

Planning Committee

10am Thursday 1 October 2015

Guidance on Replacement Windows in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

Item number	5.1
Report number	
Executive	Executive
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Executive summary

This report provides an update on the Council's guidance on replacement windows in listed buildings and conservation areas.

Links

Coalition pledges	P40
Council outcomes	CO19
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4

Guidance on Replacement Windows in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report and agrees to continue to maintain the guidance on Replacement Windows in Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas in its present form.

Background

Historical Background

- 2.1 Timber sash and case windows consist of a pair of glazed sashes, which slide vertically in a case or frame. They have a long history – their first recorded use in Scotland was in 1690 at the Palace of Holyroodhouse.
- 2.2 The opening mechanism of the sash and case window has hardly changed since its introduction in the late 17th century. However, improvements in manufacturing techniques have resulted in the availability of larger sheets of glass. The earliest types of sash had glazing bars two or more inches thick and sashes containing numerous small panes of glass. As craftsmanship improved, astragals became finer and the ‘six over six’ sash became standard. From around 1845, plate glass began to become available and sashes with larger panes of glass and fewer glazing bars were adopted.
- 2.3 Significant amounts of early crown glass survive in Edinburgh, particularly in parts of the New Town. The slight imperfections of the convex panes give depth and interesting reflections to a facade.
- 2.4 The design and detailing of traditional windows is a product of the craftsmanship, manufacturing ingenuity and social changes of the past. Glazing bar patterns reflect the fashion of the time, the building’s social hierarchy, the way property was taxed and how the latest craft advances were incorporated. Many sash windows are over 150 years old and survive in good working order.

The Window Trial

- 2.5 The Planning Committee on 4 September 2008, recommended a trial of the use of a variety of double glazing measures in listed traditionally constructed buildings. This allowed an analysis in terms of comparative performance, aesthetics and sustainability. The results of the Window Trial informed a proposed amendment to the guidance on replacement windows which was approved by the Committee on 2 December 2010.
- 2.6 The recommended amendment was to allow slim profile double glazed sealed unit timber windows, with cavities of less than 6mm, for use on Listed Buildings. This was subject to the proviso that consent would not be granted for the replacement of historic glass with slim profile double glazing.
- 2.7 This was a significant change to the previous guidance which recommended that no form of double glazing was acceptable on listed buildings and that the energy performance standard of single windows could only be improved by draught-stripping and secondary glazing.

Current Guidance

- 2.8 The Council's current guidance on replacement windows in listed buildings and conservation areas is included in the Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. There are no specific planning requirements for replacement windows in unlisted buildings and buildings not included in a conservation area.
- 2.9 The guidance includes different criteria for listed buildings and conservation areas. The main requirements of the guidance are as follows:

Listed buildings

The removal of original timber windows from listed buildings is generally not considered acceptable. Any proposals to remove original windows, must be accompanied by a statement of justification seeking to demonstrate that they are beyond repair. In the event that new windows can be justified, slim cavity double glazed windows (maximum 6mm) which match the materials and proportions of the original windows may be considered acceptable, provided that this will not result in the loss of historic glass. uPVC windows are not considered acceptable.

Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas

Replacement windows on all elevations of unlisted properties in conservation areas should match original proportions, appearance, materials, and should open in a manner that does not disrupt the

elevation. Appropriate timber sealed unit double glazing will normally be considered acceptable. uPVC windows are not considered acceptable.

Main report

Contribution of Sash and Case Windows to Character and Appearance

- 3.1 Original windows are an important feature in the elevation of any building, and their replacement with different designs can seriously affect the historic and architectural character of the building.
- 3.2 When subtle features are lost and substituted with standardised unsympathetic elements, the visual harmony and character of streets is diminished. The design standards of modern uPVC, metal systems and standardised timber doors and windows, fail to match the detailing of original timber windows. The damage that may be caused by the replacement of a window that is historically and architecturally correct, with a modern unit made from a different material, to a different design, or with a different method of opening, may be significant.

uPVC (Unplasticised Polyvinyl Chloride)

- 3.3 Rigid or unplasticised PVC is a commonly used material for window frame construction. There have been concerns about the adverse impact which uPVC has on the environment in terms of its production, use and disposal. There have also been issues about the long term durability of uPVC which has been prone to discolouration, splitting, crazing and cracking. Timber windows require regular painting, but are generally more convenient to maintain.
- 3.4 The British Plastics Federation has recently written to the Council highlighting the environmental improvements in manufacturing and waste management for uPVC. These improvements are accepted and noted. However, uPVC is not generally considered appropriate for use on historic buildings on the grounds of its appearance. The principal concern is the adverse affect of introducing a modern synthetic material into historic buildings and areas of traditional character.

Appeals

- 3.5 The Scottish Government Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals lists the following cases from last year involving uPVC windows in Edinburgh:

Case Reference	Date Case Received	Authority	Case Type	Site Address	Decision Type	Decision Issued
ENA-230-2090	16 Oct 2014	City of Edinburgh Council	Enforcement Notice Appeal	137 1F1 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, EH3 9AD	Appeal Dismissed	20 Jan 2015
LBE-230-2018	16 Oct 2014	City of Edinburgh Council	Listed Building Enforcement Notice Appeal	137 1F1 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, EH3 9AD	Appeal out of Time	12 Nov 2014
LBA-230-2057	11 Jan 2015	City of Edinburgh Council	Listed Building Consent Appeal	2F3 248 Leith Walk, Edinburgh, EH6 5EL	Appeal Dismissed	18 Mar 2015
PPA-230-2143	09 Feb 2015	City of Edinburgh Council	Planning Permission Appeal	2F2 58 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QQ	No Jurisdiction to consider	10 Feb 2015
ENA-230-2097	05 Mar 2015	City of Edinburgh Council	Enforcement Notice Appeal	2F2 58 Comiston Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5QQ	Appeal Dismissed	18 May 2015

3.6 The appeals were dismissed in all three cases which were considered by the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals.

3.7 In all cases, the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals noted that the uPVC windows were distinguishable from the original windows and materially affected the external appearance and character of the conservation area.

Changeworks Window Project

3.8 Changeworks, the Edinburgh based environmental sustainability charity, are currently undertaking a project which is considering:

- The current experience of households looking to install double glazing in traditional listed properties in Edinburgh; and

- What the current policy regime across the 32 local authorities is in relation to double glazing in listed buildings and conservation areas.
- 3.9 The project is co-funded by Changeworks and the Scottish Government, through the Learning Networks Challenge Fund. Council officials have attended and helped to organise project workshops. It will be some months before the project results are formally published. However, key findings from the survey of Scottish local authorities show that:
- The approval of slim profile double glazing for listed buildings is prevalent;
 - Window frame type was the primary focus of planning scrutiny in conservation areas;
 - The City of Edinburgh Council and Glasgow City Council are the only two local authorities which do not approve non-timber windows in unlisted buildings in conservation areas;
 - Only three local authorities (Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, and North Lanarkshire) permit the installation of non-timber windows to the rear or non-prominent elevations of unlisted buildings in conservation areas; and
 - Only one local authority, Inverclyde Council, allows non-timber replacement windows in listed buildings, and this is restricted to category C listings.
- 3.10 The key findings of the project indicate that the two local authorities with the most significant heritage assets, Edinburgh and Glasgow, are the most rigorous in terms of the protection of the architectural character of historic buildings by the restriction of non-timber windows in listed buildings and conservation areas.
- 3.11 It should also be noted that this project is focussed on slim-profile windows and does not cover the uPVC issues. However, it would be sensible to wait until the Scottish Government have reviewed this report and announced any guidance before revising the Council's guidance on these matters.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The protection of the character and appearance of listed buildings and conservation areas by maintain the current guideline on window in listed buildings and conservation areas.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no significant risks associated with approval of the report as recommended.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The aim of managing conservation areas is to enhance the quality of the area. This has the potential to improve the quality of life and supports sustainable communities. There are no predicted negative impacts on equalities.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Management of the built environment has the potential to minimise the use of natural resources and reduce carbon emissions. The proposals in this report will help achieve a sustainable Edinburgh because the management of the historic environment contributes directly to sustainability in a number of ways. These include the energy and materials invested in a building, the scope for adaptation and reuse, and the unique quality of historic environments which provide a sense of identity and continuity.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 None.

Background reading / external references

Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

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Links

Coalition pledges	P40 – Work with Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and other stakeholders to conserve the city’s built heritage.
Council outcomes	CO19 – Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm.
Single Outcome Agreement Appendices	SO4 – Edinburgh’s communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.