Mid Devon
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Design Guide
Roofs and Chimneys

Roofs and chimneys

Re roofing of a house, the installation of rooflights, the installation of solar panels including solar PV and the fitting , alteration or replacement of a chimney or flue do not normally require planning permission subject to various conditions being met. However there are some buildings that will require planning permission or listed building consent.

Addition of dormers to a roof often requires planning permission particularly to front roof slopes in conservation areas.

Listed buildings

These are buildings recognised as being of special architectural and historic interest. Listed building consent is normally required for internal and external works including reroofing, alterations to the roof, installation of rooflights , installation of solar panels and the fitting, alteration or replacement of a chimney or flue.

Buildings requiring planning permission for works to install rooflight and fit, alter or replace chimneys or flues

a) Commercial premises and flats.

b) Properties where an Article 4 direction relating to rooflights applies.

c) Properties where permitted development rights have been removed in respect of rooflights and chimneys or flues.

Buildings requiring planning permission to install solar panels

a) Properties where an Article 4 direction applies relating to solar panels including solar PV

b) Properties where permitted development rights have been removed in respect of solar panels including solar PV.

Some work to roofs and chimneys will require building regulation approval. These works can include the following

- Replacement of more than 25% of roof timbers
- Insertion of any dormer window
- Insertion of roof lights
- Construction of a new chimney with foundations
- Lining of an existing chimney unless carried out by a HETAS register contractor
- Installation of solar panels/ photovoltaic panels. Assessment of structural adequacy of the roof is required.
- Replacement of any windows in existing dormers unless carried out by a FENSA registered contractor .
- Installation of a woodburner or chimney liner where the roof is thatched as the chimney height may need to be increased.

Please check with the Building Control officers at Mid Devon District Council to see if the work you wish to carry out to the roof or chimney requires approval.

Roofs

Whilst large modern buildings frequently have flat roofs domestic properties still typically have either hipped or gabled roofs. Both these roof shapes with local variations have been used over many hundreds of years. The steepness of the roof slopes vary according to the type of material used to cover the roofs. The shapes colours and textures of roof materials are often an important part of the character and appearance of both individual buildings and the grouping of buildings in towns and villages.

1 Unbroken front roof slopes

Shapes and pitch

The shape and pitch (steepness of the slope) can indicate the age of a roof and the type of original covering. Whilst some roof shapes and roof materials are seen throughout the UK others are more particular to Devon or even parts of the county. It is important that alterations to existing roofs and the construction of new roofs whether as extensions or on new buildings respect and reflect local characteristics. This will ensure that new work sits happily against the surrounding roofs.

Generally in Mid Devon front roof slopes are uninterrupted by rooflights, solar or photovoltaic panels. (Photograph 1) Some properties have dormers particularly rows of Victorian villas and some thatched properties have eyebrow dormers often an indication of a later insertion of an upper floor within the roofspace.

Rooflights

As noted above the front roof slopes in Mid Devon are generally free of rooflights and these clean lines are an important part of the appearance of many of the local towns and villages. Installation of rooflights requires planning permission where the property is a flat including a flat over a shop or other commercial premises and in situations where the right to install rooflights has been removed by either an Article 4 Direction or by a condition attached to a planning permission whilst listed building consent is required for installation in any listed building. In the case of buildings in conservation areas, historic buildings and listed buildings the use of flush fitting conservation rooflights would be the most appropriate option if their installation is acceptable in principle.

2 Small eyebrow domer

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3 Early 20th century with variety of dormers including large gables and small hipped dormers

Chimneys

Chimneystacks and the chimney pots on them are often prominent features of the rooflines in a conservation area. The shape, the height and the materials vary according to the location and the type of property.

4 Massive external end stack with haunching

5 Massive external stone stack with brick extension

6 Distinctive chimney stack profile with attractive brick pattern and square chimney pots typical in Cullompton

On early houses that originally had an open hearth and a smoke hole, the chimney stack was often a later massive addition built against an outside wall (photograph 4). By the 17th century chimney stacks were being built inside and emerged through the roof often at the ridge to allow flues from different rooms to be included.

Grand houses displayed their wealth with often several chimney stacks each with several chimney pots. The stacks and pots displayed a range of designs with some very ornate examples. In contrast early cottages often had only one stack serving a single fireplace used for heating and cooking. Chimneys stacks on terraces and on semi detached houses often serve two houses so are quite substantial with a large number of pots.

In Devon historically chimneys can be of stone, cob, brick or a mix of these materials (photograph 5). Some may have had a lime render applied. Brick chimneys sometimes incorporate locally distinctive patterning with some notable examples in Cullompton (photograph 6).

7 Stacks with matching details despite different size and most retaining matching pots

8 Profiled brickstack and matching tall round chimney pots

9 Banded stacks with chimney pots all matching style of pot generally found in Crediton

The shape of a stack may indicate its age particularly the early external stone stacks which often rise in steps with slopes between each rise(haunching). Later stacks emerging through the roof often reflect a local tradition in the profile especially to the top of the stack where there may be projecting bands of stone or brick (photograph 7)

Pots can also be locally distinctive with tall slim rounded pots typically seen in Bampton (photograph 8), crown pots in Crediton (photograph 9) and square pots in Cullompton as seen in photograph 6 above.

Retention of existing stacks is important in maintaining the historic appearance of the roofline and also ensures that even if not in use now there is the option in the future of using the chimney stack for accommodating flues for either open fires or multi fuel stoves. Use of pots that match those already on your building or on the neighbouring properties will also maintain the character and appearance of your house and the surroundings.

Roof covering

10 Simple wrap over ridge

Thatch

Thatch is the oldest type of roof covering with a variety of plant material used depending on what was available locally including heather wheat reed and water reed. The traditional roofing material in Devon was wheat reed (also known as combed wheat reed or Devon reed). This is the straw from local wheat crops or sometimes rye. It is locally produced and a sustainable renewable material. Water reed is increasingly widely used to rethatch roofs. If your building is listed and has a wheat reed roof listed building consent will be required to rethatch in water reed and this consent may not always be given.

The local style of thatching gives a distinctive roof shape particularly notable is the rounded outline arising from wheat reed thatch rather than the more sharply defined outline arising from the rather stiffer water reed. The Devon tradition is to take off the top coat of decayed thatch and apply a new top coat. This leaves the underlying historic thatch in place thereby retaining an important layer of building history.

The ridges locally are very simple wrap overs (photograph 10). The cut ridges typical of the east side of England are not appropriate in Devon as they are not part of the local thatching tradition.

11 Classic hipped roof with covering of red clay tiles

12 Profiled red tiles

Clay tiles

Plain flat clay tiles sometimes called Rosemarys are typically seen on mid 19th century to mid 20th century houses throughout the United Kingdom reflecting wide availability due to mass production. These tiles are usually red and weather down quickly to give a mellow appearance (photograph 11).

Flat clay tiles can be made in a range of shapes to add ornamentation to roofs as part of the overall building design although this kind of ornamentation is rarely seen in Mid Devon.

Bridgewater clay tiles usually have a Double Roman profile (photograph 12). This type of tile is most often found in the north east part of Mid Devon including in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Other profiles such as Triple Roman and pantile are sometimes seen but these are not part of the local palette.

Replacement clay tiles for repair or reroofing should match the type, colour, texture, size and thickness as the existing tiles on the property.

Slate

Slate was used from the 18th century in slate producing areas but did not come into wider use until the coming of the railways. In Mid Devon Cornish slate was used on some high status buildings before this time for example at The Walronds in Cullompton evidence of early slates were found during the recent restoration works. Slate from both Cornwall and Wales came into widespread use locally in the 19th century particularly in the larger towns and villages where following numerous disastrous fires the use of thatch fell out of favour and was even banned in some places.

In Tiverton there are some fine slate roofs with corner properties displaying the skill of the slater in their sweeping curves (photograph 13). Where such properties are reroofed then it will be important to ensure that this appearance can be replicated.

13 Example of curved slating a particular feature in Tiverton

In the 20th century many quarries ceased production and there has been a rapid expansion of imported slates from countries such as Spain and China. The colour, texture, thickness and quality of these imported slates vary considerably. It is therefore important that when using these for re-roofing or roof repairs that a good match with the existing old slates is found. It is often possible to salvage a significant proportion of the old slates for reuse. Use of the reclaimed slates on prominent roof slopes and new slates on other roof slopes will reduce the visual impact of re-roofing.

Shingles

Although not a common roofing material in the Mid Devon area where these timber tiles exist repairs and reroofing should be carried out using new shingles to match the type of timber and shape. Shingles are commonly made of split oak, with sweet chestnut and cedar being alternatives.

Corrugated iron

Although most commonly used on agricultural buildings, corrugated iron is also commonly seen in use as a roof covering to rear extensions on some dwellings and also as a cover to deteriorating thatch roofs. It may be that in some situations for some barn conversions or outbuildings that corrugated iron sheets may still be an appropriate roofing material.

Concrete tiles

These tiles come in a wide variety of sizes shapes and profiles although they are generally thicker and heavier than the equivalent slate or clay tile. They do not weather down to any significant degree and have a uniformity of appearance not seen in natural materials.

Artificial slate

A wide variety of materials come in this description from interlocking tiles made of recycled slate and resin to cement fibre and asbestos tiles. All are grey in colour and flat but their appearance varies with few replicating the texture, shape and surface appearance of natural slate. They rarely sit happily against existing natural slate roofing but the better quality products can be a good option for new build in areas where slate roofs predominate.

Asbestos slates are no longer available but remain on many roofs in the area.

Ridge tiles and hip tiles

Ridge tiles provide a cover where roof slopes meet. Such tiles can be plain clay or concrete or may incorporate decoration (photograph 14) They may be grey, black, red or other colours. Some match the colour of the roof slates or tiles. Use of matching decorative ridge tiles will be appropriate where they replace existing or reinstate what has been lost damaged or removed. In the case of new development consideration should be given to the style, colour and material typical of the immediate locality.

14 Ridge tiles with pierced pattern typical of Bradninch. Plain ridge tile on adjoining property

Gutters and downpipes

Traditionally these were round and half round cast iron with simple hoppers or joints where gutters fed into the downpipes. Where cast iron gutters and downpipes exist on a building replacement of missing or broken sections with new or salvaged cast iron to the same pattern and painted to match will always give a better appearance than using plastic particularly if it is a different colour. If wholesale replacement of gutters and downpipes is necessary then a good substitute would be powder coated zinc. There are also some plastic products that mimic the design of traditional cast iron gutters, downpipes and hoppers that may be suitable for unlisted buildings in conservation areas.

Plastic gutters and downpipes particularly if made of white plastic and with a square section look out of keeping on old buildings.

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15 Fascia board carrying the gutters

16 Ornate bracketted eaves

Bargeboards and verges

On gable ends where the roof joins the wall a variety of finishes are used ranging from a line of slates, tiles or bargeboards to slate or tile hanging. Where the roof projects out for some distance rafter ends may project out to form a decorative feature (photograph 17).

17 Deep overhanging verge detail

Victorian buildings often incorporate attractive pierced or carved timber barge boards to adorn both gable ends and on gabled dormers (photograph 18). These were often used to tie together the design of various buildings on large estates or were part of the corporate style of railway companies or other industrial concerns. Their retention and maintenance are important to the character and appearance of the individual buildings and groups of buildings.

18 Ornate barge boards

19 Array of rooflights and solar panels

20 Roof covered in PV panels

Solar panels including photovoltaic panels.

Whilst there is normally no requirement for planning permission to install solar panels on unlisted buildings even in most conservation areas their impact on the appearance of prominent front roof slopes can be visually harmful both to the individual building and to the wider area (photographs 19 and 20). Consideration should be given to alternative siting on less prominent roof slopes including on outbuildings. Solar slates are a less obtrusive option for properties with slate roofs as they are integral rather than mounted over the roof slope.

There is a lot of detailed advice on the Historic England (formerly English Heritage) website

www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home

Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) provide online advice on a range of repairs and maintenance of older buildings

spab.org.uk/advice/technical-q-as

Further information and advice on thatching can be found in a publication by Devon County Council

Thatch in Devon. This can be downloaded from Devon county Council's website

www.devon.gov.uk

See also the Planning Portal for guidance on the need for planning permission under the interactive house.

For more information please contact

Sue Warren
01884 234391

Catherine Marlow
01884 234341

Paul Dadson
01884 234264