

Development Control Committee 6 September 2023

Planning Application DC/23/1023/HH – Fen Street Farmhouse, Fen Street, Hopton

Date registered: 3 July 2023

Expiry date: 29 August 2023
EOT agreed: 07 September 2023

Case officer: Debbie Cooper

Recommendation: Approve application

Parish: Hopton cum
Knettishall

Ward: Barningham

Proposal: Householder planning application - a. replacement of the existing roof coverings b. replacement of the existing rainwater goods and c. insulating render to the exterior walls

Site: Fen Street Farmhouse, Fen Street, Hopton

Applicant: Mr Thornborough

Synopsis:

Application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and associated matters.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the committee determine the attached application and associated matters.

CONTACT CASE OFFICER:

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Background:

This application was considered by the Delegation Panel on 15 August 2023 as Hopton Parish Council objected to the application, contrary to the Officer recommendation of approval.

The Panel agreed the matter should be referred to Development Control Committee for a decision.

Proposal:

1. Planning permission is sought for external alterations comprising of:
 - the replacement of the existing roof coverings, which are primarily thatch, with handmade Lavenham Clay peg tiles with rounded ridge tiles.
 - new galvanised half round rainwater goods throughout
 - the addition of 40 mm of breathable insulating render to the exterior walls to improve thermal performance. The render will be painted in a similar light colour finish to the existing.

Application supporting material:

2.
 - Location plan (drawing no. P001)
 - Existing block plan (drawing no. P002B)
 - Existing roof plan (drawing no. P005)
 - Existing elevations (drawing no. P010B)
 - Existing elevations (drawing no. P011B)
 - Proposed block plan (drawing no. P102)
 - Proposed roof plan (drawing no. P105)
 - Proposed elevations (drawing no. P110C)
 - Proposed elevations (drawing no. P111C)
 - Heritage Impact Assessment
 - Applicant's supporting statement – 'The House was re-thatched in Reed in 1993 at a cost of £24,000 and most recently re-ridged, in straw, in 2014 at a cost of £10,500. Whilst I do not have an actual quote for replacing the thatch the estimate a year ago was somewhere in the region of £70,000 which would roughly equate with the 1993 invoice price. So, the thatch is now 30 years old and deterioration will only accelerate from here with a supposed life of 40 or so years and a ridge that should be done every 12 years or so. In accordance with the terms of the current insurance policy I am not allowed any open fire or log-burner or even a barbecue within 50 metres of the house. In addition I have to have a suite of fire extinguishers serviced every year, and pay for an electrical survey periodically and on top of these extra costs the insurance is over twice what it would be for a tiled roof house. The inability to have a real fire in the coldest months means that the large brick chimney which would otherwise heat up and act as a radiator for the whole house cannot be used and I have to rely on oil fired central heating.'

Site details:

3. The application site comprises of a two-storey detached dwelling situated within the countryside on the outskirts of Hopton. The property is set in a large plot with a detached flint barn and a detached timber cart lodge. Given the age of the property it is considered to be a Non Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA).
4. This section of Fen Street is characterised by historic cottages with a variety of material finishes, including a thatched cottage to the west and a tiled roof cottage to the east.

Planning history:

5.

Reference	Proposal	Status	Decision date
DC/23/0058/HH	Householder planning application - a. two storey rear extension (following demolition of existing) b. conversion of existing barn to create an annexe c. glazed link extension to connect new extension with new annexe with 10 solar panels on south elevation d. three bay cart lodge (following demolition of existing) with 18 solar panels on roof	Application Granted	6 March 2023

Consultations:

6. Conservation Officer:

Original comments received: The proposed works relate to an unlisted building which is not located within a conservation area. It would appear the building has undergone significant works in the past to include the introduction of modern windows and doors etc and presumably a modern render. The works involve the replacement of a thatched roof with tiles and the addition of an insulated render. Whilst the resulting arrangement of additional layers of render with openings is regrettable, due to the changes the building has undergone historically, I raise no objections to the proposed alterations to include the replacement of the thatch roof. No conditions are required from a conservation point of view.

Further comments received: The building is not listed and is not located within a conservation area. The building has lost its original windows and the roof finish has been replaced historically. The replacement of thatch with tiles was not uncommon historically as more modern alternatives (materials and techniques) became available. Thatched roofs were often replaced with tiles following a fire. Given the unlisted status of the building, its location outside the conservation area and the assumed modern age of the thatch, I believe it would be difficult to justify objecting

to an approach which was commonly adopted historically particularly as the works would not involve the loss of historic fabric and the use of traditional clay tiles is proposed.

Re. Fenway - an application to list the building was submitted in 2012. Unfortunately, however this was not supported by Historic England. (Officer note: Fenway is the thatched property to the west of Fen Street Farmhouse).

Representations:

7. **Parish Council:** We understand the householder has fire risk concerns, majority of the roof is thatched. We do not agree, any modern roofing material will not be able to match this thatched roof, particularly in terms of insulation. We understand that the current thatch was renovated in the last 20 years. We would greatly regret the loss of one of the few thatched houses in the village. As we have said, we do not agree with removing this thatch at this time.
8. **Neighbours:** one representation received from The Old Chequers, summarised as concerns about the loss of the thatched roof, with only two left in Fen Street and 9 or 10 in the whole village:
... 'Thatch, whether straw or reed, is a green building material with outstanding insulation properties. Its use should be encouraged as one of the oldest traditional crafts and the loss of any thatch should be discouraged, particularly on such an important Heritage building. A tiled roof on such an imposing building would not have the same visual impact and would be great loss to the village.'

Policy:

9. On 1 April 2019 Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council were replaced by a single authority, West Suffolk Council. The development plans for the previous local planning authorities were carried forward to the new Council by regulation. The development plans remain in place for the new West Suffolk Council and, with the exception of the Joint Development Management Policies Document (which had been adopted by both councils), set out policies for defined geographical areas within the new authority. It is therefore necessary to determine this application with reference to policies set out in the plans produced by the now dissolved St Edmundsbury Borough Council.
10. The following policies of the Joint Development Management Policies Document and the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy 2010 & Vision 2031 have been taken into account in the consideration of this application:

Policy DM1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy DM2 Creating Places Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness

Policy DM7 Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy DM16 Local Heritage Assets and Building Protected by an Article 4 Direction

Policy DM24 Alterations or Extensions to Dwellings, including Self Contained annexes and Development within the Curtilage

Core Strategy Policy CS3 - Design and Local Distinctiveness

Other planning policy:

11.National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF was revised in July 2021 and is a material consideration in decision making from the day of its publication. Paragraph 219 is clear however, that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the revised NPPF. Due weight should be given to them according to their degree of consistency with the Framework; the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework; the greater weight that may be given. The policies set out within the Joint Development Management Policies have been assessed in detail and are considered sufficiently aligned with the provision of the 2021 NPPF that full weight can be attached to them in the decision-making process.

Officer comment:

12.The issues to be considered in the determination of the application are:

- i. Principle of Development
- ii. Impact on street scene / character of the area and a local heritage asset
- iii. Impact on neighbouring amenity

Principle of Development

13.Policy DM24 states that planning permission for alterations or extensions to existing dwellings, self-contained annexes and ancillary development within the curtilage of dwellings will be acceptable provided that the proposal respects the character, scale and design of existing dwellings and the character and appearance of the immediate and surrounding area, will not result in over-development and will not adversely affect the residential amenity of occupants of nearby properties.

14.In this case, the proposed changes do not result in an overdevelopment occurring and the principal is considered to be acceptable, albeit further consideration is necessary in relation to character, appearance, heritage and amenity impacts.

Impact on street scene / character of the area and a local heritage asset

15..Policy DM24 states that planning permission for alterations to existing dwellings, will be acceptable provided that the proposal respects the character, scale and design of the existing dwelling and the character and appearance of the immediate and surrounding area. Likewise, policy DM2 and CS3 requires that proposals recognise and address the key features, characteristics and special qualities of an area and maintain or create a sense of place and/or local character.

16. Policy DM16 states that proposals for the alteration of local heritage assets should respect the historic fabric, design, materials, elevational treatment and ornamentation of the original building.
17. Given the age of the property it is considered to be a Non Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). The NPPF advises 'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'
18. This section of Fen Street is characterised by historic cottages with a variety of material finishes, including a thatched cottage to the west and a tiled roof cottage to the east. Whilst the property dates back to around the 17th Century and is considered to be a Non Designated Heritage Asset / Local Heritage Asset, it has undergone significant previous works such as modern windows, doors and render. As a result of these historic changes, whilst the additional insulated render is regrettable, it does not cause significant harm such that planning permission should be refused.
19. The current thatched roof appears to be a modern thatch and therefore there is no loss of historic thatch. Historically thatch has been replaced in older properties with tiles, either at the end of their lifespan or due to fire damage. The property is not listed nor within a conservation area and there are a variety of roof finishes in the street scene such that the proposed clay peg tiles to replace the thatch will not appear out of keeping.
20. The proposed works are therefore considered to respect the character of the dwelling and the wider area, with the proposed materials considered to be appropriate. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policies DM2, DM16 and DM24.
21. As stated in the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment, the reason for the works is as follows: 'The thatch is nearing the end of its lifespan and will need to be replaced. The client wishes to thermally upgrade the property by replacing the roofing with modern insulation and traditional clay peg tiles that are in keeping with the locality. The proposed diathonite render will maintain the same external character of the walls while increasing the u-value/thermal performance'. It is considered that an additional level of weight that benefits the proposal is the improvement of the overall thermal efficiency of the property, particularly in relation to the external wall insulation. The proposal therefore also accords with Policy DM7 in relation to energy efficiency.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

22. Given that the proposal is for external material alterations only, there are no adverse impacts on residential amenity arising. It is therefore considered to comply with Policies DM2 and DM24 which seek to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact on residential amenity.

Conclusion:

23. In conclusion, the principle and detail of the development is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with development plan policies DM2, DM7, DM16 and DM24 and the National Planning Policy Framework, respecting the character and appearance of the property and the wider area, not resulting in the loss of historic fabric nor impacting on residential amenity.

Recommendation:

24. It is recommended that planning permission be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the following approved plans and documents, unless otherwise stated below:

Reference number	Plan type	Date received
P001	Location plan	28 June 2023
P102	Proposed block plan	28 June 2023
P105	Proposed roof plan	28 June 2023
P110C	Proposed elevations	28 June 2023
P111C	Proposed elevations	28 June 2023
(-)	Heritage Statement	03 July 2023

Reason: To define the scope and extent of this permission.

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online [DC/23/1023/HH](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/DC/23/1023/HH)