

CROMER - PF/20/1052 - Replacement of wooden single glazed sash windows with like-for-like upvc double glazed sash windows; 9 Mount Street, Cromer, NR27 9DB for Mrs S Coe

- Target Date: 28 September 2020

Case Officer: Miss J Hodgkin

Householder application

RELEVANT SITE CONSTRAINTS

SFRA - Areas Susceptible to Groundwater Flooding

Landscape Character Area

LDF Tourism Asset Zone

LDF - Principal Routes

LDF - Settlement Boundary

Conservation Area

LDF - Residential Area

A Road

Development within 60m of Class A road

Unclassified Road

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PLA/19820782 HR - 9 Mount Street, Cromer, NR27 9DB: change of use from retail shop to office - Approved 25/06/1982

PLA/19821062 HR - 9 Mount Street, Cromer, NR27 9DB: change of use from store room to office - Approved 27/08/1982

PLA/19940219 PF - 9 Mount Street, Cromer, NR27 9DB: change of use of part first floor from residential to office - Approved 29/04/1994

PLA/20031239 PF - 9 Mount Street, Cromer, NR27 9DB: change of use from office to residential flat - Approved 08/09/2003

PF/09/1215 PF First Floor, 9 Mount Street, Cromer, NR27 9DB: Change of use from A1 (retail) to residential flat - Approved 18/01/2010

THE APPLICATION

This application seeks permission for the replacement of the existing wooden single glazed sash windows with like-for-like upvc double glazed sash windows.

N.B. At the request of the applicant, the development's original description was amended on 10.11.2020 to omit the proposed replacement door which was not considered to be acceptable due to its inappropriate design and the lack of details provided.

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

At the request of the Assistant Director of Planning. Noting the concerns of Councillor T Adams regarding the potential that both the approved and unapproved use of upvc windows on buildings within the Cromer Conservation area is having a cumulative, detrimental impact on the significance of the designation. Additionally, Councillor Adams did not feel the proposed material changes and the potential level of visual harm they would create are justified in this instance.

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL

Cromer Town Council: Objection, not appropriate replacement materials in conservation area. Heritage statement gives no information on heritage and appears insufficient. No justification made for changes.

CONSULTATIONS

Conservation & Design: Initially objected due to insufficient details of proposal including the Heritage statement. On receipt of further information provided and since applicant has omitted the replacement door from the original description, Conservation and Design are not able to sustain an objection due to replacement windows being satisfactory in terms of their proportions and colour, and the presence of upvc windows elsewhere within the street scene.

REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of objection received on the following grounds:

1. The building occupies a prominent corner site. The changes will be clearly visible and detrimental to the appearance of Mount Street, and will not enhance or preserve the appearance of the building, contrary to Conservation Area legislation.
2. Environmental concerns: U-PVC windows and doors produce toxic products during production and disposal (Dioxins, PCBs, ash from careful incineration). Their metal components are labour intensive to recycle, more likely they will become landfill, where the toxins will leach out over time. Surely this contravenes basic environmental policies of the NNDC?
3. Studies by (formerly) English Heritage support the suitability and durability of high quality timber that outperforms any replacement materials. It makes good sense, environmentally, to maintain them. Double-glazed units could be fitted to the existing window frames to solve any insulation issues.
4. Visual appearance. The replacement of timber doors and windows by u-PVC cannot be considered a "like-for-like" exchange as implied in the Heritage Statement. New uPVC windows have thicker frames and cruder jointing and glazing bars. The illustrations supplied by the applicant make this point perfectly.
5. The current windows and door are good examples of late Victorian craftsmanship. The proposed door lacks the subtleties of Victorian wooden examples and the overly smooth, machine-finished appearance of plastic windows and doors is an unpleasant contrast with older brickwork whereas traditional timber windows and doors fit in perfectly.
6. There are a number of cases in Cromer where Planning Inspectors have decided that uPVC windows are a material change of appearance, and that there are other (and better) ways of insulating a house.
7. Restoring and maintaining the existing windows and door should be restored and maintained, to preserve the attractive qualities of the town and its architecture.

POLICIES

North Norfolk Core Strategy (Adopted September 2008):

SS 1 - Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk

SS 3 - Housing

SS 7 - Cromer

EN 2 - Protection and enhancement of landscape and settlement character

EN 4 - Design

EN 8 - Protecting and enhancing the historic environment

EN 10 - Development and Flood risk

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Section 4 - Decision-making

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places

Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

MAIN ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Principle of development
2. Design and visual impact on the Heritage Asset
3. Residential amenity
4. Other Matters

APPRAISAL

1) Principle of Development

The application site lies within a defined residential area of Cromer, a defined as a Primary Settlement, where alterations to dwellings are acceptable in principle subject to compliance with all relevant Core Strategy policies. The site is also within the Cromer Conservation Area, new proposals are expected to maintain and enhance the character of the area. Please note the building is not listed.

2) Design and Impact on the Heritage Asset:

The objections raised centre on the inappropriate choice of material proposed, the resultant harmful visual impact the upvc windows would have on the character and appearance of the building and the Cromer Conservation Area, and, that no justification was provided for the changes proposed.

The use of upvc is not to a recommended option, repairing the existing windows and fitting single glazed units behind them would be preferred option. Conservation & Design Officers (C&D) acknowledge that in practice it is difficult to sustain an objection to the use of upvc windows in an unlisted building. In similar cases locally, allowing such work has only been possible following full confirmation that the replacement windows would closely match the existing; i.e. in respect of their finish (matte woodgrain effect), the dimensions of their frame/rails/glazing bars, their position in the reveal and their opening mechanisms (sash for sash).

C&D were initially not satisfied with the Heritage Statement submitted and the lack of detail provided for the new windows. The amended Heritage Statement now provides greater detail and is more site specific and states the replacement windows are needed to improve the building's energy efficiency. The Agent has confirmed via email that the existing windows are rotten and has also provided some close-up photographs to prove this is the case.

Images of the replacement windows from the Manufacturer's brochure, drawings of the opening mechanisms and section through drawings of the sashes have also been submitted. The amended Heritage statement confirms the window sashes will be Crystal White and have a matt, woodgrain effect to most closely resemble the traditional painted finish of the originals.

As a sufficient level of information has been provided, C&D are now reassured that the works will not constitute an unacceptable level of harm to the character and appearance of the building and the Cromer Conservation Area. It is acknowledged that a refusal of the scheme could not be sustained for the following reasons; sufficient details have been provided to demonstrate that the proposed windows closely replicate the existing windows as far as practically possible, the building is not listed and there is a precedent for the use of upvc elsewhere within the Cromer Conservation area. Therefore, on balance, the proposal is deemed compliant with Core Strategy Policies EN 4 and EN8, and Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

3) Residential Amenity:

The proposed windows are purely replacements of the existing wooden framed windows. No new openings are being created, therefore in terms of privacy, the proposal would not alter the current privacy relationship between the applicant property and any neighbouring properties. As such the proposal would not impact neighbouring amenity and is compliant with Core Strategy Policy EN4.

4) Risk of Flooding:

The site lies within an area that is susceptible to groundwater flooding but as the proposal is for replacement windows, it would have no impact in the event of groundwater flooding occurring. As such the proposal is deemed compliant with Core Strategy Policy EN10.

5) Other Matters:

- The objection letter raises the environmental impact of upvc windows. Whilst repairing or replacing the existing timber frame windows with the same material would be ideal in terms of sustainability, it is acknowledged that the current timber framed windows are rotten and are not energy efficient in terms of their insulating properties. As stated within the amended Heritage Statement, the proposed upvc replacement windows will improve the thermal efficiency of the building and are a practical solution. Additionally, upvc is a widely used material for windows. Considering the above points, it would not be expedient to justify refusing the use of upvc windows on the grounds of environmental impacts.
- The objection letter states there are cases in Cromer where Planning Inspectors have determined that upvc would result in a material change in appearance and found better ways to insulate a house. Within the Cromer Conservation Area there are previous examples where appropriate upvc windows in residential buildings have been approved. Each application however must be assessed upon its own merits. Factors such as a building's prominence within the conservation area, the current appearance/ condition of the building and the surroundings, and whether features of the proposed replacement windows replicate the existing wood frame windows must be considered. In this particular case, C&D are satisfied that the drawings and detailing of the proposed windows are sufficient and that the further information provided within the amended Heritage Statement is satisfactory in addressing their original concerns with the proposal. C&D's view is that there are insufficient grounds

to justify a refusal of the scheme.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve, subject to conditions to cover the matters listed, and any others considered necessary by the Head of Planning:

- Time limit for implementation
- Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted details and specifications
- Materials for the proposed development to be in accordance with details submitted as part of the application.

Final wording of the conditions to be delegated to the Head of Planning

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the proposed development may raise issues relevant to

Article 8: The Right to respect for private and family life.

Article 1 of the First Protocol: The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions.

Having considered the likely impact on an individual's Human Rights, and the general interest of the public, approval of this application as recommended is considered to be justified, proportionate and in accordance with planning law.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 - SECTION 17

The application raises no significant crime and disorder issues.