Porter, Karen

From: Watkinson, Gregory
Sent: 20 September 2024 10:59
To: _planningadvice
Subject: H15-0602-24
Attachments: H15-0602-24_HERef_P01580695_L455768.pdf

Hi,

Please can the attached be scanned to H15-0602-24 as 2HER

Thanks,

Kind regards,
Greg

Gregory Watkinson BA (Hons), MA
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Please note that any informal officer opinion expressed by this email is without prejudice and is not binding on the Council during the consideration of any formal application.



South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

Historic England

Mr Greg Watkinson
South Holland District Council
Council Offices
Priory Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 2XE

Direct Dial: 07823608338

Our ref: P01580695

23 August 2024

Dear Mr Watkinson

T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

ST MARGARETS CHURCH, CROSS GATE, DONINGTON, SPALDING, LINCOLNSHIRE, PE11 4SQ
Application No. H15-0602-24

Thank you for your letter of 6 August 2024 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Summary

The church of St Margaret is a medieval church with early fabric dating to the 14th Century. The proposal seeks to replace the south aisle aluminium roof with terne coated stainless steel, install an array of slim fitting photovoltaics to the south aisle roof, and install an air source heat pump unit to the north of the tower.

Historic England has concerns regarding the placement of the photovoltaics and considers that their proposed location would be harmful to the significance of the listed building. The proposed re-covering of the south aisle roof in terne coated stainless steel and the proposed installation of an air source heat pump unit as proposed do not raise concerns on heritage grounds.

Historic England Advice

Significance

The church of St Margaret sits at the north of the village of Quadring, in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire. Its fabric ranges from the 14th century to the present

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day, with alterations and restorations noted in its Grade I list entry. This is a building designated on the basis of its exceptional historic and architectural interest. The church has walls of limestone ashlar and roofs of aluminium and terne coated stainless steel (previously of lead) and is set within a graveyard. It sits in isolation from the present day village of Quadring which contributes to its prominent character.

Impact

The proposed area for the installation of photovoltaics forms a principal roof elevation of the church. The south porch is the primary entrance to the church, approached directly via the main access track past the village school. The aisle roof is not concealed by its parapet.

The installation of photovoltaics in this prominent location would be highly visible in views from the road and on the main approach to the church. They would become a conspicuous element of the south elevation and would cause harm to the significance of the building through erosion of its historic character.

We note that the proposed low-profile stick-on panels can form a tidy arrangement with the new roof covering but they will inevitably undermine the aesthetic solution provided by Terne coated steel. Terne coated steel is used as a replacement for lead where following theft it is considered too vulnerable a location. Notwithstanding that lead remains aesthetically and technically the better material, we appreciate the pressures on parishes following theft (see links below to our published advice). A key attribute of Terne coated steel is that it looks as near to lead as is possible and can be formed in batten rolled panels that resemble traditional leadwork, the affixing of photovoltaics will unfortunately compromise this effect.

The harm would be caused by the visibility of the solar panels, the difference between their colour and character and those of the proposed roof covering, and the consequent effect on the architectural character of the church. This visual impact would be exacerbated by the shallow pitch of the south aisle roof.

We appreciate the church's desire to improve energy efficiency and its holistic approach to reducing its carbon footprint, and the proposed installation of the proposed air source heat pump unit is supported. However, the proposed installation of the photovoltaics would damage the appreciation of the building's architectural interest.

Whilst a Statement of Needs has been provided to support the proposed photovoltaics installation, this highlights the minimal physical impact of the proposal on roof fabric, whereas our concerns relate to the visual impact of the proposed photovoltaics.

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It is not clear from the information available what alternative, and less harmful, approaches may have been considered as part of the project.

Policy

Further to the general duty upon the authority in the 1990 Act S66(1) to have special regard, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that all harm to designated heritage assets requires clear and convincing justification and in the case of less than substantial harm to be balanced against public benefits, '…great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) [NPPF 205 / 206 / 208]. The importance of renewable energy and tackling climate change is set out in section 14 of the NPPF in particular para's 163 and 164 which identifies '…significant weight to the need to support …low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings'.

Position

We support churches and communities working towards net zero, however we are concerned that there may be better less impactful solutions that that proposed in respect of adding photovoltatic panels to a higly visible part of a Grade I listed building.

We also suggest the consideration of a partnership with the neighbouring modern school, which is less architecturally sensitive than the church. Utilising suitable roof slopes of the school buildings could contribute positively to the desired achievement of carbon reduction.

Pleae see also our published advice at :-

Energy Efficiency and Places of Worship
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/making-changes/advice-by-topic/energy-efficiency/>

Energy Efficiency and Retrofit in Historic Buildings
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency-in-historic-buildings/>

Installing PV Arrays on Buildings
<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/building-services-engineering/installing-photovoltaics/pv-arrays-on-buildings/>

Church roof replacement in Terne coated steel

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https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/church-roof-replacement-terne-coated-stainless-steel/

Recommendation

Historic England is concerned that the proposed location of the photovoltaics on the south aisle roof would look visually obtrusive and harmfully impact the medieval church, other options should be explored.

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 205, 206, 208 of the NPPF.

In determining this application, you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

I Hartley

Isobel Hartley
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas
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