

9. LISTED BUILDING CONSENT - MINOR ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING OFFICE ROOM AND TEA POINT FACILITY, TO INCLUDE NEW SUBDIVIDING STUD WALL, UPGRADES TO FIXTURES AND FITTINGS, AND REDECORATION WORKS AT ALDERN HOUSE, BASLOW ROAD, BAKEWELL (NP/DDD/0725/0663), ALN

APPLICANT: PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Summary

1. This application seeks listed building consent for internal alterations to two rooms on the ground floor of the historic part of Alden House. Overall the alterations would result in either neutral or modest enhancements to the listed building. One small part of the works would result in minor harm to significance, but would be outweighed by public benefits. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

Site and Surroundings

2. Aldern House is the headquarters of the Peak District National Park Authority and lies to the north of Bakewell Town centre. The site is within Bakewell's development boundary but outside of the designated Bakewell Conservation Area.
3. The property is a Grade II listed building dating from c.1820. It was originally designed and occupied as a house. The building was listed in May 1974.

Proposal

4. To make internal alterations to two ground floor rooms, known as Rooms 15 and 16. The two rooms are located in the north eastern corner of the historic house. Room 15 is currently a tea point facility and w.c and room 16 is a large single office accessed through room 15. The alterations consist of:
 - New subdividing stud walls and doorsets within room 16, in order to subdivide the space into two separate offices.
 - Overboarding of lath and plaster ceiling in room 15.
 - Other upgrades to fixtures and fittings including removal or replacement of modern doorsets, replacement of modern cupboard doors, replacement of secondary glazing to match existing, removal and renewal of modern kitchenette units, re-painting and new floor finishes, and renewal of lighting and fire alarm detection.
5. The works are proposed to enable room 16, which has been vacant for some time, to be sub-let for use by other businesses. It is stated that there is more demand for smaller offices, rather than larger open plan spaces.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. **3-year time limit for commencement.**
2. **In accordance with the submitted plans and specifications**
3. **All new paintwork to be in breathable Earthborne Claypaint: colour 'White Clay'.**

Key Issues

6. The impact on the character and significance of the listed building.

Relevant History

7. 2015 – listed building consent granted for alterations to kitchen and toilet area of the listed wing of Aldern House (including reconfiguration of room 15) – NP/DDD/1215/1148.

Consultations

Highway Authority – no impact on the public highway, so no comments to make.

District Council – no response

Town Council – no objections

Representations

8. None received.

Main Policies

9. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L3
10. Relevant Local Plan policies: DMC3, DMC5, DMC7

National Planning Policy Framework

11. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises our Core Strategy 2011 and the Development Management Policies 2019. Policies in the development plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. There is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the development plan and the NPPF and our policies should be given full weight in the determination of this application.
12. Paragraph 189 states that "great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

Assessment

13. Core Strategy policy L3 and Development Management policies DMC5 and DMC7 together state that applications affecting a heritage asset should clearly demonstrate its significance including how any identified features will be preserved and where possible enhanced and why the proposed works are desirable or necessary. Development of a heritage asset will not be permitted if it would result in harm to, or loss of significance character and appearance unless the harm would be outweighed by public benefit.

Proposals for Room 15

14. Room 15 is served by an original external doorway (which now gives access to a 1960s extension). It is unclear what Room 15 was originally used for. The submitted Heritage Statement suggests that given its location and proportions, it was a small entrance hallway. A plan from the 1940s held on the Authority's records shows a sink and possibly thralls in the room, suggesting it was used as a scullery at that time. The original single space was subdivided prior to listing in 1974 and was further reconfigured following listed building consent in 2015. The proposals to alter the modern kitchen fittings and to replace modern doorsets are acceptable and would have no impact upon historic significance. The ceiling to this room has been found to consist of lath and plaster, which is in a poor state of repair, with areas of cracking.
15. The Heritage Statement advises that it is not viable to repair the ceiling because lime plaster skim cannot be applied to the surface and the added weight of re-skimming would put further strain on the ceiling and increase the likelihood of collapse. It is therefore proposed to retain the lath and plaster in situ, but to overboard it in a manner that does not entail any fixing or other impacts upon the historic ceiling. This approach follows discussion with the Authority's Conservation Officer. Nevertheless, it would result in a low to medium negative impact to the significance of Room 15.
16. The application explains that Room 15 serves as the only tea point for multiple commercial tenants within Aldern House, as well as the Peak District Business Hub and that the deteriorated state of the ceiling does detract somewhat from its appearance. There is therefore a minor public benefit in maintaining accommodation to satisfy fee paying tenants, who in turn generate income to help fund the maintenance of the listed building.
17. It is considered that that these public benefits outweigh the minor harm caused by the impacts of overboarding this small section of 19th century lath and plaster ceiling.

Proposals for Room 16

18. The original purpose of the bay that now contains Room 16 is also unclear, however it is in an area that may be considered 'back of house'. A plan from the 1940s held by the Authority indicates that at that time the bay was subdivided in two, with a cross wall running west to east. The southernmost room was further subdivided with a perpendicular wall to form two small square-plan rooms. A Heritage Statement submitted with an earlier application suggests that the area was used as a boiler room with adjacent coal store. The plan appears to show a fireplace in the westernmost of the two smaller rooms. The only evidence of this that remains today is a large pillar in the centre of the now single space office.
19. The room has been used as an office since the National Park Authority purchased Aldern House in 1953. Plans from 1974 show part of the west to east cross wall had been removed by that time, and a corridor created at the western end to give access to two separate offices. This configuration remained until sometime after 1998, when all of the dividing walls were removed.
20. The proposal is now to return the layout to a similar configuration to that seen in 1974, with part of the west-east cross wall reinstated to form two separate offices and a new stud wall erected north-south to create an access corridor once again. The large pillar would remain in situ. Whilst a return to the more historic layout would be the optimum scenario from a heritage standpoint, it is accepted that this planform would not be viable for office use and the proposal does at least split the majority of the bay back into two, and returns the planform broadly to that when the property was listed, which is an improvement over the existing situation.

21. The other proposed works, including the creation of small fire rated electrical storage compartment, replacement of modern cupboard doors and replacement of secondary glazing with like for like, but more efficient glazing are minor in nature and would conserve and in some areas enhance the significance of the listed building. All new wiring and conduits would be surface mounted to avoid impacts on building fabric.
22. Finally, it has been confirmed that all paintwork would be breathable and in a muted heritage white colour.

Protected Species

23. By virtue of the nature of the proposed works, there would no impacts upon protected species.

Conclusion

24. In conclusion, the proposed works would bring about some modest enhancements to the significance of the listed building. The minor harm resulting from overboarding the small area of lath and plaster ceiling would be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. The proposals therefore accord with Core Strategy policies GSP3 and L3 and Development Management policies DMC3, DMC5 and DMC7 and are recommended for 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)

Nil