

MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	250535
Address:	Highway Cottage, Basingstoke Road, Three Mile Cross, Wokingham, RG7 1BA		
Proposal:	Application for Listed Building consent for the proposed window replacements.		
Heritage Asset:	Highway Cottage – Grade II listed building since 1987 Three Mile Cross Area of Special Character (ASC) Listed buildings along with conservation areas are classed as designated heritage assets under the NPPF (2024) and in the Council’s Local Plan policies.		
Site Visit Made:	Yes – external only		

Summary Of Recommendations

Objection

Comments On Proposal

The application proposes the replacement of 12no. existing windows at Highway Cottage, a Grade II listed building located within the Three Mile Cross Area of Special Character (ASC).

Highway Cottage is understood to be primarily an 18th century cottage fronting the old Basingstoke Road, there is however, a good deal of timber framing within the building (although some of this may well be superficial), including some fine box framing. It would not be surprising for the building to an earlier structure which was 'politely' refaced in the Georgian period, as was the fashion at the time. Likely originally constructed as dwelling, the building was then used as a public house – The George and Dragon – which closed in 1956 and then reverted to a residential function. It is an interesting building, multi-phase with a good deal of layering. Sadly, it has been mistreated, with inappropriate alterations such as cementitious re-pointing of the brickwork, which not only negatively impacts the appearance, but actively harms the building allowing excessive moisture build up, leading to decay of the brick, and – it would be assumed – damp issues internally.

It is proposed to remove the existing single glazed timber windows and installation of timber double glazed replacements. The application does not make it absolutely clear as to which windows are to be replaced (by way of elevation and plan drawings), however it assumed the 12no. is all of the windows, it also does not

contain an assessment of the age and significance of the extant windows – critical to accepting the principle of loss. From a cursory glance, the windows (at least those fronting the highway) are of an age, possibly 19th century, possibly early 20th century given a few tell-tales – it is probably a mixture of ages. Photographic evidence suggests windows of the extant appearance where in place in c1900. The primary elevation ground floor windows once had shutters affixed. The pintles remain on the left-hand window, however, appear to have been removed from the right one – a photograph existing with the shutters still in place in 1999.

As a historic architectural feature, the windows positively contribute to the special interest of the listed building and to the character and appearance of the Area of Special Character (ASC). The proposed replacement windows would be double glazed, and whilst seeking to 'replicate' the existing, the newly manufactured appearance would betray any historic integrity. As the windows appear to be historic, and thus contribute to the significance of the listed building, physically demonstrating changes to the building, enabling the chronological development to be read as well as being of appropriate material properties commensurate with a statutorily protected historic structure. As the SPAB's Briefing Note – Windows and Doors states

“Old windows and doors are an intrinsic part of our heritage. They bring texture and life to many old buildings, helping to stir our spirits and perceptions. Even the plainest windows are more than a mere assembly of mouldings and fittings: their surfaces may be time-worn, sometimes there is handmade glass and forged ironmongery, with frames that have accommodated gentle distortion in the building. At a simpler level, they are rare, beautiful items, equivalent to an antique chair or table in historic, cultural and aesthetic value.

The SPAB has long championed these significant, irreplaceable features. Not everyone appreciates their attributes, some see old doors and windows as worthless, troublesome and replaceable. Others fail to realise that retention is viable through care, repair and a few, often straightforward, steps to enhance energy efficiency or security; and that this conservative approach frequently means lower long-term costs. Sadly, there is a rash of inappropriate replacement double-glazed windows that scar the faces of buildings across the UK, are emotionally cold and, however well executed, generally bland; the new but lifeless glass tending to stand out like a false eye. So often, people are seduced to buy these replacement products by high-pressure sales techniques and remain blind to the reality of their decision because of limited knowledge and misguided efforts to 'do the right thing'. Outdated perceptions have not helped.”

Windows, and indeed any historic architectural feature, which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area should be retained and repaired rather than replaced, unless it has been clearly demonstrated that it is beyond repair. From an initial exterior inspection, the windows are in good order and just require regular maintenance and minor repair. They do not appear to be overly poor condition, and this has not been demonstrated, by way of an independent specialist surveyor's report (that by a professional who has no monetary interest associated with the replacement), within this submission. In the absence of such information, the principle of replacing the windows has not been

justified. It would also be worth drawing attention to paragraph 209 of the NPPF (Dec 2024), which states “*where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, a deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.*” Neglect of maintenance routine required for historic buildings and their features encompasses “deliberate neglect”.

Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated the proposal is the ‘least worse option’ – as per the requirements set out in para. 213 of the NPPF (Dec 2024) harm to a heritage asset “*should require clear and convincing justification*”. As it appears the existing windows could be repaired, draft-proofed, secondary glazing installed etc., all with lower financial and ecological cost. Further advice can be found here: SPAB - [Timber windows](#) and here: [Traditional Windows: their care, repair and upgrading | Historic England](#)

As such, the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the identified heritage asset. Given the loss of historic fabric and inappropriately detailed proposed replacement windows this harm would result in the erosion to the overall significance of the designated heritage asset (Section 16, NPPF).

Through the loss of historic fabric and inappropriately detailed proposed replacement windows, the proposals would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building (S16/66, P(LBCA)A 90).

Given the identified harm, the proposed development would conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan.

Conditions			
N/A			
Date:	30/04/2025	Signed:	Roderick McDonald Built Heritage Officer