

Case Study: Plastic Windows Installed in Grade II Listed Building



Plastic Windows Installed in Grade II Listed Building After Planning Authority Reversal

We are frequently contacted by members asking for advice on listed properties and conservation areas, often when the joiners are trying to help the building owners improve the thermal efficiency of their property by offering double glazed units with simulated bars or even traditional bars glazed with narrow cavity units. They complain that there is no consistency from planning authorities. We advise that each case needs to be considered on an individual basis.

The case raised by our member involved a late 18th Century property that was grade II listed but was not within a conservation area. The original listed building consent had been rejected as the Local Planning Authority had considered that fitting plastic windows and doors would fail to enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the property due to the use of non-traditional materials which was contrary to the guidance in the Local Development Plan and the requirements of section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (conserving and enhancing the historic environment). The Local Development plan stated that, proposals involving any alteration or extension of a Listed Building would only be permitted where it did not have an adverse effect on the architectural and historic character or appearance of the building or its setting and it respected the individual details of the building including the form, design, scale, methods of

construction and materials which contribute to the character of the listed building.

The listed building had undergone considerable alterations during the late 20th century, after the building was listed, including the replacement of all the doors and windows. The replacement windows were wooden framed, double glazed, pivot windows arranged in a mock sash window style which did not accurately reproduce the appearance or function of the original sash windows.

The property owner applied for Listed Building Consent to replace these windows and doors with plastic sash windows and doors but this was rejected. The Local Planning Authority said that while the principle of replacing the windows and doors was considered acceptable, as was the chosen Georgian design, the chosen materials were not acceptable in heritage terms. Plastic windows and doors were not considered to be a traditional or authentic material for a building of heritage importance. They were also concerned that the proposed sash horns were not considered an original feature of sash windows in the late 18th century and the proposed simulated glazing bars applied to the glass did not appear to be through glazing bars which would be true to timber framed Georgian windows.

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However, the decision by the Local Planning Authority was appealed and just over a year after the original Listed Building Consent had been rejected, the decision was overturned by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State who allowed the plastic windows and doors to be installed.

The main issue was whether the proposed works would preserve a grade II listed building and any of the features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

The Inspector considered that despite being fitted with late 20th century timber doors and windows, the building retained its authenticity typical of its type and period in the area with its imposing historic form, pleasing proportions, characteristic pattern of openings and traditional materials.

The Inspector referred to Historic England's guidance that states that traditional windows and their glazing make an important contribution to the significance of historic areas. They are an integral part of the design of older buildings and the surviving joinery should be conserved and repaired wherever possible but where historic windows have been replaced with ones whose design does not follow historic patterns, these are unlikely to contribute to the significance of listed buildings. Replacing such windows with new windows of a sympathetic historic pattern, whether single-glazed

or incorporating slim-profile double glazing, may cause no additional harm. In this instance, the existing windows and doors in the property did not form part of the historic fabric of the building or contribute to its significance.

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