
From: Andrew Robley
Sent: 22 December 2015 15:48
To: Rachael Collard
Subject: WGC, Stonehills House, Stonehills. 15/2252/LAWP

Rachael,

The character of central Welwyn Garden City is very much reliant on the Neo-Georgian style of all the original buildings. Georgian double hung sash windows with multiple panes divided by glazing bars are undoubtedly the most significant element of Georgian Architecture and are also undoubtedly a unifying feature of the place.

Stonehills has retained this type of window, which is a significant part of its character, especially at the corner blocks where the architecture is more refined and includes gauged brick arches and scrolled key stones.

The original painted timber sashes have individual panes of glass, therefore the reflections off of them are subtle. Often old glass remains and this enhances the effect.

UPVC replacement windows come in various forms but the form most often used, comprises a single pane of double glazing for each sash with plastic mock "glazing bars" stuck on in an attempt to simulate the real thing.

Unfortunately the subtle reflections associated with individual panes is lost and the double reflections show up the true nature of the bars from all angles except straight on.

There is no doubt in my mind that the replacement of genuine timber glazing bar windows with UPVC is eroding the character of the conservation area to a significant level because much of the character is based on its "Georgian" windows. By definition, I therefore also regard wholesale replacement of windows of a different material and form to be a significant change and thus requiring planning consent, except in the case of individual dwellings, where it is permitted development.

Real timber windows are available with individual glazing bars and slim double glazing. They therefore have most of the attributes of the original single glazed windows and are from sustainable materials, whereas plastics windows are not and the principle of seeking to use plastics and single flat panes of glass to fake the appearance of timber windows with multiple panes seems unsound. In some cases where the original windows are in good condition, secondary glazing can improve the appearance at much less cost.

In this case the buildings, nearby buildings on the opposite side of Stonehills still have genuine timber glazing bar sashes. The majority of the central area still retains its original windows although there are exceptions and these have eroded the essential character and it is important to stop this trend before the character of the whole conservation area is eroded seriously.

Conclusions: My advice is that the proposal for the replacement of multi-paned timber sash windows single panes with plastic frames using stick-on "glazing bars would be significantly damaging to the character and appearance of the conservation area and would not preserve or enhance it. It would not conform to the NPPF 2012, paras 7, 8, 9, 131, 132, 134,

NPPG 2014, Local Plan R22, D1, D2; Emerging Core Strategy CS11.

Regards,

Andrew