

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20221138

Location: 27 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Description: Retention of new UPVC windows to the front, side and rear elevations

Applicant: Mr M Altinay

Site Visit Date: 16/03/23

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form
Site Location Plan
MUAY/022/001 – Plans and Elevations
MUAY/022/003 – Window Details
Brochure Details

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
19820584	Conversion of single dwellinghouse into flat and maisonette erection of single storey rear extension to form kitchen diner and erection of external staircase	PER	27.09.1982

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 - Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- TC3 – Development Affecting Conservation Areas

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since

the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021); and
- Conservation Area Maintenance/Replacement Windows and Doors Guidance
- Windmill Hill Conservation Area Appraisal

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Ward Councillors: No response received.

Conservation Officer: No response received.

Neighbouring properties

6 surrounding properties were consulted and 4 comments were received from members of the public. One objection and 3 representations.

Summary of comments:

Objection:

- As we understand it replacement of windows in the conservation area from wooden to upvc are not allowed under any circumstances. It would be ludicrous to allow these windows to remain.

Representation:

- Although not wooden, a sympathetic design has been chosen, in keeping with other wooden sash windows in the area.
- This is not retention as the windows were timber before.
- The downstairs flat has kept timber and so the upvc remaining wood look odd.
- Other applications for upvc windows have been declined in the area.
- A Precedent for undertaking work before applying for planning consent should not be set.

Officer Note: The current situation is that the upvc windows are in place and so it is considered correct that the description would describe this as retention of these windows. As an example, if the proposed were to read 'installation of new upvc windows', that would inaccurately describe the existing situation. Despite this, consideration will of course be given to the situation of the windows prior to the works already completed.

Officer's Analysis

Conservation Area

The principal issue in the determination of this application is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Windmill Hill Conservation Area.

The Windmill Hill Conservation Area Appraisal highlights that the loss of original architectural features, such as doors and windows is a principal negative feature in the Conservation Area. Under the section on 'Issues' in the Conservation Area it states that it is evident that well-intentioned, but unsympathetic changes, especially to doors, windows and roofs, have begun to have a cumulative effect, causing loss of original architectural features that is damaging to the character of the conservation area.

An Article 4 Direction was introduced in 2008 as the Council was concerned that unsympathetic alterations to houses that harm or erode the character and appearance of the area had been carried out. The aim of the Direction is to prevent harmful changes encouraging the careful repair of original or period features, and where they have already been lost, ensure that the replacement of any modern windows and doors results in the reinstatement of an appropriately traditional type. Therefore, planning permission is required to replace any windows and doors in any elevation that fronts a highway as set out in the Direction; this includes South Hill Road. As such, planning permission is only required to replace the windows in the front elevation of the property. The replacement of the windows in the rear and the windows and door in the side elevation would not require permission as those elevations are not covered under the Direction as they do not front a highway. However, as the application is for replacement of the first and second floor windows serving this flat to the front, side and rear they will all be assessed here.

Although the Conservation Architect has not commented on the application, inference to his thoughts can be made by viewing his comments on the application made for similar works by the neighbouring property; 28 South Hill Road under planning reference 20170033. The following excerpt is taken from the delegated report of that application.

GBC - Conservation Officer

The existing windows appear to be original timber sliding sashes and are in keeping with the building and contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The proposed replacement of the front elevation windows in UPVC will result in harm to the conservation area and I am therefore unable to support this application. The side and rear windows are not fronting the public highway and therefore will not be controlled under the Article 4 Direction.

This particularly building is a three storey, semi-detached building, split into 2 flats 27a, South Hill Road and 27 South Hill Road (forming the upper two floors). The high quality traditional detailing, such as sash windows, makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset, in this case the Conservation Area.

Policy CS20 (Heritage and the Historic Environment) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy states that proposals will be supported which preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance of the Borough's heritage assets, their setting and their interpretation and enjoyment.

Saved Policy TC3 (Development Affecting Conservation Areas) of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994 expects proposals to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy expects development to be visually attractive and conserve and enhance the character of the local built historic and natural environment.

It is useful to understand how the windows have changed over time and so the images below are useful:



Image taken during a site visit on 13/03/23



Google earth images taken May 2018



Google earth image taken October 2008

As the images show, at some point between 2014 and 2018, the original timber, sliding sash windows were retained but a secondary internal glazing system appears to have been installed. Then by 2022, the windows had been replaced with the current upvc windows and composite door.

It is noted that the slimline glazing and integral glazing bars and surround, would be a better example replicate of the original windows, than previously proposed elsewhere in the street. It is noted that in refused application for the neighbour's property ref 20170033, differed as the proposed windows had a thicker surround, giving it a modern appearance unsympathetic to the designated heritage asset.

The below image is of one of the original timber sash windows which was removed.



The below close up of one of the replaced rear windows, shows a stark contrast in the appearance of those windows, largely due to its upvc material.



As the above assessment evidenced, the upvc windows and composite door have introduced a visually apparent, modern and out-of-character material to the existing largely coherent historic appearance of the property. The flat, machine-made surface of uPVC windows is quite different in character to painted wood. They contrast significantly in appearance to the existing traditional sash windows and do not replicate their distinctive character and quality.

There has been a loss of original fabric, replaced with an alien and inauthentic material which reflects nothing of the 19th century character of the building. This has eroded the original character and appearance of the existing windows as a distinctive feature and the authenticity and integrity of no. 27 as an important heritage asset would be seriously undermined. Furthermore, the double glazing has resulted in a double reflection and even chunkier proportions for the window frames in order to take the weight and thickness of the double glazing.

Overall, the proposal would harm the positive contribution made by the building to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In this way the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be neither preserved or enhanced.

Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraphs 201 and 202 differentiate between the approaches required when a proposal

would cause substantial or less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. In this case, it is considered that the replacement of the existing windows with uPVC would cause harm, albeit less than substantial harm, to the significance of no. 27 South Hill Road and the Conservation Area as designated heritage assets. The NPPF states that in such circumstances the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

No benefits have been put forward by the applicant; arguments often put forward in applications for replacement of original windows with uPVC units are that the existing windows are in a poor state of repair and cannot be repaired, upvc windows are lower maintenance and uPVC windows are more sustainable, etc. It should always be investigated if windows or doors can be repaired in the first instance. It is often completely unnecessary to replace existing original or period timber windows with uPVC units. Existing historic windows in this row will have been functioning perfectly well for around 200 years. With repair they may be able to last many more years. In terms of maintenance timber windows can be treated and modern paints used in order to significantly reduce the amount of maintenance required. UPVc windows require cleaning at least every 6 months to stop discolouration by dirt and ultra violet light and need to be lubricated and adjusted annually and weather seals and gaskets renewed at least every ten years. UPVC windows are also difficult to repair and damaged units often require complete replacement. In terms of sustainability, repairing historic windows rather than replacing them is more sustainable in environmental and economic terms, particularly when draught proofing or secondary glazing is considered. The environmental costs of replacement would be much greater than simply refurbishing as there is a large amount of energy used to make uPVC windows in the first place. It is considered therefore that there is no public benefit that would arise from the proposal that would outweigh the harm the proposed replacement windows would have on the significance of no. 27 South Hill Road and the Conservation Area as important heritage assets.

In coming to this conclusion, it has been taken into account that there are other properties in South Hill Road that have had their original timber windows removed and replaced with modern alternatives. These all fail to replicate the qualities of the windows they have replaced, look out of place and serve to demonstrate the harm that can result from such development. Furthermore, they may have been installed without planning permission or prior to the introduction of the Article 4 Direction. As stated at the beginning of this section the Windmill Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal highlights that the loss of original architectural features, such as doors and windows is a principal negative feature in the Conservation Area that is damaging to the character of the Conservation Area. The Article 4 Direction covering the Conservation Area was introduced in order to prevent harmful changes, encouraging the careful repair of original or period features, and where lost, ensuring that the replacement of any modern windows and doors results in the reinstatement of an appropriately traditional type. The proposal constitutes the exact type of development that is to be resisted in order to prevent any further loss of original windows and doors in the Conservation Area.

Conclusion & Recommendation

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposal would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Windmill Hill Conservation Area and would cause harm to it. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies CS19 (Development and Design Principles) and CS20 (Heritage and the Historic Environment) of the adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Adopted Version (September 2014) and Saved Policy TC3 (Development Affecting Conservation Areas) of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994. The development also conflicts with Section 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places and Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The recommendation is to refuse this application.

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Lisa Williams	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
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Signed:		Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	27th March 2023	Dated:	30th March 2023