

North York Moors National Park Authority

District/Borough: Scarborough Borough Council
Parish: Grosmont

Application No. NYM/2016/0111/LB

Proposal: Listed Building consent for stone cleaning works to front and side of building

Location: Station Tavern, Front Street, Grosmont

Decision Date: 04 May 2016

Consultations

Borough/District -

Parish – The Council objects to the works as carried out, i.e. the poor quality of the cleaning process and the damage to the stonework as noted in the report provided. We support the recommendation for remedial works to restore and unify the appearance of the building.

Site Notice & Advertisement Expiry Date – 22 April 2016

Director of Planning's Recommendation

Refusal for the Following Reason:

1.	The use of a damp abrasive cleaning system on the calcareous sandstone of the Listed Building would result in the loss of fabric and patina of the stone including the combed tool marks which contribute to the character of this Grade II Listed Building. The sooty patina contributes significantly towards the building's local distinctiveness and accordingly that of the wider village; a non-designated heritage asset which has been recommended for designation as a Conservation Area. The loss of the hard outer skin of the stone and its historic patina would consequently be harmful to the special interest of the designated heritage assets (Listed Building and Proposed Conservation Area) and could lead to accelerated rates of decay of the relatively soft inner stone once the hardened external layer has been removed. As such the proposal would be contrary to policy in Chapter 12 of the NPPF and Development Policy 5 of the NYM Core Strategy and Development Plan documents which seek to ensure changes to a Listed Building will not have an unacceptable impact on its special historic or architectural interest.
----	---


4th May 2016.

Application Number: NYM/2016/0111/LB

Background

The Station Tavern, Grosmont is a Public House located at the centre of the village adjacent the Railway Line.

This application is for Listed Building Consent for stone cleaning works on the front and left hand side elevation which were carried out in November 2015 without any consent being granted. The application follows investigation from the Authority's Enforcement Team.

The application states that the machine used is described as a damp abrasive cleaning system, similar to the JOS system. The blast pressure can be varied between about 2 bar and about 8, and in this case it was operated at 4 bar. Abrasive material, in this instance crushed, recycled glass grit of less than 0.5mm grit size, is mixed with water in the blast pot, and additional water introduced into the blast pot to expel a corresponding volume of abrasive and water mix. In this instance as the dirt on the stone was very superficial an abrasive consumption rate of less than 25kg per hour was considered sufficient to remove the dirt, with, according to the applicant, no apparent loss of stone or pointing.

The application states that "the stone cleaning was carried out on the basis of highlighting the building and sustaining its prominence and this was in association with a general refurbishment of the interior to provide bed and breakfast accommodation." It then goes on to state that "the refurbishment to the public house and the sand blasting was carried out to make the building look more attractive to support the economic viability."

A report carried out by an independent consultant states that in their opinion the sides of the building that have been cleaned have been over cleaned and much of the combed tool marks have been eroded due to the aggressive nature of the Farrow system. They also state that the over-bright colour of the iron stone shows the distinct possibility that hydrofluoric acid has been used in conjunction with the abrasive cleaning.

Application Number: NYM/2016/0111/LB

Main Issues

The application acknowledges that the building, 'has a prominent position within Grosmont particularly its association with the railway' but this statement, whilst true, fails to fully capture the intimate relationship between the listed Inn and the nearby railway.

Grosmont village developed in a direct response to the railway. It is believed that the Station Inn, which was purpose built by the Whitby and Pickering Railway in 1835, was the first structure to be built in the village which started life as a simple staging post. It was originally called the Tunnel Inn as there was no settlement; just the Inn which was encountered as approaching trains arrived through the nearby tunnel. The settlement that consequently developed around this staging post was also called Tunnel until as late as the 1850's.

The original name of both the Inn and the village are symbolic of the inextricable relationship between the built environment and the railway. The sooty patina that the cleaning work has removed was the accumulated evidence of the intimate relationship that the Inn and railway have experienced for the past 181 years. It was also evidence of the area's former industrial heritage which included blast furnaces, lime kilns and brick works; all of which would have burned coal in their manufacturing processes. This patina contributed significantly towards the building's local distinctiveness and accordingly that of the wider village; a non-designated heritage asset which has been recommended for designation as a Conservation Area.

The applicant states that the stone cleaning was carried out to 'sustain the building's prominence, make it look more attractive and improve its economic viability'. It is argued, conversely however, that the building now appears denuded and pale within the context of surrounding stone buildings that all still have a sooty patina. The cleaning work has undermined the building's local distinctiveness and the visual evidence of its life-long relationship with the railway thus undermining its significance, its historic interest and therefore its status within the streetscape.

Not only has the work adversely affected the historic character of the listed building, it has also undermined its special architectural interest. The independent report commissioned by the applicant to assess the work confirms that the abrasive cleaning work has eroded the high quality hand tooling of the masonry. This erosion is visible to the human eye and has resulted in a blurring of the tooling which has lost its former crispness. The porch, and subsidiary elevations, which do not appear to have been cleaned to the same degree as the front elevation, also now look different in colour and texture to the front and side elevation that have been cleaned undermining the architectural integrity of the structure.

The repercussions highlighted contravene para 131 of the NPPF which emphasises the 'desirability of sustaining...the significance of heritage assets'.

Of further concern is the potentially increased threat of erosion the masonry now faces. The local calcareous sandstone develops a hard outer skin which protects the relatively soft inner stone. When this hard outer skin is eroded the softer inner stone can become prone to accelerated rates of decay. It is for this reason that the Authority always advises against the use of abrasive cleaning methods on sandstone structures within the National Park. The applicant's assertion that because the system has been authorised in other areas it should be acceptable here demonstrates a lack of understanding about differing geologies and their relative strengths and ability to withstand abrasive cleaning techniques.



Application Number: NYM/2016/0111/LB



This photograph taken in 1982 shows the soot blackened inn in the context of a streetscape of neighbouring buildings with a similar patina.

Para 134 of the NPPF requires any harm caused to a heritage asset to be offset by public benefit. Whilst the applicant states that the works were intended to improve the economic viability of the Inn there is no evidence to suggest that the cleaning works have or will achieve this and it is argued that by undermining the Inn's architectural and historic significance the works have potentially had the opposite effect. In the light of the above refusal is strongly recommended.

Explanation of how the Authority has Worked Positively with the Applicant/Agent

The Authority's Officers have appraised the scheme against the Development Plan and other material considerations and concluded that the scheme represents a form of development so far removed from the vision of the sustainable development supported in the Development Plan that no changes could be negotiated to render the scheme acceptable and thus no changes were requested.