The Watermill Halfway Bridge

Pre-Application submission

General Principles Document

September 2021

Watermill Halfway Bridge

Pre-Application proposal

Existing Property

Description: The site is located at Halfway Bridge, to the north of the A272 in Lodsworth. The buildings comprise a large ground floor footprint much of which is single storey, with first and second floor accommodation to the northern end of the building. The second floor accommodation is located within a mansard roof form. The building is of painted render finish with white UPVC framed windows and doors, the mansard roof is hung with artificial slates. In front of the northern end of the building there is a hardstanding area which provides space for parking, with a further parking area over the road. Internally the building is laid out as office accommodation and vacant.

Topography: The site has been cut away to accommodate the existing buildings, originally the Mill building, then further on several occasions finally in the 1960's when the large single storey structure that occupies the majority of the site was built. The land has been reduced by approximately 1.0 to 1.5 metres across the site.

History: The original Mill, of which only the lower ground floor element remains was built around 1540. The original building was once four storey, with various outbuildings including a bakery which were altered over the years and subsequently demolished. In addition there was a 3 bay building on the opposite side of the road, again now demolished. A fire in 1905 saw the mill decommissioned.

Recent History of use: The offices were last meaningfully occupied in 2018. Since that time they have been marketed for let or sale and since our purchase just to let until March 2021 when all marketing ceased.

Flood Risk Assessment: having completed a FRA the conclusions of the report found that for unrestricted occupation the finished floor level needs to be 17.09, for daytime only use the level was 16.49. The ground floor level of the existing building is 15.95 so 0.54 metres below day occupation levels and 1.14 metres below the unrestricted occupation level.

Marketing: Both Stiles Harold Williams since January 2019 and Flude & Co since 19th May 2019 marketed the property until March 2021. Please see attached marketing reports.

Review of Options:

1. Existing building - flood risk will always be a factor in securing an occupier for the ground floor as it is effectively uninsurable due to the report.
2. Redevelopment will ensure occupation in terms of flood risk can be future proofed.

Options:

a. new build offices not financially viable and ongoing concerns regarding letting would remain, irrespective of the FRA. Also vehicle movements and parking created much local debate and objection, being a remote location it is likely that a resumption of office use would lead to renewed local resident frustration.

b. residential, subject to site levels should be financially viable

Proposal:

1. Whilst the 3 storey Mill element could be considered of little merit architecturally, we feel it does hold a historic link to the area and therefore an argument to retain is valid. Simplest option is as a single unit to provide:

(a) ground floor: garage/office/utility/store

(b) first floor: one bedroom flat

(c) second floor: attic/roof space/studio

2. Main site: demolish single storey flat roof building, return levels to original status prior to commercial development and construct 6 to 7 units with a finished ground floor level of 17.09.

3. Layout: option prepared in sketch format to enable discussion.

4. Unit size: mix of 1, 2 & 3 bedroom units.

5. Key Worker: a total of 3 or 4 key worker units for sale or rent at an agreed discount, minimum 20% of open market levels. We would not agree to offset key worker in lieu of a payment.

Design Principles:

1. Improve visual appearance from the road for the benefit of immediate neighbours, local residents, walkers etc.

2. Reduce built elevation alongside the highway.

3. Retain main Mill building and consider subtle changes to improve and soften its appearance, provide link to its historical use.

4. Avoid impermeable external hard surfaces

5. Reduce overall built footprint, increasing external area.

6. Reinstate original sections of the wall to the highway using local stone with brick dressings - remove

railings.

7. Services: move overhead cables below ground

8. Improve lighting with reference to the dark skies policy to achieve gain.

9. Mitigate existing neighbour land stabilization issue by reinstating original levels.

10. External staircase in stone

11. Choose materials for minimal maintenance

12. High insulation creating low running costs.

11. Parking - Electric vehicle charging, rate of one per property.

12. If layout allows consider provision of a public parking space for walkers with an electric charging point. Ownership and maintenance can remain with the Mill and again part of a 106 Agreement.

13. All permitted development rights removed in order to retain intended design, management and operation.

Sketch Designs:

1. Excluding retained Mill the reduction in footprint is nearing 50%.

2. Key worker units have gardens including flats.

3. Large bin store for recycling facilities

4. Community feel through external design between all units, avoid subdivided front gardens.

5. Consideration roof design to enhance solar panel viability

6. Mix of key worker, 2 person & 4 person