

Conservation Priorities

Sash windows were a brilliant C17 (English or Dutch?) invention, with some of the oldest in the country to be found in nearby Lyme House. Good sash windows provide excellent ventilation in all weathers: in winter short periods of opening maintain fresh air and combat condensation; in very hot weather (an increasingly frequent phenomenon nowadays), the ability to open both top and bottom sashes has an excellent effect.

The consequence of ill-fitting sashes, of course, is that they permit a great ingress of draft, to the extent that even heavy curtains will move to and fro on a windy day. Drafts, indeed mere chill, become very evident as one approaches certain windows and this clearly reduces the effect of heating and represents a dreadful waste of energy. In the winter months a partial solution is to plug all these gaps with a variety of temporary materials; the problem is that this then removes all possibility of ventilation since a stuffed window cannot be opened.

The priorities of the 21st century are surely to take all possible steps to help save the planet by conserving energy and reducing our carbon footprint emissions. Single glazing falls far short of meeting these needs; double or vacuum glazing, by potentially halving energy loss, goes a considerable way towards helping, especially in a property where other recommended options such as heat pumps and wall insulation are not available. In this property, where the windows account for by far the main part of heat loss, it is worth noting one estimate that one square metre of double glazing can save 90kg of CO₂ a year.

Improving the energy efficiency of homes is a priority for both Derbyshire County Council and High Peak Borough Council. Amongst its recommendations DCC states: "If you've got single glazing (or a lot of heat is being lost through the doors and windows), install double glazing to more efficiently trap heat." HPBC refers to a Gov.UK interactive eprogram to identify energy saving actions appropriate for one's property. Unsurprisingly, double /triple glazing emerges as a top priority.

Loss of Historic Material versus Public Benefit

My previous application involved the loss of 12 panes of historic glass out of a total of 38 i.e. 30% of all relevant glass in the flat. This was deemed to be too high a loss, even in the early 2020s when the climate crisis, carbon emissions and energy costs were a top item on the public benefit agenda. Secondary glazing installed since then has preserved 8 panes of historic glass, including the only window, in the hall, where all 4 panes are historic.

This application involves 12 panes of glass, of which just 4 appear to be historic – the upper panes in the kitchen and bedroom windows. The panes in the windows overlooking Broad Walk do not present as historic. Furthermore, all the current HPBC plans and regulations predate the Council's declaration of a climate emergency; it is to be hoped that a new local plan will redress this balance.

This application argues that the loss of just 4 panes of historic glass is massively outweighed by the public benefit, in terms of climate change and energy efficiency, of completing the insulation of all relevant windows in the flat.

Historic England Guidance

It is clear that in very recent times Historic England Guidance on GII listed buildings and windows has undergone significant updating to take account of the interaction between maintaining historic fabric and the strongly acknowledged need to respond to the climate emergency. This Guidance is now well ahead of the older local Guidelines, which are clearly in urgent need of updating.

Historic England's Advice Note 18 July 2024: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency states:

"As historic buildings continue to change and evolve, they need to contribute to a greener future and be fit for purpose for the people who live in, experience and care for them. If done

thoughtfully and carefully, changes to historic buildings can achieve the complementary goals of protecting our heritage and adapting to climate change. Keeping historic buildings in use, through sensitive repair, maintenance and adaptation, can help to reduce carbon emissions, reliance on fossil fuels, and energy costs.”

Para.18 of this Note goes on to state: “Installation of slim-profile or vacuum double-glazing within historic frames will generally be acceptable. The use of slim-profile or vacuum double-glazing can allow the installation of double-glazing in historic buildings alongside the retention of existing window frames. Many historic window frames will be capable of accommodating such glazing. Original glazing bars should be retained, and windows should be refurbished and draft proofed at the same time to fully benefit from double-glazing. Sash windows may need heavier weights to balance the increased weight of the glass.” This guidance precisely reflects our refurbishment proposals.

Elsewhere their guidance states: “Where historic windows or replacement windows of historic pattern survive without historic glass it may be possible to introduce slim-profile double glazing without harming the significance of the listed building. Where a new window or re-glazing is agreed, the reflective properties of secondary and double glazing as compared to modern, polished single glazing, do not usually harm the significance of the building.”