

HERITAGE STATEMENT 15 JANUARY 2021
FIR LODGE, STAKENBRIDGE LANE, HAGLEY. DY8 2XY
PREPARED IN SUPPORT OF THE PLANNING APPLICATIONS NOS.
20/0974/HOU WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
20/01586/FUL BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BACKGROUND TO THE STATEMENT

The Applicant has made two previous Planning Applications in recent years to Wyre Forest District Council, both of which were successful, but which have not been implemented:-

2014/0276 One two storey extension to the North (end) elevation – Kitchen with Bedroom above and a single storey extension to the West (rear) elevation resulting in an approximate increase in volume of c 7.5%

2017/0358 Complete demolition of the main House and rebuild in a more modern design

Given the above scenarios, the Applicant and his Agent were surprised to learn that the Building is considered to be an Historic Asset and was added to the Worcestershire & Worcester City HER in 2010. (**Ref No:- WSM 42924 Grid ref. SO889 799 Map Sheet SO87 NE**). In particular, the 2017 approval to completely demolish and rebuild would suggest its historic importance is in doubt.

It is also worth noting that when the original Western Orbital Route was planned through this area, Fir Lodge was one of the many casualties and was purchased by the Department of Transport for subsequent demolition. Fir Lodge subsequently reverted back into private ownership in 2000 after the Western Orbital Route was abandoned.

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL PROTECTING GREEN BELT LAND – PARA 13A AND NPPF SECTION 16 PROPOSALS AFFECTING HERITAGE ASSETS.

Approximately half of WFDC land lies within the West Midlands Green Belt. Fir Lodge itself lies approximately 0.5KM to the West of West Hagley close to the South Western boundary of the West Midlands Green Belt. Furthermore, Fir Lodge spans the boundary between Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) – the main House lies within WFDC and the Swimming Pool in BDC.

The closest large settlement is Hagley which itself forms part of a conservation area designated as such in October 1987. The area is steeped in history and is close to Hagley Hall. Hagley has grown from a small settlement located between two larger towns – Stourbridge and Bromsgrove. The growth of Hagley can be traced back to the arrival of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton railways, culminating in the erection of a larger station in 1884. Previously the station had been a request stop only. The arrival of the railways meant that Hagley was now within easy reach of Birmingham and the Black Country – two major industrial areas.

Fir Lodge was formerly part of the Brake Mill Barns, most of which remain and are all converted to private dwellings.

NPPF SECTION 16, PARA 190

Apart from its physical size, the main dwelling is considered to be quite ordinary - being covered as it is entirely in a rough cast render painted white. There are few clues to its architectural heritage, and indeed there is a mixture of modern white UPVC door and windows which the current proposal seeks to change. The UPVC windows and doors are considered to be of poor quality and not in keeping with the general style of the property. Some replacement units are leaking quite badly, causing damage to walls and ceilings. Older parts of the building, particularly the North-West corner (Study) show signs of serious damp and mould with growth on the floor. This is probably due to the solid brick construction and it is anticipated that a detailed inspection and any remedial work will be carried out when the rough-cast render is removed.

SECTION 16, PARA 193

The main object of this proposal is to continue the conservation of this asset so that it may continue to serve as a family home. The Applicant has maintained the property and extensive grounds (17 acres) to a very high standard employing a full-time Groundsman and part time Housekeeper.

Although the property is generally in good order, there are a number of inferior quality windows and doors in a mixture of inappropriate modern styles. The proposal includes replacement of all doors and windows in one uniform older style to more reflect the period of the house.

The second main reason is to completely reconfigure the interior to improve the layout of the living accommodation. The property has evolved into its existing layout at the hands of previous owners.

If the proposal is successful, the Applicant has expressed an interest in ensuring the property presents one distinct style. The style chosen would be representative of the early part of the 20th Century taking advantage of high-quality metal frames manufactured by the Crittall company. The preferred colour would be dark grey or black to complement a new smooth rendered finish. Although the existing rough cast render is generally in good order, there are cracks in some places allowing ingress of water, especially on the North and East sides. There is a tendency for the rough render to hold dirt and grime making it difficult to clean. If the property is totally re-rendered then the opportunity will be taken to inspect the integrity of all the masonry beneath, and carry out any remedial work prior to finishing in a smoother more modern material. Any input from the LA with respect to colour and type of any of the proposed elements would be appreciated.

The property has proven to be very expensive to run, especially with respect to heating. Therefore two major elements included in the proposed changes would be:- Insulate as far as possible all, or the majority of the existing building in line with the latest Building Regulations standards. Additionally, the proposal at the Building Regulations submission stage, will be to include the most modern heat source pump system. An appropriate position on the plot will be chosen and all landscaping features reinstated and improved.

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NPPF SECTION 15 – CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Swimming Pool lies right next to the boundary of the Brake Mill Plantation situated at the top of the hillside, approximately 30 metres from the main House. The Swimming Pool is almost entirely surrounded by a mixture of various tree species. This setting is a particularly attractive part of the site and surrounding area.

The building is completely self-contained, but is showing signs of serious deterioration. This is not a result of any neglect, but rather because of its proximity to the many trees which surround it. The canopy of some of the trees overhangs the ridge of the shallow-pitched roof. Falling branches and foliage has resulted in structural damage to the extent that re-roofing is considered necessary as a matter of urgency. The Applicant has resisted encouragement from a Maintenance Team to trim, or even remove, some of the trees. Advice and guidance from the Builder who would be engaged to carry out the work, includes using a slightly steeper pitch to conduct rainwater away more easily and reduce the amount of fallen leaves that would otherwise settle on the roof. An unintentional benefit of this would result in a considerably more usable roof space. Therefore by taking advantage of either of the existing two entrances into the building, easier access up to the first floor is gained making it suitable for use as an exercise/storage area. The increase in volume for this structure would be 21% with no increase in footprint. The overall increase in height to the ridge would be 1.9 metres increasing from 5.7 metres to 7.6 metres. The building would remain dwarfed by the tree canopy another 6/7 metres higher and sit well below the overall height of the main house. The swimming pool and the house are barely visible from the public highway in winter and in summer are shielded by tree cover.

SUMMARY TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED SCHEME IN FAVOUR OF THE PREVIOUS TWO APPROVED

The last proposal to demolish the main house completely and rebuild was considered unviable by the applicant – it would result in a great expense for a slightly reduced volume of living space. Therefore, the proposal to extend – Planning Application No. 2014/0276 would be the preferred option with minor adjustments. This proposal showed a single storey extension at the rear (West

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elevation), which with the benefit of hindsight, would appear to be less attractive than the current proposal. The 2014 approval was for an oak framed extension which would be out of keeping with the existing structure. This new proposal extends the house in its existing style, whilst upgrading the finishes especially the windows and the render. Whereas the proposal in 2014 made little or no attempt to disguise the alterations, this new proposal is much more sympathetic and observers could be forgiven for thinking that the building was completely original.

By accepting this proposal, the increase in volume from the Plans approved in 2014 would be approximately 8.5% (more than half of which is accounted for by the slightly steeper roof pitch of the pool house)

Please refer to the A4 table – Volume Comparisons.