



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2009

by **Ken Barton** BArch DipTP Regd Architect

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State
for Communities and Local Government

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Decision date:
12 March 2009

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/E/08/2091571

Tudor Cottage, Great Street, Norton Sub Hamdon, Somerset TA14 6SG

- 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 appeal is by Dr D W Robbins against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
- The application Ref.06/04749/LBC, dated 16 December 2006, was refused by notice dated 3 June 2008.
- The works proposed comprise a retrospective application for laying replica flags in hall and lounge.

Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Procedural matters

2. In the written representations, references were made to flagstones at Dillington House, Ilminster. With the agreement of the parties, I visited Dillington House on an unaccompanied basis and I have taken the flagstones there into account.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the likely effect on the special architectural or historic interest of the building.

Reasons

4. Tudor Cottage is a 2-storey dwelling which dates from the C17 and was listed in 1961 as a Grade II building of special architectural or historic interest. It is situated at the end of a row, at a corner with Church Lane, towards the middle of Norton Sub Hamdon Conservation Area. The cottage is built of Ham stone rubble with ashlar dressings and has a central entrance porch, with steps leading up to the front door. This opens into a hall which runs through the cottage with a room on either side. These now comprise a lounge and a dining room and there is a kitchen, bathroom and other facilities to the rear. The cottage has undergone changes over the years, but retains much of its historic character and features of interest. The Appellant has carried out various works following the grant of listed building consent, but the hall and living room floors were re-surfaced with replica flagstones without prior approval.
5. The Appellant has explained that these floors previously comprised soft wood boarding laid on a concrete base and experienced damage due to a flash flood. He maintains that the original floor covering would have been stone flags and in the submitted design and access statement it is indicated that the floor was remade in the last 20 years, although it is not made clear whether stone flags

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existed at that time or whether listed building consent was needed or obtained for the concrete and timber boarding. It is argued in the statement, however, that the replacement of the timber boards with replica flagstones constitutes an identifiably modern intervention which was installed with no further disturbance to the original fabric of the property. The Appellant acknowledges that use of genuine stone would have been ideal, but refers to the likely high cost and contends that the replica flags are a sensible compromise and have enhanced the building. The Council, on the other hand, consider that the replica flags have had an unacceptable harmful effect and, whilst not pressing for use of natural stone, argue that a timber boarded floor would be preferable.

6. I agree with the Council. The flags that have been laid seek to replicate the qualities of the natural honey-gold coloured stone extracted from the nearby quarry at Ham Hill and evident in the structure and decorative features of Tudor Cottage. As the Council have pointed out, however, flags cut from such stone are generally smaller than some of the large flags incorporated in the hall and lounge floors. Natural Ham stone flags also have variations in texture, colour and weathering characteristics that are not convincingly reflected in the replica flags used at the appeal property. This difference is emphasised by the close proximity of the replica flags to natural Ham stone within the cottage and I consider that the effect of the flags is materially detrimental to the character, integrity and special architectural and historic interest of the building.
7. PPG15 sets out national planning policy guidance on the historic environment and in Annex C paragraph C.2 underlines the importance of using appropriate local materials when making alterations to historic buildings. Paragraph C.64 refers to the importance of floor surfaces. PPG15 paragraphs 3.1-3.4 also draw attention to sections 7 and 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which aim to safeguard listed buildings and to ensure that works that would affect a building's character and special interest are not carried out without prior consent. Paragraph 3.42 advises that consent should not be granted merely to recognise a *fait accompli*. Policy EH3 of South Somerset Local Plan reflects the national guidance and seeks to ensure that alterations to a listed building do not adversely affect its character.
8. As I have indicated, the replica flags have a harmful effect on the building and I consider that their retention would not accord with national guidance and local policy which seek to safeguard historic buildings and should not be allowed. In forming this view I have taken account of the higher cost of natural stone and I have also noted that the Council consider that reinstatement of timber boards would be acceptable. As to the situation at Dillington House, from the written representations and from my site visit, it appears that authorised works to the building required use of natural stone flags and there is no evidence of support for use of replica flags there by English Heritage. I have had regard to all other matters raised in support of the appeal but these do not offset the concerns I have discussed. My conclusion is that the appeal should not succeed.

K. Barton
INSPECTOR

