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Our ref: PA01138205

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Dear Mr Beech

Pre-application Advice

MONKS HALL, SYLEHAM, SUFFOLK

Thank you for consulting us on your proposals for alterations and extensions to Monks Hall. Due to COVID-19 restrictions we have been unable to visit the site as part of this initial round of advice but, we hope that the advice below will enable to the project to be developed and moved forward in a sympathetic manner.

Monks Hall appears to be a very special complex of buildings of varying dates. The main manor house and barn are now combined to form one building which appears to of been undertaken in the mid 16th century according to the Grey drawing provided within your pre-application documentation. Much of the house seems to of been remodelled in the 17th century when mullioned windows were inserted on the first floor and other windows were further inserted in the 18th and 19th centuries. Despite these alterations, the building retains much of its early fabric including timber framing.

According to historic maps, Monks Hall has close associations with the farm buildings that surround it and the farm and the house appear to always have had their main frontage facing the main road. The rear of Monks Hall seems to of faced substantial lawn with tree planting , much like a mini parkland landscape leading down to the River Waveney. The garden was separated from the fields close to the river by a track, the remnants of which still survive today. Although the immediate surrounds of Monks Hall have more tree cover than the historic maps indicate, the relationship to the barns and the river is still evident in the landscape.

The building was added to the statutory list at grade II* on 29th July 1955.

This pre-application submission relates to alterations to all floors of the building and an extension to the ground floor rear. I will deal with each of these aspects in turn.

Internal Alterations



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As stated above, it has not been possible to undertake a site visit as part of this enquiry. We would normally therefore expect that enough information is submitted with a pre-application submission to enable a proper understanding of the significance of the building and its fabric before we can assess the impact of the proposals. Given the nature of some of the proposals, such as the insertion of a corridor on the first floor, we need to appreciate the space and understand how the subdivision of the space would impact upon the character and significance of the building. Some more photographs of the building and the rooms would be most useful to enable this to be undertaken.

From a brief look at the plans provided there seems to be bathrooms inserted on every floor. On the second floor there seems to be some further subdivision through the insertion of more stud walls which are subject to the same concerns as above. As with all of the new bathrooms throughout the building, we need to be certain whether new vents, ducts, flues and extractors are required and whether the floor is able to take the weight of the bathroom equipment.

Both the first and second floor contain feature walls in bedroom suits that are in the centre of rooms and partition the spaces, even if they are not full width or full height. Although it may be desirable to demarcate space and provide some private spaces within rooms, they also act to break up a room where the plan form of it may be important to the overall significance of the building. More understanding of the hierarchy of spaces and the importance of the plan form is required.

On the ground floor where the extension is proposed, there appears to be the loss of the smaller wooden bay window. What is the significance of this bay window? Also, a downpipe seems to run down in front of a window, is this there at present?

Some further information is also required relating to the space called 'The Rear Hall' on the proposed plans. This is in the area of wall removed in the mid 16th century according to grey but also extends into the barn. The significance of this area needs some further discussion.

The proposed extension

The removal of the boiler house extension would, according to the Grey plan involve the loss of 19th and 20th century material which is currently not discussed within the documentation provided. Although it is clear it may of been altered, it is subservient to the main building, allows the rear of the building to be appreciated and interpreted and contains historic fabric which needs some further investigation before the principle of this loss can be agreed.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposed area of extension is large and in ground floor space is a similar size to one wing of the main dwelling. We do not consider that this can be considered a subservient extension to the dwelling. The proposed brick wall





between the house and the 'pavillion' appears rather unnecessary and appears awkward against the main house. The link between the outbuilding and the house is less of a link and more part of the extension which makes it appear more dominant. Linking the outbuildings to the house is also questionable as historic maps indicate that these have always been separate and the significance of this is not discussed within the pre-application submission.

The additional hard surfaced terrace surrounding the extension gives the appearance of extending the built form into what has historically been a garden environment leading to the river and fields. Adding hard surfacing in this area, certainly to the extent proposed could be said to have a detrimental impact upon the setting of the grade II* listed building.

Next Steps

Historic England considers that some extension and alteration to this building could be possible but this is an important building with a special relationship to its surroundings and before considering what that might be, a proper understanding of the significance of the fabric and the spaces is necessary. We suggest that a statement of significance is undertaken and we would be happy to advise you further once this is available. However, we suggest that the rear extension is significantly reduced in size and minimally attached to the building. Consideration should also be given to removing the link to the outbuildings.

We would like to thank you again for involving us at this early stage in the proposals and, should restrictions allow we would be pleased to discuss this further with you on site early in 2021.

Yours sincerely

Lynette Fawkes
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