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## **Grounds of Appeal**

On behalf of

**Mr & Mrs Ashley**

**Proposed replacement windows & doors at 6 The  
Vennel, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1HF**

**Planning Ref – 13/00327/P  
Date of refusal – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012**

## ***Property History & Introduction***

The following statement is to be read in conjunction with our appeal against the ***refusal of replacement windows & doors at 6 The Vennel, Dunbar, East Lothian, EH42 1HF***. The proposals are to replace existing timber sliding sash windows with new white PVCu sliding sash windows to the property's front elevation, and casement windows to the side and rear elevation. Existing timber doors are to be replaced with a new timber door to the front elevation and a white PVCu door to the rear elevation.

The planning department has rejected our application to replace the existing windows and doors on the grounds that the framing material and window astragal type would be harmful to the appearance of the building, and would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. Our client's property is the ground floor of a traditional two-storey stone-built detached property, located within the Dunbar Conservation Area.

The property at present has timber sliding sash windows installed. However, as the windows are made of timber, years of upkeep have still left the windows inefficient. They allow draughts to pass through the building and cause a vast amount of heat loss.

## ***Grounds of Appeal***

It has been brought to our attention that windows on the adjacent building and other properties in the street have been replaced with PVCu and a variety of styles and colours are present. PVCu is also present in numerous buildings in the neighbouring streets and further afield within the Dunbar Conservation Area.

While it has been suggested that the proposed windows and doors would have a negative affect on the property and conservation area, we believe that any affect of these changes would at worst be considered neutral. Our clients, Mr & Mrs Ashley have gone to great lengths to ensure that the aesthetic integrity of the building and conservation area is respected. This has been done by proposing windows to the front elevation in the same colour and opening style as existing, with the existing astragal pattern maintained. The red timber door to the

front elevation is to be replaced with a new red timber door. The windows and door to be replaced to the side and rear elevation have been proposed to maintain the proportions of the existing windows, replicate the existing astragal pattern and retain the white finish of the existing windows and door. Overall, it is clear that due consideration has been given to the suitability of the aesthetics of the proposed windows and doors.



***Above – PVCu windows in numbers 2&4, The Vennel. Properties adjacent to Mr & Mrs Ashley's.***

Indeed, the only change of note is the use of PVCu frames for the new windows and doors. With the high level of PVCu installations in the area, the use of this material would not be out of place at all. Given the exposed coastal location, it could be considered prudent to choose a framing material, which requires less upkeep when exposed to the elements.



***Above – PVCu windows on Lamer Street, adjacent to 'The Vennel'***

The planning department has also raised issues with the proposed astragal style. This astragal is planted onto the window, with a spacer bar running inside the cavity of the double-glazed unit, to closely replicate the look of the astragal 'cutting through' the glass (*see photo below*).



***Above – PVCu plant-on astragal on sliding sash window.***

It should be noted that while not considered acceptable, this is the only manner in which PVCu windows can be manufactured with astragals. This illustrates a slight lack of understanding on the planning department's part, and we would accordingly presume the comment of the astragals being 'inauthentic' and the windows looking 'significantly different' from existing to be based on this ill-informed opinion of the windows. The note in the planning officer's report of the astragal only being applied to the outer surface of the glazing, again illustrates a lack of understanding of the process of manufacturing these astragals. We can only assume this is based on experience of lesser-quality window units in other properties. As per the photo above, the astragals on our windows are fitted with an internal spacer bar, which gives the look of the astragals 'cutting through' the window unit. The fact that these astragals don't cut through the window is literally impossible to discern by simply looking at them, and is also the best method by which to manufacture windows with astragals, as there is no break in the window unit to potentially allow for water ingress.

As a company, CR Smith has, in the past, been faced with difficulties in having PVCu windows accepted within conservation areas. We appreciate that as a window framing material, timber can have a certain presence and appeal if specified correctly. However, timber windows are more expensive than PVCu options, are not draught proof and do not perform as well as PVCu under the current U-value or WER (Window Energy Ratings) system.

Mr & Mrs Ashley's decision to choose PVCu was a holistic approach taking into account;

- Sustainability
- Current & future energy costs
- Desire to maintain a traditional appearance through window opening style, proportions & astragal pattern
- Actual window performance – U Value
- Cost of ongoing maintenance & ease of cleaning

Perhaps a negative attitude towards PVCu has been developed due to inappropriate designs, rather than the actual material.

The planning officer had noted the proposed windows and door to the rear of the property were unsuitable, as they would be visible from the resident's car park, public road and footpath on Colvin Street. However, it should be considered that the public footpath is situated around 100 feet to the North of Mr & Mrs Ashley's property, with a 6 foot-high fence in between. Accordingly, any visibility of the rear of the property (especially the ground floor) from a public place is a highly obscured one. The resident's car park to the rear the property is a private one, and during the public advertisement period of the planning application, none of the residents raised any issues with the proposals. In fact, only one comment was made during the application process, from the 'Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland'. However, it is extremely unlikely that their comment will be based on any real concern for, or knowledge of, the aesthetics of the area, as they comment as standard on any installation of PVCu windows/doors in East Lothian conservation areas. This also applies to proposed PVCu installations in comparatively modern developments. Their comments seem to be based more on a general dislike of PVCu as a material, rather than a concern for the retention of the aesthetics of the area. Conversely, Mr & Mrs Ashley have put effort into choosing new windows and doors, specifically to fit and retain the character of their property and the wider conservation area.

## ***Conclusion***

We believe our replacements not only improve the general aesthetic of the building, but they are also an environmentally friendly option. As there are already over a hundred examples of PVCu windows present on the front elevations of properties in the conservation area, it is clear that approval for these windows would be far from setting a precedence for the installation of PVCu in the street, and conservation area as a whole.

We do not believe that the refusal should be over-ruled on the basis that possibly illegal replacements already exist, but we do firmly believe that our PVCu units will not compromise the character of the building in any way. Furthermore, the existing window units allow for an unacceptable level of draft and heat loss and have already begun to deteriorate.

It is on the basis of the above that we would look to appeal the decision of the planning authority.