

9th December 2016

MANOR FARMHOUSE SPALDWICK

Listed Buildings are part of the Nation's heritage. They are irreplaceable resources which have to be conserved in a way that is appropriate to their individual significance. Owning a listed building can be a rewarding experience but it also brings extra responsibilities. Listed Buildings are protected by the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which makes it an offence to carry out unauthorised works of demolition, alteration or extension to a listed building.

An application by Huntingdonshire District Council to Peterborough County Court has resulted in the owner of Manor Farmhouse, High Street, Spaldwick being found guilty of contempt of court for carrying out unauthorised work to a listed building. Owner and builder Richard Johnson was sentenced to a 6 week suspended prison sentence and ordered to pay £25,000 towards the Council's costs.

In October 2014 the Court granted the Council a temporary injunction to prevent Mr Johnson from carrying out unauthorised work to the grade 2 listed building which he owned in Spaldwick. The injunction was lifted within a few days when he gave an undertaking to the court. Despite the undertaking not to do so, further unauthorised works were carried out from mid-2015 onwards. The Court's decision on Friday 11th November was the culmination of a year of legal action by Council.

Councillor Graham Bull the Council's Deputy Leader said "This is a demonstration of the Council's resolve to take whatever steps are necessary to protect the District's rich heritage of listed buildings. We have some 2,200 listed buildings ranging from simple cottages and farm buildings to grand houses. Work which affects the character of a listed building as a building of special architectural or historic interest must have listed building consent before it starts. We want to publicise this action to send out a strong signal that unauthorised work resulting in the loss of historic features and fabric will not be tolerated."

In this case the Court's decision will not be the end of the matter. The works remain unauthorised and Mr Johnson can now be required to repair and reinstate parts of the building he has removed at his own cost.

Owning a listed building is a significant responsibility. Changes and alterations need to be carefully considered. Listed buildings often do not have the capacity to be changed or altered in the same way that modern buildings can be updated. Change has to be appropriate to the character of the building. Replacing windows and doors and removing original walls all need listed building consent. Works of this nature may not be appropriate in historic buildings. Owners should always seek the advice of the Council before undertaking work to avoid enforcement action and potential prosecution which will be expensive.

ENDS

Notes for Editor:

Manor Farm House, Spaldwick dates in part from 1546, a time when Henry VIII was on the throne and many of the colleges in Cambridge were being established.
Photograph dated July 2013 – before works being carried out.
Photograph dated October 2014- unauthorised works being undertaken.

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