

Higher House Holcombe. Replacement windows and use of non-approved 28mm double glazing - Application Reference Number: 63065 and 63022

The Approved Application.

The Local Planning Authority in the current Planning and Listed Building Consent Approvals (Ref: 60971 & 60972) have given considered approval to wholesale replacement of the window frames at Higher House with a new product, the Steelyte window, manufactured by Touchstone Glazing. The approved glazing to be 'slimline double glazed'. Replacement glazing was therefore not in doubt, from a conservation or heritage perspective, within the application.

The Planning Approval concurred with the view that replacement of glazing would not damage the 'historic significance' of the building to any significant degree given the ad hoc nature of the existing fenestration with its combination of timber, aluminium and single glazing and variation of the frames in general.

Indeed the new frames would add to the significance and wellbeing of the building bringing a derelict heritage asset back into sustainable use, which is a core principle of the NPPF which expresses;

"the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation".

The new glazing would add to the 'aesthetic value' of Higher House and as noted be in line with the NPPF. That said, there would be a loss of 'historic value' (the loss of the remnants of the historic glazing), loss of 'evidential value' (evidence of the previous society) but for completion no loss of 'communal value' not in this instance considered relevant in respect of the glazing.

The Argument.

Given that the Approved Application, had given consent for the Steelyte windows (12mm glazing) the argument clearly lies in determining whether or not the change from 12mm to 28mm glazing is such that the 'significance of the building is harmed beyond repair?'

This requires an assessment of the changes to both frames and glazing as follows:

The Original Glazing

The original window openings included single panes of glass which were mortar / mastic pointed into the stone window surround sections. The ground floor windows consisted of upper and lower panes of glass within stone mullioned surrounds and where the upper sections included leaded lights formed from individual pieces of glass which reflected the light to varying degrees and provided a level of visual interest to the upper window sections.

There were 2 opening lights out of 6 within each of the ground floor windows and 2 out of 5 opening lights to the upper storey windows. The original opening lights consisted of wide, anodized aluminium sections which were visually prominent within the stone mullioned windows, and where a lack of uniformity and visual jarring was evident across the windows set within the principal elevation.

The Installed 28mm Glazing

The current, installed windows consist of Touchstone heritage frames formed from 19mm deep blackened stainless steel frames where there are fixed lights and 36mm deep frames where there are opening lights. The reinstatement of the opening lights within the overall window, with 2 opening lights out of 6 fixed lights to the ground floor windows and 2 out of 5 to the upper windows, replicates the original arrangement and where these are required for ventilation purposes under the Building Regulations. The 17mm difference in depth of the frame between the opening and fixed lights is not readily apparent when the windows are viewed from 90 degrees. It is difficult to discern the opening lights from the adjacent fixed frames.

The difference in double glazed unit thickness is only realistically discernible when the windows are viewed from close range and obliquely, where the slightly wider silver hermetic sealing strip to the double glazed unit is visible or when the windows are viewed from the interior.

Width of Frames

The inclusion of the Touchstone, heritage window frames have only a marginal impact, if any, on the external appearance of the building, with the sensitive inclusion of the narrow framing sections appearing as an acceptable addition to the windows – where the bright stone mullion sections seek to capture the visual attention of the viewer and where the fine detail of the dark window frames is lost against the adjacent stonework.

The overall width of the framing (whether the double glazed unit is 28mm or 12mm thick) is identical – the 16mm difference in double glazed unit thickness being accommodated using plastic spacer packers (as per the details). The width of the carrier frame for the fixed lights for both the 12mm and 28mm double glazed units is the same at a narrow 19mm.

Provision of Kiln Modified Glass and Leaded Lights.

The inclusion of kiln modified glass to the outer pane of the double glazed units helps to provide variation in the reflectivity of the windows as would generally be seen on historic buildings with traditional hand-manufactured glass. A most positive addition.

The sensitive incorporation of the original leaded lights into the upper section of the ground floor windows, replicates the former appearance of the ground floor fenestration with variation in reflections being created by the individual glass panes.

Conclusion in Regard to Significance

Given, that wholesale replacement of the glazing and frames (as previously seen) had been approved and the clear visual difficulty in distinguishing between the 12mm the 28mm glazing (without being close up and viewing obliquely) we conclude that the loss of significance and harm to the heritage asset, through the introduction of marginally wider glazing is de minimis.

Given the justifications detailed above, we now respectfully request Planning and Listed Building Consent approval is now granted.