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PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE OF THE MOORCOCK INN @ SLAIDBURN ROAD, WADDINGTON

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rycroft Associates Landscape Architects were commissioned in June 2014 to review and update the Visual Impact Assessment document which was commissioned in August 2012 to support earlier proposals for the redevelopment of the former Moorcock Public House at Slaidburn Road, Waddington, this earlier scheme was withdrawn.

The current proposals are for the demolition of the existing building and its replacement with seven stone built residential dwellings which will be located on the site of the former hotel building and the adjacent car park area to the West of the site. The original pub gardens which are sited to the south of the Moorcock are not included within this application.

The purpose of this report is an assessment of the Landscape and Visual Impact on the surrounding landscape of both the existing large building and the proposed new build development on the surrounding environment, having regard for landform, landscape character and setting. This report has been prepared by Sarah Rycroft Dip LA who is a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute with 35 years professional experience.

2.0 LANDSCAPE SETTING

The Moorcock Hotel site is located 2.5 kilometres to the North of Waddington Village and 5.0k from Clitheroe within the Forest of Bowland, this locality was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1964. The scenery of this region is an attractive mixture of hill and fell, moorland, woods, rivers and pasture land

The proposed development site is sited beside the B6478 road between Waddington and Slaidburn and was formerly a public house and restaurant, with some residential rooms and conference facilities and associated car parking. The pub has long been a well known local landmark and the white painted Tudor style building is immediately adjacent to the roadside at the foot of Waddington Fell with a South facing aspect offering extensive views overlooking the Ribble Valley and Pendle Hill.

The lower slopes of the hillside leading down towards the River Ribble at Clitheroe are predominantly agricultural, made up of a network of small fields with deciduous woodland and narrow lanes bordered with trees, but as the Slaidburn Road approaches the public house site the landscape character changes to more open moorland and is at the edge of the designated Open Access land.

The existing building is set into the base of the fellside with the ground rising steeply beyond the boundary from 250m up to a high point of 383m on the top of Waddington Fell.

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3.0 SITE APPEARANCE

We understand that the original use of the Moorcock Inn was as a farmstead with records of its use dating back to at least 1847. By 1925 the building had become a pub with rendered elevations and stone quoins, possibly it was rendered to make it visible for potential customers or to disguise the use of non local materials. By the 1930's the mock Tudor additions had been incorporated and the buildings were extended and adapted further in the 1970's all of these actions progressively increased the visual impact of the buildings within the landscape.

The existing building has a large car park to the West accessed by a wide roadway which also forms the access route to the driveway leading up to a large detached residential property known as Moorcock House. This property is set at a higher level than the hotel buildings but is also white rendered and appears to have been built in the early to mid 20th Century. The grounds of Moorcock House have extensive tree planting and are substantially screened from the pub site with trees and an evergreen hedge. It is not possible to see Moorcock House from any public rights of way as a result of this well vegetated setting despite its higher position.

To the front of the public house there are gardens which have been neglected since the closure of the business but still contains areas of ornamental tree and shrub planting broken up with lawns, paths and paved areas which would have provided attractive seating areas to complement the public house and would have been well used by customers taking advantage of the beautiful views. Although there are some trees planted along the outer boundary of these gardens they are mainly bordered with lower shrubs and light foliaged trees, presumably to prevent the pub from being hidden from the view of potential customers driving up the road from Waddington.

The pub car park was also landscaped in the past with several island beds planted with shrubs and Birch trees, the majority of these are in a poor condition due to neglect and are of negligible retention value. To the front of the car park is a more densely enclosed lawned garden area which possibly was a private garden for the landlord. The Southern boundary of the property is very well treed providing a dense screen which precludes any views of the car park area and the adjacent property Moorcock House from outside the site.

To the North of the site where the ground rises steeply up towards Waddington Fell, there is a belt of mixed deciduous trees sited along the stone boundary wall along with a copse of birch trees beyond on the slope leading up to the open fellside these block any views from the hillside into the site. As the building and its surroundings are nestled into the base of the slope they cannot be viewed from the North and the building only comes into view when travelling South down the B6478 as the gradient begins to level out.

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4.0 VISIBILITY OF DEVELOPMENT SITE WITHIN LANDSCAPE

Although the Moorcock Inn building is large, brightly painted and appears to be very prominent when approaching it from the immediate South, the road further away is tree lined and the landscape undulating so that the building is actually only visible for approximately 1.0 kilometre as the site is approached. It cannot be seen from any other highways with the exception of a short section of the minor trackway Browsholme Road which serves 4 residential properties namely Mitchells, New o Nook, Highfield and Summit House which are set within 500-750 metres from the existing Moorcock building. It is possible that the pub building can be seen from some upper floor windows of Mitchells and from the upper windows of the side elevations of New o Nook and Highfield, but there are certainly no significant views from these properties located to the West & South West of the planned development site.

To the South and East it would appear that none of the farms and houses in the vicinity have any view of the site as they are either enclosed with trees or set below any sight line.

There are a number of public footpaths and bridleways in the vicinity of the site with one pathway cutting diagonally across the field to the South East running from Cuttock Clough Farm, where there is a clear view of the existing pub building along the route of the footpath for approximately 350metres.

Public Rights of Way running across Bradford Fell would initially appear from the Ordnance Survey Map to afford clear views of the site, however when the routes are walked there is only one 200m section of the path running North West from Moor Lane and a 300m section of the spur pathway heading East West where there is any view of the existing building. The undulating land form and strong network of dry stone walls prevent more than very fleeting views of the pub building, despite the fact that the building is painted white and is a large single mass. It is also possible that there will be a more distant fleeting view of the building from the highest point on the bridleway which runs along the edge of the plantation on the top of Grindleton Fell but this is at a considerable distance from the building and set below the horizon.

The gardens and car park surrounding the Moorcock are completely screened from view from any public viewpoints by the natural landform and trees and other vegetation within and surrounding the site.

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4.1 POTENTIAL VISIBILITY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed redevelopment of the site consists of the construction of 3 detached stone dwellings, two pairs of semi-detached properties of which one pair will be positioned on the footprint of the original Moorcock building and its adjacent car park. The area of gardens below the access drive will not be developed and these will provide a good landscape buffer to the South of the development.

The most concentrated grouping of new buildings will sited be on the existing building footprint and these are laid out around a paved courtyard with a further 2 detached dwellings located to the West within the car park zone. This grouping of new buildings could be said to reflect the character of a farmstead with a farmhouse and associated agricultural buildings set around a courtyard with the outlying detached buildings appearing to be barns.

The new buildings will be constructed of local materials, stone and slate with stone boundary walls to their perimeters which will be softened with native mixed hedgerows. Additional tree planting will be implemented to supplement the shelterbelt of trees along the northern boundary and within the gardens to all the planned properties.

Detached property numbers 1 and 2 have large plots which allows the opportunity for an additional shelter belt of native trees to be set to the South of the new buildings. This will provide effective visual screening for them and also be a useful windbreak for the dwellings in this exposed hillside location.

New tree and shrub planting will also be carried out around the group of buildings clustered around the courtyard and will consist of a mixture of native hedgerows and trees along with ornamental planting to complement the new buildings.

Hard materials i.e. the driveway, footpaths and courtyard etc. will be surfaced with local paving stone setts and gravels in character with the local materials which are planned to be used on the buildings.

Details of the proposed landscape treatment will be included within the landscape scheme Dwg No 685.1 which will be submitted to support the development proposals.

4.2 CONCLUSION

Although the existing building on the site is a large structure it is not seen on the skyline from any viewpoint and it is well enclosed with mature vegetation screening it from the majority of viewpoints. Careful siting and design of the proposed new buildings will ensure that they are significantly less visible than the existing building and any views of the site will be of a sympathetic group of buildings in which blend into the local scene.

The proposed new houses will be significantly smaller than the original Moorcock building. They will be traditionally styled and stone built using locally sourced building materials, which will be more appropriate to the local vernacular than their predecessor. The grouping of the houses has been designed so that from a distance they could be read as a single farmstead. The new houses will be set into extensive gardens with new tree and shrub planting and enclosed with local gritstone walls backed by mixed native hedges which will ensure that they are well screened and will have very limited visible impact within the landscape.

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5.0 LANDSCAPE MITIGATION MEASURES TO FURTHER REDUCE ANY IMPACT OF THE PLANNED DEVELOPMENT AND TO ENHANCE THE SCHEME

The following mitigation measures have been considered when preparing the designs for the setting to the proposed scheme to reduce the impact of the development and to ensure its sensitive integration into the natural landscape. Details of the landscape proposals will be included within landscape proposals dwg No685.1 which will be submitted shortly to support the planning submission:

- Plant additional trees within site to reduce impact of buildings and reinforce screening effect of existing shelter belt
- Ensure that as many trees can be retained as practically possible.
- Supplement tree planting along Eastern section of Southern boundary to clients ownership creating partial screening effect afforded to rest of site.
- Define external plot boundaries with local stone walls backed with mixed native hedges, internal boundaries between plots to be a combination of stone walls, fences and hedges.
- Create informal grass verge along Slaidburn Road where possible to reflect local roadside character and form green corridor.
- Plant native hedgerow trees and shrubs along the Slaidburn Road roadside boundaries to soften the impact of the boundary walls and integrate the scheme into local environment.
- Plant native trees and shrubs wherever possible within site.
- Use local stone for building works and paving to site.
- Design the landscape setting in simple style using local materials to avoid creating suburban effect.
- Carry out tree and shrub planting along plot boundaries to soften boundaries and provide screening between properties.

Report prepared by Sarah Rycroft principal of Rycroft Associates - 3rd September 2012 and updated 19th June 2014.

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