



Maria Ferguson

PLANNING CONSULTANCY

YOUR REFERENCE:

OUR REFERENCE: 16/044

Durham County Council
Planning Services
County Hall
Durham
DH1 5UL

21st October 2021

Dear Sir / madam

**PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE AND ALTERATION OF VACANT BUILDING TO FORM SINGLE DWELLING
WITH ASSOCIATED GARAGING / STORE, PARKING AND AMENITY SPACE**

THE OLD JOINER'S WORKSHOP, LARTINGTON ESTATE

I attach with this letter applications for planning and listed building consent, with accompanying supporting documents, for the change of use and conversion of a vacant former workshop to a single detached dwelling and garage / store.

The application proposes the use of timber sliding sash windows and aluminium doors to existing openings. The existing roof is temporary to preserve the structure, but this will be replaced with natural blue slate. A courtyard area will provide amenity space to the dwelling, as well as parking. This will be surfaced with a mix of hardcore, cobbles, and stone paving.

The building has been vacant for many years, and was falling into disrepair following the refusal of an application for planning permission in August 1995 for its conversion to a dwelling (reference 6/1995/0137/DM). Accordingly, the owner has carried out some remedial works in the short term to secure its retention and bring about a visual improvement to the site. This included clearance of self-seeded small trees and bushes which were impacting on the structure, a new temporary roof covering, repair and minor re-building of some walls, and re-pointing of stonework. To facilitate these works, the access track to the site has been improved with hardcore.

The design of the proposed development, particularly the external layout, has been heritage led, and finalised in full consultation with the applicant's appointed heritage consultant. A heritage report and impact statement accompany the application (prepared by Archaeo-Environment Ltd). Due to the sensitive location of the site and its proximity to trees which are important in the landscape, ecology and tree surveys are also submitted with the application to inform the decision.

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Design / heritage considerations

The application subject building is one of a small group of former workshops associated with Lartington Hall. Lartington Hall is a listed building (grade II*) and any outbuildings pre-dating July 1948 with an association with the Hall, including this one, can also be considered to be curtilage listed. The private mausoleum associated with the Estate is located about 60m to the south of the workshops and is listed grade II. The site also sits with Lartington's Conservation Area and the Hall's designed landscape which is a grade II registered park and garden. The site also lies within an Area of High Landscape Value.

The past industrial / commercial use of the building is at the forefront of the design ethos. By and large, existing openings will be re-used, which means there will be minimal physical alterations to the overall appearance of the building. Dark grey aluminium doors are proposed, rather than timber, to retain this character, and to minimise domestication of the appearance of the site. Similarly, it is proposed to replicate the former cobbled courtyard that would have once existed between the application subject building and the former south range (now demolished). This will avoid the need for a garden, which would appear suburban. A flue is proposed, which is not out of keeping with a building with this history.

Minimal external intervention as proposed will ensure the character of the site and its setting is preserved as far as possible. The re-use of the building on the other hand will secure the retention of this heritage asset, and is to be encouraged.

A full heritage impact assessment accompanies the applications for planning and listed building consent which deals with the impact on heritage assets in more detail.

Policy compliance

The application site is located in the open countryside for planning purposes, and within a sensitive landscape and historic setting.

Government planning guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (NPPF) provides advice on the creation of new housing in the countryside. In particular, paragraph 80 sets out the limited circumstances where isolated housing will be permitted in rural locations. One such circumstance is where "the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting". In addition, housing may be appropriate where this represents "the optimal viable use of a heritage asset".

The County Durham Plan was adopted in 2020. It is the development plan for the area. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that "where in making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material consideration indicates otherwise."

Policy 10 (Development in the Countryside) is the policy which is most important in the consideration of the planning application. This sets out the types of development which will be regarded as acceptable in rural locations, and is broadly consistent with NPPF. Policy 10 provides support for development necessary for the change of use of an existing building or structure which (a) already makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and is capable of

conversion without complete or substantial rebuilding, disproportionate extension or unsympathetic alterations; (b) results in an enhancement of the building's immediate setting; (c) does not result in the unjustified loss of a community service or facility; and (d) in the case of a heritage asset, represents the optimal viable use of that asset consistent with their conservation.

The proposed development makes a positive contribution to the area and is capable of conversion without extension or re-building. The applications are therefore in compliance with policy 10 and NPPF.

Technical / environmental considerations

The proposed development will not have an adverse impact on the ecology of the area. The site and buildings have been surveyed by a suitably qualified ecologist and a report of his findings accompanies the planning application.

For completeness, and to inform potential future woodland management, this survey covered a wider area than the site itself, including some old dog kennels (buildings 3 and 4) and the surrounding woodland. For the avoidance of doubt, these applications relate only to buildings 1 and 2. The survey concludes that there will be no impact on protected species, subject to mitigation, and enhancement of biodiversity could include opportunities for bat roosts in the building or bat boxes.

Much of the site was overgrown with self-seeded small trees and bushes, and these were cleared to protect the building and enable its repair. The remainder of this woodland will be the subject of a woodland management plan (not part of the proposed development). If trees are to be removed as part of this plan, then where appropriate the LPA will be notified due to their position within the conservation area. No trees will be lost or harmed as a result of the proposed development. The proposed treatment plant and associated drains have been sited to minimise impact on tree roots. Proposed hardstandings will be a safe distance from tree roots and the cobbling will be permeable.

Access to the site is from an existing private road which serves a number of residential properties. The number of dwellings served from this private road was reduced as part of the development of the Hall as a wedding venue, when the primary access to some of the properties to the south of the site was re-routed. Three houses which were previously accessed off the private road are now served from the B6277. This existing access and private road already serve a number of existing properties, including 'The Stables', Grey's Lodge, and Dairy Cottage. An additional dwelling will be imperceptible in terms of additional traffic movements.

The site is located outside of flood zone 3, but the private access road is within the flood risk area. This access road serves a number of residential properties and is existing. It is not prone to flooding.

In summary, the application site can be regarded as curtilage listed, and is an important building in terms of contribution to the historic landscape. The proposed development will secure the long term future of the building and the contribution it makes in a sensitive way. The proposed development is sensitively designed, having regard to the historic importance and character of the building, as well as surrounding trees and biodiversity.

The development is in compliance with policies contained within the County Durham Plan. It is therefore hoped a favourable decision will be reached on these applications.

Yours faithfully



Maria Ferguson

**DIRECTOR
MARIA FERGUSON PLANNING**