

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE DATE: 13 February 2013

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APPLICATION REF. NO:	12/00704/LBC
STATUTORY DECISION DATE:	28 December 2012
WARD/PARISH:	MIDDLETON ST GEORGE
LOCATION:	Dovecote, Low Middleton House, Low Middleton, Middleton St George, Darlington
DESCRIPTION:	Listed Building Consent for conversion of dovecote to form dwelling
APPLICANT:	Mr And Mrs E M Hall

APPLICATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The application property is a mid 18th Century octagonal-plan dovecote (Grade II listed). Associated with Low Middleton Hall (Grade II* listed), the dovecote stands on a raised mound in the centre of agricultural land, isolated from surrounding buildings.

Listed building consent is sought for the conversion of an existing dovecot to form a dwelling. Internally it is proposed to install two new floors with an open plan kitchen / living room on the second floor and a bedroom and a separate bathroom on the first floor. On the ground floor there would be an entrance hall, utility room and store room. The different rooms would be created by stud partition walls. An Oak staircase would connect the levels.

The external changes consist of installing four new oak casement windows at first floor level. These windows would match the proportions of the existing corresponding openings on the level above where inward opening oak framed casements are proposed. The existing entrance way would be enlarged with a new door in double boarded oak. It is also proposed to re-roof the property in hand made clay pantiles. A ha-ha is proposed to surround the Dovecote building and a stone path would connect it to a proposed carport.

PLANNING HISTORY

A previous planning application (Ref: 11/00744/FUL) and an application for listed building consent (Ref: 11/00745/LBC) were withdrawn on 8 February 2012. This was to allow a bat survey to be carried out at an appropriate time.

PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

Policy CS14 (Promoting Local Character and Distinctiveness) of the Darlington Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2011 is relevant to the application as is the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

Occupiers of neighbouring properties have been consulted and a site notice has been displayed. No objections have been received.

Middleton St George Parish Council objected to the application on the grounds of it being an agricultural building, a Listed Building, being outside the development area and that it would set a precedent for further developments.

The **Conservation Officer** supported the application and made comments including those set out below:

- *Whilst it is preferable to locate new residential dwellings within the development limits, it is considered that this conversion offers the opportunity to bring back one of Darlington's important and unique heritage assets into a viable use and protect it for the future. Having been vacant for 30 years, no other uses have been proposed to our knowledge. Should a residential use not be supported within this building, it will be at a great risk of being lost forever.*
- *The proposed design of the dovecote makes minimal changes to the original structure and has been well thought out to protect the significance of the listed building. Four new windows will be inserted at high level, minimal in relation to the overall surface area of the building and appropriately placed. They are positioned so to appear frameless and avoid over-domestication of the building.*
- *Internally, the retention of many of the nesting boxes is positive and will contribute to retention of the character of the listed building. The insertion and subdivision of floor is considered acceptable. Any harm will be outweighed by securing a new and viable use within the building.*
- *The existing roof is non-original, apparently installed approximately 30 years ago. Although not the original roofing material, replacement with pantiles will alter the appearance little from the existing and is therefore appropriate.*
- *A ha-ha is proposed surrounding the dovecote. A fence, hedge or other boundary would not be appropriate and therefore a ha-ha is considered to be a well designed alternative which maintains uninterrupted views of the listed building, protecting its setting. Small sections of estate fencing are proposed for safety reasons and are appropriate for the context.*

The **County Archaeologist** considered the proposal contrary to policy and objected to the application. The points raised are summarised below:

- *The level of assessment of the significance of the designated heritage asset in the Design and Access Statement is not adequate to fully inform the planning decision.*
- *The proposed development seeks to enclose the dovecote within a ha-ha dovecotes are, to my knowledge, never enclosed by fencing, banks or ha-ha's.*
- *I understand why there is a desire to enclose the dovecote if it is being turned into a permanent residence - most people want to have their own amenity space and garden. However, the negative impact that this will have on the setting is not, to my mind, justifiable.*
- *The planning authority can remove permitted development rights - and if planning permission is granted this should be done as a matter of course Para 133 of the NPPF*

states that: "...local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply: The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and, no viable use of the heritage asset can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and, conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and, the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use."

- *There will still be a need to put conditions on it with regards to the archaeological impact of the proposed sewerage system on the extant ridge and furrow in the field to the NW. Permitted development rights should be removed and no means of enclosure should be considered.*

PLANNING ISSUES

Policy CS14 (Promoting Local Character and Distinctiveness) of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2011 states that the distinctive character of the Borough's built, historic, natural and environmental townscapes, landscapes and strong sense of place will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced by various means including protecting historic buildings.

Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional.

The Dovecote is currently in a poor state of repair with missing roof tiles and evidence of structural movement through the brickwork. The conversion to residential use offers the opportunity to bring the building back into a viable use that should safeguard the most important aspects of the significance of the building for the future. The conversion has been sensitively designed to minimise its impacts and would not lead to substantial harm to the significance of the Dovecote.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect

Conclusion

The conversion would not significantly detract from the significance of the Listed Building and would secure its future.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT LISTED BUILDING CONSENT BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

1. A5 - LB Applications (Implementation Limit)
2. B4 Details of Materials (Samples)
3. All works and repairs to the building shall use traditional materials (as approved under Condition 2) and methods including the use of lime mortar.

Reason – In order to safeguard the character of the Listed Building.

4. B7 – Detailed Application (Listed Buildings)
5. No works shall commence until a written scheme of investigation for the recording of the building including both its structure and internal fittings, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason – To ensure that a proper and permanent historical record is made of the architectural details of the building before works commence.

Suggested summary of reasons for granting listed building consent

The conversion would not significantly detract from the significance of the Listed Building and would secure its future. The proposal is considered acceptable in light of Policy CS14 (Promoting Local Character and Distinctiveness) of the Darlington Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.