Ref: 0683

Design & Access Statement
Old Grove House
St Barnabas Road
Reading
RG4 8RA

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RIBA Chartered Practice

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0683	Old Grove House	1	May 2022	KH	SD	RH

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The Report

The Subject Building/Heritage Asset: Old Grove House
St Barnabas Road
Reading
RG4 8RA

Instruction(s):

Production of Design & Access Statement to support a planning application for a ground floor limecrete floor, air-dam, and reopening of existing internal doorway within Old Grove House. All works undertaken in line with Janus Conservation's terms and conditions.

Introduction

The Author

Katherine Harrison, the author of this report, is a fully accredited member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), holds a Master's degree in Building's History from Cambridge University, a Postgraduate Certificate in Historic Conservation from Oxford Brookes University, and a Bachelors in Fine Art from Goldsmiths University of London.

Prior to her employment at Janus Conservation, she worked for 7 years as a specialist Conservation Officer advising on all aspects of the management of historic buildings and areas at South Northants District Council.

The Site

Old Grove House is a Grade II* listed property located within the suburbs of Reading. The property sits on the eastern side of St Barnabas Road alongside the separately listed barn to the north-east (Grade II). Old Grove House dates from the early 17th century however was restored and altered in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Figure 1: Aerial view of Old Grove House, approx. site outlined in red

Proposals

Overview

It is proposed to integrate an insulated limecrete floor throughout the ground floor removing the concrete floor which is retaining significant moisture in the structure. It is further proposed to integrate underfloor heating, which will manage the environment effectively. An air dam will also be inserted around the eastern and southern perimeters of the house.

Internally a former doorway is proposed to be re-opened to re-instate an original feature and form to the building.

Layout

The location is the ground floor of Old Grove House, Reading. The works will have no effect on neighbouring properties and are largely obscured from public viewing.

The proposals seek to have as little visual impact on the building as possible whilst giving sufficient amenity to its internal spaces to transform the property into a comfortable residence.

Design and Scale

The design is to remove the existing concrete floor, salvage (where appropriate) historic tiles and timbers, lay an insulated limecrete floor, re-lay the salvaged materials, and introduce a natural stone tile where necessary. An air dam is also being proposed around the eastern and southern periphery of the house.

Internally a former doorway is proposed to be re-opened. The proposed door will be in a 'secret bookshelf' style which is a contemporary 21st century take on the 'secret openings' found elsewhere within the house.

Structure

The works do not a structural engineer.

Access

There will be no changes to access arrangements for the property or building as a result of this development. There will be a reopening of a former doorway in the northern part of the property. This will allow for internal access between the living room and technical room.

Use

The proposed use is for residential purposes.

Amount

The proposals will not increase the overall floorspace.

Landscaping

No trees will be impacted by the proposed works

Ecology

See associated Initial Bay Survey and Preliminary Roost Assessment also submitted with this application. No bats were observed inside the principal building during the survey however evidence of bat droppings within the central loft. Two bird nests were found within the buildings on site. The proposed works are not considered to have any impact on the ecology of the site.

Sustainability

The works will be in-line with current building regulations. This will improve and maintain the EPC value (Energy Performance Certificate) for the property.

Conclusion

The proposals have been designed in a sympathetic manner with the aim of enhancing the building fabric, retaining the building's character, and meeting the client's brief of addressing the damp issue within the property whilst achieving contemporary, comfortable living standards.

It is considered that the proposals are in accordance with guidance set out in the following polices outlined overleaf.

Appendix D: Local and National Relevant Planning Policies & Legislation

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) ("the Act") contains legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas. The Act sets out the legislative framework within which development affecting listed buildings and conservation areas must be considered by local planning authorities, upon which it imposes a general duty in the exercise of planning functions. Sections 16(2) and 66(1) direct the local planning authority when considering whether to grant consent for any works or development to a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 72(1) imposes the same duty in respect of a conservation area and directs that special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF), the Historic England 'Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide' and the Historic England Good Practice Advice documents (advice notes 2 and 3) are relevant to the content of this report and the consideration of any application. The government objective is that heritage assets (which includes listed buildings and their settings) should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 16 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. This states that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

Paragraph 194 states that when determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on that significance.

Paragraph 195 identifies that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 197 sets out that in determining 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 makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 199 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 201 states that where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Planning for the Historic Environment Practice Guide (English Heritage, 2010)

Although the NPPF superseded Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5) as Government Policy, the policies in the NPPF are very similar and the

intent is the same, so the Practice Guide remains almost entirely relevant and useful in the application of the NPPF.

Paragraph 58 of the Practice Guide and the Historic England Good Practice Notes 2 and 3 advocate the methods of investigating the significance of a heritage asset. In particular it advocates that three steps should be carried out when preparing an assessment including:

- Check the development plan, main local and national records including the relevant Historic Environment Record, statutory and local lists, the Heritage Gateway, the NMR, and other relevant statutory sources of information that would provide an understanding of the history of the place and the value the asset holds for society.
- Examine the asset and its setting.
- Consider whether the nature of the affected significance requires an expert assessment to gain the necessary level of understanding.

A number of other steps are suggested as appropriate, subject to the nature of the asset and the proposed works.

In the case of this application the records which have been investigated include:

- The Heritage Gateway.
- The planning records and planning policy Documents held by Westminster Council
- Historic England Website

Historic England Good Practice Advice Notes and Guidance Notes

Advice Note 2 titled 'Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment' and Advice Note 3 titled 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' are relevant to the consideration of this application.

Advice Note 2 highlights that there are 4 types of Conservation Principles that an asset may hold, which are aesthetic, communal, historic, and evidential value. The Assessment of Significance at Section 5.0 identifies the value attached to the setting and significance of the surrounding heritage assets.

Advice Note 3 in relation to the impact of development on the setting of listed buildings, highlights the steps which should be taken when assessing the significance of heritage assets. The curtilage, character and context of a heritage asset must be taken into consideration during assessment. This has been carefully considered as part of the assessment provided.

Reading Local Plan Adopted November 2019

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Historic parks and gardens; and
- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those

elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:

- Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;
- Restoring original building features;
- Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;
- Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees,
- particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;
- Improving signage and street furniture;
- Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;
- Sympathetic landscaping and planting;
- Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;
- Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;
- Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);
b. Sensitivity to historic context;
c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);

d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.