application under Article 4 for the replacement of sash windows to front with like for like white aluminum units
Refused
1 December 2015
Appeal Dismissed
5 April 2016

The above application was refused under delegated powers for the following reason;

The development would result in the unnecessary loss of original sound timber sliding sash windows that have been handcrafted to be stylistically in keeping with the aesthetic attributes and context of the property and would be replaced with modern aluminium sash windows that would be out of character and in conflict with the objectives of Policy BNE1 and BNE14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The application was subsequently dismissed at appeal with the Inspector concluding that;

The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the property, and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Historic Rochester Conservation Area.

Representations

The application has been advertised on site, in the press and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

5 letters of support have been received, making the following summarised comments:

- Improvement to St Margarets Banks
- Would improve the property and local area
- Easier to maintain
- Energy efficient

1 letter of objection has been received from the City of Rochester Society stating that the use of upvc windows in a conservation area should be avoided.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background

As the planning history shows, a recent application for replacements windows and door to the rear of the property was submitted and approved. It was considered that as the Article 4 relates predominantly to the front façade and that other examples of replacement windows and doors to the rear were evident within the immediate area, together with the outlook was towards a new build estate with heavy framed brown grained upvc windows that clearly did not have the same significance as the front. Overall, it was considered that the proposal would not result in a detrimental impact on the host property or the character and appearance of the area, and was approved with conditions.

The current planning application seeks to replicate this but to the front of the property which faces directly onto St Margarets Banks.

Street Scene, Conservation and Design matters

No 272 St Margarets Banks is not listed as it is a much later build circa 1980's early 1990's within the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area but does have an article 4 direction. Article 4 direction applies to alterations to the facades of houses which face highways or public footpaths.

The replacement windows would be visible from the street. The application seeks to change the windows to upvc sliding sash with double glazed units. The design and access and heritage statements provided state that this would 'vastly improve the thermal efficiency of this residential house by removing existing windows which are in a poor condition, have no merit and are rotten in many places. uPVC frames will add to the existing fenestration and improve the general appearance of the building'.

Despite the fact that the application states that they are in poor condition and the new windows would match the existing but in upvc, new ownerships of the property invariably leads to some upgrading work, which often involves replacing windows because they are 'worn out'. However, the idea that old windows are 'worn out' is driven largely by a culture of replacement and fashion rather than by an actual assessment of their condition and performance via a lack of maintenance.

Replacement plastic (PVC-u) windows pose one of the greatest threats to the heritage value of historic areas. Despite attempts at improving the design of these windows they are instantly recognisable because they cannot match the sections and proportions of the joinery. Their design, detailing and operation make them look different to traditional windows. Manufacturers have been unable to replicate the

sections/glazing bars used in most timber and steel windows due to the limited strength of the material and the additional weight of the secondary glazing units. False 'glazing bars' which are thin strips of plastic inserted within the glass sandwich of a double glazed unit change the character of the window.

Even though the windows are not historic they have been designed with acknowledgement to the past and the design of its neighbouring buildings. An assessment of the significance of the windows and the contribution they make to the overall significance of a building is the key first step in deciding the right course of action. The different appearance and character of PVC-u windows compared to historic windows is highly likely to make them unsuitable for older buildings, particularly those in Conservation Areas.

Windows have a significant impact on the character and appearance of a building, through their arrangement, size and detailing. They are an important element of the design of a building, give information about its origins and development, and are of real importance to the character and appearance of historic buildings, particularly those that are listed or situated within a Conservation Area. In order to protect the appearance of such buildings, proposals to carry out work which will alter the design, detailing, materials or method of operation of the windows require very careful consideration.

One of the primary reasons stated by the applicant for replacing the windows is to ensure thermal insulation, which can be achieved without removing the original windows. It is considered therefore that the unnecessary and avoidable loss of the property's unique character would not be acceptable.

Accordingly, the loss of historic original details that this development would result in is unacceptable, consequently it is considered that the proposed development conflicts to the objectives of Policies BNE1 and BNE14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraphs 193 and 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

Amenity Considerations

Due to the nature of development proposed, it is considered that the proposal would not impact on neighbours in term of loss of outlook, privacy, daylight or sunlight. Therefore no objections raised in respect of BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003

Highways

Due to the nature of development proposed, it is considered that the development would not increase the needs for parking or cause any detriments to highway safety. Therefore, no objections are raised in regards to T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Other Matters

With homeowners increasingly seeking to preserve the traditional appearance of their properties, it is to be hoped that knowledge of alternative solutions to window related problems will continue to grow. Before making a decision to discard sash windows, it is always worthwhile consulting experts. They can help to determine the extent of

deterioration and guide the process of renovation or, where really necessary, replacement.

The Council considers the removal of the original windows and their replacement with UPVC windows to be unacceptable. The applicant has stated that the window units would be as close as visual match for the existing as possible. Due to the finish of the windows and the lack in sufficient detailing of the windows, it is considered an unacceptable proposal.

In addition, a sequential number of properties either side of No 272 of varying styles seeking to change their windows will lead to a negative cumulative impact meaning impacts that result from incremental changes caused by other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions relating to proposed window changes.

Conclusions and Reasons for this Recommendation

The development would result in the unnecessary loss of original sound timber sliding sash windows that have been handcrafted to be stylistically in keeping with the aesthetic attributes and context of the property and would be replaced with modern upvc sash windows that would be out of character and in conflict with the objectives of Policies BNE1 and BNE14 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and paragraphs 193 and 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019, and is recommended for refusal.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred for Committee determination due to the number of representations received expressing a view contrary to officer's recommendation.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>