

Guidance Note for the use of uPVC in Conservation Areas

1.0 Why preserve historic windows?

- 1.1 Part 2 of the Authority's Design Guide (Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings) provides general guidance on the insertion and replacement of windows into new and existing unlisted properties within the National Park.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Guidance Note is to take this information and provide more specific direction on the use of uPVC in Conservation Areas. In some cases the Authority considers its use acceptable and therefore this Guidance Note has been developed with an aim to help inform interested parties on the decisions the Authority takes in relation to the use of uPVC, especially in Conservation Areas where there is an Article 4 Direction.
- 1.3 This advice relates to the alteration of non-Listed Buildings. The use of uPVC in Listed Buildings will not be supported.
- 1.4 Conservation Areas are areas of **special architectural or historic interest**. The Authority has a duty to have regard to the desirability of **preserving or enhancing** the character and appearance of the area (Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
- 1.5 Conservation Areas are often characterised by historic buildings constructed using natural materials, such as natural stone, handmade brick, natural slate or hand-made clay tiles and timber windows and doors. Traditional timber windows and doors are fundamental elements of the street scene, and in many streets they are features that form a distinct pattern which can be harmed by the introduction of new designs and finishes.
- 1.6 Windows are the eyes of a building and are a testimony to artistic, social and economic and technological developments of past ages.
- 1.7 Traditionally manufactured timber windows and doors are constructed using techniques which allow fine detailing and slim sections. The fine detailing and soft appearance of painted timber complements the traditional materials and character of older properties. As a material, timber can work equally well with contemporary dwellings.

2.0 Why are uPVC (plastic) alternatives discouraged?

- 2.1 For the purposes of this guidance composite windows or those finished with Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) will be treated as uPVC.
- 2.2 uPVC windows and doors generally have much heavier sections than their timber counterparts. The combination of heavy frames and the flat, uniform, engineered finish of uPVC harm the character and appearance of properties by distorting the proportions of architectural features. Often, uPVC replacements use one double-glazed unit in each sash resulting in a window which has a much flatter appearance than sashes with multiple panes. Many suppliers have a very limited range of products and therefore, locally distinctive features cannot be replicated and the special architectural interest of villages is eroded. Overall, the use of uPVC tends to lack the subtle variations in reflection and tone that are important to the architectural interest of a building and character and appearance of the wider Conservation Area.

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3.0 Performance, efficiency and sustainability.

3.1 In terms of performance, good quality double glazed timber windows will offer similar energy efficiency to those levels claimed by manufacturers of uPVC. However, timber windows and doors are much easier to repair than uPVC, will not fade, can be re-painted to suit individual owners' preferences and can be fitted with better quality ironmongery. Generally, if properly cared for, timber windows and doors will outlast uPVC installations by many, many years. Timber is also a more sustainable material than uPVC in terms of its manufacture and disposal.

4.0 Assessing change

4.1 In order to determine whether the replacement of timber windows and doors with uPVC **preserves or enhances** the character and appearance of the area, a qualitative assessment needs to be made on the existing, specific circumstances and this is done on a case by case basis. For this, the Authority would consider the age and architectural quality of the building and also the quality of the existing fenestration. The most common scenarios are:

- In instances where the existing building is modern or has been altered to such an extent it is deemed not to contribute to the architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area, the installation of better quality or well detailed uPVC is unlikely to impact on the architectural interest of the wider area.
- Alternatively, where the host building is of vernacular appearance but has modern stormproof casements and/or a modern glazed door, their replacement with well detailed uPVC alternatives is likely to have a minimal impact on the architectural interest of the wider area. In these instances, the Authority may alternatively offer a **Conservation Area Enhancement Grant** to reinstate a more traditional style of timber window or door.
- Where however, traditional windows and doors do exist (such as Yorkshire sliding sashes, vertical sliding sashes, Whitby composite, panelled doors) their replacement with uPVC would not be supported.

4.2 Where the Authority is considering supporting the use of uPVC (in modern properties of ubiquitous design for example or where the application is to replace existing, poor quality uPVC) a number of small design considerations such as; colour, applied (putty/wedge shaped) glazing bars, creation of deeper reveals, installation of stone sills, flush-fitting rather than storm proof casements and a balance between opening and non-opening windows, can all help mitigate against the impact of the installation of uPVC.

Planning Permission will be required for the alteration of timber windows with uPVC alternatives in Conservation Areas with an Article 4 Direction and therefore it is always best to check first with the Planning Team to avoid carrying out unauthorised works. The Authority charges for written pre-application advice, so please contact a member of the Planning Administration Team or see the Authority's website for further details; <http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/planning/pre-application-advice>.



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