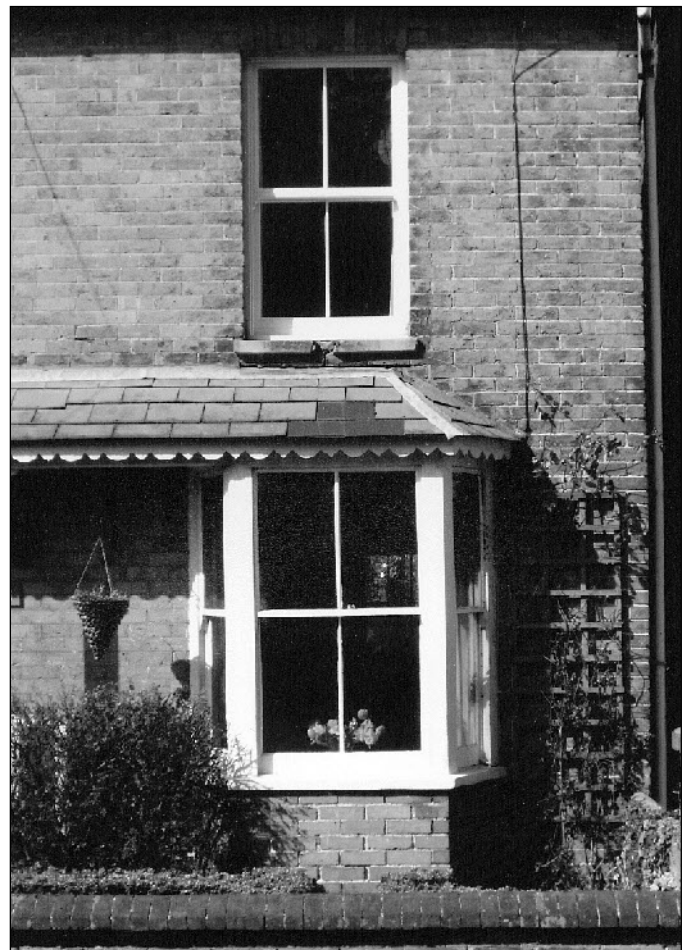


Replacement Windows - Making the Right Choice

by Roy Worskett RIBA MRTPI (Rtd)

Following the publication of the Horsham Society's proposals for a Local List of buildings of architectural interest, one problem has become increasingly clear. The most intrusive threat to the character of those buildings is the widespread and unsympathetic changes that are taking place to windows and doors by UPVC replacement windows, often carried out with little or no reference to the original style or design of the building.

Windows are always the most dominant architectural feature of a building. Without the necessary awareness of the importance of the character of a building, its qualities can be so easily undermined that architectural value and, ultimately, financial value, is diminished. This is not just a problem for buildings on the proposed Local List, but one that affects all buildings. The purpose of this note is therefore to alert owners of this problem and to encourage them to look carefully at the style of existing windows before ordering replacements. Owners need to insist to suppliers that the original style is maintained and that designs are accordingly appropriate.



The wide variety of window design in Horsham's houses helps give character to the town.

Some further examples of the wide selection of existing windows in Horsham, each giving character to the house



Where existing wooden painted windows are particularly good, it is always worthwhile considering secondary glazing - frameless, plain, sliding glass panels - behind the external windows. These are virtually invisible from the outside and improve insulation. Their use has proved successful on listed Georgian windows.

Where statutorily listed buildings are concerned, it should be remembered that listed building consent is required from the local council to both change the materials and the appearance of a building, including the windows.

Examples of good practice



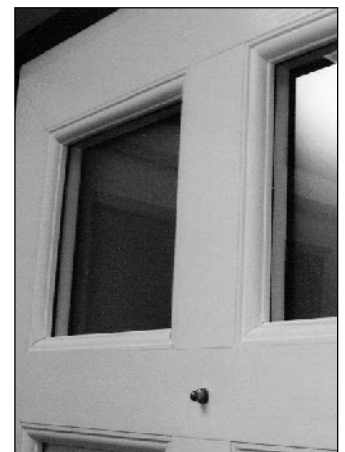
The best approach is, wherever possible, to repair and repaint the existing window.



An excellent facimile in UPVC.



A good UPVC replacement matching the original.



Simple windows in a UPVC door.

Common mistakes in window replacement are often caused by changing from sash windows to top hung ones or using much thicker sections than the originals. Inserting false glazing bars or fake plastic leaded lights within the double glazing always looks wrong. Replacement doors are often constructed with fanlights in the door itself - simple rectangular windows in the door are more traditional and always better.

Common mistakes



Change from original timber sash to top hung UPVC on the ground floor – before and after.



Top hung UPVC with false glazing bars replace original sash.



Fan light in the door when it should be over the door frame.

The Society's message is that the owners of locally listed buildings should look carefully at the character and style of their windows and, where replacement is essential, insist that manufacturers or suppliers provide windows that closely follow the style and appearance of what exists or what had existed originally.

Whilst the retention and repair of original windows is always the best approach, it is understandable that owners will want to achieve higher insulation standards by double glazing and reduce maintenance costs. UPVC windows can obviously achieve this. Appropriately designed windows and doors that replicate original designs are available locally.