



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2025

by **P Hanna PGDip MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/Y/25/3368401

Church View, Slaley, Northumberland NE47 0AD

- 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 Mr Steven Best against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/04242/LBC.
 - The works proposed are installation of PV cells to south face of roof of converted garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for installation of photovoltaic cells to south face of roof of converted garage at Church View, Slaley, Northumberland NE47 0AD in accordance with the terms of the application ref: 24/04242/LBC, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The works hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.
 - 2) Following installation, if the solar panels cease to be in use, they shall be removed within three months of the day of their last use. Prior to removal, details of how the solar panels are to be removed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the removal of the solar panels shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have amended the description of development in my decision for clarity. The appeal relates to a listed building consent, and I have therefore had special regard to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). A previous appeal decision for installation of photovoltaic (PV) cells in the same location was dismissed on 8 November 2016.¹

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the Grade II listed building, Church View (list entry 1302725), and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

4. Church View was originally constructed in the seventeenth century and remodelled in 1769. The main house has a substantial but subservient outbuilding attached, which has been converted to residential use. The principal elevation of the main house is of formal design, being two storeys, three bay, and built in squared stone courses, with

¹ Ref APP/P2935/Y/16/3152407.

rusticated quoins, stone slate roof in diminishing courses, and skews. The front elevation of the outbuilding is more functional in its design, containing two windows of different sizes and proportions in an irregular fenestration pattern, and built in coursed rubble stone with slate roof.

5. To the rear, an outshut dominates the main house, and the outbuilding is more heavily fenestrated, including two former agricultural segmented arches. The walls of both the main house and the outbuilding are rubble stone. Unlike the contrasting design and detailing of the front elevation, the use of a single material to the rear walls provides a considerable degree of cohesion to the appearance to this elevation. Even so, in my judgement, this cohesiveness is lessened by the contrast in roofing materials, which emphasises the primacy of the main house and subordination of the outbuilding.

6. In light of the above, the significance and special interest of the building, insofar as they relate to this appeal, are primarily derived from the quality of its vernacular design and detailing, the contrast in design and materials between the principal main house and the former agricultural outbuilding, and the historic fabric of both.

7. The proposal is for 12 solar PV panels to be fitted to the slate roof on the rear south slope of the outbuilding. The panels would be positioned approximately centrally, such that the slate roof would remain visible around the periphery of the roof slope. The panels would be of slim profile fitted tightly to the plane of the roof.

8. The previous appeal decision found that none of the original structural features of the outbuilding's roof remained, such that the proposal at that time would not cause any harm to the historic fabric of the listed building. I see no substantive evidence to cause me to reach any different conclusion in this respect.

9. That decision did however find that harm would be caused as a result of the incongruent appearance of the reflective surface and aluminium frame on the underlying matt slates, particularly when the full visual extent of the rear elevation is considered. However, since that previous appeal decision, Historic England has published Advice Note 18: Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency (HEAN18). This states that the installation of PV panels on roof slopes of less prominence will generally be acceptable, even if they would be visible, as their impact in such locations would be limited. It goes on to say that the subordinate parts of buildings can provide the most appropriate place for such installations.

10. I agree with my colleague that the proposed materials would contrast with the building's existing and historic materials. This is an inevitable consequence of placing a modern and functional material in such a context. Nonetheless, HEAN18 places renewed emphasis on adaption to climate change to the extent that such a contrast is not necessarily unacceptable. The proposed works have been designed with regard to the particular context of the heritage asset, in that the panels would be installed in a rectangular layout to reflect the shape of the existing roof plane, be of low profile design, and with a uniform design and layout that would also leave adequate peripheral roof space to allow the roof to still be seen and understood as a slate roof. In other words, the panels would not dominate the roof plane, notwithstanding that the number of panels has not been reduced from the previously dismissed scheme.

11. The proposal would also be sited on a less prominent elevation than the principal elevation, and would be on the outbuilding which is subordinate to the main house, such that the hierarchy of the building would continue to be respected. Whilst the comparative significance of the rear elevation to the front has not been substantially

addressed by the heritage statement, it is nonetheless clear in my mind that the rear elevation is of less prominence, such that the harm to the building's special interest would be limited, notwithstanding that the previous Inspector did not make a finding on relative significance. Although the roof may be visible from the valley to the south, no significant harm would be caused to these longer views given intervening landscape features. Overall, the degree of harm would be less than substantial, in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), at the low end of the scale.

12. The harm I have found should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, in accordance with paragraph 215 of the Framework. In terms of ensuring optimum viable use, the continued use of this listed building is not dependant on the proposal as the present residential use would not cease in its absence. The proposal would however make the listed building more energy efficient and, consequently, it would contribute to carbon reduction and national climate targets. Although the contribution would be small, I conclude that these public benefits would nevertheless be of sufficient magnitude to outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage asset, and the considerable importance this carries.

13. The Council suggest that alternative, less harmful locations should have been considered, with specific reference to the detached outbuilding within the curtilage. Section 1(5)(b) of the Act establishes that any object or structure within the curtilage of the building, although not fixed to the building, that forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948 shall be treated as part of the building. This listed curtilage structure is very small, both in footprint and height, such that, in my judgement and in the absence of any substantive evidence to indicate otherwise, the siting of PV panels on it would be out of scale and overly dominant. Overall, I am not persuaded that the suggested alternative would have a less harmful effect than the proposal.

14. Given that wider public benefits would outweigh the low level of less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset, the proposed harm to the Grade II listed building known as Church View and its features of special architectural and historic interest would be acceptable. The proposal would thus satisfy the requirements of the Act, as well as accord with the historic environment policies in the Framework and policies ENV1 and ENV7 of the Northumberland Local Plan (2022) insofar as relevant to this section 20 appeal.

Conditions

15. The Framework sets out that conditions should only be imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the works to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. I have amended wording in the Council's suggested conditions in order to comply with the tests. The imposition of a condition to require removal of the panels in the event of their obsolescence would secure reversibility of the works. The Council's suggested condition requiring compliance with plans is not necessary as progressing the works in accordance with the submitted plans is part of the formal decision above.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons the appeal should be allowed.

P Hanna

INSPECTOR