



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 26 November 2019

by David Nicholson RIBA IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th December 2019

Stafford Knott House, Main Street, Laxton, Corby NN17 3AT

- The appeals are made by Mrs Joanne Dawson against the decisions of East Northants District Council.
 - The development/works proposed are: Replace existing Collyweston tile and corrugated sheet with imitation Collyweston tile.
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Appeal A: APP/G2815/D/19/3239127

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The application Ref 19/00021/FUL, dated 20 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 2 May 2019.
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Appeal B: APP/G2815/Y/19/3235665

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The application Ref 19/00020/LBC, dated 26 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 May 2019.
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Decisions

1. Both appeals are dismissed.

Reasons

2. Laxton Conservation Area incorporates almost the whole of this pretty village of stone houses many with decorated barge boards and Collyweston stone slate roofs. Stafford Knott House, formerly a public house, is constructed of squared coursed limestone under Collyweston roof slates. The house is set back from the road with a range of traditional barns running down the right-hand-side of the plot. The building is in the picturesque style, with eaves dormers and decorated barge boards. A rear single-storey section of the main dwelling is roofed in grey slate. The house is listed at Grade II.
3. The structure to which the appeals relate is an open fronted barn, in sections, and is ancillary to the main dwelling. It is within the curtilage of the house and should be regarded as part of the listed building for consent purposes. The building is currently used for external storage and was previously an animal shelter. Most of its roof slopes are covered in natural Collyweston stone slates although a small area has been replaced with corrugated iron sheets. The roof shows some areas of disrepair but also areas of a type of torching visible on the underside. The proposed change in roof covering would result in the complete loss of the Collyweston slates and their replacement with a concrete tile intended to closely imitate the appearance of Collyweston slates.

4. The Historic England publication, *Stone Slate Roofing: Technical Advice Note (2005)*, is relevant and advises that: *If the special qualities of our built heritage are to be conserved, any repair or reroofing should be based on the principle of replacing 'like with like'. Stone slate roofs are no exception. Keeping the local stone slate roof of an historic building helps to conserve its significant character.* The proposed replacement roof covering would be Winchcombe tiles, which are man-made. While they would be laid to diminishing courses, and have been designed to imitate a stone slate roof, they differ from natural Collyweston stone slates in a number of respects. They are relatively uniform and lack the irregularities of a natural product, they have fewer gauges to their courses, the colouring of the tiles and weathering characteristics are different with little variation between tiles, and they are hung over battens with some nailed courses rather than pegged and laid on a bed of mortar.
5. In my assessment, the scheme would result in a markedly different appearance to the barn roofs which are a traditional roof covering for this area and a key part of Laxton's character and appearance. Consequently, the change would also harm the building's historic significance and that of the wider Conservation Area. As the re-roofing would not directly affect the fabric of the house, it should be assessed as less than substantial harm. The proposals would therefore be contrary to policy in paragraphs 184, 193, 194 and 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework that: listed buildings are an irreplaceable resource; great weight should be given to their conservation; any harm to, or loss of, their significance from alteration should require clear and convincing justification; and, less than substantial harm to significance should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. It would also be contrary to criterion a) of Policy 2 of the adopted North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy which seeks to conserve and, where possible, enhance the significance and setting of heritage assets.
6. The Appellant has argued that the current Collyweston roof shows considerable slippage and is no longer watertight, that the cost of replacing the Collyweston tile roof would be greater than the value of the building, and that the replacement product would retain all the features of the Collyweston tiles without the financial impact. Although there are some signs of slippage and a number of slates along the eaves need replacing, it is unclear whether this is due to an overall roof failure or just the result of localised frost damage and perhaps mechanical impact to the roof edge. The extent of unspoilt torching under some of the roof suggests that deterioration of the pegs, battens and nails may be limited. Either way, there is no independent expert report on the roof or on the feasibility of localised repairs without wholesale replacement. I accept that Collyweston slates are a limited resource, but I have no information on whether or not new slates are available.
7. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised including the presence of bats, I conclude that the public benefits of re-roofing with imitation slates would not outweigh the harm to the significance of the building and that both appeals should fail.

David Nicholson

INSPECTOR