



Brentham Garden Estate, Ealing

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(Distributed to Brentham Residents)

Insulation v Conservation? Finding a solution

Brentham houses provided far better conditions for their original occupants than those in typical back-to-back terraces of the time, but they don't meet the insulation standards we expect today. However, these are hard to achieve without damaging the special character of the area, which is protected under Conservation Area (CA) legislation.

A few weeks ago you received an invitation to visit 4 Denison Road, where the owner had just received planning permission to replace all of her windows with new timber windows containing slim sealed units (double glazing). This was after a successful appeal where the planning inspector overturned the Council's decision to refuse permission. The Council tells us that it will continue to refuse planning permission to replace original Brentham windows with double glazing on front elevations. You may also have been approached by the company who made the windows. Their marketing material refers to *'the approved Brentham style window'*. It may have been approved on appeal in this instance but the Council's position has not changed and there is no standard 'approved' Brentham window - except the original one!

So what *can* be done?

The Brentham Society's view

The Brentham Garden Estate is a CA with the extra protection of an Article 4 Direction. This means there are constraints on how we can change the appearance of houses, and the replacement of windows with primary double glazed units is covered by these provisions. As you walk around our estate, probably the most distinctive features you see on the front of Brentham houses are the windows. Their appeal rests in the delicacy of the frames and glazing bars, and the characteristic uneven reflections created by the original glass panes. They also serve to unite the overall appearance when houses are grouped in terraces. So changing the windows in a Brentham house will affect its 'look' and in many cases detract from the visual appeal of the whole street.

Double glazing in Brentham frames

Although the technology has been steadily advancing, it is not possible to install double glazing that perfectly replicates the look of the original glass and window frames. Small double-glazed units, the same size as typical Brentham panes, can be made, but they are much thicker than the original glass, and the reflections are flatter. The glazing bars have to be much deeper to accommodate the units. In addition, some residents have reported that this glazing is not robust and prone to failure.

Slim sealed units in new timber frames take a huge amount of energy to manufacture, mainly because of the Krypton gas in the units. Because sealed units have a limited life, they will probably never save as much energy as is expended in making them. In addition, they are nowhere near current new building standards and no better thermally than good quality secondary glazing.

Slim double glazed units cannot be fitted into existing windows. Their use requires the whole window to be replaced, and this can be very expensive. As it is not possible to retain the original window sections, the Brentham Society argues that the type of primary double glazing available at the moment is not suitable for installation on original elevations.

On Thursday 30th April at 8.00 pm at the Brentham Club, the Brentham Society is putting on an exhibition of secondary glazing. This can be a cost-effective solution to outside noise, draughts and heat loss.
Watch out for posters or visit www.brentham.com for more details.

The Council's policy

For replacement windows in Brentham new windows should be identical in section and construction to the originals. Recently, double glazing using slim units has been allowed on new ground floor extensions and dormers at the rear of properties in the Brentham CA. It has also been allowed in some instances to replace existing double glazed windows of the 'picture window type' installed before conservation designation. It has not been allowed to replace historic windows. The Brentham Society has supported its use in these particular instances.

The way forward

Brentham houses are not all alike, and planning applications are considered on a case-by-case basis. This can sometimes result in outcomes that seem inconsistent. Two recent appeal decisions relating to different houses in Denison Road have offered contradictory views. Details of these two cases are outlined below.

The Brentham Society has considerable knowledge of conservation policy in Brentham, and, through the Brentham Society Advice Group, is able to discuss with residents what is likely to be passed or refused. But it is the Council's Planning Department that decides whether to grant or refuse consent, and their decisions are subject to appeal. As noted above, their policy regarding replacement windows has not changed.

Window design is advancing, and the Brentham Society and the Brentham CA Advisory Panel continue to look at and evaluate new developments, as they have done for over 20 years.

Two Recent Appeal Decisions

Recently, two applications for replacing windows with double glazed units, both in Denison Road, were refused by Ealing Council's Planning Department. Both residents appealed to the Planning Inspectorate against the Council's decisions. These decisions can be read in full on our website at:

<http://brentham.com/planning/insulation-v-conservation-finding-a-solution/>

In the first Appeal (APP/A5270/D/14/2218343) the Council's decision was upheld in part by the Inspector.

Of the terraces in Denison Road the Inspector wrote: *'In particular their fenestration and external materials are uniform. The white painted timber casement windows are all single glazed and include slim glazing bars, which add to the elegant and lightweight character and appearance of the windows. These windows make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the*

host terraces and the BGECA as a whole. Indeed the existing single glazed timber sash and casement windows found throughout the BGECA are an integral part of the character and appearance of the conservation area'.

The Inspector considered the current state of the windows and the fact that they were not energy efficient. However, he considered that the proposed double glazed windows would harm the uniformity of the terrace and adjacent terraces and as a result would detract from the character and appearance of the CA, so he upheld the Council's decision to refuse double glazing on the front of the property. He allowed it on the rear where the harm would be outweighed by the benefits.

The other appeal (APP/A5270/D/14/2220685) overturned the Council's decision. The Inspector took the view that the new double glazed windows should be allowed in this case. He focused on the 'host building' in contrast to the other appeal where the focus was on the impact of the new windows on the terrace. He noted that some of the existing windows were a mixture of original and replacement windows, some in a poor state of repair and that therefore the overall effect of installing new windows that are broadly consistent with the original pattern, although double glazed, is not any worse than the existing arrangement. While he acknowledged that the new windows would have a different appearance with frames that would have a less slender appearance and glass that would reflect light differently, resulting in a marginally heavier appearance, he considered that 'the difference would not be discernible' from the road.

These two Appeal decisions although contradictory, illustrate the issue. Primary double glazing, even of the slim type, does affect the appearance of a house. Changing the windows in one house of a terrace affects the look of the whole terrace. There is a danger that if the integrity and appearance of many of the terraces in Brentham is compromised, the incremental damage will lead to the removal of the Article 4 Direction, as has happened in some other conservation areas. Ealing Council recognises this and this view has been reflected in many of the planning decisions made in Brentham. The Brentham Society does not support developments that have potential to harm the character of the CA.

Come along to our open meeting on Thursday 30th April at 8.00 pm at the Brentham Club, where we will be on hand to discuss this with you. Watch out for posters or visit www.brentham.com for more details. You can also comment through our website www.Brentham.com