

**Report to District Development
Management Committee**



Report Reference: DEV-023-2015/16
Date of meeting: 20 April 2016

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject: Listed Building Application EPF/0018/16 – Gunpowder Mill, Powdermill Lane/Beaulieu Drive, Waltham Abbey – Grade II* Listed Building Application for the conversion and alteration and extension of several listed buildings to provide guest accommodation and classrooms, as part of the redevelopment of the site as a residential centre for outdoor recreation and activity.

Responsible Officer: Graham Courtney (01992 564228)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendation:

That consent is granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this notice.
Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
- 2 The development hereby permitted will be completed strictly in accordance with the approved drawings these being those set out in the Drawing Register (Sheets 1 to 4) submitted with the application.
Reason: To ensure the proposal is built in accordance with the approved drawings.
- 3 Notwithstanding approved drawings, samples of the types and details of colours of all the fencing, hardstanding, and signage shall be submitted for approval by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works
- 4 Dining Hall extension to L168:
 - Details of the types and colours of the external finishes of the extension to L168 shall be submitted for approval by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development, and the development shall be implemented in accordance with such approved details.
 - A sample panel of brickwork for the extension to L168, minimum size 900 x 900mm, shall be built on site prior to commencement and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works.
 - Additional drawings that show details of proposed new window, doors, eaves, verges, and cills of the extension to L168, by section and elevation at scales between 1:20 and 1:1 as appropriate, shall be submitted to and approved by

the Local Planning Authority in writing prior to the commencement of the works.

- **Notwithstanding annotations on the approved drawings, fascias, soffits and bargeboards of the extension to L168 shall be timber unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority**

5. Notwithstanding annotations on the approved drawings, all new rainwater goods and soil and vent pipes shall be of black painted cast iron unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

6. Additional drawings that show details of proposed new internal doors, at scales between 1:20 and 1:1 as appropriate, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing prior to their installation.

Report

The Site:

1. The 'red lined' application site covers two separate areas of the existing site – being the Queens Mead/Eastern Flank area (the southern section), which contains the majority of the Listed Buildings on the site, and the New Hill Area (the north-eastern section), which lies immediately to the east of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.
2. The whole site is located within a conservation area that was specifically designated around the entire Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills (WARGM) site due to the historic significance.
3. The north-eastern section of the application site (New Hill) contains several small process buildings that were previously related to the construction of the adjacent nitro-glycerine factory in 1940. None of these buildings are listed and all are in a poor condition. This area contains a substantial lake that was created from a 'borrow pit' that provided clean soil during the earlier decontamination works of the southern site. The New Hill area was not part of the original WARGM site, however it was annexed from the surrounding farmland during the Second World War.
4. The two sections of the application site are dissected by the SAM (Scheduled Ancient Monument) and SSSI. (Site of Special Scientific Interest) This does not form part of the application site

Description of Proposal:

5. The proposal is a joint application made on behalf of both PGL Travel Ltd. and the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills Charitable Foundation Limited (hereafter referred to as the WARGM Trust)..
6. This application is for listed Building Consent for conversion of several existing Listed Buildings to provide further guest accommodation and classrooms,

7. All the existing listed former gunpowder incorporating mills to the east of Queen's Mead are vacant and unused with the exception of L157. Four of these (L145, L148, L153 and L149) are proposed for refurbishment, conversion and use as guest accommodation, while the remaining listed former gunpowder incorporating mill (L157 – Grade I listed) will remain as a display space and teaching rooms with shared use by PGL and the existing visitor attraction. Building L134 (former cordite press house, later laboratories) will also be used for additional teaching rooms.
8. The converted former gunpowder incorporating mill buildings (L145, L148, L149 and L153) would provide 176 guest bed spaces and 21 teacher bed spaces. In addition each building would incorporate a lounge area for teachers (except L148) and storage space together with plant rooms. Listed building L134 (Building G) comprises a listed former cordite press house, which would be converted to provide classrooms.
9. At the southern end of Queens Mead, building L168 (Grade II* listed) will be converted to provide a reception area, administrative offices, meeting room, first aid room, IT room, kitchenette and WC facilities for PGL. A new extension is proposed to the east of this building to provide further facilities for PGL, including a dining hall, kitchen, indoor activity space and WCs. This would be erected on the slab of an earlier 1950s building that was later demolished. Buildings L176 and L177 (Grade II* listed) are currently used as a café and WCs and would be used to provide a lounge for use by PGL teachers and staff. The adjoining buildings (L180 and L182) will be used to provide an equipment store and maintenance facility for PGL. Building L167 (Grade II listed) will be used to provide a shop and 'chill-out' zone for PGL guests. This building comprises approximately 202m² of gross floorspace and is a single volume space, which would be unaltered as part of this proposal. At the northern end of Queens Mead buildings L119 and L122 (which are not listed), and buildings L133 and L136 (which are Grade II listed), will be refurbished and converted to provide living accommodation for PGL senior staff members.
10. Several small unlisted buildings at the northern end of Queens Mead are proposed for reuse as equipment stores, hazardous materials store and WCs whilst other small buildings of low heritage value that are in poor condition would be demolished. Building L185, which is currently used by the visitor attraction and houses the restored powder barge, will remain with the WARGM Trust and would continue to be part of the visitor attraction.
11. A full list of the listed building on the Queens Mead/Eastern Flank area of the site and their existing and intended uses is as follows:
 - L133 - Magazine - later propellant store (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Senior staff accommodation building
 - L134 - Cordite press house (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Teaching rooms
 - L135 - Tray magazine (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - senior staff accommodation
 - L136 - Remote accumulator tower (Grade II Listed) – currently a 'Wildlife tower' (part of existing visitor attraction): Proposed use - Senior staff accommodation
 - L141 - Sorting house (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Equipment store

- L145 - Group F Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
- L148 - Group G Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II* Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
- L149 - Group E Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II* Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
- L153 - Group D Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II* Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
- L154 - Expense magazine (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Equipment store
- L157 - Group C Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade I Listed) – currently exhibition space and classrooms: Proposed use - Teaching rooms
- L165 - Mineral jelly store (Grade II Listed) – currently storage: Proposed use - Equipment store
- L167 - Charcoal store, later converted into reel drying stove (Grade II listed) – currently exhibition space: Proposed use - Shop and ‘chill out’ zone for guests
- L168 - Engine house and mechanics’ shop (Grade II* listed) – Currently the “Mad Lab”, Rocket Vault and exhibition space (part of existing visitor attraction): Proposed use - Reception, admin, offices, meeting room, first aid room, WCs
- L170A - Expense magazine (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Equipment store
- L176 & L177 - Boiler house and dynamo house (Grade II* listed) – currently cafe and toilets (part of existing visitor attraction): Proposed use - Lounge for staff and teachers, toilets

Policies Applied:

HC10 - Works to listed buildings

HC13 - Change of use of listed buildings

HC16 - Former Royal Gunpowder Factory Site, Waltham Abbey

12. The above policies form part of the Council’s 1998 Local Plan. Following the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), policies from this plan (which was adopted pre-2004) are to be afforded due weight where they are consistent with the Framework. The above policies are broadly consistent with the NPPF and therefore are afforded full weight.

Consultation Carried Out and Summary of Representations Received:

13. The application has been advertised in the Local press and site notices were erected, in addition Historic England and the Historic Buildings Advisor were consulted.

14. With regard specifically to the proposed works to the listed buildings Heritage England state:

“We welcome the proposals for the repair of the listed buildings... within the conservation area. The conversion of some structures for accommodation, in particular the Grade II and Grade II incorporating mills, would result in a significant degree of repair/replacement of the fabric necessary for the new use, minor changes to current elevations and the loss of visibility of mechanical components resulting from internal conversion, which would result in a degree of harm to their significance..*

15. No other responses relevant to the listed building application were received.

Issues and Considerations:

16. The only considerations with regard to the listed building application are the impact of the proposed development on the historic and architectural interest of the listed buildings.

17. The NPPF requires that Local planning Authorities take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, and to afford great weight to the conservation of the significance of designated heritage assets. Should proposals harm the significance of designated heritage assets, that harm should have clear and convincing justification and be weighed against the public benefits arising from the development including securing its optimal viable use.

18. Although the proposed conversion works result in a degree of harm to the significance of the listed buildings, this harm is justified in providing a new, viable, and, on the most part, sympathetic use for the buildings. Externally, the buildings will be little changed; repairs will be like-for-like, new materials (for example the single-ply membrane roofing to some of the incorporating mills) will replicate the appearance of the existing, and the proposed new windows match the existing. Internally, several of the listed buildings require no or minimal work. Interventions into the incorporating mills are greater; however, the elements of significance within the buildings will be retained with additions being reversible. The internal layouts are retained with the glazed corridor providing access to each of the accommodation units still divided by the blast walls. Where machinery survives within the incorporating mills it will be obscured from view by new suspended flooring, however, it is still retained in situ and can be revealed by removing the flooring.

19. The large extension to L168 to provide a new dining hall is located on the same footprint and will have the same roof height as an earlier building on the site that was demolished in the 1950's. Whilst is of modern design and would be a relatively prominent structure within the site, is is considered that it will not detract from the listed building.

20. It is considered that the works proposed are the minimum necessary to enable their satisfactory re use and have been well thought out and designed, such that the harm to the character and historic interest of the buildings is minimised. The reuse of the buildings will help secure their long term maintenance and retention and therefore the small harm must be balanced against this benefit.

Conclusion

21. Historic England conclude that the proposed development would assist in achieving the heritage benefits set out in the NPPF and that harm to the heritage assets from the development would not be substantial. It is for the Local planning Authority to determine whether the benefits of the development are sufficient to outweigh this non substantial harm.

22. The works to the listed buildings are required in order to enable the overall development to be viable and to secure ongoing income to the charitable Trust which will be ploughed back into maintaining the heritage assets, it is therefore considered that the benefits of the scheme clearly outweigh the limited harm and the listed building application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.