
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2025

by **OS Woodward MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M2840/Y/25/3359618

26 Paddock Lane, Mears Ashby, Northampton, NN6 0EQ

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Tessa Watts against the decision of North Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is NW/24/00615/LBC.
 - The works proposed are to change thatch roofing to corrugated metal.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Because the appeal relates to a refusal to grant listed building consent and the appeal site lies within a conservation area, I have had special regard to Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act)¹.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether or not the proposal preserves the Grade II listed building '26, Paddock Lane'² or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses; and,
 - whether or not the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mears Ashby Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

Significance

4. As set out in the list description, the building dates from the 17th Century. There is also an attached barn that is now part of the building but this dates from the 20th Century and is not part of the proposal. Insofar as it relates to the appeal proposal, the 17th Century part of the building's age, surviving historic fabric, extant historic features and use of traditional construction and materials make important contributions to its significance. With regard to the roof, the 17th Century part of the building has a thatched roof. It is in a poor state of repair. I observed protective plastic sheeting over part of the roof. There are visible areas where the thatch has degraded. Moss is growing in several areas. There are holes. Nevertheless, the thatch creates a pleasing

¹ The Council, in the reason for refusal, refers to s66(1) of the Act. However, this relates to applications for planning permission, not listed building consent, so I have instead correctly considered s16(2)

² List entry number 1191270

and attractive appearance, particularly by its relatively soft form and by features such as where it has a swept profile to provide a hood to the first floor window to the north elevation.

5. It is common ground between the parties that the building would have originally been thatched. This is also the conclusion drawn by the Inspector in the recent appeal for the same property³. However, the appellant has stated that the thatched roof was replaced by a tin roof in around 1918. It was only reverted to thatch in 2004. The evidence corroborates this statement and the list description, made in 1972, references a corrugated metal roof. Nevertheless, the current roof is thatched. The original building would have been thatched. Thatched roofs are relatively regularly repaired and sometimes completely replaced as part of the normal maintenance process. 'Original' thatch for an over 300 year old building is not, therefore, plausible. It is therefore the principle of the material, not the historic thatch straw, that contributes to the significance of the building. The thatch is therefore an authentic and appropriate material for the roof of the 17th Century part of the building, and it positively contributes to its significance.

6. The CA is centred on the historic core of the village. There are a variety of buildings of different ages and designs, but largely vernacular and built with a palette of local building materials. With regard to roofs, many are slate or tiled. There are examples of corrugated metal and of thatch, however, there are relatively few thatched roofs remaining in the CA, with only four listed in the Mears Ashby Village Design Statement SPD (Design SPD). This rarity increases the significance of the remaining thatched roofs, which therefore positively contribute to the character and appearance, and thus significance, of the CA. The appeal building is an attractive and historically important listed vernacular building which is relatively prominent because of its proximity to the junction of Manor Road and Paddock Lane. The building therefore positively contributes to the character and appearance of the CA, with its thatched roof being an important element of this contribution.

Assessment

7. It is proposed to remove the thatch and replace it with a corrugated tin roof. The existing thatch is in a poor state of repair. There would therefore be very limited harm from the loss of the specific thatch on the roof. However, it would result in the loss of an authentic material that positively contributes to the significance of the listed building. This remains the case even though the building has previously had a tin roof. It is not tin now and hasn't been for over two decades. Where thatch is an authentic material that positively contributes to the significance of a listed building, as is the case for the appeal proposal, it should be expected that damaged thatch be replaced like for like. The replacement and repair of thatch is part of the standard life cycle of this form of roofing, so the age and condition of the specific thatch is less important than the principle of the material.

8. None of the examples provided by the appellant⁴ with regard to the value of tin roofing are within the Mears Ashby CA, and most are not within the same local authority. Nevertheless, the Design SPD notes the existence of other corrugated metal roofs in the CA. I agree with both the appellant and Historic England⁵ that the principle that corrugated tin can sometimes be a characteristic of local architecture and can positively contribute to the significance of historic buildings. However, the appeal

³ See paragraph 8, appeal Ref APP/M2840/Y/23/3335063, dated 6 September 2024

⁴ See Appendix 2, Statement of Case

⁵ Practical Building Conservation 2013, see Appendix 2 Statement of Case

building does not have an existing corrugated tin roof. One of the example guidance quotes provided by the appellant⁶ is clear that there can be a presumption in favour of the retention of tin roofing. However, nowhere does it say that it should be used as a replacement for existing thatch on historic buildings.

9. In addition, the proposed corrugated tin roof would harm the special architectural and historic interest of the building by creating a much more stark appearance, with straight, hard lines to the parapet and ridge. This would be particularly evident to the two dormers to the front and rear elevations.

10. I acknowledge that the building was listed at a time when it had a tin roof, as set out in the list description. However, and as set out by Historic England in its observations on the application, the list description is not a definitive account of the significance of the listed building. This fact does not, therefore, alter my assessment as set out above.

Overall

11. Overall, the proposed corrugated tin roof would not be as authentic as the existing thatched roof. Thatch is self-evidently the preferred material for the roof of the building because that is the material with which it was originally constructed. The proposed roof would cause further harm from its stark appearance in comparison to the existing thatch. The proposed removal of the thatched roof to be replaced by corrugated tin would, therefore, erode the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and harm its significance, thus failing to satisfy the requirements of the Act and Paragraph 210 of the Framework. I assess the level of harm to be less than substantial, to the middle of that range.

12. As the listed building is an integral part of the CA, and the CA has relatively few remaining thatched properties, it follows that the contribution the host property makes to the CA would be diminished as a result of removing its thatch roof. Hence the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the CA as a whole and would harm its significance. I assess the level of harm to be less than substantial, at the lower end of that range.

13. Listed building appeals are not subject to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Therefore, development plan policies do not carry the same weight as when considering planning applications. Nevertheless, the Council refers to them. The proposal fails to comply with Policy 2(a)(b)(d) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031, adopted 2016, which reflect the Framework and the Act and require proposals to complement their surrounding historic environment. It also fails to comply with Character Guideline 1 of the Design SPD, which requires proposals to maintain the character contribution of listed buildings in the village.

Planning Balance

14. In accordance with Paragraph 212 of the Framework, I place great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets. Although less than substantial, I place considerable importance and weight on the harm that I have identified to the listed building and to the CA. As set out at Paragraph 215 of the Framework, where there is less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed

⁶ The Brixworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

15. There would be economic benefits from the employment generated to implement the proposed works, but these would be limited because of the small scale of the proposal. There would likely be some, although unquantified, thermal benefits from the replacement roof. However, it is well established that a properly maintained thatched roof has good insulating properties. Any benefits would therefore likely be limited.

16. The existing roof is in a poor state of repair. This has gone beyond aesthetics and the roof is leaking in several locations. As set out in evidence, and as I observed on site, there are several areas where the leaks have led to damage to the interior of the building, such as damp and mould. This is causing harm to the historic fabric of the listed building. It is also likely to be at least contributing to health issues being suffered by the occupant of the house. However, these issues would almost certainly all be resolved if the thatched roof were to be repaired.

17. I acknowledge that repair of a thatched roof can be expensive. As can be insurance even after the repairs have taken place. However, I have seen no substantive evidence, such as confirmation of the income and wealth of the owner versus the precise costs of repair and insurance, that the costs would be so prohibitively expensive as to make them unachievable. Also, my responsibility is to defending the significance of the building and this does not necessarily mean with the current owner. In this regard, there is no substantive evidence before me that demonstrates that the proposal is necessary to secure the continued use of the building as a dwelling, or that the use of the building would be at risk if the appeal was to fail.

18. Several letters of support have been submitted. These relate to the issues with damage to the house, the personal circumstances of the appellant, that the current roof is an eyesore, and that there can be a long wait time for replacement thatched roofs to be installed. I have largely dealt with these above. Regarding the eyesore point, this would no longer be the case with a replacement thatched roof. No substantive evidence is provided regarding the waiting times, and I therefore place very limited weight on this concern.

19. The proposal therefore represents only limited public benefits and it is not required to secure the optimum viable use of the building as a home. Therefore, the harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets that I have identified clearly outweigh the public benefits of the proposal.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons above, the appeal is dismissed.

O S Woodward
INSPECTOR