

Design and Access statement for alterations at the Dower House, Dunthrop Road, Heythrop, Oxon OX7 5TL

4 October 2021

New Application Summary

Consent was granted in June 2021 for the various refurbishment works to include demolition of existing stone building currently housing oil tank and erection of single storey extension to main house; conversion of existing outbuildings to create 'teen-den', gym and construction of self contained annex to replace existing attached garage and erection of flat-roofed timber pool house (ref 21/00706/HHD).

This application is a variation of the above proposal with minor changes to the design of the outbuildings and pool house and change of use of the Studio, details as follows:

POOL HOUSE

- 2no. additional round windows, one to the South elevation and one to the East elevation.
- 1 no. rooflight omitted.
- 2-leaf sliders in lieu of the fixed window and side door to north elevation.
- New location for the Tennis/Pool store and reduced size.
- New steps to access back of Pool House.

OUTBUILDINGS: STUDIO

- Change of use: The existing Pottery Studio is to be converted into a granny annex which will provide a home for the client's mother. The building will remain ancillary to the main house. The proposed building envelope has already received consent in a recent Application (ref. 21/00706/HHD).
- 1 no. additional rooflight on the North-East roof slope to allow more daylight into the Living space.
- Enlarged window to bedroom to provide more daylight and to function as an egress window to comply with Building Regulations.

OUTBUILDINGS: TEEN-DEN

- Enlarged French doors opening.

Previous Application Summary

The Dower House is a substantial detached stone house built at the end of the 19th century on the edge of the village of Heythrop by Albert Brassey as part of the Heythrop Park Estate. The house originally served as the rectory to the newly built St Nicholas Church (Grade 2 listed) which adjoins the garden, designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield. The Grade 2* listed medieval church (the Old Church of St Nicholas) is located in a copse immediately south of the Dower House. The Dower House is built of stone in the Cotswold vernacular with tiled roof slopes and mullioned and transomed windows, but it is not listed and does not lie in a Conservation Area.

The grounds of the Dower House are quite extensive and include the following elements:

- 1 A pair of out-houses known as the Gardener's Cottage and the Cow Barn and adjoining garage, located about 20m west of the main house.
- 2 A walled garden adjacent to the outhouses and the main garden, recently restored. The north-west edge of the walled garden is formed by the Orchard

- House, built in place of a stable block to create a dwelling for the house-keeper and his family completed in 2017.
- 3 A range of stables adjacent to the walled garden and Orchard House.
 - 4 An outdoor swimming pool and small pool house located east of the main house, concealed by yew hedges and a modern stone wall.
 - 5 A tennis court, located east of the house, near the swimming pool.

In addition to the grounds immediately around the house, the applicants also own the woodlands sloping away from the house to the south and the fields to south and north visible from the house.

The relevant planning history is as follows:

Part change of use from existing paddock to accommodate private tennis court (Planning ref W85/1024) granted consent 10.09.85

Alterations and erection of single and two-storey side extensions (Planning ref W96/1053) granted consent 29.08.96, not built.

Alterations and erection of single and two-storey side extensions (Planning ref W97/0037) granted consent 13.02.97, not built.

Removal of stable block and erection of housekeeper's lodge (Planning ref 15/00200/FUL) granted consent 21.01.15. Built 2016/2017.

Pre-Application consultation on proposed changes to the Dower House and buildings within its curtilage, subject of this application. Response from West Oxfordshire Planning issued on 31 October 2019 (ref 19/02650/PREAPP).

Changes to Dower House and buildings within its curtilage (Planning ref 19/03259/HHD) submitted 22 November 2019. Advice that bat surveys required received from planners 13 Feb 2020; application withdrawn 26 Feb 2020.

Changes to Dower House and buildings within its curtilage (Planning ref 21/00706/HHD) consent received in June 2021.

The planning application consists of the following elements:

- 1 The demolition of a small stone building housing the oil tank, located in the north west corner of the courtyard adjacent to the back door of the house and replacement with a new extension to the house that will fill in the north part of the courtyard and provide two new back doors (one from the parking area, one from the courtyard), a rear entrance hall with coat storage and a Sun Room with glazed wall/French doors on to the courtyard. The intention is to replace the oil-fired boiler with a ground-source heat pump, greatly reducing the carbon output of the central heating system. The window from the existing store room off the utility room is to be converted to French doors for access from the proposed new kitchen to a paved external dining/sitting area with a steel and timber pergola overhead.
- 2 The conversion of the existing outbuildings to new uses that are ancillary to the main house. The Gardiner's Cottage will become a home gym and the Cow Barn will become a 'teen-den', complete with a mezzanine level occupying part of the existing attic space. There will be a new terrace located in the walled garden, accessed by French doors. The east elevation of the Cow Barn will be modified with fixed glazing to the former hay loft opening at first floor level. The garage adjacent to the Cow Barn will be demolished and a new L-shaped extension built

on the site of the garage and chicken run to house a pottery studio for the clients' use.

- 3 The demolition of a small circular stone store adjacent to the swimming pool and replacement with a flat-roofed, timber pool house providing changing facilities, a bathroom, a sitting area and kitchen, a sauna and the pool plant room. The pool house will have black-stained timber cladding and a green roof with sedum plants, and will act as a wind break from cold northerly winds on the poolside. It will have sliding doors facing the poolside to the south and a glazed screen/door with timber frames overlooking the paddock to the north.

The following changes have been introduced to each of the above proposed elements in response to the comments received in the Pre-App:

1 Extension to the main house

- 1.1 Roof of proposed Sun Room given a steeper pitch so that it matches the pitched roofs of the main house. Length of pitched roof shortened to correspond to the length of the sun room (ie it no longer overlaps new rear entrance hall).
- 1.2 The wall fronting the new entrance hall (previously part of the courtyard) is set in by 1m to articulate the hallway area with its flat, zinc-clad roof as a distinct element in relation to the sun room.

2 Conversion of out-buildings west of the main house

- 2.1 The number of rooflights in the north roof slope has been reduced to simplify the appearance of the roof as seen from the driveway and Cherry Lawn.

3 Proposed new pool house

- 3.1 Floor area reduced by approximately one third (GIA reduced from 64m² to 46m²) and height lowered by 300mm. The length of the pool house now corresponds to the length of the pool.

4 New garages to replace existing stables

- 4.1 This element has been omitted from the planning application and will be subject to a separate application at some point in the future.

It is noted that the pool house will be effectively screened from the main house (including the first floor windows) by existing trees, and is not visible from either the C19th century or the medieval St Nicholas churches, the two grade 2 listed structures adjacent to the Dower House.

Although the Pre-App suggested a pitched roof finished in zinc, it was felt that this would make the pool house higher overall and more intrusive in the landscape than the reduced proposal with the flat roof and sedum green roof covering.

Heritage Statement

The heritage assets adjacent to the site are the C19th St Nicholas Church (grade 2 listed) located west of the main house, and the old church of St Nicholas (Grade 2* listed) located in the small wood south of the main house garden.

None of the proposed changes are visible from within either church, nor from the church yards, due to the woodland surrounding old St Nicholas and the yew trees in the church yard of new St Nicholas. The only place from which the changes can be viewed is from the top of the new St Nicholas tower. This is not normally open to the public.

For this reason it is considered that there will be no harmful impact upon the heritage assets caused by the proposed changes within the curtilage of the Dower House, including the proposed new pool house.

Additional surveys and assessments

Following preliminary bat roost assessments, Bat Emergence and Re-entry surveys were carried out at the existing Cow Barn, Gardiner's Cottage and Oil store house by an approved ecologist, Arbtech. The resulting report is attached to this application.

Two common pipistrelles and two soprano pipistrelles were recorded emerging from building B2 (the Cow Barn). The report recommendation is that a European Protected Species Mitigation License (EPSML) will be required from Natural England prior to the commencement of the works: as there are two bat roosts of low numbers of common species present, the works can be completed under a Natural England Bat Mitigation Class License (low impact).

There is no evidence of nesting birds in any of the buildings being demolished or altered, and it is not considered that a nesting survey is necessary.

Given that the only new structure included in the application is a lightweight timber pool house used on an occasional basis in the summer months, the environmental impact of the proposals are considered to be minor and that a formal Environmental Impact Assessment is not necessary.

Dower House: internal changes

The internal layout of the ground floor of the Dower House will be altered to improve its outlook and usability, but these changes do not require planning consent.

Accessibility

Where buildings are being converted, thresholds will be lowered to improve accessibility. The Dower House will have a step-free point of access via the new back doors and rear entrance hall. The new Pool House will have step-free access from the poolside. Overall the accessibility of the proposed changes will be an improvement over the current situation.

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