

9. LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION - REPAIR AND CONSOLIDATION OF THE SHELL AND INTERIOR INCLUDING, NEW CAST-METAL RAINWATER GOODS, FENESTRATION & JOINERY. RE-ROOF AND TIMBER REPAIRS. CONVERSION OF THE MILL TO RESIDENTIAL USE. PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO CONNECT TO THE A6. REINSTATE SMALL ROOF LIGHTS AT THE MILL, MILL LANE, ASHFORD IN THE WATER, (NP/DDD/1214/1291, P2524, 419831/369520, 24/12/2014/ALN)

APPLICANT: DR ROBERT GRIFFITHS

This is the listed building application relating to the previous item NP/DDD/1214/1290.

Site and Surroundings

The application site, known locally as Ashford Mill is located approximately 200m to the south east of the main body of the village of Ashford in the Water. The site abuts the northern side of the main A6, east of the junction with the A6020. To the east, a minor road (now a cul-de-sac) leads north from the A6 over Lees Bridge.

The River Wye is located some 38m to the north of the site. A series of leats, created by diverting water from the main river run adjacent to the mill building itself. The south leat, which consists of two channels, runs immediately to the south of the mill building between it and the A6. The water runs through a series of sluices and weirs and served a former water wheel on the south elevation of the mill. The north leat served a second waterwheel on the north side. As such the buildings effectively stand on an island between the diverted watercourse and the River Wye.

The mill building is the only building within the red edged application site. The former corn mill is grade II listed and the site is within the Ashford in the Water Conservation Area. Also included in the application site is the land to the east of the mill in the form of two spurs between the three water channels, a hardstanding area to the north of the building and the leats and small areas of intervening land to the west of the mill.

The mill is an L-shaped building that is 1½ storey in height. It is predominantly constructed from locally quarried limestone interspaced with limestone blocks. The roof largely retains its original gritstone slates. At the east end of the south wing is a kiln at ground floor with a drying room above. The mill is redundant, having ceased milling in 1963. It was used as a general farm suppliers until the early 1980s. It is currently used for domestic storage purposes by the applicant who has owned the site since 2008.

Immediately to the north of the mill and also within the applicants control is a two storey barn. To the north east is a pair of semi-detached houses. The westernmost property, Mill Cottage, is in third party ownership. The easternmost property, the Old Mill House is occupied by the applicant and is grade II listed. Lees Bridge, which is also a grade II listed structure, abuts the eastern side of the application site.

Vehicular access is gained to the mill building along with Old Mill House and Mill Cottage along a shared driveway off the cul-de-sac leading north off the A6.

Proposals

The application seeks listed building consent for alterations to the listed building in association with the conversion of the mill building to a single open market dwelling. The dwelling would have two bedrooms and lounge accommodation on the first floor and kitchen/dining room, utility room and storage on the ground floor.

A pedestrian bridge would be constructed across the mill leat to the north of the mill building linking the land immediately adjacent to the mill to the A6. The bridge is intended to provide emergency egress from the building in the event of a flood.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

- 1. 3 year implementation time limit**
- 2. Adopt amended plans including plans for the sloped bridge with yachting wire infill panels.**
- 3. Conversion to be within shell of building with no demolition or rebuild without the prior written agreement of the National Park Authority.**
- 4. All repairs to historic fabric outlined in the submitted 'Condition Survey and Repair Methods' to be completed before the dwelling is first occupied.**
- 5. Details of internal doors to be submitted and agreed.**
- 6. Details of etched map on lobby glass to be agreed.**
- 7. Windows and doors to be repaired on a like for like basis unless otherwise agreed in writing by the National Park Authority.**
- 8. Photographic record of internal and external features to be submitted before work commences.**
- 9. Minor design details.**

Key Issues

1. whether the proposed works to the listed building would conserve and enhance its features of special architectural or historic interest; and
2. whether the proposed bridge would conserve and enhance the setting of the listed building.

History

February 2015 – Enquiry opened with regard to unauthorised use of barn as a dwelling.

February 2012 – Retrospective planning and listed building consent granted for turbine housing, bridges and path creation.

2009 – Planning and listed building consent applications for conversion of barn to holiday accommodation and storage withdrawn.

Consultations

Highway Authority – no comments

District Council - no response

Parish Council - has reservations about this plan as a whole and the conversion to living accommodation. This building is part of the local heritage which the parish council feel should be preserved as its original function. The Parish Council objects to the bridge as it is out of character in the setting of a listed building and is also in a conservation area. It is also felt to be unnecessary. No response received to re-consultation on amended bridge design.

English Heritage - The application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of the Authority's specialist conservation advice.

Authority's Built Environment Team – amendments to the design of the conversion itself both internally and externally are acceptable. No objections to the bridge in principle and amended design acceptable although the additional of metal mesh to the sides is regrettable and may make the bridge appear more substantial. Would prefer to less obtrusive addition such as horizontal yachting wire (climbing on it should not be an issue given the bridge is only for emergency use). Favours the horizontal rather than the curved form as this may help to reduce its obtrusiveness. Considers that the mill should remain ancillary to the main house to preclude future problems over curtilage, parking etc.

Representations:

One letter has been received in support of the proposals on the grounds that the mill would be preserved for future generations.

Eight letters of objection have been received which raise the following issues:

- the proposals would prevent future use of the building for its original purpose as a mill;
- conversion to a dwelling is not the only means of preservation of the mill;
- the owner has a duty to undertake repairs to the listed building;
- concerns that other suitable uses such as garaging or uses incidental to the dwelling have not been investigated;
- the proposed bridge would detract from the setting of the listed building and the wider Conservation Area;
- concerns about introducing a residential use into an area of high flood risk;
- mobility impaired people would have difficulty accessing the bridge due to stairs within the building;
- lack of side panels on submitted plans for bridge results in risk of falling into the river;
- land beyond the boundary wall with A6 is still at risk of flooding;
- the mill should remain ancillary to Mill House; and
- acceptance of bridge may lead to others seeking to build further bridges.

Main Policies

Relevant Core Strategy policies include: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3 & L3.

Relevant Local Plan policies include: LC4, LC5, LC6 & LC8.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') was published on 27 March 2012 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered to be a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent national planning policies in the Framework with regard to the key issues that are raised in the determination of the current application:

The key issues in the determination of the current application include considerations with regard to the impact on the building's special features of historic and architectural interest and the impacts arising from the proposed bridge adjacent to the listed building. In these respects, Paragraph 115 of the Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks along with the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage, which is consistent with the aims and objectives of policies GSP1, GSP2 and L3 of the Core Strategy.

Paragraphs 132 and 134 of the Framework state that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. This is consistent with the aims and objectives of policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3 and L3 of the Core Strategy and LC4, LC5, LC6 and LC8 of the Local Plan.

Assessment

Issue 1: Whether the proposed works to the listed building would conserve and enhance its special architectural and historic features.

Ashford Mill is a fine grade II listed building which contributes significantly to the character of the Conservation Area in which it is located, as evidenced in a 'Statement of Significance' submitted with the application. This provides a chronology of the history of the mill dating back to the 17th century and highlights its importance in terms of the local heritage of the area.

Impact of Conversion on Character and Setting of Listed Building

Core Strategy policy HC1 is permissive of the conversion of the mill building if it were required for conservation and enhancement in accordance with policies GSP1 and GSP2 of the Core Strategy, which support sustainable development proposals that reflect and respect the statutory purposes of the National Park's designation. Core Strategy policy L3 and Local Plan policies LC5 and LC6 require that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal the significance of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic assets and their settings and say development will not be permitted where it is likely to cause harm to the significance of a listed building or the special qualities of a designated Conservation Area.

Local Plan policy LC8 allows for the conversion of buildings of historic or vernacular merit provided that the new use can be accommodated without changes that would adversely affect its character (such changes include significant enlargement, or other alteration to form and mass, inappropriate windows spacings and major rebuilding or changes to the buildings curtilage or require new access that would adversely affect its character.) Local Plan policy LC4 and policies GSP3 set out further detailed considerations on the design of new development.

In this case the proposed conversion would be carried out within the shell of the existing mill

building. A structural survey has been submitted which indicates that the building is in reasonable condition with no major rebuilding required although some strengthening and repair of internal beams and trusses would be required along with local rebuilding and consolidation of external walls.

The application has been supported by a Historic Building Appraisal, an Archaeological Evaluation report and a Design and Access Statement incorporating a Statement of Significance. These reports explain that the building is unusual in that internally it retains 19th century grinding machinery, including the stones, line shafting, hopper chutes, grain storage bins and hoist mechanism. The submitted plans show that these elements would be repaired and retained 'in situ'. As such the residential accommodation has been designed in a 'loose fit' manner, around the historic features.

On the ground floor the kitchen/dining space would be provided without subdivision of the existing space. The machinery which sits along the south wall would be retained and the existing timber partitions would be repaired and remounted such that they can slide open to reveal the gear train behind. The kiln at the east end of the ground floor would be unaltered. A new staircase would provide access to the first floor where a bedroom would be provided in the drying room above the kiln. A glass floor would be installed which would provide views of the remaining perforated tiles and kiln below. In the second bedroom at the northern end of the building the grinding stones and one hopper would be retained with a second hopper partially dismantled to provide access to the room. Within the living room space the granary storage bins would be retained along with associated millstones and housing. In the attic space above, the top of the hoist and associated machinery would remain in situ.

Externally existing window and door frames would be repaired. A single rooflight would be reinstated on each of the north, west and east facing roofslopes. Otherwise there would be no change to the external appearance of the building. Following negotiations it has been agreed that conditions will be appended to agree details of internal doors and the proposed etched map on the lobby glass and subject to these conditions it is considered that the proposed scheme would serve to conserve, and by repairing and revealing the historic features within the building, enhance the special architectural and historic qualities of the building in accordance with Core Strategy policy L3 and the wider range of design and conservation policies in the Development plan and the Framework.

With regard to the impact on the setting of the listed building, following negotiations a plan has been submitted showing the extent of the proposed domestic curtilage. This is limited to modest areas of land between the leats on the west side of the building, the area between the south side of the building and the leat and a narrow strip of land to the east of the building, together with the hard surfaced parking area to the north. As the mill is a listed building, planning consent would be required for the erection of any extensions, domestic outbuildings or wall, fences and gates.

In conclusion it has been demonstrated that the conversion of the building itself and the impact of a domestic use on its setting would not harm the significance of the heritage asset and therefore the proposals are compliant with Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3 and L3 and Local Plan policies LC4, LC5, LC6 and LC8 and accordingly with paragraphs 128 to 134 of the Framework.

Issue 2 - Whether the proposed bridge would conserve and enhance the setting of the listed building.

Whilst it has been established that the proposed development in terms of its impact on the listed building and its immediate surrounds would not cause harm, the next issue is whether the bridge would conserve and enhance the listed building and its setting.

The short section of bridge to be replaced abuts the listed building but would not impact upon its

structure or any features of architectural or historic significance. The new, longer section of the bridge would be mounted onto the banking adjacent to the mill but would not affect any features of interest and the roadside boundary wall is not curtilage listed, being in different ownership at the time of listing.

Location and Design

Whilst it has been established in the planning application that the bridge is necessary in the interests of the safety of the occupants of the proposed dwelling and the proposed location is the most suitable in respect of minimising flood risk, these considerations must be weighed carefully against the impact of the bridge structure on the setting of the listed building.

As noted above, GSP1 and GSP2 of the Core Strategy support sustainable development proposals that reflect and respect the statutory purposes of the National Park's designation L3 emphasises the need to conserve and enhance the setting of historic asset, LC6 states that planning applications for development affecting the setting of listed building should demonstrate how these will be preserved and where possible enhanced. Core Strategy policy GSP3 and Local Plan LC4 state that development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site with particular attention being paid to a range of considerations including impact on the character and setting of buildings.

The principal elevation and main entrance to the mill faces north towards the barn and the other dwellings adjacent to the site. The rear of the mill faces south towards the A6. In the winter months when the riverside trees are not in leaf the rear elevation of the mill and its surrounding leats and water features are visible from the A6 and the footway that runs alongside it. This is an attractive view into the Conservation Area. The proposed bridge would be clearly visible in views of the mill at these times of year from stretches of the road and its adjacent footway. It may also be seen in more distant views from Lees Bridge to the east. In support of the application the agent has submitted a historic plan for the site which shows that in 1898 there was a crossing over the river just to the east of the site for the proposed bridge but it is not clear whether this was a ford or a bridge.

Aside from its prominence, the overall design of the bridge, which is simple and industrial but lightweight in style, is in keeping with the working mill heritage of the site, and consequently is considered to be appropriate. However officers were concerned that the height of the bridge as shown on the submitted plan was such that its intersection with the boundary wall at such a high level would appear incongruous. As a result amended plans have been received which show the height of the bridge reduced whilst maintaining the necessary clearance of the river in flood and also the design amended such that it slopes down towards the wall, thus reducing its prominence when viewed from the road. As amended the footplate would be approx. 400mm below the top of the coping stone. An alternative design for a gently arched bridge, which would achieve a similar effect was also submitted but officers and the Authority's Built Environment Team consider that the straight, sloped bridge is, on balance, more functional in appearance, slightly lower overall and therefore more appropriate in this setting.

Officers were also concerned about the use of stainless steel as it is considered that its bright appearance would make the bridge more prominent and the orange coloured 'Corten' finish might also stand out against the backdrop of trees. As a result amended plans have been received which show the use of steel pre-coated in a dark recessive colour.

The bridge would appear at quite a high level in relation to the adjacent road in that the uprights would be visible above the roadside boundary wall. As amended however, whilst it would be visible from the A6 at certain times of the year, it is considered that its lightweight structure and the recessive colour mean that it would not stand out significantly and the mill building would still be visible beyond its structure.

Trees that are growing along the river bank would be retained and these would help to soften its

appearance.

The harm that has been identified in terms of the fact that the bridge would be seen in views of the mill from the road is considered to be 'less than substantial' in terms of the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. The public benefits of the scheme would be that the existing building and its internal workings would be repaired and conserved albeit that the building would be put to a different use to that for which it was designed. On balance therefore it is considered that these benefits outweigh any harm that the bridge might bring to the setting of the building and the wider Conservation Area. As such the proposals are compliant with the Framework and with Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3 and L3 and Local Plan policies LC4, LC5 and LC6.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out in this report the proposed development meets the requirements of Core Strategy policy L3 in that the proposed works would conserve and enhance the listed building. The proposals are therefore compatible with the wider range of relevant Development Plan policies and design and conservation policies in the National Planning Policy Framework. Accordingly the application is recommended for conditional approval.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)