

Planning statement

In support of

**PROPOSED KITCHEN EXTENSION (Freemasons Arms) AND CHANGE OF USE
OF 4&6 VICARAGE FOLD**

at

THE FREEMASONS ARMS and 4&6, VICARAGE FOLD,

WISWELL,

BB7 9DF

April 2016

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNER

Director: J Dickman BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI FRGS FRICS

Company No 6874283, a company registered in England and Wales **VAT No 152 2106 58**

Registered office: 11 Riverside, The Embankment Business Park, Vale Road, Heaton Mersey, Stockport, SK4 3GN

Introduction

We act on behalf of the applicants, Borton Ltd, who own the above mentioned properties that now form this planning application.

We have visited the site and its environs. The Freemasons Arms is a public house and restaurant located on Vicarage Fold within the village of Wiswell in the Ribble Valley. It lies within the designated boundary of the Wiswell Conservation Area as defined by Ribble Valley Borough Council.

A separate heritage statement and a design and access statement (D&A) accompany this proposal.

This statement will look at the planning and economic merits of this rural business.

Planning History

We have undertaken an online search of previous applications on the subject site. No previous applications were found for Nos4&6. However the following have been found for the Freemasons Arms and/or the joint site.

In July 2015 an application (LPA ref No.3/2015/0604) was made for a kitchen extension to The Freemasons Arms and change of use of Nos4&6 Vicarage Fold to 4 bedrooms as hotel accommodation from their current use as 2x 3bed terraced houses. This was refused on 15.1.16 for the following reasons:

- 1) *The proposed extensions are dominant and incongruous from their design, materials and the obscuring of important and defining architectural elements and result in the loss or alteration of important historic walling, boundary enclosure and garden structures. This is harmful to the character and appearance of Wiswell Conservation Area and the setting of Vicarage House (Grade I listed) and the Barn approximately 50m north west of Vicarage House (Grade II listed). This is contrary to Key Statement EN5 and Policies DME4 and DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 17 (conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance), Paragraph 60 (reinforce local distinctiveness), Paragraph 131 (development sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and positively contributing to local character and distinctiveness), Paragraph 132 (great weight to conservation) and Paragraph 137 (new development should enhance or better reveal significance).*
- 2) *The proposal would be detrimental to the residential amenity of adjacent occupiers by virtue of an increase in overlooking and noise disturbance and as such would be contrary to policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (Adopted Version).*

Other previous applications on the property are:

Application LPA ref No.3/2010/0234/P which was for retrospective change of use of two first floor rooms from residential accommodation to a licensed area at The Freemasons Arms. Approved 19 March 2012.

Application LPA ref No 3/2008/0140/P which was for proposed new toilets and store and first floor garden room at The Freemasons. Approved 18 June 2008.

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We also note in the committee report on 3/2015/0604 the following:

‘6/10/52 – proposed additions. Planning permission granted 23 May 1949.’ It does not say which property and assuming it was implemented so given only the pub has extensions we assume it is the Freemasons.

Policy

This planning statement will consider current national and local policy relevant to the site but will only consider it from the rural enterprise and economic aspects as the heritage statement deals with the heritage specifics though for completeness the relevant documents are noted herein.

The application site lies within the Wiswell Conservation Area and is noted as Buildings of Townscape Merit. The Conservation Area is designated under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural and/or historical interest.

As well as the Act the relevant national and local planning policies are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Guidance (NPPG) and at the local level the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (adopted Dec 2014); the Wiswell Conservation Area plan and appraisal and management guidance note which all date from 2005/6.

NPPF

Paragraph 7 of NPPF notes: ‘There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.’ Para 8 goes on to note: ‘These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.’

Paragraph 14 of NPPF states a presumption is in favour sustainable development and that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Para 17 of NPPF sets out core planning principals including:

- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development
- secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity
- supporting thriving rural communities
- conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable
- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Para 28 of NPPF deals with supporting a prosperous rural economy:

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- 'support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside.
- promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.'

Para 70 also notes LPAs should guard against unnecessary loss of local services and facilities

Para 131 of NPPF states:

'In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'

Para 134 of NPPF notes:

'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.'

Para 186 states: 'Local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development.'

NPPG

NPPG notes: 'Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use to as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.'

Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2014

RVBC Core Strategy at DS2 reflects para 14 of NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and EN5 on Heritage Assets reflects paras 17 and 131 of NPPF.

At EC1 of RVBC CS on Business and Employment Development we note:

'Developments that contribute to farm diversification, strengthening of the wider rural and village economies or that promote town centre vitality and viability will be supported in principle.

Proposals that result in the loss of existing employment sites to other forms of development will need to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact upon the local economy.'

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We note EC3 encourages note that proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged.

Policy DMG1 lists the general considerations for development in relation to design, access, amenity, environment, infrastructure etc.

Policy DME4 (Protecting Heritage Assets) of the adopted RVBC Core Strategy states in respect of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings thus:

'IN CONSIDERING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS THE COUNCIL WILL MAKE A PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF HERITAGE ASSETS AND THEIR SETTINGS.

1. CONSERVATION AREAS

PROPOSALS WITHIN, OR AFFECTING VIEWS INTO AND OUT OF, OR AFFECTING THE SETTING OF A CONSERVATION AREA WILL BE REQUIRED TO CONSERVE AND WHERE APPROPRIATE ENHANCE ITS CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE AND THOSE ELEMENTS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

THIS SHOULD INCLUDE CONSIDERATIONS AS TO WHETHER IT CONSERVES AND ENHANCES THE SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE AREA AS SET OUT IN THE RELEVANT CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL.

DEVELOPMENT WHICH MAKES A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION AND CONSERVES AND ENHANCES THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AREA IN TERMS OF ITS LOCATION, SCALE, SIZE, DESIGN AND MATERIALS AND EXISTING BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, TREES AND OPEN SPACES WILL BE SUPPORTED.

IN THE CONSERVATION AREAS THERE WILL BE A PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF ELEMENTS THAT MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA.

2. LISTED BUILDINGS AND OTHER BUILDINGS OF SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE INTEREST

ALTERATIONS OR EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS OR BUILDINGS OF LOCAL HERITAGE INTEREST, OR DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ON SITES WITHIN THEIR SETTING WHICH CAUSE HARM TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSET WILL NOT BE SUPPORTED.

ANY PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OR LOSS OF IMPORTANT HISTORIC FABRIC FROM LISTED BUILDINGS WILL BE REFUSED UNLESS IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES EXIST.'

Policy DMB1 supports business growth and the local economy and allows for the expansion of existing firms on their existing site provided it conforms to other policies in the plan and there are no environmental consequences.

Wiswell Conservation Area Plan 2006

The Wiswell Conservation Area Plan 2006 (WCAP) shows the application site as lying within the Conservation Area. The buildings which form the basis of this particular application consist of The Freemasons Arms and neighbouring properties No's 6 and 4 Vicarage Fold. None of these buildings are 'Listed' buildings; however they are defined as 'buildings of townscape merit' due to the positive contribution made by them to the local streetscape and character of the village. The terrace including Nos 4 & 6 are also shown on the WCAP as dwellings for 'proposed Article 4 Direction' though we understand no such Direction has been made.

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We note that para 5.6 of RVBC CS states that there is a rolling programme of updating Conservation Area Appraisals, though Wiswell's still remains 10 years out of date.

Discussion

National and local planning policy supports and encourages thriving rural businesses. In addition being a public house the Freemasons Arms is also a social hub in the village so meets these policy criteria.

NPPF notes the importance of facilities such as pubs in rural areas to their economic, social and environmental well being. The proposal is a sustainable development at the heart of the village of Wiswell. These factors need to be given due consideration when assessing this application and the balance between these and the heritage issues needs to be properly weighed and considered. This was not apparent in the officer's report to committee on LPA ref No.3/2015/0604.

The Freemasons Arms is one of the few rural businesses in Wiswell. It is long established as a public house and is now a successful gastro pub. This application has been made to ensure the continuing success of the business which is further demonstrated by the fact they have been the Good Food Guide best pub in the UK in both 2014 and 2015.

The need for the kitchen extension arises from the fact the existing kitchen is very small and food preparation is currently carried out in the kitchen of No.6 then cooked in the pub kitchen. This is unsatisfactory as noted by your environmental health team. There will not be any changes to the cooking area only the benefit to the business of having the preparation area within the same space.

For the avoidance of doubt there will be no change to the current kitchen extraction machinery or position of said extractors. Also as the extension to the kitchen is for food preparation only, it is not cooking area. Therefore there will be no change in regard to noise or odours in respect of the kitchen.

Having the larger kitchen space also assists in space for food storage and thus reduces the number of deliveries to the site from 6 days a week to 3 days a week.

We note that LCC as the highway authority had no objection to the previous application (LPA ref No.3/2015/0604) and given the amended scheme has not changed the kitchen area or accommodation to that proposed previously we assume their response would reflect this.

We have considered the previous reasons for refusal in submitting this revised application and the response to refusal reason 1 on LPA ref No.3/2015/0604 in regard to the details of how the design and materials take account of the existing stone walls and continue the style of the existing kitchen extension across the back of No.6 at ground floor level only, are covered in detail in the D&A and the heritage statements accompanying this application. There is an existing fire escape over the roof of the existing kitchen extension from first floor. This will remain though the steps will be realigned to take account of the extension behind No.6.

The heritage statement sets out how the revised scheme addresses the issue of harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the 2 Listed Buildings identified on the south west side of Vicarage Fold and concludes in relation to the distinctions set out in paragraphs 133 and 134 of the Framework this is considered to be close to the lower end of the range of 'less than substantial harm'.

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Refusal reason 2 has been addressed as access to the new hotel rooms in Nos. 4&6 will be only via the front door of No.6. There will not be any access to the proposed rooms in Nos.4&6 across the kitchen roof so no noise disturbance or increased overlooking to adjacent residents' amenity. Nos. 4&6 are currently 2 x 3 bed houses whereas this proposal converts these into 4 double bedrooms with en suites. Overall there will be fewer people occupying Nos 6 & 4 than at present.

Conclusion

The proposal complies with the requisite national and local policies.

It will enable a successful economic use to continue and also keep Buildings of Townscape Merit in viable use.

It supports the economic, social and environmental needs of the local community.

It is compliant with NPPF offering sustainable development which preserves and enhances the environment and does not detract from the setting of the identified Listed Buildings nor from the Wiswell Conservation Area.

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