

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE DATE: 30 May 2012

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APPLICATION REF. NO:	11/00680/LBC
STATUTORY DECISION DATE:	30 January 2012
WARD/PARISH:	CENTRAL
LOCATION:	Retro, 82 Skinnergate, Darlington
DESCRIPTION:	Listed Building Consent for internal refurbishment works including in filling rear yard to create an extension to ground, first and second floors, new structural openings, formation of a separate entrance off Mechanics Yard to first floor nightclub, toilet facilities, kitchen and back of house storage areas. Alterations to Skinnergate facade including new steps, raised patio and wrought iron railings, also form first floor drinking patio and smoking area to rear elevation (Amended plans and additional information received 25 April 2012)
APPLICANT:	Mr Alistair Powell

This application is for listed building consent only and the main considerations relate to whether or not the proposal would sustain or enhance the significance of the heritage asset in accordance with the National Planning Framework and the relevant development plan policies. The recommendation for this proposal does not prejudice the Officers recommendation for the application seeking planning permission for the proposed works, which also forms part of this Agenda.

APPLICATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

No 82 Skinnergate is a Grade II listed building, formerly the Mechanics' Institute. It was built in 1854, and described in the List entry as designed by local architect J.P. Pritchett. It was built with Quaker money as an educational establishment. It is an imposing, classical building with a strong frontage to Skinnergate, but a valuable side elevation to Mechanics Yard. The building also lies within the Town Centre Conservation Area.

The building has had a number of uses including a bank before its current use as a Public House. The building is in poor condition, particularly the frontage and is therefore on the Council's Building 'At Risk Register'.

The proposal involves the comprehensive refurbishment of the building to create a public house on the ground floor and a night club on the first floor. The works include

- Infilling the service yard area with a three storey extension to link the main sections of the building together to create the entrance to the first floor club;
- The removal of the existing steps and ramps on the front elevation and the reinstatement of the railings and central steps;
- The introduction of a disabled lift to the right hand side of the main entrance;
- The enlargement of the existing front windows to create glazed doorways;
- The removal of the balcony and the erection of a new floor to create to first floor club;
- The creation of a first floor drinking terrace at the rear of the building above the existing kitchen area (also to be extended)

PLANNING HISTORY

The property has a long Planning History but the most relevant entries are:

91/00554/MISC In September 1991 planning permission was GRANTED for the change of use and alterations to create public house and restaurant, caretakers flat incorporating snooker/social rooms

91/006545/MISC In November 1991 planning permission was GRANTED for a ramp access for the disabled and alterations to front wall and railing

94/00587/MISC In December 1994 planning permission was GRANTED for the part removal of front wall and railings and formation of new stepped entry

94/00588/MISC In December 1994 listed building consent was GRANTED for the part removal of front wall and railings and formation of new stepped entry

96/00505/LBC In October 1996 listed building consent was GRANTED for internal alterations and external renovation and decoration

PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Darlington Core Strategy Development Plan Document

CS14: Promoting Local Character and Distinctiveness

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

Three letters of objection to the original scheme have been received. The contents of two of the letters raise matters that are not relevant to the determination of an application for listed building consent. The other comments can be summarised as follows:

- *The building as it stands at the moment is in keeping with our building (81 Skinnergate) and the surrounding area. Darlington is a historic town and therefore how can the Council allow such a sacrilege of such a heritage building*

- *The internal and external alterations will totally remove the original architectural design and nature of this former Mechanics Institute building, and its original form as a spacious single storey building with period internal first floor balcony detailing. The creation of a full first floor level produces a large area of low level ground floor accommodation, which runs contrary to the listed building's original design. As a consequence the alterations result in a wholly unsympathetic design solution for the listed structure and should be resisted in the interests of the listed building as a whole. To permit the external and internal alterations to this listed building would totally undermine the recently undertaken work at the adjacent property, Marco Polo and the end solution for which was achieved by the owner and the Authority's Conservation and Planning Officers working closely together on the project*

Two letters of support have been received and the comments can be summarised as follows:

- *I see this as a very positive plan for the Darlington and the surrounding areas. The building is currently looking in a poor state and these plans will renovate it to its former glory. It is good for local businesses and will have a great effect on Darlington's nightlife*
- *This is a land mark building in Darlington and a sympathetic restoration of same would give the street a real lift. Just the type of development to breathe life back into the Town Centre and create jobs.*

Consultee Responses

English Heritage considers that as the property is a Grade II listed building, the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the Council's expert conservation advice.

PLANNING ISSUES

The main issue to be considered here is whether or not the proposal sustains and enhances the significance of the heritage asset (the listed building) and places the building into a viable use consistent with its conservation in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) and Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy

The building consists of two main buildings linked together by a two storey extension. The existing ground floor of the building contains the main bar area and dance floor and the associated toilets and store rooms. An enclosed stairwell from the main entrance off Skinnergate leads to a first floor bar area and balconies with associated toilets. There are also two snooker rooms at this level. The second floor contains the Caretakers living accommodation. There is a service yard area which is currently accessed off Mechanics Yard.

It is considered that the external alterations to the frontage, including the replacement of the ground floor windows with doors and the railings are appropriate and would improve the visual appearance of the building when viewed from Skinnergate.

The Mechanics Yard elevation is also an important feature of the building and the infilling of the service yard would involve the erection of a three storey extension of a contemporary design constructed from a mix of black stone tiles on the lower level with metal cladding panels above. A set of glazed double doors would create the club entrance. New timber fire doors would also be located on this elevation and an existing doorway would be bricked up. The section of the building overlooking the service yard contains many historic and traditional features including

brickwork, window openings and sash windows and the applicant has agreed to incorporate and retain many of the existing features of the building within the internal space. It would be appropriate to impose a planning condition to ensure that such features are retained in the finished scheme. The use of metal cladding on the façade of the link extension is to create a clear statement between the front and rear of the buildings in order to show that the infill is a recent addition and clearly not part of the original building. The use of these materials has been satisfactorily justified and is considered acceptable. The final design of the Fire Doors can also be secured by a planning condition.

A kitchen extension is proposed on the rear elevation of the building to allow internal access directly to the main ground floor bar area. An outdoor smoking terrace would be created above the extended kitchen which would be enclosed by a high brick wall. At present there is a large traditional window in the kitchen and the scheme has been amended to allow for the retention of the window which is welcomed.

Internally, the building has been heavily altered and what remains does not contribute to the character of building and this is an opportunity to improve the internal layout. There are no objections to the removal of the balcony and the creation of a mezzanine floor to create the night club. The majority of the internal walls to be removed are modern stud walls and it would appear that the existing staircases which will be removed are not original features. It is considered that the internal alterations to the building are appropriate and have been justified to the satisfaction of officers.

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

It is considered that the proposed use of the building is acceptable and that the internal and external alterations will sustain and enhance the significance of the listed building. The proposal would accord with the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- 1) A5 – LB Applications (Implementation Limit)
- 2) B5 – Materials (Samples)
- 3) Notwithstanding the details on the approved plans and the requirement of condition 2, precise details of the wrought iron railings on the Skinnergate elevation and the entrance door timber Fire Doors on the Mechanics Yard elevation shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the

development and the development shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved details

REASON: In the interests of the visual appearance and character of the building

- 4) Notwithstanding the information contained within the application, precise details of the methods used for the retention of existing historic and traditional features within the internal layout of the building shall be submitted to and approved by the by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development and the development shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved details
- REASON: In the interests of the visual appearance and character of the building

- 5) B7 – Detailed Application (Listed Buildings)

SUGGESTED SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION

It is considered that the proposed use of the building is acceptable and that the internal and external alterations will sustain and enhance the significance of the listed building. The proposal would accord with the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy.