

Planning Committee: 15 December 2022

Item Number: 5

Application No: [W 21 / 1456 LB](#)

Town/Parish Council: Leamington Spa
Case Officer: Jane Catterall

Registration Date: 04/10/22

Expiry Date: 29/11/22

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Seaforth House, 8 Warwick New Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 5JF
Re roofing FOR Ms Judy Hall

This application is being presented to Committee due to the amount of support comments received.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee is recommended to refuse Listed Building Consent.

DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The applicant seeks listed building consent for the complete replacement of the covering to existing pitched roofs, with the material to be altered from Welsh slate to imported Canadian slate.

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

The application relates to a mid-nineteenth century, two storey Victorian Villa. The building is Grade II listed and is the only listed building within the immediate area. The roof consists of two sharply pitched gables and a central low pitch which is screened by a parapet wall.

Seaforth House has a rendered façade with decorative details, including windows in chamfered reveals and hood moulds with end stops, with red brick to the side and rear elevations. The Welsh slate roof is a key focal point for the building, with five tall stacks with cornices drawing attention to this area.

The building is located within Area 24: Warwick New Road of the Leamington Urban Conservation Area, which was part of the mid-to-late nineteenth century development to the west of the town centre. The building is located on a good-sized corner plot, facing Warwick New Road and sitting astride Guy's Cliffe Road, resulting in good visibility of the roof area from multiple viewpoints within the wider conservation area.

PLANNING HISTORY

W/04/1243 – Change of use of 3 first floor rooms to joint nursery/residential use with a nursery cloakroom and Variation of Condition 5 of Planning Permission W/02/1459 to permit a total of 49 children to be accommodated in the enlarged nursery - Grant

W/04/1867/LB - Restoration to two chambers of cellar including alteration to access stairs, windows and light wells - Grant

RELEVANT POLICIES

- National Planning Policy Framework

Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029

- HE1 - Protection of Statutory Heritage Assets
- HE2 - Protection of Conservation Areas

Royal Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2029

- RLS3 - Conservation Area

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Royal Leamington Spa Town Council - no comment.

Councillor King (Clarendon Ward) - Supports. Obtaining new Welsh slate is all but impossible; reclaimed Welsh slate is of unacceptable poor quality. The Canadian slate proposed has been approved for use by other authorities in the UK. If a common sense approach to preserving listed/heritage buildings is not accepted as a matter of urgency, residents will lose confidence in the system.

Public Response

25 in Support:

Within Leamington Spa: 10

Warwick District: 7

Outside of District: 8

- The problems of sourcing and sustainability and the similarity of Glendyne Slate, re-roofing with this is a sensible option.
- The proposed tiles are in keeping with the original style of the building.
- The proposed tiles are indistinguishable from one another.
- The proposed tiles look the same. Tiles have slipped letting in rain and are a worry on a windy day.
- It's important that buildings are preserved and maintained for the historic value to the wider community.
- The Welsh and Canadian tiles look exactly the same.
- It is important for the safety of the children that the building is reroofed.
- There is very little difference visually in the slates.
- The roof renovation is necessary and especially important to ensure the integrity of this otherwise very well-looked after building is maintained.
- The building is well maintained but the roof is in need of repair.
- The Canadian Slate which is proposed for this work is an excellent substitute for the unsustainable Welsh Slate.
- Having been given a chance to look at samples of the existing slate and the Canadian slate, I cannot see any difference in the two.
- I have seen the Canadian slate sample next to the Welsh ones and I cannot see any difference.

- It is clear to me that roof is old and in need of repair. I have seen both the Welsh and the Canadian slate and cannot tell the difference between the two materials.
- I have seen both samples of slate placed side by side and am confident that these look identical and therefore the Canadian slate would be more than suitable to use for this project.

ASSESSMENT

Impact on the Listed Building

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 explains that in considering whether to grant permission for developments affecting listed buildings or their setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Policy HE1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 states that development will not be permitted if it would lead to substantial harm to or total loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, unless it is demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

Policy HE1 also states that each historic building has its own characteristics related to its original design and its original or subsequent uses. For listed buildings, traditional materials and appropriate colours and finishes will be required. The use of appropriate materials in any restoration or alteration works will be expected to maintain the character and appearance of both the building and its setting. The objective of this policy is to ensure that any works or alterations to listed buildings are carried out using appropriate materials to preserve the integrity of the building.

Policy HE1 explicitly states that the use of imported roofing material will not be permitted to adhere to the aforementioned points.

Policy HE2 seeks to retain the integrity and form of conservation areas and recommends resisting alterations to both listed and unlisted buildings that would have an adverse effect on the overall character of these areas.

In light of the aforementioned policies, the proposal to remove the entire roof covering and replace this with imported slate is considered to be contrary to guidance, constituting less than substantial harm and as such, is recommended for refusal.

The works to the roof are considered to exceed the remit of repairs, due to the proposed complete replacement of the existing material, and as such, Listed

Building Consent has been sought.

The material at present is predominantly Welsh slate, with lead-lined ridges and lead flashing to the stacks. There is evidence of patch repair with Swithland Slate, Mauve Welsh slate and man-made tiles also present on the roof.

The roof, which is an unusual plan form comprised of two steep outer pitched roofs sandwiching a low inner pitch, contributes greatly to the significance and character of the building, which was been selected for listing whilst many buildings of the same age in the surrounding location were passed over.

The drawing of the eye to the roof is a deliberate statement of the changing trends of bolder Victorian architecture away from the Georgian desire to conceal their roofs behind full parapet walls. The slate that forms the roof is an important factor of this character. Welsh slate could be easily transported around the country via improved nineteenth century transport links and became a symbol of progress.

The proposed replacement material is imported Canadian roof slate which is considered to result in a loss of character to the building and to undermine the historic significance of Welsh slate. Whilst the Heritage Statement makes reference to the possibility of Swithland Slate being the original covering, this seems highly unlikely as the surrounding buildings of a similar age have Welsh slate coverings, Welsh slate would have been a statement piece, and the presence of only small patches of Swithland slate indicates minor repairs whilst the majority of the covering is Welsh. When reroofing, slate is most often reused and therefore it would be uneconomical to replace an entire roof with Welsh, even in modern times, and to only retain small patches of Swithland slate. Swithland is also heavier than Welsh, requiring stronger timbers and more labour when fixing therefore any possible saving in cost due to their closer origin was lost, and for Victorians, greater transport links meant that the proximity of material no longer had to be a determining factor.

The roof has been reroofed in the late twentieth century however the roofing material was retained as Welsh slate, thereby preserving the character of the building.

Policy HE1 of the Warwick Local Plan explicitly notes the unsuitability of important roofing material, as the use of inappropriate, non-traditional material can undermine the character of both the building and its setting. The objective of this policy is to ensure that any works or alterations to listed buildings are carried out using appropriate materials to preserve the integrity of the building.

Works to the roof do appear to be necessary and it is not proposed here that the roof should be left unrepaired or ignored. It is the choice of materials that is the cause of contention and namely, the use of an imported roofing material to replace the entire existing covering which is domestic slate. It is important that this application does not form a precedent which results in lesser materials, with greater environmental costs, becoming acceptable. The benefits of the proposal are considered to be of a private rather than public nature and whilst it may be more time consuming and difficult to source Welsh slate from reclaimed sources and reuse this domestic slate where possible, this should not outweigh the benefit of the use of this historic material.

Overall, it is felt that the application will have a negative impact upon the heritage asset resulting in significant albeit less than substantial harm, with the works undermining the special architectural and historical significance of the heritage asset. The proposed benefits are considered to be of a private rather than public nature and therefore the proposal is deemed unacceptable, in direct contradiction to policy HE1 of the Warwick Local Plan and is therefore recommended for refusal.

Summary/Conclusion

The benefits offered by the applicant in the choice of imported roofing material over domestic slate are not considered to outweigh the harm identified to the building and would not be in the wider public interest. The current proposal would constitute significant harm which whilst being less than substantial would nevertheless be contrary to local and national policy. As such, the proposal is deemed unacceptable, in direct contradiction to policy HE1 of the Warwick Local Plan and is therefore recommended for refusal.

REFUSAL REASONS

Policy HE1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 and the NPPF state that, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building and conservation area by reason of the use of unsuitable materials which undermine the character and integrity of the heritage asset. Insufficient public benefits have been identified to outweigh this harm.

The development is thereby considered to be contrary to the aforementioned policy.
