

Item B. 2 **06/00147/FUL** **Refuse Full Planning Permission**

Case Officer **Mrs Helen Lowe**

Ward **Pennine**

Proposal **Proposed restoration and conversion of WAP building to offices.**

Location **Site Of Howard Arms Hotel Dark Lane Whittle Le Woods LancashirePR6 8AE**

Applicant **Primrose Holdings 1995 Ltd**

Background This application proposes the reconstruction and conversion of a small building located within the grounds of Heys Lodge and the creation of a car parking area (a group of 10 residential properties recently converted from the Howard Arms). The application site is located adjacent to the west boundary of the site, abutting Dark Lane. A car parking area would be provided adjacent to and accessed from Dark Lane. Some external walls of the original building remain on the site (most notably the west and south elevations), although there is no roof remaining and what is left of the building appears to be in a poor state of repair. It is proposed that the building is used to provide office accommodation for the residents of Heys Lodge and the buildings owners (the applicants: Primrose Holdings)

Planning Policy The application site lies within the Green Belt, as defined in the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review. The following policies from the Local Plan are considered relevant:

DC1 Development within the Green Belt
GN5 Building Design and Retaining Existing Landscape Features and Natural Habitats

The following central government guidance is also considered relevant:

PPG2 Green Belts

Planning History 9/01/00866/COU Change of use of public house into 10 dwellings and erection of 2 storey extensions to front and rear
Approved 22/01/02

9/03/00762/COU Conversion of wap building to offices
Withdrawn 05/09/03

9/03/00763/FUL Erection of 9 garages and gardeners store
Withdrawn 04/09/03

9/03/01154/FUL Conversion of existing outbuilding to 5 garages and erection of 5 new garages
Approved 08/03/04

Consultees Responses

Whittle le Woods Parish Council: The wap building is an important part of the heritage of Whittle le Woods, being part of the Whittle le Woods Spa. As the proposed development restores the building to its original condition the Parish Council would like to express their support for this application.

Lancashire County Council Highways: comments not yet received.

Head of Public Space Services (Arboricultural Officer): comments not yet received.

Head of Development and Regeneration (Economic Regeneration & Conservation Manager): comments not yet received.

Third Party Representations

Five letters have been received in response to the proposal, three raise objections to the proposal and two raise no objections. Two of those objecting, express support in principle to the restoration of the building however, they raise concerns about the proposed use of the building;

The objections raised are:

- Conversion to offices is inappropriate;
- The provision of a visitors car park would lead to increased traffic and loss of trees and wildlife;
- Loss of residential amenity caused by increased noise and disturbance from additional vehicles;
- The application site is in the Green Belt, the rebuilding of an office and a car park is inappropriate in the Green Belt and no special circumstances exist to allow for commercial use of the building;
- It is more likely that the offices would be used by the owner not residents of Heys Lodge and could be sub-let at a later date;

Applicant's Case

The applicant has put forward the following in support of their application:

- The wap building was one of three buildings originally constructed as a spa in the mid 1840s. The wap building being the entrance lodge;
- The buildings are a vital part of the history and development of the settlement of Whittle Springs displaying definite links to the cultural heritage of the region. A historical value report has been submitted with the application;
- It is intended to restore the building as far as possible to its original form, removing the later addition to the rear of the building. Much of the cut stone detailing remains on site and there is photographic evidence of the building's original appearance;
- It is intended that the building will provide an extra facility for the building's owners and residents of Hey's Lodge providing office space so that it will be possible to work from home within the grounds of Hey's Lodge. Car parking is provided for residents already within Heys Lodge. There is a level area adjacent to the wap Building and Dark Lane, outside the garden perimeter of Heys's Lodge which is suitable for visitor parking and a turning area. The building

has a modest floor area of 35m².

- The building is a sufficient distance from surrounding residential properties to cause no loss of privacy or any adverse impact on residential amenity;
- It is considered that the proposed restoration of the wap building can demonstrate very special circumstances which would allow permission for the development of renovating the building and bringing it back into use;
- The site is also adjacent to an area defined in the Local Plan as a Priority Urban Fringe (policy EP13). The building has the potential to enhance recreation in the area being, when restored, an interesting local building and feature of note on a walk in the area or as a detour from a canalside walk;
- There are benefits in promoting working from home in reducing the need to travel;
- The overarching emphasis in this scheme remains the historic value of the property in combination with other buildings on the site;
- The restoration of the building would enhance the visual appearance of this part of Whittle Springs

Assessment

The main issues to consider in determining this application are impact on the Green Belt; impact on highway safety; impact on neighbour amenity and impact on trees.

Green Belt

The applicant has not made any reference to policy DC7A – The Conversion of Rural Buildings in the Green Belt. No structural survey has been submitted with the application. The extent of works and amount of building required to bring the existing remains into use, is such that the proposal is considered to constitute the erection of a new building.

In the Green Belt planning permission will not be granted, except in very special circumstances, for development other than one of the specified categories of acceptable uses as set out in PPG2 and Policy DC1 of the Local Plan Review. This does not include the erection of new buildings for commercial uses. As the application site does not form part of a residential curtilage (the grounds surrounding Heys Lodge are used on a communal basis by the occupants of the residential properties and cannot therefore be considered to form part of a private garden), the proposal cannot be considered to be the erection of a domestic outbuilding. The proposal must therefore be considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as defined in PPG2.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist that warrant granting permission for an inappropriate development. The applicant's arguments in this case appear to be based on the following reasons:

- The historic value and importance of the building;
- Improving the visual amenity of area;
- Reducing the need to travel by encouraging working from home;

The remains of the wap building that exist on the site at present are not a statutory or locally listed building, nor is Heys Lodge/former Howard Arms. The site is also not located within a

conservation area. Whilst the site clearly has some local historical importance, the lack of any formal recognition of this limits the weight that can be attached to such a reason for allowing the proposed development.

It is considered that the visual amenity of the site could be improved, but that this need not necessarily be through the erection of a new building. It is considered that the retention of what remains of the wap building, could be satisfactorily achieved visually, without the need to construct a new building. This would also have the additional benefit of retaining an indicator of the history of the site.

The benefits to be gained from the residents of Heys Lodge potentially working from home as a result of the development are considered to be insufficient to warrant approval of the proposed development. No evidence has been submitted by the applicant to demonstrate the degree to which the provision of the building would lead to a reduction in the need to travel. A personal condition could be imposed to ensure that the building is only used by the occupants of Heys Lodge or Primrose Holdings, however the use of such conditions is not recommended unless very special circumstances have been demonstrated.

Highway Safety

To date no comments have been received from LCC Highway Engineers.

Neighbour Amenity

The boundary of the application site is approximately 35 m from the nearest property at Heys Lodge and 15m from the nearest property on Spring Mews (No. 3). The building itself would be 35m from the property at Spring Mews. Due to the small scale of the accommodation to be provided, whether to be used by occupants of Heys Lodge or the developers of Heys Lodge (Primrose Holdings), it is considered that the proposal would not give rise to an undue loss of amenity for residents of nearby residential properties.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is considered that the reasons put forward by the applicant, for allowing what amounts to a new building in the Green Belt, are insufficient to warrant granting approval of this application.

Recommendation: Refuse Full Planning Permission

Reasons

1. The proposed development would be located within the Green Belt as defined by Policy 2 and the Key Diagram of the Adopted Lancashire Structure Plan and by the Proposals Map of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review. The proposed development is contrary to Policy 4 of the Adopted Lancashire Structure Plan and Policy DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review. Within the Green Belt planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances for the erection of new buildings other than for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, for cemeteries, and other uses which do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it, or limited extension, alteration, or replacement of existing dwellings.
