

ADVANCE SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT
TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE
30 March 2021

Agenda item 12

21/00219/LBC

Oakley Hall, Oakley, Market Drayton

Since the publication of the main agenda report further comments have been received and revised plans have been issued which amend the internal proposals:-

The **Conservation Advisory Working Party** has no objections to the scheme and welcomes the amendments addressing the drafting errors and clarification.

The **Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)** (in summary) refer to the Officers Report for Planning Committee on 30th March where it is reported that the SPAB's 'biggest concern were that the drawings and archive material is checked, and the building considered by an appropriately qualified professional to ensure aspirations for the building are soundly based.' While this certainly was one of their concerns it is a misunderstanding to say that is was their biggest. To clarify, the Society's main concerns with the previous application were:

- i. a lack of an appropriate assessment of significance and, therefore a lack of other information, an inability to fully understand the potential impact of the proposed works on the building's significance, and
- ii. concern that the proposals would result in harm and for which there was no clear and convincing justification.

With regard to proposed double glazing, the Officers Report states 'The Society also commented on the lack of information to enable a full assessment of the proposal for double glazing and argue that it is therefore contrary to the NPPF'. While they did argue insufficient information had been provided to enable as assessment of the existing and proposed, and this remains a valid point, they also raised the point that any energy efficiency measures should be considered on a whole house basis (i.e. not piecemeal such as this) and that the effect (thermal improvement) of installing double glazing in the two proposed window and door apertures would be negligible.

They are grateful for the clarification in respect of a former door opening in the rear elevation, it is now clear that the current proposal to reconfigure the existing 1970s window into a new window and door takes its cue from former arrangement on the left hand side of the bay/bow window. The scheme has been revised so that the cill of the proposed window is now at the same height as the neighbouring ones. The proposed arrangement is therefore an improvement in design terms to that which was proposed in the previous application. The proposal would involve some loss of historic fabric (red brick and red sandstone plinth), and the authority will need to determine if there is clear and convincing justification for this.

The Society is grateful for the additional information and clarification in respect of the internal arrangement and the proposed alterations. Their outstanding concerns remain in respect of the following:

- the proposed opening between the existing kitchen and laundry room (to form the larger kitchen and dining room);
- the partial removal of the wall to create a recess for cupboards in the existing kitchen (to become a dining room); (**Amended plans have removed this objection**)
- the demolition of part of the eighteenth century chimney breast to accommodate a new large cooker/range in the existing utility (to become the larger kitchen).

While they welcome the revision to the proposed new opening between the proposed larger kitchen and dining rooms, they maintain their *objection* the above. The argument put forward that Oakley Hall is 'robust' and that its 'large grand rooms and a large number of rooms can absorb these minor changes and adaption whilst still retaining its significance' is not one with which they fully concur. The grand proportions of rooms of such buildings is not their only or principal area of interest; their smaller rooms, and service areas, and their relationships to one another, are also important. There have already been a number losses in respect of internal walls and former layouts and the changes would weaken/further dilute the historic plan and the legibility of the building's evolution.

They suggest that if clear and convincing justification can be provided for a new opening between the proposed larger kitchen and dining rooms - that it be double door width maximum. In respect of the eighteenth century chimney breast - they suggest that it be retained as existing and that a new location is found within the kitchen for the large cooker/range. With regard to the proposed opening into the boot room, they withdraw our previously expressed concerns.

SPAB has confirmed that its concerns do not constitute a formal objection (requiring the LPA to refer the application to the Secretary of State)

Officers comments

The amended plans and information submitted with this application has helped the understanding of this proposal on an important and complex building which has undergone many alterations over the year's both internally and externally.

The proposed window on the rear elevation has been amended to lift the cill height to match the other ground floor windows. The proposed doorway is retained to allow access onto the terrace. Whilst this involves some loss of historic fabric (red brick and red sandstone plinth) it is reinstating an appropriately proportioned window and door where currently the 1970s horizontal window is causing significant harm to the appearance of the rear elevation. This will involve the loss of a small amount of historic fabric in the brickwork and plinth but the proposal will also have beneficial impacts due to better revealing the appearance of the rear elevation.

Further amended plans have been received since the report was published which omits the partial removal of the wall in the proposed dining room to create a recess for cupboards in the existing kitchen. SPAB welcomes this amendment.

The applicants' agent has provided information which states investigation work discovered that part of chimney breast was constructed in later (1970's) brickwork and after further investigation that timber shuttering and a concrete lintel was cast into place bearing on to this wall, which assisted in forming the doorway in to what was later used as a pantry. The applicants' recently engaged historic building advisor now confirms this wall is a later addition and it is the intention to carefully remove the concrete lintel and utilise the existing chimney recess. There is no harm to the building in this respect and no case to make.

The proposed opening between the existing kitchen and laundry room (to form the larger kitchen and dining room) still remains as a concern from SPAB. The wall is proposed to be removed and replaced by a folding door retaining approximately 1m of the wall at each end. The upper part of the wall and the plain moulded cornice in the proposed dining room will be retained so that the existing plan form will still be legible. (The cornice in the kitchen is a later quadrant coving).

The overall intervention in historic fabric is of a very limited nature, provides a balance between modern extended family requirements and the proposals to create usable internal spaces and re-instate external details whilst not harming the heritage significance of the building to a large degree.

In line with Historic England's advice in Conservation Principles, this conclusion can be reached because there is enough information to understand the impacts of the proposal on the significance of the building; the proposal would not materially harm the values of the place, and would be further revealed; the proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which provide a sustainable future; and the long-term consequences of the proposals will not prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

The RECOMMENDATION remains as set out in the main agenda report