

Item No 07:-

18/02869/LBC

**Chester House
High Street
Fairford
Gloucestershire
GL7 4AD**

Item No 07:-**Re-roofing of back slope to main house at Chester House High Street Fairford
Gloucestershire GL7 4AD**

Listed Building Consent 18/02869/LBC	
Applicant:	Mr & Mrs M Lee-Browne
Agent:	Michael Grosscurth (Surveys) Ltd
Case Officer:	Mark Smith
Ward Member(s):	Councillor Andrew Doherty
Committee Date:	12th December 2018
RECOMMENDATION:	REFUSE

Main Issues:

(a) Impact on the special architectural or historic interest of the Listed Buildings

Reasons for Referral:

The Ward Member has advised that he disagrees with the Officer's recommendation to refuse the application.

1. Site Description:

A stone built townhouse with a projecting C20 former shop front on the ground floor, in a prominent location within the centre of Fairford. Likely dating from the early 17th Century and probably raised to 3 storeys in the 18th Century. The roof is in natural blue slate to the front roof slope with Cotswold stone slates to the rear roof slope and projecting rear wing. The blue slate roof to the front elevation was present at the time of listing in 1952. A pedestrian throughway to the right on the ground floor leads to The Croft.

2. Relevant Planning History:

None.

3. Planning Policies:

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

4. Observations of Consultees:

None

5. View of Town/Parish Council:

Comments as follows:

"It is clear from looking in detail at this together with the Local Plan policies (including the Cotswold Design Code, particularly paragraph D.45) and national guidance, as well as the Historic England Listing Selection Guide (Domestic 1: Vernacular Houses, particularly sections 2.1, 2.3), that this small section of roof may have more 'special interest' than was initially apparent:

i) as an illustration of characteristic roofing style/practice (The roof of the wing at the rear of the building is also Cotswold stone slate which is tied to the main roof through swept valleys, "... 'swept valley', the construction of which is often the best example of the slater's art." (Cotswold District Council, Stone Slate Roofing, 2000). Swept valleys are characteristic of the Cotswolds, "...enabling curves (such as the swept valleys of the Cotswolds)... " (English Heritage, Stone Slate Roofing, 2005)),

ii) as an example of an exception to this (as a stone slate covered roof of lower pitch) and

iii) in the visibility of the evolution of this aspect of the building (there are also others, as indicated in the listing statement). The proposed re-roofing would therefore not be supported by Local Plan Policy EN11 - Conservation Areas: ("Development proposals, including demolition, that would affect Conservation Areas and their settings, will be permitted provided they: a. preserve and where appropriate enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of siting, scale, form, proportion, design, materials and the retention of positive features; ...".) It is also clear that, in the absence of a 'convincing justification' of public benefit (possibly including any evidence of risk to the structure of the building), the development would not be in accordance with Local Plan policy EN10(3).

On this basis, we support the Officer's recommendation to reject and his suggestion of the alternative preferred solution of repairing with Cotswold stone slates, subject to this being feasible. However, if convincing evidence were brought forward of significant risk to the structure of the building due to the 'eccentric loading' of the roof, this would obviously be another material consideration."

6. Other Representations:

None

7. Applicant's Supporting Information:

Design and Access statement dated July 2018

Further details and photographs submitted 20.11.2018 (see appendix A)

8. Officer's Assessment:

Legislation, Policy and Guidance:

Chester House is a grade II listed building (Listed as Manchester House, Number 12, High Street, Fairford). The Local Planning Authority is therefore statutorily required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting, and any features of special architectural or historic interest it may possess, in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

It also lies within the Fairford Conservation Area, wherein the Local Planning Authority is statutorily obliged to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area, in accordance with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining or enhancing the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of the proposed works on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 196 states that where a development

proposal will cause harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset that is less than substantial harm, that harm is weighed against the public benefits of those works.

Caselaw:

In *Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v. E. Northants DC, English Heritage, National Trust* [2014] EWCA Civ 137, the High Court held that less than substantial harm does not equate to a less than substantial objection.

In the *Quarry Hill Cottage, Brockhampton* appeal decision (APP/F1610/W/16/3150472 & 4) for the replacement of natural stone tiles on the rear elevation of a listed building with an alternative material, the Inspector concluded that "the proposal would result in the loss of a key element of the building's historic fabric. As such the proposal would not preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the building or its significance."

National Guidance:

Historic England's 'Making Changes to Heritage Assets' advises throughout the importance of historic fabric, and the need to minimise impact upon it, stating explicitly that "The historic fabric will always be an important part of the asset's significance" (paragraph 42). It states that "Original materials normally only need to be replaced when they have failed in their structural purpose. Repairing by re-using materials to match the original in substance, texture, quality and colour, helps maintain authenticity" (paragraph 11), and that "Replacement of one material by another may harm significance and will in those cases need clear justification" (paragraph 12).

Historic England's 'Stone Slate Roofing: Technical Advice Note' advises that stone tiles are a highly regionalised roofing form, fundamental to the distinctive local character of buildings in many parts of the country, but that they are under threat as stone slate roofing is becoming increasingly rare. It states that keeping the local stone tile roof of an historic building helps to conserve its significant character, and specifically identifies swept valleys as an important characteristic of the Cotswolds.

Significance:

The significance of Chester House rests in its being a characteristic 17th-century townhouse built in the local vernacular with traditional, locally-available materials; but which was altered and updated in the 18th century, with the raising of the roof, and the more polite remodelling of the front elevation with the insertion of sash windows. The fact that the earlier mullions were not removed, but remain visible, characteristically indicates that the building would also have been rendered at this time, further unifying its appearance.

The precise date at which the blue slate roof was installed on the front elevation is unclear, but it appears, from being mentioned in the list description, not to be recent. Indeed, blue slate roofs were increasingly common in the Cotswolds in the 18th and 19th century, as it allowed shallower roof pitches and cleaner lines that were more appropriate to polite buildings than traditional steep roofs. By contrast the retention of a traditional stone-tile roof, with its softer, rougher texture and gentle swept valleys was characteristic of, and reinforced the vernacular character of the rear.

Thus the hierarchical difference in the treatment of the roofs, with the traditional, vernacular (and then readily available) stone tiles and gentle swept valleys on the lower-status rear, and the more polite, 'imported' blue slates on the higher-status, and more classical High Street frontage, closely reflects and reinforces the hierarchy of the elevations and the evolution of the building, and contributes positively to its aesthetic value and significance.

There are thoroughfares passing both to the North and South of the building linking the High Street to The Croft (see appendix B), allowing the rear of the property to be viewed from a number of public vantage points. Whilst the significance of a listed building is not reliant on public views, these do allow the significance to be more readily appreciated.

Proposal:

The proposal is to replace the existing natural Cotswold stone tiles to the rear roof slope of the main building with natural blue slates. The roof of the projecting rear wing will remain in natural Cotswold stone tiles. The characteristic gentle swept valley would be replaced by a crisp gutter valley.

The application notes that the differing weight of the roof covering to front and rear "exacerbates the risk associated with unequal thrust". However, no evidence of any damage to the substantial historic roof structure from the existing and potentially historic uneven thrusts has been presented, nor has any assessment of the condition or structural capacity of the roof structure been submitted to suggest that it is inadequate to the loading.

Reference has also been made to water ingress. However, this is a result of the condition of the present roof, and is not due to the presence of stone tiles on the rear slope. Localised replacement of damaged stone tiles with new natural stone tiles to match the existing would be acceptable and would not require Listed Building consent, subject to confirmation of details and of the extent of replacement.

Both the above have been suggested as a public benefit, however, the first point is unproven, and the second is merely the regular maintenance and repair required by any old building.

Drawings were requested to show the proposed details of the new roof, including treatment of the valley detail between the new natural slate roof and the existing Cotswold stone tile roof; further information regarding this provided by the agent is included in appendix A.

Impact upon significance:

The rear slope comprises a modest area of roof, but a visually prominent one from the public lanes to the rear, allowing the vernacular character of the rear of the building, and its contribution to the building's significance to be readily appreciated.

The replacement of the stone tiles with blue slate would constitute the loss of a characteristic vernacular building material and detailing from the vernacular rear elevation, thereby eroding the historic authenticity of the building, and failing to sustain its significance.

The change from a characteristically vernacular, rough stone tile with swept valleys to a crisper, sharper blue slate would also erode the distinct difference between the more vernacular rear elevation, and the more polite front elevation, an hierarchical distinction that is an important part of the building's character and history, thereby further harming the significance of the building.

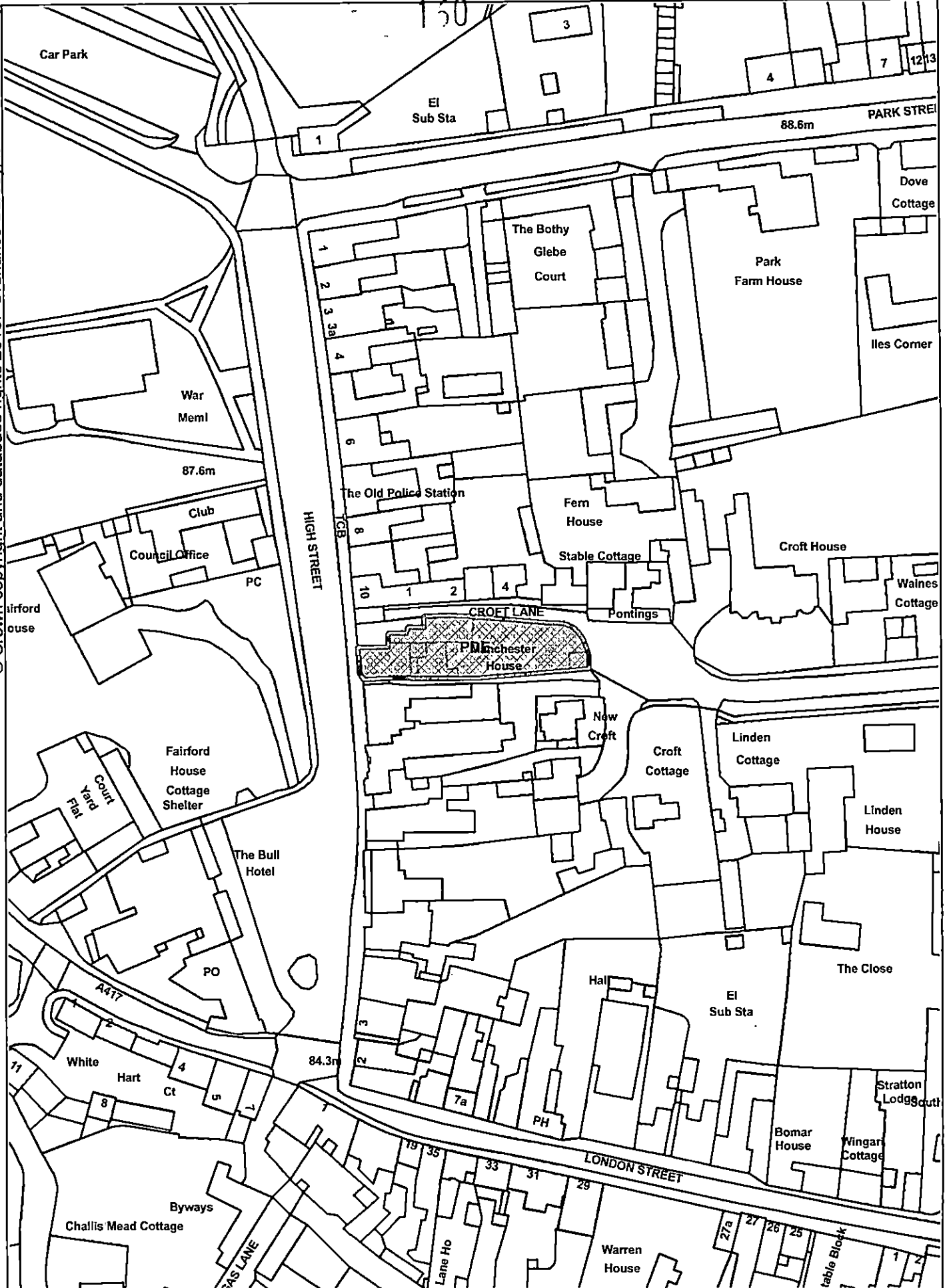
9. Conclusion:

Consequently, the proposed change in the roofing material of the rear slope of Chester House would harmfully erode its special interest as a listed building, thereby failing to sustain its significance as a designated heritage asset. No public benefit would accrue from the proposal. To grant consent would be contrary to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Section 16 of the NPPF with particular reference to Paragraph 196.

10. Reason for Refusal:

Chester House is listed Grade II (listed as "Manchester House") as being of special architectural or historic interest. As such the Local Planning Authority is statutorily required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses. The proposal is to replace the existing natural Cotswold Stone Slates to a rear roof slope of the building with natural blue slates. The Cotswold stone tiles are valuable historic fabric and along with the characteristic Cotswold detailing of the roof are important elements of the special interest of the building. The replacement of the stone tiles with blue slates as proposed would harm, and therefore fail to preserve, the building as it would result in the loss of an important element of the building's historic fabric, thereby reducing its special architectural and historic interest. It is considered that the proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building with no public benefit demonstrated in this case which would outweigh that harm. To grant consent would be contrary to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Section 16 of the NPPF with particular reference to Paragraph 196.

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CHESTER HOUSE HIGH STREET FAIRFORD

Scale: 1:1250

Organisation: Cotswold District Council

Department:

Date: 30/11/2018



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Appendix A

Further details on proposals and photographs, received 20.11.2018

Good afternoon Mr Smith – I refer to yours below and draw your attention to the following :

1. the top floor to this property (under the main roof) has a plasterboarded ceiling into which a small access trap has been formed; this has enabled verification of the following:
 - a. front roof slope
 - i. pitch: 35 degrees, overcovered with circa 1970's black type 1f roofing felt
 - ii. modern 20thC softwood common rafters laid over historically modified old hardwood trusses and purlins
 - iii. covering and substructure sound – no requirement for repair outside that associated with the need for ventilation due to high condensation risk
 - b. rear slope
 - i. pitch: 35 degrees, overcovered with circa 1950's black type BS 747 bitumastic felt
 - ii. 20thC common rafters laid over modified old hardwood trusses and purlins
 - iii. no deterioration to sub structure (outside woodworm) calling for repair on the basis that permeable felt would be used for any recovering program
 - c. evidence within main bedroom of 20thC modification to trusses – raising of collars and boxing in, plus moderate to severe water leakage due to perished stone slate to rear slope
2. with regard to your request for drawings this could be made conditional ... but in practical terms the following would apply
 - a. ridge detail there will be no change – existing caps would be reused and wet bedded, not dry fixed
 - b. verge detail there will be no change – the roof is as shown earlier – mid terrace thus there are no verges albeit good practice would dictate soakers being added
 - c. eaves detail there will be no change - in terms of overshoot between blue slate and stone slate, thus remains unchanged
 - d. valley detail this is in swept format and it is proposed to change to mitred format, open or closed to be negotiated, with a lead tray beneath – considered better than a dry valley
 - e. other changes none outside prudent treatment for woodworm, re-nailing rafters, replacement battens, upgrades to insulation & ventilation – the latter via type of felt

3. Engineering details; we have consulted DSA Cirencester who simply confirm that unequal loading is always a risk – see email from John Mills – extract below

'I am sorry that events have precluded an earlier response, but I now confirm that roofs with different weights of tiles to each pitch, as is the case at Chester House, have large shear stresses at the ridge. The rafters are normally spiked to a ridge board and with equal weights this is satisfactory, but with differing weights the nails have to carry significantly more load.

The nails are the weak part of a roof and I strongly recommend that works be undertaken to match the tiles to each pitch before nail fatigue causes the roof to collapse. In short, I agree with your assessment of the situation at Chester House. '

4. Significance:

- a. the front and rear slopes are 35-degree pitch: some 15 degrees below that deemed prudent for stone slate in the alternative the roof truss modifications carried out in say the 19thC was based on a blue slate covering when the top floor was re-formed and the older trusses were retained /re-jigged to suit
 - b. inspection of the front wall clearly shows signs of bowing and outward movement, plus tie bars – all part of the evolution of the main fabric
 - c. the rear slope is beyond repair and needs to be stripped / recovered
 - d. historically the front roof has gone from stone to slate; the rear probably the same, albeit its last strip in say the 1950's coincided with the reroofing of the outbuildings (these are 45 degree pitch) thus the whole of the rear was then in stone – and unfortunately mother nature hasn't forgiven the then roofer for his basic error hence the rapid – in overall terms – deterioration due to the unsuitability of stone on a slack pitch
 - e. the loss of a small section of stone is insignificant; there are several listed buildings in the High Street / Market Place with their main slopes covered in blue slate irrespective of their pitches ranging from 35 to 50 degrees – again historically confirming the evolution both in style and material. One simple example would be 1 High Street – or The Bull – both are now blue slated to a high pitch designed for stone, whilst others are blue slated to an original 35-degree pitch. When read from the rear the public will see the continuation of blue slate from the large area of the Lloyds Bank building, plus other blue slate to the outbuildings adjacent - and in the same ownership – previously approved by yourselves in the late 1990's
 - f. the gain to the public is obvious – the preservation of the original stone walls via the removal of the eccentric loading
5. General repairs: whilst the rear slope is downloaded that window will be taken to improve insulation and ventilation, plus reinstatement of damaged plaster and redecoration. If further repairs are needed the applicants have taken on board the necessity of liaison with yourselves apropos the possible need for a further application.
6. Please refer to photos sent under separate cover – these were taken today.

Regards

Mike Grosscurth MRICS

PHOTOGRAPH SCHEDULE

**Chester House
Fairford**

These photographs were taken on 20 Nov 2018

Weather conditions: cold / dry

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Mobile: 07768 798407
Email: mike.surveys@btinternet.com

Nov 2018
MJG/8789

1.

Top end of High Street



- 2 blue slated roof slopes
- 2 different roof pitches to blue slated sections

2.

Mid High Street



- 2 blue slated sections
- 2 different pitches

3. **Subject building**

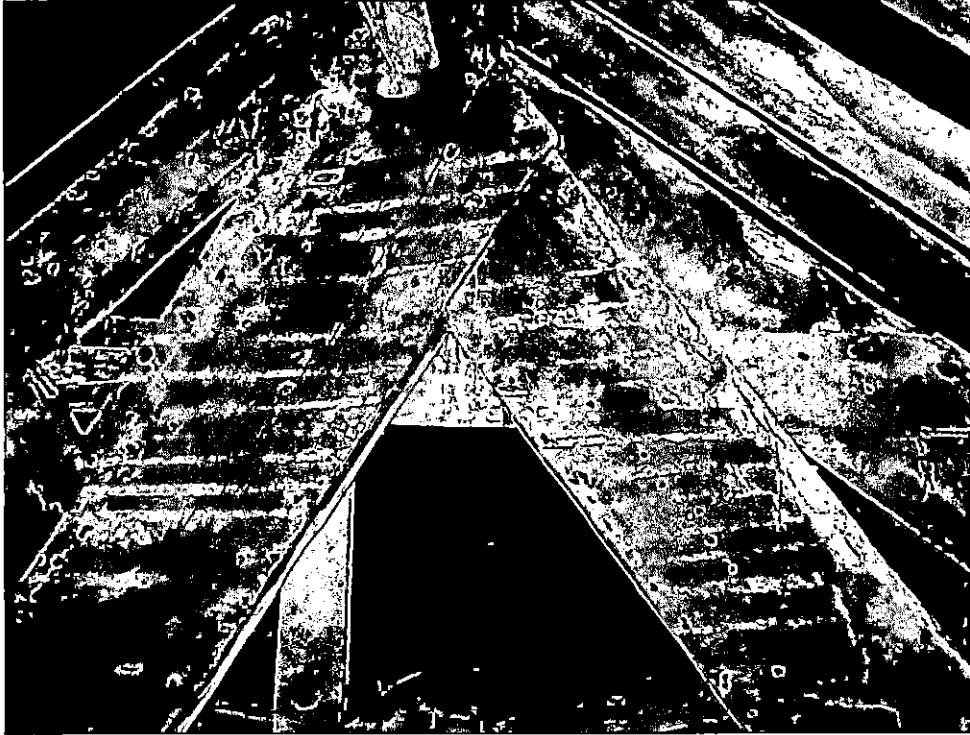


- o Blue slated front slope at 35 degrees

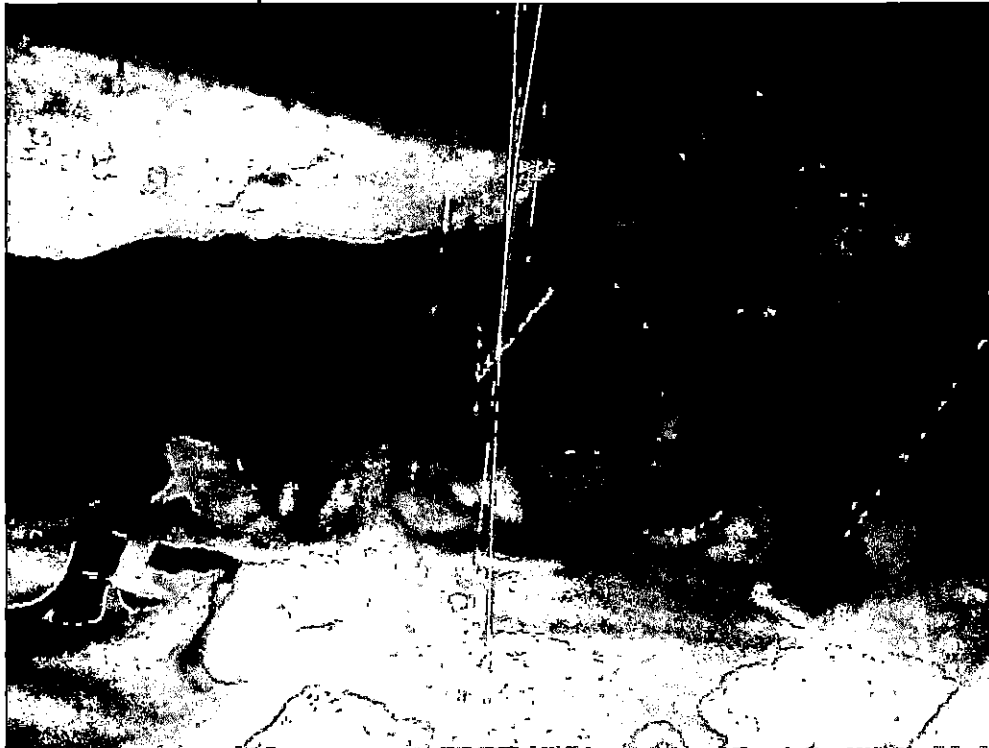
4. **Lower end High Street**



- o Recent blue slated pitch
- o Plus other blue slated slopes to London Street

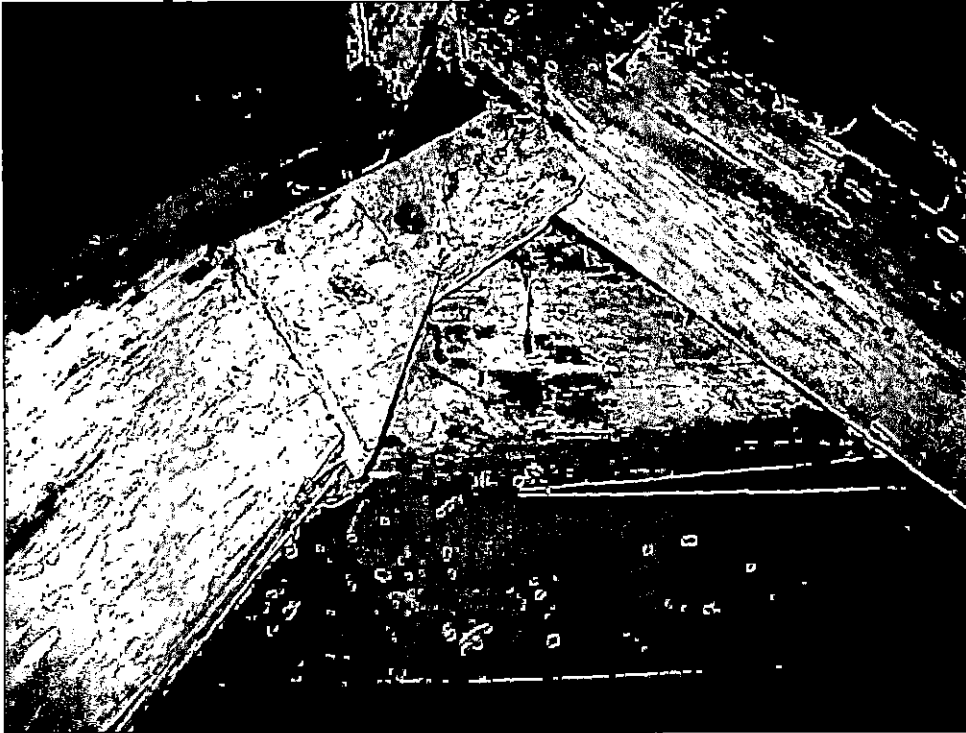
5. Main roof construction

- o Modified trusses 'lifted' to accommodate 35-degree pitch, originals retained at steeper pitch

6. As above – rear slope

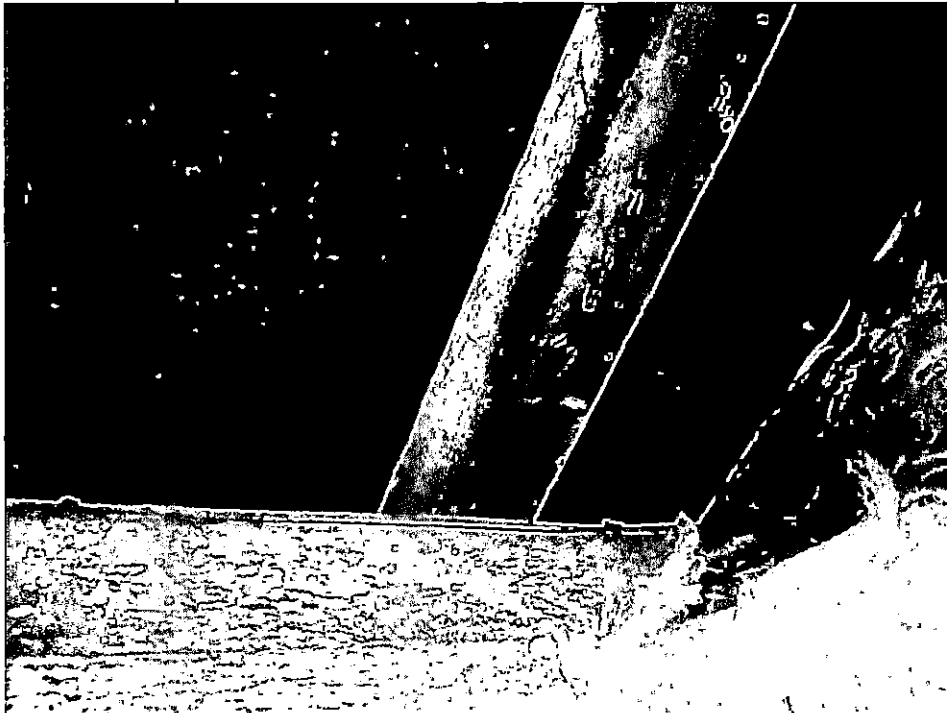
- o Slack 35 degree pitch to accommodate original blue slate overcovering
- o Note packers over retained earlier 50 degree pitch for stone slate

7. Retained original truss



- Packed out and historically lifted

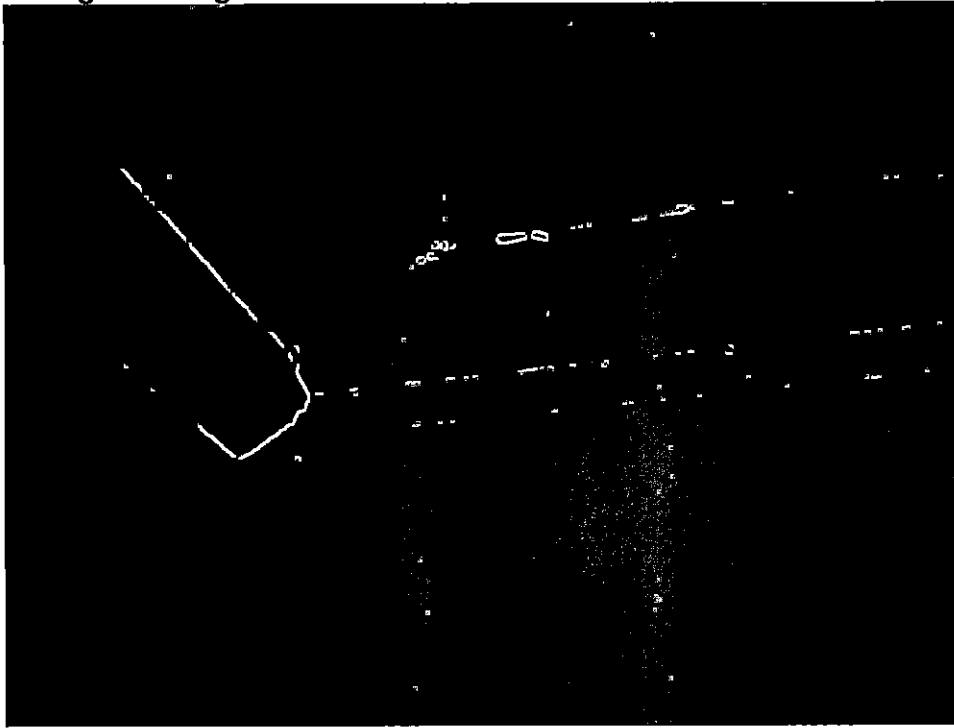
9. Rear roof slope



- 1950's bitumastic felt over modern rafters over earlier purlins
- 35 degree pitch carrying stone!

10.

Ceiling – back right



o Leak staining as a direct result of perished stone slate

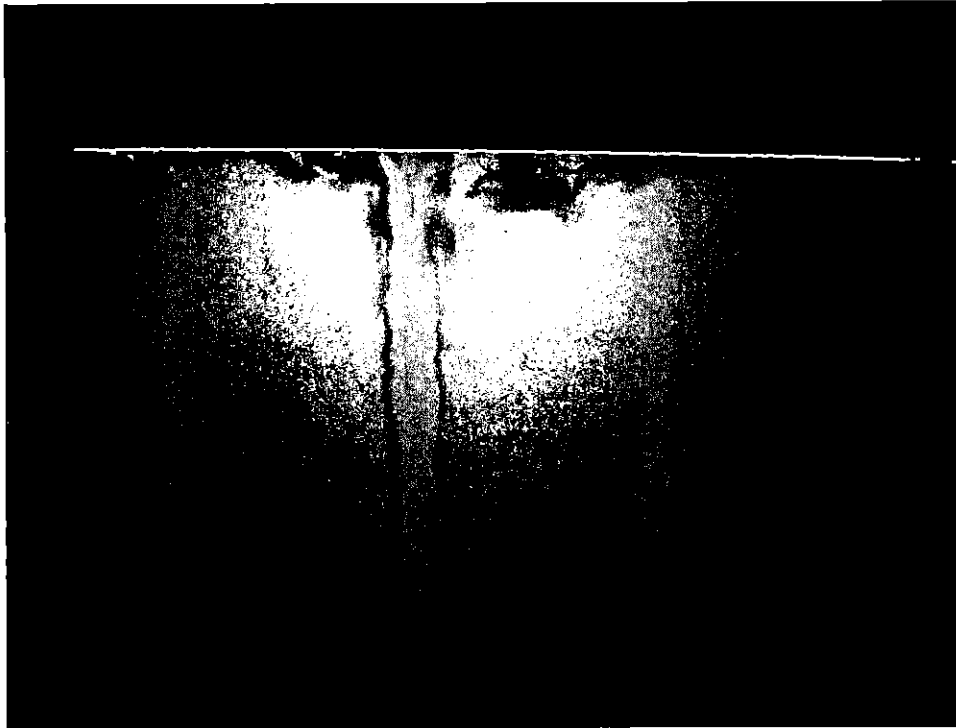
11.

Bedroom ceiling – mid section



o Leak staining as a result of perished stone slate

12. Main Bedroom



- o Leakage / staining due to perished stone slate

Appendix B

Site plan showing thoroughfares between High Street and The Croft running adjacent to the site.

