DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

CHANGE OF USE FROM AN OFFICE TO A MEDITATION CENTRE INCORPORATING RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION FOR VISITORS AND STAFF

GEDLING HOUSE, WOOD LANE, GEDLING, NOTTINGHAM NG4 4AD

PLANNING APPLICATION BY KADAMPA MEDITATION CENTRE NOTTINGHAM LIMITED

Richard Ling

Richard Ling & Associates

June 2021

Introduction

1. The applicant – Kadampa Meditation Centre Nottingham Ltd [the Charity] - is a registered local charity founded thirty years ago as a place of peace and public service where everyone is welcome to visit and learn about meditation and how to solve life’s problems with compassion and wisdom.
2. Many people visit the centres run by the Charity for help with stress, anxiety and the worries of modern life. Increasingly people are being referred to the Charity by their doctors and other support organisations.
3. The Centre follows a programme of Buddhist teachings and meditations and is part of New Kadampa Tradition – International Kadampa Buddhist Union [NKT-IKBU] – which is a world-wide family of 1600 centres and local groups.
4. Examples of other Listed Buildings used by NKT-IKBU in the country are Conishead Priory at Ulverston, Lancashire, Kilnwick Percy Hall, Pocklington, Yorkshire, and Thornby Hall in Northampton.
5. Gedling House is a converted former house which was built around 1820 with a single storey addition – the Ballroom – on the western elevation built at the end of the nineteenth century.
6. The site was purchased by Nottinghamshire County Council and was used as an educational resource store. The County Council sold the land and the building, and it changed use to an office until that use ceased in 2020.
7. Over the years, the full extent of the ownership of the land that used to be part of Gedling House has been reduced. The building attached to Gedling House to the east is used as a pre-school facility.
8. The previous user – Gedling Homes – occupied the building until recently.

The Application Proposals

1. The application proposals are for the change of use of Gedling House from an office use to a Meditation Centre incorporating a café and book shop which would be open to the public. This will involve the following alterations and changes: -
2. the removal of the partition wall in the former ballroom to form a meditation room;
3. the provision of an external ramp with rail to the side door to the proposed meditation room to provide access for those with limited mobility and as a fire exit;
4. alterations to the main entrance area removing partitions and screens, and removing the more recent ceiling in the corridor to reveal the soffit of the cantilever staircase;
5. the creation of a café in the former ‘Regent Suite’ with a new paved area outside the ‘Regent Suite’ for the café set out with tables and chairs for the use of customers, along with a book shop in the adjoining room;
6. the creation of ten bedrooms and a Teacher Suite – most with en suites – on the first and second floors which will involve new internal walls, the removal of parts of some existing walls, the provision of additional or relocated bathrooms/toilets, soil stacks, waste routes, changes to the ventilation system and removing obscure glazing from some windows and providing obscure windows to others. One of the proposed bedrooms is an accessible en suite room;
7. the provision of a ritual preparation area known as the prep room;
8. the provision of additional ventilation ducts with new slate type inline extract terminals located on the inner slope of the pitched roof apart from the proposed new en suite to the rear room facing the Nursery where a through wall vent is proposed (as available space is restricted);
9. the provision of three electric charging points in the car parking area immediately to the west of the building;
10. the provision of a bin storage area store in the area of the grounds close to the western car park area; and
11. the provision of a secure cycle store in the main car park area.
12. The Heritage Statement includes more details of proposed internal changes and which cover matters that are required by Listed Building Consent.
13. The application proposals have the following benefits –

* allowing public access for the first time in many years to parts of the ground floor of the building;
* restoring many of the features on the ground floor – the removal of the partition in the former ballroom and the removal of bulkheads and screens in the reception area which will expose the full cantilever stair;
* bringing accommodation back into what was formerly a dwelling; and
* providing a suitable beneficial use for this historic building

1. The bedrooms proposed would be for those on courses, those who are at the Centre for a longer period, and for staff.
2. The Centre would provide a resource for the promotion and practice of meditation and would provide a variety of courses of varying lengths of duration.
3. Around 3-4 full time staff would be employed at the site along with some additional volunteers.
4. As the Meditation Centre has a residential component, it is open all day. For staff who are not resident at the House and volunteers, the hours would be 06:30 to 21:30. Class times would typically fall between 10:00 and 21:00 so non-residential participants would arrive or leave shortly before or after these times.
5. There may be occasional events that start earlier or as at New Year finish soon after midnight.
6. The cafe and bookshop would, after the start-up period, be open for a maximum period of 8:00am-4:00pm in the summer.
7. Access would be as at present via the shared drive to Wood Lane.
8. There are currently six car parking spaces to the side of the building and a further sixty spaces are available in the former walled garden.
9. Apart from the proposed bin store, cycle store and the paved area in front of the café, no changes to the grounds are being proposed. Being a Meditation Centre, the grounds assist in maintaining a calm, tranquil atmosphere and course attendees may walk in the grounds when using the Centre.

Planning Policy Assessment

1. The site lies in the Green Belt and the House is a Grade II Listed Building.
2. Relevant planning policies are found in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Aligned Core Strategy (ACS) and the Gedling Local Plan Part 2.
3. The NPPF allows for the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt in paragraph 146.
4. Policy LPD 12 of the Local Plan Part 2 concerns the reuse of buildings in the Green Belt which are appropriate where certain criteria are met. The application proposals preserve the openness of the Green Belt, and the building is of a permanent and substantial construction, structurally sound and capable of re-use without major alterations, adaptations or reconstruction.
5. The application proposals are in accord with national and local planning policies regarding the Green Belt.
6. Section 16 of the NPPF is concerned with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires Councils to ask applicants to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected.
7. Gedling House is a Grade II Listed Building (listed in 1950). The House was built as a large, detached mansion around 1780 (the single storey ballroom on the western elevation was added in the late nineteenth century). Along with its grounds, the House served as a residence for a succession of wealthy Nottinghamshire families. Set on higher land with woodland behind, the House was an important landmark in the area and visible to those travelling on the Nottingham/Southwell road.
8. The House is constructed of brick, stuccoed, with hipped slate roofs. The southern elevation which is that most seen by the public has a full height parapeted bow at its centre.
9. The visual grandeur of the building has not been diminished by recent developments such as the school and its grounds, housing and the new Gedling Access Road which passes approximately 200 metres to the east.
10. The applicants want to keep the appearance of Gedling House and to undertake as minimal changes as is necessary to convert the building from an office use to a meditation centre both in terms of external appearance and internal changes.
11. These changes are detailed in this Statement and the Heritage Statement which also accompanies the applications. The changes proposed include works to reinstate parts of the interior that had been altered by previous commercial users such as removing the partition in the former Ballroom and removing screens and partitions from the reception area.
12. The proposed changes will affect parts of the interior of the building but with measures to reduce any harm, the impact upon the Listed Building would be little with the benefit of the building being in a beneficial use, with former features being reinstated and with the public now being able to enter parts of the ground floor. Rather than being an imposing building seen from a distance, the public can now appreciate parts of the interior of the building. The building was designed as a grand residence and the application proposals bring back a measure of residential use in that ten bedrooms are provided.
13. As such, the provisions of paragraphs 193 – 196 of the NPPF are met.
14. The proposals are in accord with Policy 11(1) of the ACS in that the Listed Building and its setting are being conserved and enhanced.
15. Policy LPD 26 (Heritage Assets) of the Local Plan Part 2 follows the framework of the NPPF and has three requirements. Criterion 1 requires the applicant to explain and demonstrate the importance of the asset. This has been done in paragraphs 27-29 of this Statement.
16. Criterion 2 requires the applicant to identify the impact of the proposals on the special character of the asset and its setting. Mention has been made in paragraphs 9-11 of this Statement of the works that would be required. The applicants wish to undertake the minimum amount of change to the building. The proposed changes would keep the internal design patterns of the building whilst removing some of the alterations undertaken by commercial use of the property over the last seventy years.
17. The applicants have had two meetings with the Council’s Conservation Officer prior to submitting the applications and this has given valuable guidance and insight to reduce any impact upon the Listed Building and clarify which option to undertake to reduce or remove that impact.
18. Criterion 3 requires the applicant to provide clear justification for the proposals so that any harm can be weighed against public benefit.

The House is suitable for the proposed use and examples have been given in this Statement of similar Meditation Centres that have been established in Listed Buildings elsewhere in the country. The proposals will require some changes to the interior of the building, but this would be a requirement if the building were the subject of proposals for a hotel or for apartments. The building was designed for residential use albeit at a grand scale and the proposed bedrooms will partly return the character of the use of the House to its former purpose. Paragraph 32 of this Statement sets out the public benefits of the proposals.

The requirements of the Local Plan policy are met.

Access Considerations

1. The access to the site is by a shared drive from Wood Lane. The drive is shared by the adjacent school, three residential properties, a day Nursery and a business. The applicants are using the existing signboard used by Gedling Homes and have altered it accordingly.
2. The access was suitable for the office use who had over 80 staff employed at Gedling House and used all 66 car parking spaces during office hours.
3. The proposed use would not generate the amount of vehicle traffic and parking requirements of Gedling Homes.
4. Courses at the Meditation Centre typically have between 10-20 attendees on weekday courses and 20-25 for weekend events. Quarterly special events may have up to 60 attendees. Some of these attendees will be using the bedrooms at the Centre whilst others are coming in on a daily basis. The applicant estimates that 50% or more of the attendees will car share, cycle or walk.
5. Traffic generation is likely to and from the site would tend to be just before or after the session times which are for the morning session 10:00 to 13:00, 18:30 – 21:00 for the evening sessions and 10:00 to 13:00 for the weekend half-day courses.
6. The café and bookshop are likely to attract 20 visitors per day who are not attending a course at the Centre. These customers are likely to come by car, by cycle or on foot. It may be that parents/guardians of children at the adjacent nursery will use the café in which case this would be a shared trip.
7. There would be typically 5-6 staff and volunteers travelling to and from the site daily.
8. Traffic generation to and from the site is therefore likely to be much less during the week than when Gedling Homes were operating from the building.
9. There are six car parking spaces at the western end of the building, two of which would be marked for disabled users. Three of the spaces will have charging points for electric vehicles. There are 60 car parking spaces available to the Centre in the walled garden. It is extremely unlikely that all these spaces would be needed.
10. A secure cycle store would be constructed within the main car park.

The applicants would provide information, with the brochure and booking details, regarding taxi services from local train stations, bus services to the locality and cycle routes. In this way, the need to use the car to visit the site can be minimised. This would help the environment which is an important objective for the applicants.

The Grounds

1. To the south of the House is a lawn with trees and shrubs near the borders, and to the west of the House is a wooded area.
2. A tree survey has been commissioned and shown that two trees may be unsafe and need remedial action The trees on the site do not appear to have been managed.
3. The applicants wish the tree cover at the site to be maintained to provide quiet areas and to allow visitors to enjoy a natural environment. This is a particularly important consideration in the selection of Gedling House to be a Meditation Centre.

Other Considerations

1. There are existing light fittings in the grounds that illuminate the building at night-time. These lights will be kept but the angle of the light may be altered so that it does not affect those sleeping in the proposed bedrooms.
2. It is proposed to provide a bin store near to the small car park. On collection day, the bins will be wheeled to the drive where the bins from other users are collected. At present the bins stay in that location all week and this is unsightly, and smells affect neighbours in Summer.
3. The applicants would accept conditions requiring details of the proposed bin storage area and the secure cycle store to be submitted and agreed with the Council.

**List of Plans**

RL 1 Application Site Scale 1:1250 A4

RL 2 Application Site with shared Scale 1:2500 A4

drive to Wood Lane

RL 3 Proposed Sites of Secure Scale 1:1250 A4

Cycle Store and Bin Store

DP-A-2000 Existing Ground Floor Plan Scale 1:100 A3

DP-A-2001 Existing First Floor Plan Scale 1:100 A3

DP-A-2002 Existing Second Floor Plan Scale 1:100 A3

DP-A-1200 Proposed Site Plan Scale 1:500 A3

DP-A-2200 Proposed Ground Floor Plan Scale 1:100 A3

DP-A-2201 Proposed First Floor Plan Scale 1:100 A3

DP-A-2202 Proposed Second Floor Plan Scale 1:100 A3

DP-A-2220 Proposed Roof Plan Scale 1:100 A1

DP-A-3700 Proposed Elevations 1 Scale 1:100 A3

DP-A-3701 Proposed Elevations 2 Scale 1:100 A3