

**REPORT FROM: PLANNING, BUILDING CONTROL AND LICENSING SERVICES MANAGER**

**TO: COLNE AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

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**ALBERT ROAD CONSERVATION AREA  
UPVC WINDOWS AND SHOPFRONTS**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To set out issues around the use of plastic windows and shop frontages as opposed to timber within the Albert Road Conservation Area.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) To consistently apply the Council's adopted design guidance on the use of appropriate materials for windows, doors and shopfronts in the Albert Road Conservation Area
- (2) To consider enforcement action where unauthorised UPVC windows, doors and shopfronts have been and are installed.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) In order that the heritage significance, character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not harmed by the use of inappropriate modern materials
- (2) In order that the heritage significance, character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not harmed by the use of inappropriate modern materials

**ISSUE**

- 1 At the last Committee meeting reference was made to a number of shopfronts on Albert Road which were not in keeping with the Conservation Area status i.e. plastic as opposed to timber shopfronts. A report was requested to look at the issues. This report sets out the heritage significance of the Conservation Area in relation to the current usage of these materials and their impact on character and significance, sets out the policy background, and refers to some recent cases where the use of UPVC has been an issue.

## Background

### Significance of the Conservation Area and impact of use of timber and UPVC

- 2 The Albert Road Conservation Area (CA) was designated in 1984. The CA Character Appraisal notes Colne's 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>C origins as a linear market town, with some earlier buildings surviving from this period such as the Parish Church (Grade I listed) Red Lion and Old Grammar School (both Grade II listed). However the town owes much of its character and appearance to the variety of later Victorian buildings which grace Albert Road as it climbs uphill. These are generally 2 or 3 storey commercial or residential, with larger buildings punctuating the streetscene including The Gables and War Memorial (Grade II), Municipal Hall, Norway House (Grade II) and Shackleton Hall (Grade II). The Parish Church and the Town Hall (Grade II) stand out as landmarks.
- 3 Most of these key buildings either retain their original joinery or more recent timber replacement frames. Elsewhere on Albert Road there is a mixture of original timber frames, modern timber replacements and plastic replacements, although timber is more prevalent than UPVC. It should be noted that there are many residential properties on Albert Road which enjoy permitted development rights in respect of window and door replacements, unlike non-residential uses. In respect of shopfronts, over the last few years the trend has been for more to be reinstated or repaired in timber, in line with the Council's Conservation Area Design Guidance (see below). Where UPVC shopfronts now exist they tend to stand out as the exception rather than the rule. Plastic windows tend to be more frequent at upper levels however.
- 4 Church Street and Market Street display a narrower and less formal appearance. The buildings tend to be older and more vernacular in feel so that this part of the CA is more picturesque in character. Unusually for Pendle some buildings in this area retain their original early 19<sup>th</sup>C small-paned timber sash windows to the upper floors; these make a significant contribution to the historic character of the town centre. It is encouraging to note that several other shops along Market Street have replaced more modern window styles with similar small pane timber sashes to their upper floors over the last few years. Shopfronts in this area again are mainly in timber, with UPVC a little more common at upper floor level.
- 5 A major part of the heritage significance of the CA is in the townscape character provided by the imposing and often individually designed C19<sup>th</sup> buildings. The architecture and fine detail in the original stonework and timber joinery is usually individual to each building, and this adds greatly to the character and appearance of the CA and the local distinctiveness of the town centre as a whole. Albert Road stands out amongst Pendle's conservation areas for having retained much of this original architectural detail, particularly in the joinery of windows, doors and shopfronts. Many buildings, both commercial and residential, retain their original painted timber sash windows, shopfronts and doors. This distinctive traditional character definitely enhances the individuality and appeal of the town as a shopping and commercial centre.
- 6 Overall, although there is a relatively good survival rate of original timber joinery in the CA, other buildings were 'modernised' in the later C20<sup>th</sup>, with original timber sash windows, shopfronts and doors being replaced usually by poorer quality stained timber or white UPVC frames. Encouragingly though, the trend over the last few years has been for most owners to recognise the commercial benefits that a distinctive heritage character can bring to the town. Following on from the sensitive restoration of the listed Shackleton Hall, shops at the listed Norway House and the Market St Arcade, the majority of smaller shopkeepers are now generally happy to repair and reinstate timber frontages, and use more traditional paint

colours. However there are still several poor UPVC shopfronts and windows, most having been in place for some years.

## Relevant Planning Policy

- 7 Policy ENV1 of the **Core Strategy** sets out the approach to conserving and enhancing the Borough's historic environment. Conservation Areas will be conserved and should be enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. Policy ENV2 states that development should seek to deliver the highest possible standards of design, whilst enhancing and conserving heritage assets. Proposals should contribute to the sense of place and make a positive contribution to the historic environment and local identity and character. All new development will be required to meet high standards of design, being innovative to obtain the best design solution and using materials appropriate to the setting.
- 8 The **Conservation Area Design and Development Guidance SPD 2008** sets out more detailed principles for windows and shopfronts in CA's. Relevant headings are summarised below; the detailed guidance can be seen at:  
[http://www.pendle.gov.uk/downloads/file/5475/adopted\\_conservation\\_spd\\_whole](http://www.pendle.gov.uk/downloads/file/5475/adopted_conservation_spd_whole)

*4.25 Where the replacement of an original window is unavoidable, any new window should as far as possible be an exact match of the original, or otherwise appropriate in design and materials to the age and style of the building.*

*4.31 UPVC windows cannot replicate the proportions, detailing and pleasing aesthetic qualities of timber windows, and will not normally be appropriate in CA's*

*4.32 Replacement windows in UPVC will never replicate the pleasing aesthetic finish that painted timber provides. Plastic windows will 'deaden' facades as they lack the finish, detail and texture of timber. UPVC windows cannot reproduce the same size openings as those in timber as they have bulkier sections, particularly those frames which have opening lights.*

*4.35 If modern windows in a period building are to be replaced, then the replacements should normally be in timber and a style that is appropriate to the age of the building.*

*4.39 Where the replacement of an original door is unavoidable, a new door should as far as possible be an exact match of the original, or otherwise appropriate to the age and style of the building. UPVC doors or other modern styles will not normally be appropriate in CA's.*

*4.100 Original shopfronts, or elements of original shopfronts, which date from before the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, should be retained.*

*4.103 New and replacement shopfronts should be of a high standard of design, of good quality materials, and well related to the individual building and the streetscene.*

*4.105 Only high quality finishes and natural materials should be used; the use of UPVC or other plastics for any elements of a shopfront in a CA will not be appropriate.*

The policy guidance is clear in that UPVC will not normally be appropriate for CA's. This is in line with national best practice guidance by Historic England. The majority of permissions in the CA involving new windows or shopfronts over the last few years have consistently followed the guidance.

## Relevant cases

### 9 Stanley Villas 63 Albert Road

An application to replace timber windows to front and side elevations with UPVC units was refused in November 2014. The existing original timber window frames were individually designed to suit the formal stone architecture. The timber frames were moulded to fit the different shapes of the openings, some of the sliding sashes having arched tops. The windows were in reasonably good condition with no significant decay. Original softwood timber is much more durable than any modern replacement. There are specialist

companies and products now available that can significantly improve the energy efficiency of old timber sashes by refurbishment, sealing and draught-proofing. The proposed UPVC windows would not replicate the fine detailing and pleasing aesthetic finish of the existing painted timber windows; the proposal would therefore harm the character and appearance of the Albert Road CA and was therefore refused.

## **10 72 Albert Road**

This was a retrospective application for the installation of brown UPVC shopfronts, doors and windows at a hot food takeaway in November 2011. The application was refused in accordance with SPD policy guidance and a subsequent appeal was dismissed. The Inspector pointed out that *UPVC is a modern material inappropriate for use in a building within an area designated for its architectural and historic interest. UPVC frames lack the subtlety of detailing that can be incorporated in timber framing and are, in comparison, thicker in profile. The design, scale, proportions, detailing, profile, surface finish, colour, texture, and jointing techniques, are inappropriate and incongruous and have had a serious adverse effect on the character and appearance of the Albert Road CA.*

## **11 Live Like the Boy, 2 Church Street**

No planning application was submitted for the alteration. Committee decided not to pursue the matter further.

## **Conclusions**

- 12** Although there has been a general improvement to several key buildings and the appearance of the CA overall over the last few years, which has undoubtedly enhanced the attractiveness and vibrancy of the shopping centre, there is still the risk that remaining original timber shopfront and window joinery could be indiscriminately lost and replaced, which would lead to a gradual erosion of the character and distinctiveness of the CA. It is important that the detailed guidance in the Conservation Area Design and Development SPD is consistently applied to new development, and enforcement action taken in appropriate cases.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:** The loss of timber windows to UPVC would alter the policy of the Council and would lead to the deterioration of not only this but all conservation areas across the Borough

**Financial:** None

**Legal:** None

**Risk Management:** None

**Health and Safety:** None

**Sustainability:** None

**Community Safety:** None

**Equality and Diversity:** None