

Statement of Details for the replacement Thatch roof

Thatching with Water Reed

Water reed (*Phragmites communis*), is recognised by its brown feathery seed head growing on a single stem with broad spear like leaves and its length varies from 1 – 2.5 m (3 – 8 feet). Originally from the marshes and fens and often known as Norfolk Reed, demand has outstripped supply and, it is estimated, that three-quarters of the water reed used in Britain today is purchased from Europe. "Mixed" reed is occasionally used, being reed mixed with shoof grass and other plants, which grow in company with it. Harvesting takes place in the winter and the reed is formed into bundles or bunches ready to be delivered to the site. Generally speaking water reed is attached to a bare roof although some thatchers 'spar' it over a straw base coat.

1. Prior to rethatching a full survey of the roof shall be carried out by an independent thatching consultant.
2. All old wire and thatch shall be removed.
3. The roof shall be thatched in good quality water reed (*Phragmites communis*), cut to a length
4. Prepare but butting each bundle to align the stems and grading the bundles according to length and quality.
5. The minimum length over the batten or substrate from the surface of the thatch will not be less than 12 inches (300 mm) and the depth of the material over the fixings shall be a minimum of 5 inches (125 mm).
6. Where a "reed fleeking" exists (the woven mat visible between the rafters of early roofs) it should be retained to form the base coat for the new thatch.
7. The reed shall be secured by adequate fixings (normally steel hooks, 8mm steel rod and twine) to ensure that there is no slippage and every course should be fixed to every rafter.
8. Twine shall be twisted tarred cord, untarred cord or hooks and sways so the butt ends are only visible on the surface
9. The water reed shall have a compact finish and even density and the surface of the reed will conform to the pitch of the rafter, which will not normally be less than 45 degrees
10. Dress the reed by batting the butts with a leggett to give a tight, brush-like consistency so that the butt ends face downwards and present an even surface which results in a uniform, crisp, sharp appearance entirely of the butt ends of the reeds, with the exception of the ridge
11. Unless otherwise agreed the ridge shall be a straight, undecorated, block-cut ridge of longstraw or marsh sedge, detailed to the satisfaction of the Council and of a minimum thickness of 3 inches (75 mm).
12. There are no visible fixings on the eaves or verges, the reed being secured by its own concealed fixings and by its own tension against the roof structure, which is made to splay out at this point.

13. The ridge, or where appropriate the whole roof shall be covered with 20/22 gauge 19mm (maximum) galvanised wire netting. If wire netting is fixed to the whole roof, it shall conform closely to the roof shape and be fixed in such a way that it can be easily removed in the event of fire.

NOTES

Any change of thatch material or method of application on a listed building requires listed building consent, which has to be obtained from the Council. Consent is required to change from longstraw to combed wheat reed, for example or from water reed to longstraw etc. No consent is required to rethatch in a like manner.

Any roof timbers, which may need replacing, should be done on a like for like basis, using timbers of similar size, type and section. The Council's Conservation Officer should be consulted, as listed building consent may be required.

Since it has now been established that a contractor can be held responsible for unauthorised alterations to a listed building (even if acting under direct instruction), it is advisable to ensure that listed building consent has been obtained for any changes in thatching style or materials before work commences.

In general, Building Regulations approval is not required for the repair or renovation of an existing thatched roof. However where considerable alteration (replacement of roof timbers for example) is proposed, then approval may be required.