

Appeal Decision Notice

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Decision by R F Loughridge, a Reporter appointed by the Scottish Ministers

- Listed building consent appeal reference: LBA-270-2001
- Site address: 48 Breadalbane Terrace, Wick, Caithness KW1 5AG
- Appeal by Martin J Sutherland against the decision by the Highland Council
- Application for listed building consent 13/01830/LBC dated 17 May 2013 refused by notice dated 1 August 2013
- The works proposed: replacement of 6 tilt and turn and 1 three sided dormer white uPVC windows on a like for like basis
- Date of site visit by Reporter: 11 October 2013

Date of appeal decision: 8 November 2013

Decision

I dismiss the appeal and refuse listed building consent.

Reasoning

1. The determining issue in this appeal is the acceptability or otherwise of perpetuating the use of uPVC in the windows concerned, and the impact such windows might have on the building itself and the street scene of which the building forms part.
2. Dating from around 1850, the property at 48 Breadalbane Terrace is part of a stone-built, semi-detached pair of two-storey, two-bay, rectangular plan, gabled houses, listed Category B on 14 September 1983, and part of an A category group, which includes among other properties the majority of properties in Breadalbane Terrace. The listing description records that at the time of listing the windows were modern double glazed. The group listing recognises the exceptional value of the buildings concerned as the core of Thomas Telford's 1809 scheme for the new town plan of Pulteneytown for the British Fisheries Society. The appeal premises and the group of which it forms part comprise a handsome albeit plain vernacular composition retaining much of the original simple but austere character.
3. From the papers before me, it appears to be common ground that the original windows on the front elevation were timber sash and case windows, six over six panes. These and the other widows at issue in this appeal were replaced by uPVC windows in

terms of a planning consent granted in 1984. It is these 1984 windows which the appellant seeks to replace as they have come to the end of their useful life.

4. It is widely accepted, today, that uPVC is an unsuitable material for window replacement in listed buildings because, largely, of design constraints. The profile, bulk and frame detailing is generally not comparable to the original window composition, and it is accepted that these differences of detail have an unfortunate and unacceptable impact on the character of the listed building in question. National advice on the replacement of windows in an historic building where the existing windows are themselves replacements is to the effect that new replacements should seek to improve the situation through designs and materials that are in keeping with the character of the building.

5. In my assessment, this analysis and advice is sound and applicable to the present proposal. The windows at issue, in my opinion, have a substantial effect on the character and interest of the building in question and, equally importantly, of the street of which it forms part. This is equally true of the other buildings in the locale forming part of the group. On my site inspection I noted what appear to be other instances of inappropriate replacements, but Breadalbane Terrace insofar as within the group listed as category A still manifests much of its original character and interest. I do not accept the appellant's assessment that 50% of the properties in the neighbourhood have already installed uPVC windows, especially if attention is confined to the group A properties. The proportion of unsuitable windows is much smaller. I agree with the planning authority that there is considerable merit in attempting to secure an improvement in the existing situation at the appeal property in accordance with the national advice. For such reasons the appeal proposals merit only dismissal.

6. I have considered all the other matters raised in the appeal submissions but find nothing which leads me to a different conclusion. I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and/or the building group or any features of special architectural or historic interest which the building and/or the building group possesses. In assessing this proposal I have taken into account Historic Scotland's guidance note on managing change in the historic environment which sets out principles that apply to altering the windows in buildings such as this, and on the course to follow when considering the further replacement of non-original windows which already display an unsympathetic design or materials. It appears to me of paramount importance that the design of the further replacement windows and the materials employed should be appropriate to the character and appearance of the building in its context. The present proposals fall significantly short of what is required as neither the design nor the materials are in keeping with the character of the building in particular or the group of which it forms part. The understandable desire to achieve energy efficiency does not outweigh these considerations.

R F Loughridge
Reporter