



FAO: Planning Department,
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2023/1726/FULL
Date: 12/09/2023

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: 26-52 Rooks Hill Welwyn Garden City AL8 6ET

The application is for replacement of existing timber double glazed windows with UPVC double glazing.

The proposal site is part of a late 20th century development within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area, which replaced the 1930s houses at Longcroft Green. However, it is considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

There is no objection in principle to the replacement of the existing windows if they are beyond viable repair, particularly as the proposal site is a late 20th century construction and no historic fabric would be lost. However, there is a strong objection to their replacement with uPVC as this is a modern material which does not uphold the quality of the historic environment and cannot replicate the detail of timber windows. It is modern in finish and overall appearance and detracts from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. While the proposed design would match the existing, it is unlikely that double glazed uPVC units will exactly match the detailing of the existing timber windows due to the need for thicker frames and surface applied glazing bars as illustrated in the supporting documents.

As noted in the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area Appraisal, along Longcroft Lane *there is an inconsistency between the employment of UPVC window glazing and the extant original wooden sash windows*. It is also noted that within the town centre *“the overall character of the buildings is marred by the replacement of original timber sash windows with UPVC units, which are visually harsh and have already weathered poorly”*.

Moreover, the Conservation Area Appraisal identifies negative factors noting that *“Incremental alteration is the most seriously degrading threat to the character of the conservation area. Most of these occur as “permitted development” to individual houses. They can affect whole groups of houses which were intended to be part of a single composition. Common alterations include:*

- Replacement windows of different patterns and materials to the originals...”*



Furthermore, national guidance from Historic England (*Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading*) highlights the unsuitability of uPVC windows in historic buildings and areas:

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 that are listed or in conservation areas... these windows are assembled from factory-made components designed for rigidity, thermal performance and ease of production. 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.

The proposed uPVC windows are therefore considered to undermine the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. With regards to the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), the level of harm to is considered to be 'less than substantial'. As such the local planning authority should weigh this harm against any public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use as per Paragraph 202. Furthermore, the proposal fails to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, as set out in Paragraph 197c of the NPPF.

Yours sincerely

Luciana Rigano RIBA ARB
Built Heritage Team
Place Services

Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter