

My name is James Layton. I live at 83 High Street, Barkway in north Hertfordshire with my wife and daughter. My ancestors have lived in this house for over 150 years. As such, the property means a lot to us and I am dedicated to maintaining it and preserving its condition and character for centuries more. It is a Grade II listed building, which we believe was likely built around the year 1700. After my great grandmother died, my grandmother and grandfather renovated the house in 1974 because it was in a very fragile state and was effectively unlivable. Essential amenities like internal plumbing and electricity were added. All of the windows were replaced at this time and new windows were added at the back of the house, where there had been none previously.

These windows are now over 50 years old and are past their usable life.¹ Some are suffering from rot, while others are warped and no longer close properly. Several have broken panes. All of them are single-paned and draughty despite efforts to draught-proof them. Plastic secondary glazing is not appropriate and, for most of the windows, is unfeasible due to the shallow depth of the frames. Additionally, in the winter months, condensation builds on the inside of the windows, encouraging mould growth and poor internal air quality, adversely affecting the health of my family, and encouraging rot.

The windows are beyond economic repair, and replacing them with high-quality, thermally-efficient, heritage-appropriate alternatives that match the original design is the most viable long-term strategy in this case. The 2022 North Hertfordshire Local Plan stipulates that any changes to a heritage asset like our house must enable it to be continued to be used “in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance.”² Ensuring that the property remains livable and without future risk of decay is paramount. As the existing windows are not original to the building or its history (they have only been present in the building for 52 years out of its ~326 years of existence), replacing them with timber-framed windows of the same design and character requires no “alteration or destruction” of the heritage asset or its significance within the village’s conservation area.³

Despite the large cost, we are committed to finding an optimum viable use solution that is respectful, compliant and energy efficient. We have engaged with multiple window companies to identify the best option for the house and conservation area. The Cambridge-based heritage timber frame expert Schnauber offers an excellent solution suitable for conservation and

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<https://builders.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Modifying-Historic-Windows-as-Part-of-Retrofitting-Energy-Saving-Measures.pdf>, p. 36. A “large number of timber windows, dating from the 1960s and 70s” were poorly made and “now require replacement.” Per one study by Imperial College London from 2004, the average lifespan of older timber frames from this period is estimated at 40 years.

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<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/North%20Hertfordshire%20Local%20Plan%202011-2031.pdf>, p. 168.

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPE_December_2024.pdf, p. 61. More on Barkway’s designated conservation area: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Barkway%20CA%20Character%20Statement.pdf>

heritage projects like ours.⁴ They manufacture historically accurate timber frames that are a match in design, character, profile and opening mechanism with the Georgian panes found in our house and throughout the village of Barkway. They use vacuum insulated glass (VIG) from PassivGlas, an ultra-slim profile pane measuring 8.15mm thick that maintains the traditional look of single-glazed windows. This conservation-grade glass allows for improved energy efficiency without altering the historical appearance of the building. It offers U-values of 0.5 W/m²K – the equivalent of triple-glazing, but without the depth. From the inside and outside, vacuum insulated glass is indistinguishable from single-glazing.⁵

Recognising the concerns of conservation planning officers, we are proposing to replace seven windows and one pair of French doors at the rear of the building, not visible from the road; and one window on the side of the building, facing the driveway, which is six metres from the road. There will be no impact to the front of the property, which lines the street. No modifications will be made to the structure of the building, either inside or outside, and access will not be impeded. The installation period is estimated to be 1–2 weeks, with each window taking approximately half a day to install. Schnauber will touch up and paint any exterior wall plasterwork, as needed, to match its appearance before the work.

We feel this is an appropriate request as similar properties at the north of the village (1 High Street & and the brick house next to 14 High Street) have recently installed new timber-frame double-glazed windows with conservation officer approval.⁶ Additionally, the Grade II listed White Posts, High St, Barley, received planning permission for double-glazing in 2015 (reference: 14/03170/1LB). In all of these cases, the new windows are on the front of the property and the double glazing has a clearly visible cavity. The replacement windows we are proposing for our house are of a higher quality and are indistinguishable from single-glazing, without a visible cavity.

I have included all requested architectural plans with this application, as well as exterior photos of the back and side of the house, plus more detailed photos of the style and condition of the existing windows. In support of this application, I am also including a supporting letter from my mother Elizabeth Layton documenting the past renovation of the house and windows completed in the 1970s.

⁴ <https://schnauber.co.uk/windows/heritage-slimline-windows/>. Also see attached supporting document: Schnauber-examples-of-previous-heritiage-approved-installations.pdf

⁵ <https://passivglas.com/vacuum-glazing-for-heritage-properties-passivglas/>

⁶ Based on an informal conversation with the owner of 1 High Street, Barkway in February 2026.