

23 July 2013

Mr J Macholc
Head of Planning Services
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2RA

Dear John

**PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATIONS FOR CONVERSION
OF OUTBUILDINGS TO RESIDENTIAL (FIVE UNITS)
EAVES HALL, MOOR LANE, WEST BRADFORD
3/2013/0110 and 0111**

I write further to our meeting with your colleagues, Adrian Dowd and Gill Atkinson, your recent visit to the site and our conversation regarding the scheme on 18 July 2013.

Copies of revised floor plans, elevations and site layout plans have been submitted to your offices electronically. Please accept these as formal substitutions to the previously submitted plans. You will note that the revisions to the scheme are as we discussed. In particular, they relate to the deletion of the front extension to the motor house building and deletion of indicative planting within the courtyard area and to the rear of the motor house building. I trust you will find the revised design to appear appropriate to the character of the building, demonstrate continued subservience of the outbuildings to the main Hall and avoid any impression of disruption to the visual link between the Hall and its outbuildings.

Other matters were raised at the 10 July 2013 meeting with your colleagues. Those matters are addressed below.

Neighbour Amenity Considerations

In the light of Gill's comments, I can confirm that deliveries to the Hall are carefully organised with suppliers. This is not only to ensure that necessary supplies are in place at the required times, but also to ensure that there are no 'clashes' with functions being held at the Hall. I can confirm that the close working relationship with suppliers will continue and that they have been instructed to make all deliveries at the front of the Hall. Not only is this rationalisation of delivery arrangements beneficial operationally, but will ensure that future

residents of the units to be converted would not have their amenities affected in any way by deliveries to the Hall.

Gill also sought confirmation as to whether visitors to functions etc at the Hall would have reason to enter into the rear courtyard (ie that serving the converted coach house and motor house buildings) or be in the vicinity of those buildings. I can confirm that there would be no reason for those attending functions etc to enter such areas. Rather, all attendees to the Hall would enter the Hall via the front entrance (ie well away from the buildings to be converted) and, even when using external areas at the Hall, attendees would be within the terrace and formal garden areas to the south east of the front face of the Hall or on / alongside the bowling green to the south west of the Hall (see comment below regarding Premises Licence). As such, there would be no cause or reason for attendees at functions to impact upon the amenities future residents can reasonably expect to enjoy.

I can further advise that the Eaves Hall premises are subject to various licences under other legislation, issued by the Council or other authorities. For instance, a Premises Licence relating to various activities such as entertainment, dance, music, and alcohol sales, as issued by Ribble Valley Borough Council. As I am sure you will appreciate, the Premises Licence carefully regulates these various activities in the interest of both public safety and (of greater relevance to the planning application) wider amenity considerations. Of particular note is that the Premises Licence requires any outdoor entertainment to ordinarily finish by 21.30 hours and the area within which such activity may take place is restricted to the bowling green and terrace to the south west of the Hall. Thus, the existing terms of the Premises Licence would serve to protect the amenities of any future residents within the proposed conversions. In turn, there should be no adverse impact on the viability of the continuing hotel business at Eaves Hall by reason of the presence of the occupiers of the residential conversions. Indeed, if that were an issue it would have already come to light as a result of the hotel's proximity to the greater number of existing houses on the opposite side of Eaves Hall Lane.

Gill also sought information about the existing extractor vent from the Hall's kitchens on the building's Moor Lane façade. The extractor is positioned away from the units to be converted and does not face them (it does, though, face existing houses on the opposite side of Moor Lane from which there have been no complaints). I can advise that the unit comprises of 1no. 560 Axial fan with bespoke ducting and a box type cowl. The unit includes 4 no. 595 x 595 x 20 mesh grease filters. The airflow rate is 1.125m³ per second. A contract is in place for necessary maintenance and cleaning of the unit on a six monthly basis. I trust the information is sufficient for Gill's purposes.

Background to Application

A considerable amount of supporting information was provided with the original application, including a Design and Access Statement, Heritage Statement and a Planning Statement. However, at the 10 July 2013 meeting Adrian sought further commentary on why the proposals are part of a sensible business approach to the Hall and hotel, which would assist with (and not detract from) its continued operation as such.

In this respect I can advise for that the rationale for the proposed conversion of the ancillary buildings to the rear of Eaves Hall is as follows. Very simply, the proposal can be explained by a wish to ensure that all of the buildings at the site are provided with a productive use which would contribute to their maintenance and upkeep (there would be no other reason to invest in the outbuildings, they would remain without use and continue to deteriorate as has happened with previous owners over many years).

On purchasing Eaves Hall in the autumn of 2010 James Warburton was faced with the problem of a failing country house hotel business that occupied a magnificent main Eaves Hall building with several less than magnificent ancillary buildings, occupying a 13 acre site. Unfortunately, when considered as a whole, Eaves Hall could not stack up financially. There was too much real estate on the site that did not generate sufficient profit. Peel Cottage and the Motor House contributed nothing at all. The four bedrooms at first floor within the coach house block contributed very little as these were the worst of the 34 bedrooms in the hotel. They are accessed by the incongruous 1960's 'bridge' and are always the last bedrooms to be filled and therefore the least economically viable to refurbish.

The challenge was to find a way forward that would allow the outbuildings to contribute to the overall business and not to be a continuing drain on resources / a debt burden. Eaves Hall now operates as an exclusive use venue for weddings, parties and celebrations, conferences and other corporate activities. Although these are still early days the performance of the business, following a significant investment in the building, gardens and grounds, has been very encouraging. The calendar year 2013 will see Eaves Hall host 140 individual events, 2014 has a target of 200+ events, some 95 have already been confirmed and booked. The economic viability of the business and Hall has largely been secured for the short term, which can only be excellent news for local heritage. The medium and long term security can only be achieved by continual investment, internally and externally to ensure that the business remains at the top of the tree.

As the business is grown, Eaves Hall's appetite for cash will no doubt remain as strong as ever. There is a need to plan accordingly and invest the money that Eaves Hall generates in the specific elements of the Eaves Hall fabric that are beneficial to the core business and not let it be diverted into other non-core Eaves Hall fabric projects.

The ancillary buildings at Eaves Hall are however in a poor condition, internally and externally. They require a significant investment of time and money to bring the 'back of house' of the Hall up to the standard that most observers would anticipate if not expect. A planning permission for conversion of the outbuildings would create value for these buildings. In the case of the stable block it would create value where there is very little. In the case of the motor house, which currently has a residential flat at first floor the proposal would enhance the value of the building, not just by the addition of an extra dwelling but by allowing for its restoration and significantly enhancing the look and appeal of the existing building. That productive use can only be beneficial to the overall Hall. More significantly, once value has been created in the outbuildings the overall business would be able to tap into that to provide the funds to carry out and complete the conversion works without restricting the funds available for the ongoing investment in the core business at Eaves Hall and the wider business operations of the James' Places group.

With regard to the long term future economic viability of Eaves Hall, the outbuildings currently generate no revenue for the business and without significant reason for investment that is not going to change. They, however, continue to cost the business money to insure, secure and rudimentarily maintain. A residential conversion would relieve this burden as the buildings would be self supporting. It would leave the overall business in a healthier condition, ie more viable, allowing other investment at Eaves Hall to more readily take place. An example of how such future investment might benefit the character and appearance of the Hall would be replacement of the kitchen extraction system. I can assure you that the business is looking at alternatives to allow the present ducting system to be removed. However, that would be at a cost to the business, potentially a very large expense, with little or no direct benefit to the business. That money has to come from somewhere. Thus, the need to examine and pursue all potential sources of revenue / value to the business, eg from such as the proposed residential conversion of the coach and motor houses.

The completion of the 'back of house' refurbishment would also benefit the main business simply by improving the outlook from several bedrooms and the overall feel good factor of knowing that the site looks as good from behind as it does from the front.

I should point out that the proposed scheme has some distinct benefits. In particular wholly unsympathetic past alterations to the outbuildings would be reversed, the courtyard area tidied and continuing deterioration of the outbuildings halted. Most notable would be the removal of the visually incongruous 1960's link bridge between the main Hall and the stable block and replacement of the inappropriate upvc windows.

As a final point, I should make it clear that we held a pre-application consultation event with local residents and there have been no objections made to the scheme from local residents / the Parish Council.

I trust you will find the further information / scheme revisions to be sufficiently supported for you to reach a favourable decision.

Should you require any further information, or wish to discuss any matters arising please contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Mike Gee

cc: Adrian Dowd, Conservation Officer RVBC
Gill Atkinson, Environmental Health Officer, RVBC