

Proposed replacement of windows St Alphege CE Infant School, Whitstable, CA/12/464 (KCC/CA/0100/2012)

A report by Head of Planning Applications Group to Planning Applications Committee on 24th July 2012.

Application by Kent County Council Property and Infrastructure for the replacement of 16 white painted, soft wood timber vertical sliding sash windows with pine wood clad with white powder coated aluminium facing profile at St Alphege CE Infant School, Oxford Street, Whitstable CA/12/464 (KCC/CA0100/2012).

Recommendation: Permission be granted subject to conditions.

Local Member(s): Mr M Harrison & Mr M Dance

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. St Alphege CE Infant School is located in Oxford Street within the Whitstable Town Conservation Area. A map showing the location of the site in relation to its surroundings is included.

Proposal

2. This minor development proposal is for replacement of 16 windows to the Oxford Street elevation of the school building. The existing windows are currently softwood, white painted, double hung sliding sash windows and it is proposed to replace these with high quality factory engineered units. The proposed replacement units are formed in a white finish pine timber and clad externally in white powder coated aluminium facing profile. Details of the proposal are shown below.

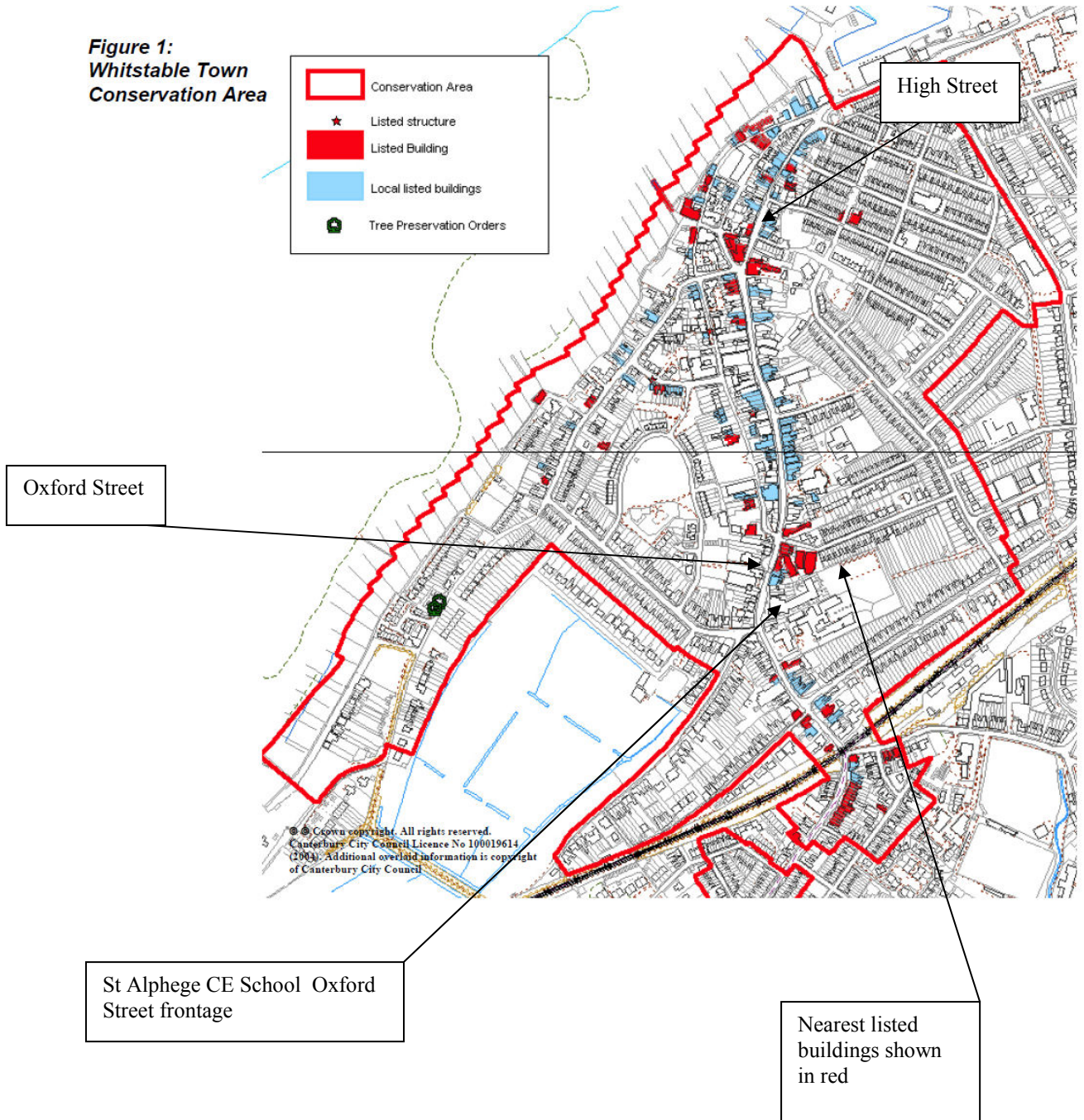
Background

3. This proposal is for replacement windows on a relatively new building for which planning permission was granted in 1998 (CA/98/229). It is of traditional design and construction. Details of the external materials were approved in March 1999 and allowed for vertical sliding sashes in timber painted white along the Oxford Street elevation.
4. Despite their age, the current windows along the Oxford Street elevation show signs of decay and rot and have been identified by the applicants survey as in need of replacement. A photographic survey report is included in the application.
5. The setting of this proposal in a Conservation Area requires special consideration of whether the proposal is likely to affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or to any listed buildings in the locality.
6. Given the Conservation Area location, pre-application discussions have taken place with the applicant concerning the need for replacement windows which would need to be sympathetic in appearance to the existing window arrangements on the Oxford Street elevation.

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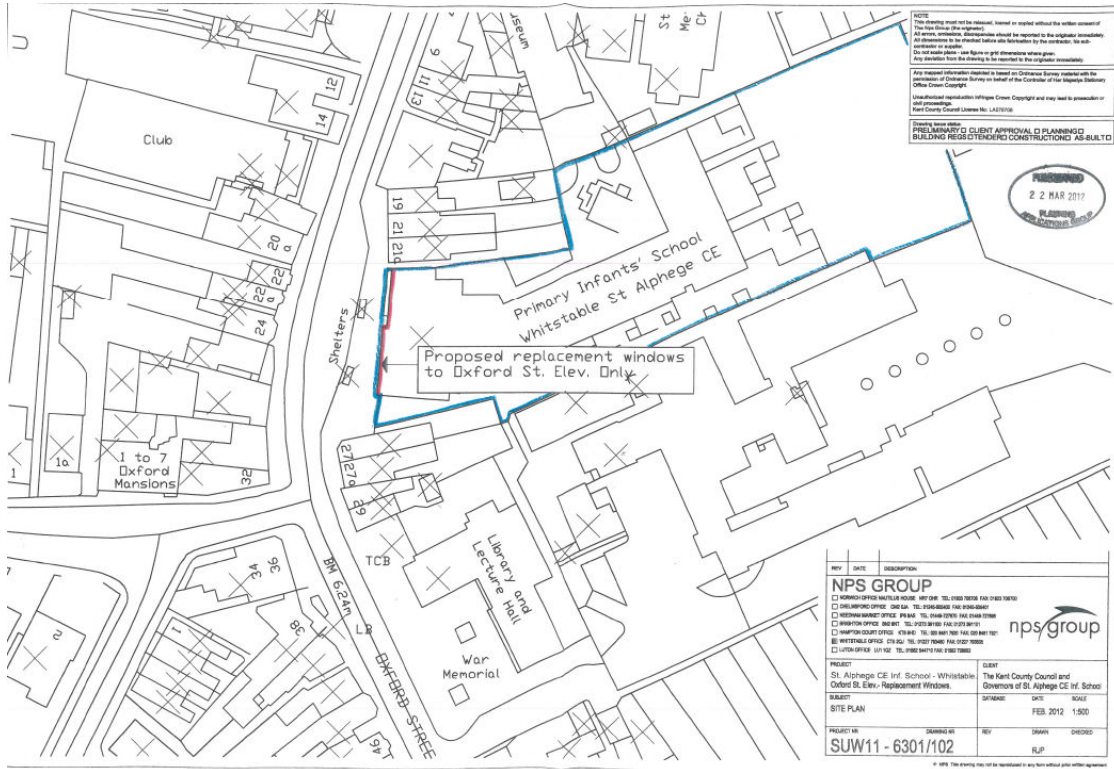
Location Plan – Whitstable Town Conservation Area

Figure 1:
Whitstable Town
Conservation Area



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Site location Plan

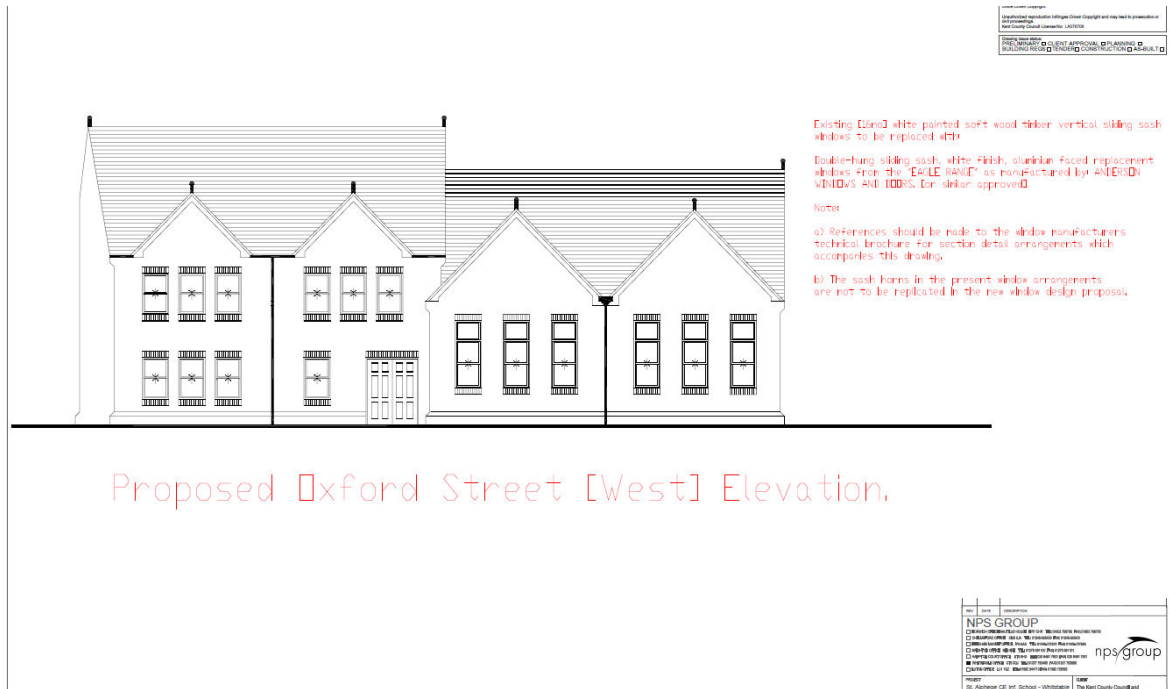


Proposal details –existing elevation



Proposed details – proposed elevation

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View of street scene and context looking toward the school to the east of Oxford Street



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Planning Policy

7. National policy guidance relevant to consideration of this application is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which presumes in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF guidance on good design and conserving and enhancing the historic environment is relevant to delivering sustainable development and in relation to this development proposal.
8. The NPPF guidance for good design seeks to ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development and to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. The guidance states that replacing poor design with better design in order to achieve positive improvements in the quality of the built environment can contribute to sustainable development. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment is regarded not just in relation to the visual appearance of development but also in terms of integrating new development into the natural, built and historic environment. A core planning principle is that heritage assets be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
9. For decision-taking the NPPF defines the presumption in favour of sustainable development as meaning approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies out of date granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policy guidance in the NPPF or specific guidance (eg land designations or heritage) in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.
10. Regional policy is contained within the South East Plan 2010. This policy document is due to be revoked as set out in the Localism Act 2011 but remains in place until it is deleted by secondary legislation. The relevant policies to this application are:

Policy CC1	Seeks to achieve sustainable development.
Policy CC3	Seeks to ensure via design the efficient use of resources.
Policy CC4	Seeks to achieve sustainable design and construction.
Policy CC6	Seeks to promote sustainable communities and respect the character of the environment.
Policy BE1	Seeks to improve the quality of the built environment.
Policy BE6	Seeks to protect, conserve and where appropriate enhance the quality of the historic environment
11. Local Development Plan policies are contained in the Canterbury District Local Plan 2006. The policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application.

Policy TC1	Seeks to add viability and vitality to town centres.
Policy BE1	Seeks to achieve high quality design which responds to the objectives of sustainable development.
Policy BE7	Seeks to preserve and enhance features that contribute to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

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Supplementary Planning Guidance is contained in the document Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation (Canterbury City Council, 2007) which provides detailed guidance in relation to development and Conservation Areas. This states that replacement windows should be appropriate for the proposed style and form of building.

Whitstable Town Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) is a background paper to the Local Development Framework. This describes the key elements that contribute to the special architectural and historic character of the area and the key features of the area that are desirable to preserve or enhance.

Consultations

12. **Canterbury City Council** raises no objections to the proposal.

Kent County Council **Heritage and Conservation** raises no objections to the proposal.

Kent County Council **Highways and Transportation** raises no objections to the proposal.

Local Member(s)

13. The local County Member(s) Mr Mark Dance and Mr Michael Harrison were notified of the application on the 5th April 2012. Following some initial concerns over the need and proposed solution, Mr Harrison has since responded in recognition of the current condition of the windows and wishes the school well with the project.

Publicity

14. The application has been advertised by newspaper notice, the posting of a site notice and by the individual notification of a number of neighbouring properties.

Representations

15. One neighbour representation has been received regarding the proposal with concerns about consistency in decisions relating to planning applications for the replacement of windows in the Conservation Area. This individual appears to have had a planning application refused for replacement windows to a shop front.

Discussion

16. Decisions on planning proposals are required to be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan together with planning policy guidance (contained in the NPPF) and other material planning considerations provides the framework for making decisions. The relevant development plan policies are set out above and require proposals to be acceptable in terms of the context, design and impacts. In my opinion, the main determining issues for this application relate to the context and design of the proposal and the impact on the character or appearance of the

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Whitstable Town Conservation Area and in particular the character area of Oxford Street.

17. The Supplementary Planning Guidance contained in the document Heritage, Archaeology and Conservation (2007) and the Whitstable Town Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) are particularly relevant and material to consideration of this proposal. The need for the development proposal, the context, design and impacts are considered below.

Need

18. The applicant has undertaken a condition survey of the existing timber windows at the site and identified "serious and extensive wet rot" which they attribute to the use of poor quality timber which provided inadequate resilience to the weather.
19. It has been identified by the applicant that replacement rather than repair is necessary because of the condition of the windows. The six larger hall windows are in a worse condition than the smaller windows to the north of the building. Whilst repair rather than replacement may have been an option in relation to some but not all of the windows, in my view a uniform and consistent elevation would be better achieved by replacement of all of the windows at the same time. A photograph showing the typical condition of the hall windows is included above. In my opinion, there is a need for replacement of the windows, and replacement rather than a mixture of repair and replacement would be preferable in visual and design terms.

Context

20. The Whitstable Town Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) describes the character of Oxford Street in relation to the visual interest resulting from the curved streetscape and continuity of frontages. It is the streetscape as a whole rather than the quality of individual buildings within Oxford Street that characterises the particular Area in which this proposal is located. A photograph of the streetscape is included above. Planning policy relating to the Conservation Area requires change and development (including alterations to existing buildings) to positively respond to the Area's character and setting ie the streetscape and continuity of frontages which characterises the Oxford Street area.
21. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the design proposed and the impact of the proposal on the streetscape and continuity of frontages. The age of this building, in relation to its surrounding also needs to be taken into account. There are also a number of listed buildings in the locality, although in my view the proposal does not impact to any significant degree on the setting of these.

Design

22. The current windows on the Oxford Street elevation of the school are modern timber sliding sash windows. Given concerns regarding the durability of the existing wooden frames, the applicant has proposed replacement windows which have a wood frame but an external aluminium weather facing. The applicant states the proposed new windows would follow faithfully the sight lines and fenestration detailing of the existing windows and that they will fit directly into existing un-disturbed brick openings.

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23. There are however some design differences including the sash horn detail which would not be reproduced; the trickle ventilation strip at the top of the window which would not be needed; a fixed top light above the opening sash windows to the hall; and some minor frame measurement differences. These are regarded as minor variations to the existing window design which, in my opinion, would not detrimentally affect the overall appearance.
24. The supplementary planning guidance (2010) seeks to encourage windows that are appropriate for the proposed style and form of building. This building is relatively modern having been constructed in 2002 and is of traditional design and construction and currently respects its setting. In my view, replacement of these windows would achieve functional improvements whilst not adversely impacting or materially altering the appearance of the school frontage and therefore the setting would still be respected. Replacement would also impact on efficiency of the building in terms of heat retention within the building and sound insulation. These positive aspects need to be balanced against the Conservation Area objectives for Oxford Street. The significance of a change from wood to a wood and powder coated aluminium within this proposal needs to be further considered in relation to the impact to the visual appearance on the Oxford Road streetscape and also in terms of consistency in the application of the Conservation Area objectives.

Impacts

25. Local Development Plan policy BE1 seeks to achieve proposals that have high quality design and which respond to the objectives of sustainable development including with regard to the need for the development, local distinctiveness and character, visual impact, architecture and form, the need to keep buildings in use and fit for purpose as well as having regard to the supplementary planning guidance. Policy BE7 requires particular consideration to retention of architectural details that contribute to the character or appearance of the area and the removal of unsightly or negative features. The school has an obvious 20th century façade and the current windows are a modern interpretation of a traditional window. The applicant states that they do not match any of the other nearby window arrangements on Oxford Street. Given that the proposed windows are designed to maintain the existing glazed aperture and fenestration, the visual appearance in my view would not be unduly affected. The main issue therefore seems to be whether it is appropriate in policy terms to replace modern timber frame windows with a timber frame which has a modern protective exterior coating to assist with maintenance, durability and sustainability. The Conservation Area objectives do not prescribe that the replacement window should be of the same material as the original windows in these particular circumstances. Taking this into account, in my view the proposal would not be against the Conservation Area objectives.

Consistency

26. The issue of consistency has been raised within neighbour representation, in particular in relation to the use of aluminium. There are a range of buildings and uses within Oxford Street. Planning applications for the replacement of windows for shop fronts in the Whitstable Town Conservation Area would be dealt with by Canterbury City Council but with reference to the same policy documents that apply in relation to this proposal. All planning proposals would be considered in relation to the impacts of what is being proposed on the character and appearance of the

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building and on the street scene. This planning proposal which proposes the replacement of wood frame windows with a white finish pine timber clad externally in a white powder coated aluminium facing profile, needs to be considered on its own merits (as discussed in terms of needs context and impacts above), and determined in accordance with the policy documents referred to above.

27. The proposed window replacement is in my view of high quality design. In my view the proposal is suitable for the age of this building and the context of the Oxford Street elevation. I do not consider there to be detrimental visual amenity impacts from the proposal nor detrimental impact to the curvature of the streetscape, consistency of frontages or character of the area and therefore in my view the proposal would not adversely impact on the streetscape nor listed buildings in the locality. Taking into account that there are no objections from Canterbury City Council or the County Council’s Conservation and Design Architect, in my view a recommendation for approval of this proposal would be consistent with, and not undermine, planning policy and/or objectives for management of the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

28. Having considered the need and the proposed design together with the site context and the likely impacts, together with the neighbour notifications received and responses from consultees, I conclude that the proposal is sustainable, in accordance with the development plan and that there are no material considerations that indicate that the decision should be other than to grant permission.

Recommendation

29. I RECOMMEND that the application BE PERMITTED, SUBJECT TO conditions covering the following aspects:
- the standard time condition that the development be commenced within 5 years;
 - that the development approved is carried out in accordance with the approved plans.

Case officer – H Mallett	01622 221075
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Background documents - See section heading
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