

**Item A. 8                      06/00509/FULMAJ                      Permit Full Planning Permission**

**Case Officer                      Mr Simon Pemberton**

**Ward                                      Chorley North West**

**Proposal                              Demolish existing extensions, buildings and structure and convert the existing Coach House into a new cafe, classroom and exhibition space and shop associated with Astley Hall and the conversion of part of the barn adjacent to the Farmhouse to provide toilet facilities and associated hard landscaping works. The construction of a 2.5m to 3.5m high wall to complete the enclosure of the walled garden. The construction of bin stores. The engineering operations associated with the drainage and desilting of the lake and pond. The refurbishment and extension of the existing pavilion to provide a new kiosk to serve light refreshments.**

**Location                              Astley Park And Buildings Park Road Chorley Lancashire**

**Applicant                              Chorley Borough Council**

**Background:**                      This report relates to the two applications on this agenda relating to Astley Park. The applications relate to works within the grounds of Astley Hall and to some of the existing outbuildings. The works comprise part of a larger project which has been part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Chorley Borough Council.

The site is a Grade II Park on English Heritages Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest. It is also identified within the Lancashire Sites and Monuments Records (PRN 8614). The Coach House is a Grade II Listed Building and is also identified in the LSMR (reference PRN 8615).

The main hall is a Grade I Listed Building, there is a drinking fountain located within the park in close proximity to the Coach House. There are other listed buildings within the grounds of the Park including Ackhurst Lodge and the entrance gates.

The two applications that have been submitted are for planning permission and listed building consent for those works that require consent which are to be undertaken as part of the ongoing project. The descriptions of the two applications are:

**Reference: 06/00509/FULMAJ**

**Description:**                      Demolish existing extensions, buildings and structure and convert the existing Coach House into a new cafe, classroom and exhibition space and shop associated with Astley Hall and the conversion of part of the barn adjacent to the Farmhouse to provide toilet facilities and associated hard landscaping works. The construction of a 2.5m to 3.5m high wall to complete the enclosure of the walled garden. The construction of bin stores. The engineering operations associated with the drainage and de-

silting of the lake and pond. The refurbishment and extension of the existing pavilion to provide a new kiosk to serve light refreshments.

**Reference: 06/00510/LBC**

**Description:** Demolition of existing extensions, buildings and structures and proposed works to facilitate the conversion of the Coach House to a new cafe, classroom and exhibition space and shop and the conversion of part of the barn adjacent to the Farmhouse to provide toilet facilities together with related hard landscaping works. The repair and reconstruction of the existing wall to the walled garden and the construction of a new 2.5m to 3.5m wall to complete the enclosure of the walled garden.

In order to avoid repetition this report deals with both of these applications. The works proposed by both applications can be summarised as:

- 1) The restoration and re-use of the Coach House into a visitor centre including a new cafe, museum shop and new toilet facilities on the ground floor with an exhibition and education space on the first floor.
- 2) The re-use of part of the farm house barn building for public toilets.
- 3) Associated hard and soft landscaping in the courtyard and immediate areas surrounding the coach house.
- 4) The restoration of the existing wall surrounding the remnant walled garden including the construction of a new wall along the eastern boundary.

In addition the planning application proposes

- 5) An extension of the Pavilion within the grounds to form a small kiosk
- 6) The drainage, dredging and de-silting of the existing lake adjacent to Astley Hall
- 7) The engineering operations associated with the deposition of the silt on the existing sports pitches

In addition the complete package of works at Astley Hall as part of this Project include:

- 8) The proper management of the woodland areas
- 9) The restoration of the landscape setting
- 10) The restoration of the garden areas within the walled garden
- 11) Various soft landscaping and associated mitigation and re-instatement works

These details will be in accordance with the Conservation Plan prepared as part of the HLF bid.

The planning application, reference 06/00509/FULMAJ, originally included the removal of the existing pets corner and play area located adjacent to the central pathway through the wider park, and its relocation to a site behind the existing pavilion. However, a number of concerns were expressed during the consultation period (set out below). As a result this element of the application has been withdrawn, pending further consideration of the need

and appropriate location of this type of facility. It is possible that a further application for planning permission may be submitted in due course, depending on the outcome of these investigations.

**Policy:**

The site lies within the urban area of Chorley. The Local Plan includes various designations on parts of the site identified on the proposals map, including:

- 1) Historic Park / Garden (HT13 / LT7)
- 2) Protected Parks and Recreational Open Space (LT14)
- 3) Biological Heritage Site (EP2)
- 4) Safeguarded cycle routes (TR17)
- 5) Visitor Facilities (LT6)

In addition the following policies in the Development Plan for the area, which currently comprises the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West, the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan (2005) and the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003, were taken into account. This includes specifically the following policies:

**Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG13)** – DP1, DP2, DP3, UR4, ER1, ER2, ER3, ER5, and ER6.

**Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003** – GN5, EP2, EP4, EP9, EP13, EP17, EP18, EP21, HT1, HT2, HT3, HT6, HT13, TR4, SP6, SP8, LT6, LT7, and LT14.

**Joint Lancashire Structure Plan (2005)** – Policy 20, 21 and 22.

**Representations:**

A number of representations have been received in response to the extensive consultation exercise that was undertaken as part of the application process. This includes comments from both nearby residents and the adjacent schools and church. The concerns expressed in these comments can be summarised as:

- 1) That the relocation of the pets corner and play equipment is unnecessary and will have an adverse impact on the nearby residents and school through:
  - Increase antisocial behaviour,
  - Increased noise and disturbance (from both the pets and visitors),
  - Vermin,
  - Odours
  - Potential health risks (e.g. bird flu),
  - Lack of natural surveillance
  - Harm to existing trees
  - That the bund is an alien feature in the landscape
  - Harm to wildlife
  - Lack of toilet facilities
  - Isolated location less convenient for visitors
  - Lack of supervision on the site
  - That the pets corner is unnecessary and that information about wildlife would be more appropriate

A separate single letter considered that the works are a waste of time and money and that the state of the park and buildings is through neglect and poor management over many years. That the park is subject to much anti-social behaviour and that this should be addressed.

The majority of these comments were directed at the proposed play area and pets corner, which was subsequently withdrawn from the application. As a consequence these comments are no longer of direct relevance to the application. However, where general points, or specific points made in relation to the remainder of the proposal, these are considered in the assessment below.

**Consultations:**

Comments have been received from the following organisations:

The County Ecologist – Revised comments awaited following submission of additional information.

The County Archaeologist - Identifies the archaeological assets that may exist on the site. They raise no specific objections but advise that a condition should be imposed to secure an architectural watching brief and that the buildings be the subject of a programme of building recording and analysis.

Chorley Borough Council Highways/Drainage - No objections.

English Heritage - No comments but advise that this application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.

Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment (Environmental Health) - Raises no objections.

Director of Development and Regeneration (Forward Planning) - The proposals accord with Policy LT6 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003. Taking this into consideration, there are no policy objections.

Ancient Monuments Society - Are delighted to see these applications to repair and reuse the Coach House and barn at Astley Hall and do not wish to offer any objections.

S P A B - No comment

The Georgian Group - Generally welcome the proposals for the Coach House and Walled Garden, particularly the removal of unsympathetic twentieth century additions and the restoration of historic features. That the uses proposed were appropriate to the buildings character. As such they do not wish to object to the application. However, they would prefer to see a more sensitive approach to the front and rear carriage openings.

British Coal - Standing advice

MAPS – Appropriate control of access should be made and the existing gaps secured. Bin storage areas should also be appropriately secured. That there is limited natural surveillance of the proposed toilets. All doors, windows and locks be to the appropriate specification (secured by design).

**Assessment:**

The main issues associated with the consideration of the application are considered to be:

- Impact on the Historic Fabric
- Archaeology
- Impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings and Park and Gardens
- Landscape
- Impact upon protected species
- Impact on general nature conservation interest

- Impact upon sport and recreation provision

These are addressed in turn below. As referred to above, the majority of objections related to the play area and pets corner (for the reasons set out) and as this element of the proposal has been withdrawn, are no longer relevant to the remainder of the application.

### Historic Fabric

Located at the centre of the historic park and garden is the Grade I Listed Hall with a cluster of historic estate buildings that date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The Coach House and Farm House are Grade II Listed Buildings in their own right. Together with the walled garden they form a cluster estate buildings around a courtyard to the west of the main hall.

Currently the Coach House is under utilised, there is a small cafe, former artist studio, pest control store and toilets located within the building. It is generally in a poor state of repair and is in need of significant investment.

The general approach to the proposed development is to remove existing inappropriate buildings, alterations and extensions from the Coach House and enhance and reinforce the essential historic character of the site and the individual buildings.

It is the widely held consensus that the application is an opportunity to remove some unfortunate additions to the Coach House and restore to a sufficiently high standard. The proposed use of the building appears to be entirely appropriate, being able to be accommodated without significantly detracting from the historic interest of the building.

In relation to the comments from the Georgian Group in respect of the detail of the fully glazed openings to the north and south elevations. They have suggested the use of Diocletian windows above tripartite doors, recessed from the façade.

The two openings concerned are the historic coach entrances which are a fundamental functional part of the original building. The existing twentieth century insertions of doors and fixed glazed/boarded panels above to the north and stone /glazing to the south, detract from a clear interpretation of the original function, though the reading of the original stone dressings and openings is clear.

The agent advises that the suggested use of Diocletian windows above doors would inevitably introduce quite large timber glazing members into the detail. They suggest, that this would be entirely out of character and inappropriate for the building. The Georgian Diocletian window in timber was a well founded method of dealing with arched window openings in smaller openings, and thus supporting lesser weights of glass, which enabled finely detailed and delicate mullions to be used. However, the two carriage entrances are both approximately 4.0m wide and 6.0m high to the apex which is considered to be on such a large scale it would be almost impossible to achieve acceptable detailing. The agent also asserts that, more importantly, the use of an uninterrupted structural glazing system will enable the openings to fully

demonstrate their original purpose and, indeed, to continue to signal that they remain the main entrances into the Coach House.

The structural glazing system to be employed comprises large glass panes, dividing the width into three modules, the larger in the centre, joined by silicone flush with the front plane, but with an internal glass reinforcing fin, perpendicular to the plane of the main glass screen. The final size of this fin will need to be agreed on site with the eventual specialist supplier appointed under the contract, and it is the size of this that will eventually decide the final fixing location within the stone reveals. The architects remain aware of the need to set the glazing as far back within the opening as possible, but has requested that the final detail is accepted as a condition to agree with the Local Authority's, once a specialist glazier is appointed.

### Archaeology

The County Archaeologist has submitted detailed comments on the application. In general he considers that the development is acceptable subject to the imposition of a condition relating to recording. This is a matter that is entirely appropriate to condition.

A draft outline watching brief has been prepared and appears to be satisfactory to the County Archaeologist.

### Setting of the Listed Buildings and Park and Gardens

The application site lies within the historic curtilage of the main hall and other listed buildings. The detailed design has been drawn up with the fundamental aim of restoring and improving these building together with their immediate setting. The proposals will therefore significantly improve the setting of the Coach House and the main hall. The environmental improvement works, restoration of the lake, hard landscaping of the courtyard and restoration of the walled garden will all positively impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding buildings.

Astley Park is historic parkland with associated house, gardens and outbuildings. The extensive grounds are completely surrounded by the urban development of Chorley. The park is an important historic feature, an important public open space much used by local residents. The proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact upon this wider setting. However, any impact will be positive and will significantly improve the contribution of the cluster of buildings has to its environs.

### Impact upon protected species

Astley Park has a rich biodiversity supporting species rich habitats and European protected species. The wildlife interest has been recognized through the designation of a 'Biological Heritage Site' (BHS) for most of the wooded areas within the park. An ecological survey was commissioned to carry out an overall ecological assessment of the woodland in order to make management suggestions. Further work consisted of various surveys including European protected species surveys, including a great crested newt assessment, water vole assessment, bat survey of coach house, and assessment of trees to be felled for potential bat roosts.

In accordance with PPS9 the impacts of the above proposals on the ecology and biodiversity of the site are assessed below. Of particular importance in this respect is the impact of the proposed development in terms of:

- 1) Bats
- 2) Great Crested Newts
- 3) Water Voles

In relation to bats the bat surveys have revealed the presence of brown long eared bats and pipistrelles in the Coach House, and a noctule tree roost below the dam wall. The brown long eared bats and pipstrelle will potentially be disturbed during re-roofing works to the Coach House. Appropriate mitigation has been suggested to ensure that any impact is minimised during the course of construction and that appropriate measures are put in place to facilitate the continuing use of the building by bats.

The loss of woodland would also have some impact upon the bat habitat, although this is not the subject of this application, and bearing in mind the remaining woodland cover, this is unlikely to significantly impact upon the protected species. The noctule bat tree roost is 50m from the tree felling on the dam face and will not be affected by any of the proposals.

The draining of the lake will interrupt the food supply provided to bats, which will feed over the lake/dam. The operations will be undertaken in such a manner so as to reduce the amount of time the lake is drained to the minimum. This is currently scheduled to be 2 to 3 months with refill scheduled to occur in late September / October 2006.

In the long term, there will be an enhancement and an increase in the amount of water available as feeding habitat for bats. This is further provided by the restoration of an existing completely dry pond within the woods. In addition, the removal of the fish and the replacement of the eutrophic water in the lake with clean water should increase the quantity of insect biomass available as bat food for at least the next ten years, until fish become established again.

In respect of Great Crested Newts, the survey work has identified no evidence of great crested newts on site. No great crested newts have been recorded within 500m of the development site in the past (data provided by Lancashire County Council). As such it considered that there would be no impact upon this protected species, or its habitat.

There are recent records of water vole within the park on the River Chor. However, as part of the detailed surveys no evidence of water vole was found. The banks of the river did not appear very suitable, as there was no vegetation cover on the steep riverbanks at this point. There is a wet fen area close to this position that might support water voles. This fen is more than 500m from the development area. There is no evidence of water voles using the lake/dam banks for shelter. As such it considered that there would be no impact upon this protected species, or its habitat.

## Impact on general nature conservation interest

In addition to the forgoing a further survey was commissioned at the request of the County Council Ecologist a Lancashire Pond Biodiversity Assessment of the lake, which is to be drained and desilted. This was carried out 12/6/06 using Lancashire CC pond assessment guidelines. Use was also made of existing data and species lists held by the record centre at Lancashire County Council.

The Biological Heritage Site boundary includes Ackhurst, Great, Judeland, Damhead and Dog Trap Woods (Chorley BHS 51NE12).

These are remnants of ancient woodland on steep valley sides with a wealth of ancient woodland indicators

The site boundary also includes Astley Park Lake /Dam. This supports a species rich emergent flora at the inlet to the north of the lake, 41 wetland plant species, a moderately species rich inflow on the south east corner of the dam, and a species poor aquatic flora consisting of almost entirely yellow water lilies in the open water.

The moderately species rich flora at the northern end of dam will be lost during sediment removal. The species rich marsh flora at the north of the dam should remain untouched. It had been the intention to remove this as apart of the overall sediment removal works, but it is suggested that this is now retained.

The aquatic flora within the main body of the lake will be destroyed with the removal of the sediment. However, some yellow water lilies have already been rescued and translocated to an approved CBC receptor site by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV). It is the intention that these will be reintroduced when the works are complete and the lake is refilled. This will mitigate any impact.

Thirty two aquatic invertebrate species were recorded as a result of survey of the lake to be drained. Most of these were small snail species or water bugs. No Nationally Notable species were recorded as part of this assessment. The recommendations and key points within the report can be summarised as:

1. There is a need to retain some sediment within which most of the invertebrates exist and replace into the bottom of the dam once the dredging is complete and the water replaced.
2. The removal of nutrient enriched water and replacement with clean water will provide an improved environment for many early colonizers such as dragonflies.
3. Re-profiling of the lake shore to provide a shallow marginal shelf 1m wide as shown on the submitted plans will be available for plants to colonize naturally.
4. The removal of fish should greatly assist the re-colonization of the water by invertebrates as fish predate many invertebrate species. Fish should therefore not be reintroduced. However natural re-introductions are inevitable with time. Until the fish population has re established, the water will be good for a wide variety of invertebrates.



5. There should be some additional replacement planting of native trees and shrubs elsewhere in the park to mitigate for the loss around the lake. These will provide a valuable habitat for birds and bats.
6. During the clearance of the walled garden the contractor should be instructed to cease work and seek further approval for works if unusual wildlife is discovered such as slow worm, great crested newt, snake, etc.
7. Himalayan balsam already established in areas where works are taking pace should be pulled by hand or killed using chemical control before seeds are set. Young plants germinating in soil disturbed as a result of works in 2006 should be chemically treated or pulled by hand to prevent the further spread of this undesirable species in 2007.
8. In relation to the removal of trees from dam wall, this should be mitigated by the plant native trees elsewhere in the park.

In summary it is considered that the loss of habitat, the disturbance of birds and bats will be minimal in the short term. The long term gains and benefits from improved water quality in the lake, the removal of fish, the anticipated increase in invertebrates and amphibian numbers from both the main lake and the new pond to be created should outweigh the disadvantages experienced in the short term whilst the restoration works are being carried out.

#### Impact upon sport and recreation provision

The application includes proposals affecting sports provision within the park. The de-silting of the lake will require silt to be placed on the existing sports pitches, which will be allowed to drain before the pitches are re-established.

The existing pavilion building, located to the south and east of the main hall within the park is a 20<sup>th</sup> Century building, albeit within the historic curtilage of the hall. This building has been the focus for and subject of antisocial behaviour over recent years. The project includes the improvement of the facility and the creation of a kiosk. This will improve facilities for the public; increase the use of the building and to relocate some functions out of the main hall.

As a result, whilst there will be some short term impact upon the availability of sports pitches, there will be longer term benefits to the facilities available within the Park.

#### **Conclusion:**

In summary, the proposals represent an opportunity to facilitate significant improvement to the historic fabric and the setting of these nationally important buildings. As such it is considered that both planning and listed building consent applications should be approved.

However, the determination of the planning application should not precede the consideration of the listed building application. As that application has to be referred to Government Office for their consideration and determination, it is not possible to issue a decision at this time.

It is therefore recommended that the determination of the planning application be delegated to officers pending the referral and

determination of the listed building application and that all matters arising be delegated to officers. It is also recommended that any approval be subject to the following conditions:

**Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission**

**Conditions: -**

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

*Reason: This condition is required to be imposed by Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation) Act 1990.*

2. The existing materials or, in default, salvaged second hand materials that in all respects are identical to those used on the existing building shall be employed on the external faces of the development hereby permitted.

*Reason: To maintain the integrity of the historic building in accordance with policy HT2 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003.*

3. Prior to any works commencing details of the proposed fenestration and other joinery, to include full details at a scale of not less than 1:10 shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All works shall then be undertaken strictly in accordance with the details as approved.

*Reason: To maintain the integrity of the historic building in accordance with policy HT2 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003.*

4. Before the development commences, full details of the treatment of all the proposed windows and doors shall have been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include the proposed method of construction, the materials to be used, fixing details (including cross sections) and their external finish including any surrounds, cills or lintels.

*Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the building and in accordance with Policy HT2 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review (2003).*

5. No works shall take place until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of building recording and analysis. This must be carried out by a professionally qualified archaeological/building recording consultant or organisation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which shall first have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Upon completion of the programme of building recording and analysis it shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: To ensure and safeguard the recording and inspection of matters of archaeological/historic importance associated with the building and in accordance with Policy HT6 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review (2003).*

6. Before any development is commenced, proposals for the hard and soft landscaping of the site, to include provision for the retention and protection of existing trees and shrubs, if any, thereon, together with any means of enclosure proposed or existing within or along the curtilage of the site shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority by means of a large scale plan and a written brief. All proposed and existing trees and shrubs shall be correctly described and their positions accurately shown. Upon approval such new planting shall be carried out during the planting season October/March inclusive, in accordance with the appropriate British Standards for ground preparation, staking, etc., in BS4428:1989 (1979), immediately following commencement of the development. The landscaping shall thereafter be maintained for five years during which time any specimens that are damaged, dead or dying shall be replaced and hence the whole scheme shall thereafter be retained.

*Reason: Pursuant to Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to protect and enhance the appearance and character of the site and the locality and in accordance with policies GN5 and EP10 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003.*

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