

Area North Committee – 25 April 2012

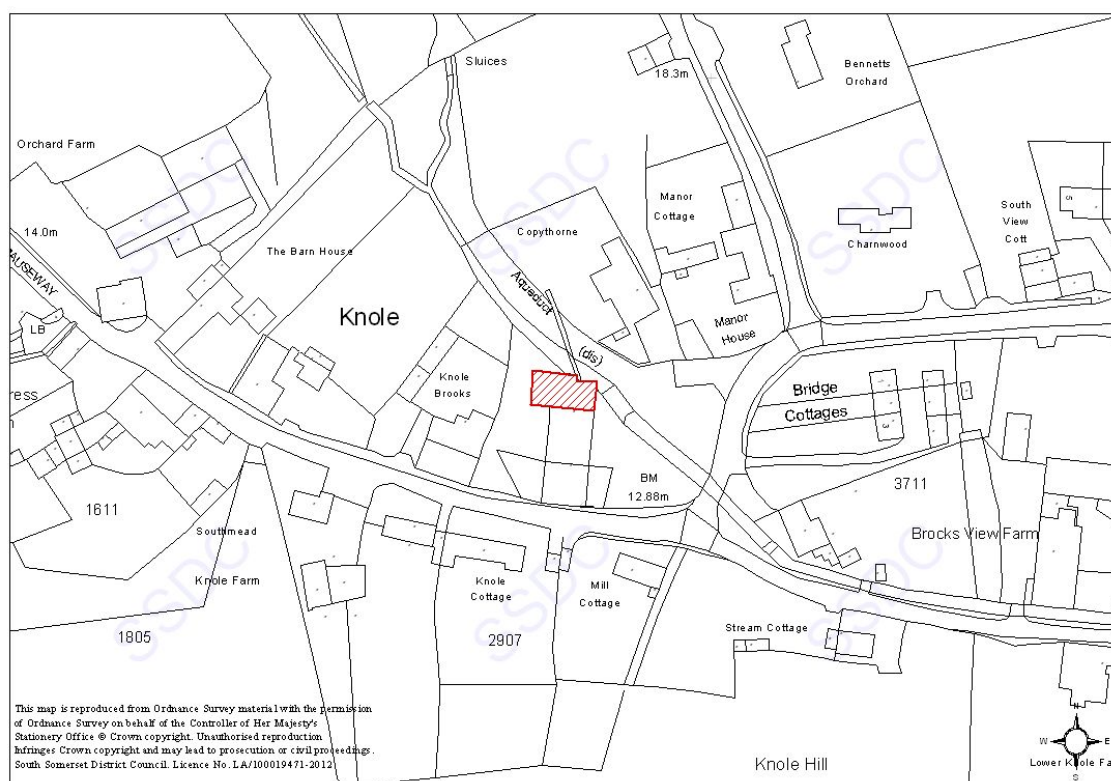
Officer Report On Planning Application: 12/00324/LBC

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| Proposal : | Installation of a 15 panel solar p.v. array on south roof elevation and two additional conservation rooflights on north roof elevation, replacement of existing defective roof timbers and general internal repairs and improvements (GR: 348296/125128) |
| Site Address: | The Old Mill, Bineham Road, Knole |
| Parish: | Long Sutton |
| TURN HILL Ward (SSDC Member) | Mr S Pledger (Cllr) |
| Recommending Case Officer: | Dominic Heath-Coleman Tel: 01935 462643 Email: dominic.heath-coleman@southsomerset.gov.uk |
| Target date : | 5th April 2012 |
| Applicant : | Mr Roger Marriage |
| Agent: (no agent if blank) | Mrs Marie Louise Green 61 The Park, Yeovil BA20 1DF |
| Application Type : | Other LBC Alteration |

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

This application is before the committee, at the request of the ward member and with the agreement of the area chair, to enable the comments of the conservation officer to be debated.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL



The proposal seeks consent for installation of a solar array to the south elevation roof slope, the installation of two additional rooflights on the north elevation, the replacement of existing defective roof timbers and general internal repairs and improvements. The property is a two-storey semi-detached house constructed of natural stone, with a clay tiled roof and painted timber window frames. The house is a Grade II listed building and is located close to a variety of residential buildings. The property is not within a development area and is within a conservation area as defined by the local plan.

RELEVANT HISTORY

11/04973/FUL - The erection of a sheep proof fence - Application permitted with conditions 17/01/2012

06/00059/LBC - Erection of external staircase, installation of 4 no. rooflights, alter pitch and reroof garage, erection of a Nib wall, form flood inundation relief works and internal works for upgrading accommodation - Application permitted with conditions 07/07/2006

POLICY

Section 16 of the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act is the starting point for the exercise of listed building control. This places a statutory requirement on local planning authorities to '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'

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Chapter 12 - Conserving and Enhancing Historic Environment is applicable. This advises 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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Whilst Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning Act is not relevant to this listed building application, the following policies should be considered in the context of the application, as these policies are in accordance with the NPPF:

Relevant Development Plan Documents

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan
STR1 - Sustainable Development

South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted April 2006)

ST6 - Quality of Development
ST5 - Principle of Development
EH1 - Conservation Areas
EH3 - Alterations to Listed Buildings

Guidance Documents:

English Heritage - "Micro-generation and Historic environment" 2008

English Heritage - "Small Scale Solar Electric Energy and Traditional Buildings" 2008

CONSULTATIONS

Long Sutton Parish Council - Supports the application.

Area Engineer - No comment

SSDC Conservation Officer -

"This proposal relates to a listed building in a conservation area. The building is converted mill with attached house, this part being the mill part. The application relates to a number of alterations including the installation of Solar PV panels.

The proposal relates in part to PV panels. English Heritage have provided two advice notes: 1) Micro-generation and Historic environment, and 2) Small Scale Solar Electric Energy and Traditional Buildings.

The area of roof to be used would be on the south side of the rear wing which is at the north end of the building facing the road. This brown/terracotta clay tile roof is visible from the road.

English Heritage's policy is clearly stated in the Micro Generation booklet with criteria to be dealt with in any application set out on page 3. No information has been submitted in this respect. The Small Scale and Traditional Buildings booklet advises that with regard to orientation. In my view, the proposal would also fall foul of the advice on orientation given by English Heritage in the second booklet which is that it is "generally not considered sympathetic to a building's appearance to have solar panel or other equipment fixed to any of its main elevations i.e. the face or faces seen from the principal view point, towards which it is mainly viewed."

The impact is compounded by the fact that it would be black panels on a clay roof which would increase their prominence.

I have been round the entire conservation area and can find no other panels on public view. You will be aware that we have approved a large number of installations in a historic context, but this is one where I cannot see a way forward that would work for the building.

Overall I consider the panels, which would be clearly visible from a public road, set on a clay roof, to be detrimental to the architectural interests of the listed building; that they would not preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area, and would also be contrary Policy ST4 of the Local Plan. The application also does not address the criteria laid down by EH and therefore fails to be justified.

Roof lights: This is a long narrow room with little natural light. I am happy with the proposal to increase the number of roof lights as proposed, but would suggest less uniformity in size and position.

Dry lining: The issue here is about character. It is not clear what the previous use of this area was, as there is no discussion of the impact of this in the Design and Access Statement. As it is part of the mill, it may have been stone, lime washed stone or

plastered onto the stone, depending on use. I am not opposed to improving the insulation where we can, but would like some more information with regard to the character of the building, and whether any part of the walls can be left exposed. I attach another booklet from EH with advice on insulating stone walls for information purposes."

REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of objection received from the occupier of a neighbouring property. The objection is raised on the grounds that the solar panels are unsightly and should not be permitted within a conservation area.

CONSIDERATIONS

The conservation officer was consulted in regards to the impact of the alterations on the character and setting of this listed building and the surrounding conservation area.

Solar Panels

The conservation officer noted that the application does not address any of the criteria laid down by English Heritage in their guidance documents relating to solar panels in the historic environment.

He has noted that the solar panels will be situated on an elevation that, whilst not the principle elevation of the property, is clearly visible from the road and the surrounding conservation area. He has stated that their prominence will be further increased by the fact that they will be black panels sited on a clay roof. He concludes that the panels would be detrimental to the architectural interests of the listed building; that they would not preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area, and would also be contrary Policy ST4 of the Local Plan. The application also does not address the criteria laid down by English Heritage and therefore fails to be justified.

Roof Lights

Two rooflights have already been approved to the north elevation of the property as part of a listed building consent approved in 2006. The current proposal is for an additional two rooflights to the north elevation. The conservation officer has indicated that he has no concerns with the principle of supplementing the number of rooflights to this elevation, but they would better respect the character of the building if they were to be less uniform in their size and position. As the application currently stands the proposed rooflights are not considered to respect the character of the listed building. However, it is noted that this could be easily resolved with a minor alteration to the scheme to reduce the uniformity of the rooflights in terms of size and position.

Internal Alterations

Again the conservation officer is concerned about the lack of justification within the application for the dry lining of the living room. He has stated that he is not opposed to the principle of improving the thermal characteristics of the building, but would need to see a more detailed justification put forward by the applicant. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF requires that the applicant to "...describe the significance of any heritage assets affected...sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance." In terms of the impact of the dry lining of the walls no such assessment has been put forwards with the application.

The conservation officer has not raised any other concerns with the proposed internal alterations.

Conclusion

As, the opinion of the conservation officer is considered to hold considerable weight in applications of this nature, it is considered that the proposed solar panels and rooflights would be detrimental to the architectural interests of the listed building and would not preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area contrary to the provisions of the NPPF and policies EH3 and EH1 of the South Somerset Local Plan (adopted April 2006). It is further considered that the applicant has failed to provide adequate justification for the solar panels and dry lining of the property in terms of the English Heritage guidance on solar panels within the historic guidance and paragraph 128 of the NPPF.

As such the application should be recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse for the following reasons:

01. The proposed solar panels by reason of their position and design would be detrimental to the character of the listed building and would fail to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area, contrary to the provisions of the NPPF and policies EH3 and EH1 of the South Somerset Local Plan (adopted April 2006).
02. The proposed rooflights by reason of their uniform position and size would be detrimental to the character of the listed building contrary to the provisions of the NPPF and policy EH3 of the South Somerset Local Plan (adopted April 2006).
03. The applicant has failed to justify the proposed solar panels and dry lining including an understanding of the significance of the building as a heritage asset, or to assess the impact of the proposal against such an understanding contrary to paragraph 128 of the NPPF.

Informatives:

01. The applicant should be aware that it is considered that the second reason for refusal could be easily overcome with only a relatively minor amendment to the scheme to reduce the uniformity of the rooflights in terms of size and position.
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