

Design and access statement and heritage statement for Hawks Mill, Needham Market replacement windows

Proposed works and justification

This application is in response to a pair of rear elevation windows serving Flat 6 Hawks Mill, Needham Market, that have become rotted and non-functioning following years of building mis-management and insufficient exterior maintenance by the Freeholder.

The single glazed, timber framed windows were installed during the 1980s when the mill was converted into flats. Permission is being sought to replace these windows with a thermally improved aluminium double glazed window, following advice given at pre-application stage. The decision to adopt an aluminium window has been made to mitigate future maintenance issues and remove the reliance the leaseholder has on the Freeholder, its managing company and agents to honour their commitments to properly maintain this Grade II listed property.

It is proposed that the replacement windows be finished in white, as per the existing.

The glazing types proposed shall also match with those existing, namely Clear Glazing to one (the eastern) and 'Cotswold' Obscured Glazing to the second (the western).

Having new windows incorporating insulating glazing units, functional draught seals and fully operation openings, will inevitably aid the fuel efficiency of the property by allowing enhanced insulation during winter and effective ventilation during summer.

It should also be noted that the current in-operable nature of the existing windows is rendering a potential route of emergency escape impassible. The layout of the property would, in lacking access from these window openings, have only a single route of escape through the main stairwell of the building, as the front elevation windows all have cast iron 'legacy' frames blocking the apertures.

The windows forming this proposal are not visible from the highway.

Access

Pedestrian and vehicle access to the property would remain unchanged. The area to which this proposal relates has been surveyed and adequate access has been identified for the works to be completed both safely and efficiently. Vehicular access is available to the rear of the building for the delivery and clearance of materials, tools

and workers. All used or old materials will be disposed of properly by an elected FENSA registered fitting company.

Design of the proposed replacements

The chosen design, system and details have been selected to closely replicate the style, dimensions and aesthetic of the existing windows. It should be noted that the window apertures to this part of the rear elevation of Hawks Mill are 'new' apertures created during the buildings conversion to residential flats in 1986/87 and do not relate to the existing build of 1884 (as shown in planning document 922/84, kindly supplied by the archives team at Mid Suffolk District Council during pre-application advice). The replacement windows would not be a prominent change to the rear elevation of this large building.

Heritage Statement

Hawks Mill is a designated heritage asset, Grade II listed, and the heritage aspect of the proposal has been given careful consideration, in line with the requirements of the NPPF chapter 16. Information about the historic environment has been reviewed. The listing description for this large and distinctive building reads as follows:

“Former watermill. Built 1884, the wings added in 1892 5-window main range, 3 storeys with attics. Slightly set-back wings one window wide on either side, of 2 storeys with attics. Red brick with twin bands of gault brick at various levels. Pilasters between each bay of the centre range rise from 1st floor, have capitals at 3rd floor and support round arches at 3rd storey; within each of these is a circular window. Mainly concrete plaintiled roofs, the higher block with gabled hips and the lower blocks half-hipped. (The right hand block has an asbestos-slatted roof). Small-pane iron windows with segmental heads of gauged gault brick. Boarded doors, some with oblong fanlights. A weatherboarded hoist with small-pane casements is cantilevered centrally above the 3rd storey; a smaller and lower hoist projects from the left hand gable. The left-hand block contains an Armfield water turbine which is still in working order; in front of it is a late C18 bridge beneath the road. Its outer face has two semicircular arches, mainly red brick with random burned headers. The parapets are rebuilt in C19 gault brick. The milling machinery has been removed.”

Hawks Mill is within the Needham Market Conservation Area. The Mill is referenced within the conservation area appraisal in terms of its history of use, linked to its river setting:

“Two large watermills at one time harnessed the power of the river's flow for grinding corn: Bosmere Mill to the east near Needham Lakes and Hawks Mill at the north end of the town. Both were sited adjacent to locks on the Gipping navigation, remains of which can still be seen despite being converted to sluices by the river authority.”

The conservation area appraisal also refers to the area in front of the Mill is stated to be a “major space”, and the wider river setting as follows:

“The area around Hawks Mill and the river is well provided with the usual wetland and other trees, especially surrounding Valley House.” and;

“The back streets to the east of this section of High Street are fairly intimate in scale, whilst Hawksmill Street dives deep into a cutting to underpass the railway, leading down to the river and the enclosed area around the mill.”

The important heritage contribution of the Mill to the character of this part of the town and the conservation area is referenced in the Needham Market neighbourhood plan, and four key views within Needham Market which make important contributions to the significance of the settlement, or individually significance assets. One view along Hawks Mill Street looking west towards the mill complex, is considered to not only highlight the visual prominence of the mill complex, but also the historic character and industry of the river valley. Policy NM7 seeks to protect the visual scenic value from development that may adversely affect its character, and part 3 references this view:

POLICY NM7 - Preserving the town’s setting and retention of important views.

The visual scenic value of the landscape and countryside surrounding Needham Market including Needham Lake and the valley of the River Gipping will be protected from development that may adversely affect its character.

*Important views into, from and within the town will be protected from inappropriate development. Development that significantly detracts from the following views (shown on **Map 6**), by failing to respect their distinctive characteristics, will not be supported.*

1) View looking north-west up the High Street.

2) View looking south-east up the High Street.

3) Short views along Hawks Mill Street looking west towards the mill complex.

4) Short view along Coddendam Road looking north-west towards the mill complex.

The Hawks Mill is a significant building of special historic interest itself (especially its front elevation and roofscape), and its setting and relationship with the buildings in this area contributing to the historic character of the area. The rear elevation, and the subject windows in particular, make less of a contribution to its significance.

The single glazed, timber framed windows were installed in 1986/87 when the mill was converted into flats. One opening was original to the building and one was created as part of the alterations for the conversion. The fabric of the existing timber window frames is not of historic value. The window frames would be replaced in a near-matching design (see the submitted drawings, and the manufacturer’s typical frame details on pages 17 and 18 of the provided brochure for the Alitherm Heritage. The change in material from timber to aluminium, with the same colour finish, is consider appropriate for this former industrial building. Indeed the window frames to the front of the mill (its principal elevation) have cast iron grilles in front of them, referred to in

the listing description as “Small-pane iron windows”. The windows on the rear of the mill are not visible from the important view of policy NM7.

Having taken careful consideration of the significance of this listed building, the proposed replacement windows being on the rear façade, at some distance from public views, the modern nature of these added window frames installed in the 1980s and by replacing the window frame in near-matching design, the proposal preserves the special historic interest of the listed building. The proposal will not change the setting of the mill building. The proposal would preserve the character or appearance of the Needham Market Conservation Area. There would be no harm to heritage assets.

Engagement

We do not feel this work will affect the local area or neighbours in any way, but the adjacent neighbours have been informed and are very happy for the work to take place. All neighbouring properties will be informed in advance of any work starting.