

Application No: 12/3262N

Location: Peckforton Castle Hotel, STONE HOUSE LANE, PECKFORTON, TARPORLEY, CHESHIRE, CW6 9TN

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for Renovation, Alteration and Extension to Former Engine Sheds in Connection with the Planning Application 12/2550N Proposed (Woodland Experience - Conversion and Expansion of Former Engine Sheds to Create an Activity Centre, Animal Farm, Warden Accommodation, Ancillary Buildings, Means of Access and Car Parking

Applicant: Majorstage Ltd

Expiry Date: 17-Oct-2012

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES:

- List Description;
- Site History;
- Current Proposal; and
- Design

REFERRAL

The application has been referred to Committee at the discretion of the Development Management and Building Control Manager due to the close proximity of the site to a Grade I Listed Building and its potential impact on setting within the locality.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The castle (Grade I Listed Building) is a folly and not a real castle and is currently used as a hotel. The applicants property is located wholly within the open countryside and within the ASCV. The property is an imposing building constructed out of sandstone and is accessed via a long twisting private drive, which is accessed via Stone House Lane. Located in close proximity to the site are a number of derelict buildings (which are the subject of this application) in various states of deterioration. These buildings are accessed via an undulating track and is screened by a number of large mature trees and other vegetation.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

This is a listed building application for a proposed woodland experience - conversion and expansion of former engine shed to create activity centre, animal farm, warden accommodation, ancillary buildings, means of access and car parking at Peckforton Castle.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

There is a lengthy history of planning applications at Peckforton Castle the most recent of which are:-

7/08785 – Change of Use to Private Rec. Society for Prom. Playing and Enactment of Historical War Games with Staff Quarters and Refreshment Bar – Approved – 18th March 1982

7/11668 – Change of Use to Hotel – Approved – 7th February 1985

7/11669 – Alterations to Existing Access – Approved – 7th February 1985

7/12143 – Change of Use of Land to Jousting Area in Conjunction with Conversion of Castle to Hotel – Approved – 27th June 1985

7/12474 – Listed Building Consent to Convert Castle to Hotel – Approved – 6th January 1986

7/12475 – Conversion of Castle to Hotel – Approved – 17th October 1985

7/18921 – Listed Building Consent for New Door Openings and Internal Alterations – Withdrawn – 28th June 1991

P91/0019 – Listed Building Consent for Door Openings and Internal Alterations – Approved – 24th December 1991

P99/0844 – Change of Use and Alterations to form Hotel – Approved – 6th January 2000

P99/0845 – Listed Building Consent for Alterations to Form Hotel – Approved – 6th January 2000

P01/0159 – Phase Two Hotel Development (LBC) – Withdrawn – 25th October 2001

P03/1075 – Flagpole Antenna – Withdrawn – 15th October 2003

P03/1092 – Listed Building Consent Flagpole Antenna – 15th October 2003

P03/1309 – Telecommunications Equipment – Approved – 10th February 2004

P03/1357 – Listed Building Consent for Telecommunication Equipment – Approved – 24th February 2004

P09/0079 - Listed Building Consent for New Covering Over Existing Rooflights, Automatic Frameless Glass Doors to Foyer and Automatic Glazed Doors to Main Rear Corridor – Approved – 12th May 2009

09/1339N - Phase Two Restoration of Peckforton Castle to Provide 11 Bedrooms and Additional Public Hotel Space – Approved – 18th November 2009

09/1332N - Listed Building Consent for Phase 2 Restoration of Peckforton Castle to Provide 11 Bedrooms and Additional Public Hotel Space – Approved – 18th November 2009

11/3675N - Refurbishment of the Fire Damage to the East Wing, Together with a New External Opening at Undercroft Level, a New Opening at Roof Level and Solar Panels on Roof – Approved – 13th December 2011

11/3676N - Listed Building Consent for Refurbishment of the Fire Damage to the East Wing, Together with a New External Opening at Undercroft Level, a New Opening at Roof Level and Solar Panels on Roof – 7th December 2011

12/0252N - Two storey extension to the east wing of Peckforton Castle to provide improved access and laundry facilities, conversion of non-habitable space beneath drawing room in east wing into staff facilities and stores – Approved – 16th March 2012

12/0254N - Listed Building Consent for Two storey extension to the east wing of Peckforton Castle to provide improved access and laundry facilities, conversion of non-habitable space beneath drawing room in east wing into staff facilities and stores – 12th March 2012

12/2018N - Listed Building Consent for Proposed Erection of Waste Compactor and Recycling Shelter in Grounds of Grade I Listed Castle – Approved – 18th July 2012

12/2017N - Proposed Erection of Waste Compactor and Recycling Shelter in Grounds of Grade I Listed Castle – Approved – 20th July 2012

13/0265N - Development of the Coach-House and adjoining yard and buildings into a spa facility, and convert the Grainstore Tower and Stable block into additional habitable accommodation – Approved – 8th August 2013

13/0263N - Listed Building Consent for development of the Coach -house and adjoining yard and buildings into a spa facility, and convert the Grainstore tower and Stable block into additional habitable accommodation – Approved – 8th August 2013

PLANNING POLICIES

National Policy

The application should be determined in accordance with national guidance set out in:

National Planning Policy Framework

Local Policy

The principle issue surrounding the determination of this application is whether the development is in accordance with the following policies within the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011:

BE.2 (Design Standards)

BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions)

OBSERVATIONS OF CONSULTEES

English Heritage: No objections the proposal will not have an impact on the setting of the castle as the site is well screened and the proposed development is sensitive in scale. However, they do have some concerns regarding the demolition of the storage building and would like to be retained if at all possible.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL:

We have examined the plans, specifications and other details submitted for the above applications.

The proposed site for both applications is within the Area of Special County Value and as such must comply with the Local Authorities policies regarding that designation.

We do not propose to restate those policies here, as they are well known to you, but feel that both of these proposed developments fall short in satisfying the policies as set out in both the

Cheshire 2016: Structure Plan Alteration and the Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan 2011 with regard to Housing, Environment and Amenity.

We accept that the applicant is attempting to expand his business and has sought to re-use an existing derelict building but we feel that the proposed reuse of the derelict Engine Shed is effectively a new build that has at its heart a desire to obtain some, admittedly limited, residential use on the pretext of a Wardens accommodation to look after the animals that are proposed to be located at the site. We consider that this is not an appropriate use under the Councils Policies for this area and that once residential use has been established that it will be the venue for future applications to extend the residential nature at this site.

At present the Land Rover Experience is within the Castle grounds and we feel that this enclosure is a good location for this office and indeed that the enclosure of the castle walls provides an ideal curtilage for all the proposed activities that are envisaged in these two proposals and that it is inappropriate and not within Policy for these two applications to be successful in their current form.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:

No representations received

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Design and Access Statement

A Design and Access statement has been submitted to accompany the application. This is available on the application file and provides an understanding of the proposal and why it is required.

Heritage Statement

OFFICER APPRAISAL

List Description

The castle is a Grade I listed building and the list description for the building states:

'Castle. 1844-50, by Anthony Salvin for Sir John Tollemache MP. Rock-faced red sandstone with lead, asphalt and tile roofs. Mainly 3 storeys with one tower 5 storeys high, all arranged around a ward, with the principal accommodation on the north side. The castle has a triple-chamfered giant arch, above the gateway arch, a pair of oak Gothic headed studded doors, shouldered lintels to doors and windows, gate towers and battlements. The buildings at the west side of the inner ward are the stables, coach house, rectangular bell tower together with kitchens and service area. East of the entrance is the chapel (qv) and north is the Great Hall range of 18 bays with the entrance porch, set forward, approached up steps and with Gothic headed arch. The Hall has cross windows with trefoil heads and small trefoil lights in the gothic heads and a polygonal oriel window whereas the service and bedroom wing (west) and long gallery wing (east) mainly have two-light windows with shouldered lintels. The large circular main tower is behind the hall entrance and the octagonal Library tower is at the east

end of the gallery wing. The outer walls of the castle have full height slender turrets or bartizans at changes in direction and there are corbel tables supporting part of the battlements, arrow slots, and even a gatehouse garderobe. The roof is mainly flat, of asphalt, concealed by the crenellated parapet. The single storey coach house makes early use of the timber lattice roof trusses.

Interior: The porch leads to a screens passage with oak screen, in early gothic style, and matching gallery rail above. The Great Hall has Minton Tile floor, large stone chimney piece and stone quadripartite ribbed vault supported by corbels with shields. The Long Gallery, (east) has oak panelling 1.8m high, a chimney piece in a wide arched recess, and a ceiling panelled by three longitudinal and six cross beams. The Long Gallery gives access to an irregular shaped Billiard Room with beamed ceiling (north) and the octagonal (tower). Library with oak linenfold bookcases (east). The Drawing Room (North) has an oak boarded floor, a wide stone fireplace. Gothic-headed door with ornamental strap hinges, plastered walls and beamed ceiling. The main staircase is behind the hall. It has a light well pierced by shouldered-linteled openings vertically and horizontally in pairs. The circular tower, at the north west corner, contains the octagonal Dining Room with Minton tile floor, two fireplaces, and vault of eight radial ribs running to a central boss. The room contains an Oak sideboard with carved 'Green Men'. Below the dining room the wine cellar is a circular tunnel vault from a short round pier. The Kitchens and Service rooms are south and west of this tower, extensive, unaltered and disused. The first floor nursery area has plastered walls with cornices, square headed cross braced oak doors with ornamental strap hinges and some plastered barrel-vaulted ceilings. The first floor gallery is above the long gallery and very similar in arrangement. The Racket room at fifth floor level in the round tower, approached up a stone spiral staircase, has a boarded ceiling and originally had its walls lined with boards. The roof of this tower room is covered with block lead. The upper ceilings of the Bell Tower and Gatehouse are barrel-vaulted.

The castle can be regarded as a great Romantic house or as the last serious fortified home built in England, created as a refuge from the social disturbances of its time. Designed on a great scale with consummate skill, it was executed to the highest standards and is one of the great buildings of its age'.

Site History

Peckforton Castle was built in approximately 1851 by Sir John Tollemache and has since had a fairly chequered history. The castle has suffered a lot of deterioration over the latter part of the 20th century but approximately fourteen years ago it was acquired and converted into a hotel. Planning Application P99/0844 was submitted to and approved by Crewe and Nantwich Council for change of use and a Listed Building Consent Application was approved in early 2002. The first phase of the works was commenced to form the hotel and 38 bedrooms. The building was acquired approximately seven years ago by Majorstage Limited and they have made a tremendous success of the business and as such the owners. On the 19th June 2011 a guest at the hotel started a fire, which did not result in loss of life and outwardly the east wing remained intact. However, the ferocity of the fire caused extensive damage to the structure and internal fabric of the building and further damage was caused by smoke and water, which was used to extinguish the fire. Planning permission and Listed Building consent was subsequently granted for the refurbishment of the wing and some other minor alterations.

Currently the guest facilities at Peckforton Castle include the function rooms (the Great Hall and the Drawing Room), the 1851 Restaurant, the 2010 Brasserie, the Tranquillity Spa and 47 guest bedrooms. Back-of house facilities occupy the remainder of the East and West Wings, as well as the former Kitchen and Bakery buildings. The Coach house is used in the summer as a bar area, but is under utilised in winter months. Only the ground floor of the Grainstore is occupied (by the Land Rover Experience) and the remainder of the building is semi-derelict. The Stable block houses those birds of prey not housed in the bays located within the castle Ward. The upper floors of the Gatehouse provide storage and staff accommodation.

The Current Proposal

Due to increasing demand it was acknowledged that additional guest bedrooms are considered to be an important part of the hotels development strategy as the current occupancy levels are considerably above the norm throughout the year. Feasibility studies produced by the castle have shown that the Grainstore tower and the adjoining Stable block could be refurbished and fitted out to provide an further 13 bedrooms, which would be a mix of accessible rooms, standard rooms and executive suites (this proposal was subject to applications 13/2063N & 13/0265N which were subsequently approved on 8th August 2013). Additionally, together with the anticipated release of one bedroom in the West Wing from its current role as a bat loft, this would raise the hotels accommodation offering to 61 bedrooms.

However, the Land Rover Experience operates out of the ground floor of the Grainstore tower. The business runs successfully from this location, but the building layout is not ideal for them and their presence in the building prevents its re-development. The castles 'Birds of Prey' experience packages are also popular with visitors, but presently the birds are partly housed in timber bays within the Ward as well as in stalls in the former Stable block. While the birds themselves complement the heritage atmosphere of the castle Ward, the bays fall short. The Stable block is also underutilised as accommodation for birds of prey.

To achieve the other objectives of the development plan, it is proposed that the currently derelict Engine Sheds be converted into an Activity Centre. By providing improved facilities for the "Land Rover Experience, as well as housing the Birds of Prey that are currently in the Stable block, the Grainstore and Stable block would be released for redevelopment. The Activity Centre would also offer improved archery facilities in a new archery range in the woodland. The engine sheds are located approximately 100m away from the castle. The former engine sheds are in a poor state of repair and have not been used for some considerable time. The building is screened for the most part by a large earth bund which is heavily vegetated and due to the topography of the surrounding environ is located in a natural hollow.

Design

The principle issues surrounding the determination of this application are whether the development would adversely impact upon the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and would respect the pattern, character and form of the surroundings, in accordance with policies BE.2 (Design Standards) and BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011.

The main thrust of the Local Plan policies is to achieve a high standard of design, respect the pattern, character and form of the surrounding area, not adversely affect the street scene by reason of scale, height, proportions or materials used.

Development Control guidance advocated within the National Planning Policy Framework places a greater emphasis upon Local Planning Authorities to deliver good designs and not to accept proposals that fail to provide opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area. It specifically states 'Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions'. (Para 64). It is the opinion of the case officer that this proposal does not detract from the character of the host property and will not have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the area and is accordance with advice stated within NPPF. This view is supported by English Heritage and the Councils Conservation Officer

Policy BE.9 (Listed Building: Alterations and Extensions) states that development proposals for the alteration or extension of a listed building, or any feature of special or architectural or historic interest which contributes to the reasons for its listing, will not be permitted unless:

- The proposal respects the scale, materials, colour, detailing and other significant features of the building concerned; and
- The proposal does not detract from the character or setting of the building concerned, especially with regard to its surrounding gardens, landscape, street scene or relationship with adjoining buildings and significant views.

The NPPF intimates that subsequent alterations to historic buildings do not necessarily detract from the quality of a building. They are often of interest in their own right as part of the building's organic history. Successful alterations require the application of an intimate knowledge of the building type that is being altered together with a sensitive handling of scale and detail. It is considered that the proposed alterations and extensions do preserve the historic fabric of the buildings and do not detract from the setting of the castle and as such the proposal is in accordance with advice stated in NPPF and policy BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions)

In addition, the NPPF 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'. (Paragraph 132).

The Engine Sheds consist of a group of buildings within an area of approximately 50 x 40m, which is located some 100m away from Peckforton Castle in a roughly South-west direction. They are located in the Peckforton Estate woodland, which consists of a mix of natural growth deciduous and managed pine trees. As previously stated, the buildings and the surrounding area are entirely outside of the Peckforton Woods SSSI. They are accessed via woodland tracks that were clearly formed to be used by vehicles, but are now only really accessible by 4x4 due to their poor state of repair.

The largest building has a pitched roof structure orientated in a South-west direction, while outbuilding 1, the most intact of the other more ruined buildings is orientated South-east. The orientation of two of the remaining building ruins (outbuildings 2 + 3) is also to the South-west, while the other ruin (outbuilding 4) appears to be orientated to the north. Of the other four buildings, outbuilding 1 is more prominent than the others – this has four complete stone walls, but no roof structure. The other three buildings are all in an advanced state of ruin, and consist of stones that indicate positions of walls only. Building 2 to the North-east side of the site is the most evident, while buildings 3 and 4 are little more than stone outlines.

The external walls to each of the remaining blocks are largely constructed of stone with a rustic finish, but the stone on each block has differing coursing and tooled finishes. The roofs are constructed out of timber trusses and purlins with a natural slate roof material. The majority of slates are missing and the buildings (on the whole) are open to the elements.

The development will be almost entirely screened from both the main drive up to the Castle and from the Castle itself as it is centered on the engine shed. Due to the size of the existing building the main Engine Shed has always been seen as the central focus of the development. It is proposed that it shall become the new base for the Land Rover Experience and incorporate activity centre reception, landrover experience reception, storeroom and meeting room, while part of the smaller block will provide accommodation for an on-site warden / caretaker. The building will retain its former industrial appearance whilst allowing it to be used for modern day activities. Additionally, the retention of the buildings distinctive roof lanterns and their repetition in the proposed extension is sympathetic within these proposals and the fact that the extension will be made visually more subservient by virtue of its step down in roof height is welcome and will also be sympathetic in that it will serve to continue the rhythm of the existing step down of the current two sections of the engine shed. The applicant states that the warden accommodation is required due to the birds of prey being in close proximity and other animals which may require on demand expertise at very short notice. Furthermore, the warden will help to deter any potential thieves as the birds etc are expensive and as such the warden will aid on site security. It is considered given the relative isolated nature of the site and need for on demand expertise relating to the birds of prey and other animals, the wardens accommodation is reasonable and will be subject to a condition restricting its use.

A small garage block will be located to the north west of the Landrover Experience and will comprise open faced carport with attached store room and refuse area to the rear. An extension is proposed to the North-west end of the building to house store rooms, and an open-sided covered walkway shall link the building to a bathroom block built on the site of the larger of the other buildings.

According to the submitted plans the outbuilding 1 shall be developed as the bathroom block. This location is seen as the most appropriate as it is the most central and roughly the right size. Clients at the Land Rover Experience need to be able to shower after their activities, so the block requires more than just toilets. It has also been designed to provide sanitary facilities for the guests staying overnight in the proposed future yurt accommodation (covered by a separate Planning Application).

Located to the south of the Landrover Experience and toilet block is a relatively large linear building which will help to reinforce the southern boundary of the site and it helps to define a courtyard appearance, which is in keeping with setting. The section of the building closest to

the toilet facility will be used for animal husbandry, maintenance and plant. The remainder of the building will house the birds of prey and other animals and a buggy room. According to the submitted plans the building will be clad in timber and the pens will be constructed out of mesh under a corrugated metal roof, whilst the remainder of the building will be roofed in slate. It is considered given the materials used and the utilitarian and simple form and nature of the building will not detract from the setting of the castle or have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the locality. Overall, it is considered that the proposal complies with policies BE.2 (design Standards) and BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions)

In addition to the above, the applicant is proposing additional car parking to the front of the car port, to the side of the toilet block, and to the far end of the activity centre. In addition, 8no. VIP car parking spaces will be located off the access road and will be taking into account the natural vegetation/trees and to make appear less uniform and stolid. The majority of visitors utilising the site will park at the main car park, which is located approximately 450m away. The applicant is proposing to landscape the surrounding area in order to soften the development and help to incorporate into the natural environ and as such conditions relating to landscaping and surfacing materials will be attached to the decision notice in the event that planning permission is approved.

Located to the north of the activity centre/Landrover Experience is a small sitting out area, which due to the natural gradient of the land makes best use of the topography. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development complies with policies BE.2 (Design Standards) and BE.9 (Listed Building: Alterations and Extensions) and advice advocated within the National Planning Policy Framework.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed alterations and extensions are of an acceptable design and would not have an adverse impact upon the character or appearance of the Grade I Listed Building and is therefore in compliance with provisions of Policies BE.2 (Design Standards) and BE.9 (Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions) of the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011 and advice advocated in the National Planning Policy Framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Approve subject to conditions:

- 1. Standard**
- 2. Plans**
- 3. Materials**
- 4. Drainage**
- 5. Mortar Mix**
- 6. All air vents and grills should be painted black**
- 7. Cleaning Mechanism of stonework**
- 8. Details of approach to blown sandstone**
- 9. All plaster to be lime based**
- 10. Describe and illustrate all replacement/new doors/windows**

- 11. Describe and illustrate proposed replacement radiators**
- 12. Rainwater goods to be cast iron and painted black**
- 13. Surfacing Materials**
- 14. Landscaping Submitted**
- 15. Landscaping Implemented**
- 16. Details of Timber Stain**
- 17. Roof trusses to remain exposed**
- 18. Details of door furniture to be submitted and agreed in writing**
- 19. Details of internal flooring to be submitted and agreed in writing**

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