

Application No: 19/3037M

Location: MERE GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB, CHESTER ROAD, MERE, WA16 6LJ

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for alteration and extension to provide additional bedrooms, conferencing and clubhouse floorspace, extension of the Stable Block (Spa) to provide additional leisure and spa facilities, creation of a tennis hut and golf starter hut and other ancillary buildings, alteration and rationalisation of the wider site and car park to provide more parking spaces and additional landscaping and re-development of existing ground store

Applicant: Mere Golf and Country Club Limited

Expiry Date: 08-Jun-2020

SUMMARY

The application is for Listed Building Consent for alterations and extensions to provide additional bedrooms, conferencing and clubhouse floorspace, extension of the Stable Block (Spa) to provide additional leisure and spa facilities, creation of a tennis hut and golf starter hut and other ancillary buildings, alteration and rationalisation of the wider site and car park to provide more parking spaces and additional landscaping and re-development of existing ground store known as 'The Cube'.

Initial objections raised by consultees have been resolved through the submission of amended plans and the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with conditions

PROPOSAL

The application is for Listed Building Consent accompanying the application for the expansion of the Mere Golf Resort located in Mere. The application proposes alterations and extensions to provide additional bedrooms, conferencing and clubhouse floorspace, extension of the Stable Block (Spa) to provide additional leisure and spa facilities, creation of a tennis hut and golf starter hut and other ancillary buildings, alteration and rationalisation of the wider site and car park to provide more parking spaces and additional landscaping and re-development of existing ground store known as 'The Cube' (as previously approved under 15/0141M).

The proposal includes significant extensions to the main hotel building to provide an additional 64 bedrooms, 41 of which located in the new extension. Giving the hotel a total of 145 bedrooms from 81. The other extensions provide additional conferencing facilities which cover an area of 700sq.m. The extension providing enhanced conference facilities is located to the east of the building and faces the Mere and wraps around to the north. The extension provides enhanced conference facilities by providing extensions to the existing conference rooms. The extension includes the remodelling of the restaurant area externally, which will comprise brick to match the building. The conference area can be divided up or opened as one space. The extension to the west of the building includes the golf club reception, golf shop, female and male changing rooms, and storage. At first floor the extension includes a terrace area to the east, in addition at first floor a bar and golf club seating area. This replaces the existing facilities at ground floor and allows the existing club lounge to be converted to a larger formal restaurant area. The internal arrangement will be more open plan and legible for guests as a result.

The application proposes an extension to the south of the building, this provides additional hotel rooms. The extension is designed to match that of the existing hotel building. The extension will be constructed on an existing area of hardstanding and tennis court area. The remainder of the tennis courts to the south will become car parking area as the tennis courts are relocated to behind the spa building. The building known as 'the cube' was previously approved under a former application is located to the south of the site. This building will be extended slightly from that as approved and relocated away from a tree that has habitat value. This is proposed to be used as remote office space with ancillary comfort facilities. The application proposes a golf starter hut located to the front of the main building overlooking the Mere.

The Stable Building is the only Listed Building on the site and is Grade II. This building is currently used as the spa, offering treatments and contains wellness facilities and sits independently of the main building. Due to the sensitivities around this building, particularly in relation to its architecture and listed status, the scheme has been amended to reduce the harm to this building. The proposed changes to this building now include a dance studio to the rear which fills in an existing area which is used as an outdoor spin studio. The proposal includes an extended terrace area to the east elevation of the building at ground floor, adjacent to the existing indoor swimming pool. An existing small roof terrace area will be removed. The raised plateau area to the rear of the spa building will now include two tennis courts with floodlighting and a small tennis hut, for equipment. There will be a net loss of one tennis court.

The proposal includes providing additional car parking spaces. There are currently 325 on site, and this proposal following amendments now proposes an additional 49 spaces, taking it to a total of 374. The access points to the site will remain as existing, with two accesses off Chester Road.

During the process of the application discussions have taken place with input from consultees, and a package of amendments has been submitted. This addresses a number of issues highlighted throughout the process.

The amendments include the following:

- Both remote parking areas have been removed to resolve amenity, heritage, ecology and arboricultural concerns. This has resulted in a loss of proposed car parking spaces, but there will still be an increase across the site.
- The main car park has been redesigned to resolve ecology and tree concerns
- The extensions to the Stables Building (spa) have been significantly reduced in size and it is proposed to raise the height of the bordering wall to reduce the impact of the remaining extensions
- The entrance to the conference area has been redesigned to reduce visual impact
- The entrance to the hotel has been redesigned to better reflect the character of the building
- The building known as 'The Cube' has been relocated by 2 metres, closer to the main buildings, in order to retain an ecologically important tree.

The amendments submitted have addressed a number of issues listed above particularly in relation to the Listed Buildings.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is the Mere Golf and Country Club which covers an area of 3.4ha. The wider site golf course covers an area of approximately 69ha. The club has two access roads, the southern access, is used as ingress and the northern access is the used as the egress. The site includes the Grade II listed building, which is currently used as the spa building and was formerly stables. In addition, the lodge at the northern access is also a Grade II Listed Building, no alterations are proposed to this Listed Building. The main building was partially destroyed by fire and has been rebuilt. The site has an extensive planning history and has evolved over time.

The site has the Mere to the east which is 'The Mere SSSI/Ramsar', the mere is bordered by private properties. There are properties along Chester Road located adjacent to the entrances to the site. The red line plan shows the proposed car parking areas. However these have been omitted from the scheme.

The Golf Course is well established with many mature trees. The built area of the site contained within the red line does contain some trees along its boundaries.

RELEVANT HISTORY

The Mere Golf and Country Club site has been subject to several planning and listed building consent applications in the past.

50071P, Temporary training centre, withdrawn 24.08.1987

71783P Extension to building (stable building), withdrawn 13.10.1992

71791P Renovation of existing outbuildings and infill to form a leisure area incorporating squash courts and changing facilities, withdrawn 13.10.1992

78451P, Refurbishment alteration & extension to form squash courts, Approved, 05.09.1994

81398P, Removal of existing grass area and laying of artificial grass surface, withdrawn, 16.08.1995

04/2341P, Construction of new tennis court, Approved, 03.11.2004

06/0785P, Alterations and extensions to new mere hall to provide 85 bedrooms. conversion and extension of stable block and squash courts to accommodate leisure facilities, alterations to site access, off-site highway improvements and rationalisation of car parking facilities, withdrawn 20.06.2006

06/0786P, Conversion, alteration and extension of stable block to provide additional leisure facilities, Withdrawn, 20.06.2006

07/1518P, Alterations and extensions to new mere hall to provide 86 bedrooms, conversion and extension of stable block and squash courts to accommodate leisure facilities, alterations to site egress arrangements (including demolition of north lodge) and rationalisation of car parking facilities (resubmission of 06/0785P), Withdrawn, 15.09.2007

07/1519P, Conversion, alteration and extension of stable block to provide additional leisure facilities (resubmission of 06/0786P), Withdrawn 15.09.2007

08/1262P, Conversion and extension of stable block and squash courts to accommodate leisure facilities (listed building consent), Approved, 10.11.2008

08/1263P, Alterations & extensions to new mere hall to provide 86 bedrooms, conversion & extension of stable block and squash courts to accommodate leisure facilities. alterations to site egress arrangements (including demolition of north lodge) and rationalisation of parking facilities (full planning), Approved, 18.03.2009

09/3549M, Variation of condition 3 on application 08/1263p relating to various external alterations, Approved, 22.03.2010

09/3818M, Variation of condition 2 on application 08/1262p (LBC) to include some external and internal alterations, Approved, 07.01.2010

10/3745M, Non material amendment to 09/3549M - variation of condition 3 on application 08/1263P relating to various external alterations, Approved, 19.10.2010

10/4444M, Replacement of 1990s front door with glass and minor non-material working amendment relating to application number 09/3549M (variation of condition 3 on application 08/1263P), Approved, 01.02.2011

15/0141M, Re-development of existing ground store/helicopter hanger and addition of new circulation area to house a gym and cafe, and conversion of existing temporary car park to permanent car park, Approved, 18-Aug-2015

18/3759D, Discharge of Condition 8 on approved application 15/0141M, Approved, 07.08.2018

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 July 2017

SE7 The Historic Environment

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004 (saved policies).

Policy BE15 Listed Buildings

Policy BE17: Preservation of Listed Buildings

Policy BE18: Design Criteria for Listed Buildings

There is no neighbourhood plan for Mere.

National Policy:

The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Practice Guidance

CONSULTATIONS (External to planning)

None received

VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Mere Parish Council – Comments received however these do not relate to matters of the Listed Buildings.

REPRESENTATIONS

Individual letters of representation

1 letter of representation has been received which does not discuss matters relating to the listed buildings, and relates to objections with the impact of the planning proposals.

APPRAISAL

Heritage and Design

A heritage impact assessment was submitted with the application which was updated following revisions to the original proposals, which came about as a result of initial objections from the council's Conservation Officer. The heritage impact assessment complies with the requirements of policy SE7 which requires the significance of the heritage asset to be described and reported as part of the application.

The site contains 2 listed buildings - the gate house and the stables. These are designated heritage assets.

The first is the Gate House a Grade II Listed Building with the following list description:

4/47 Entrance arch and gates to Mere Country Club and golf course, Mere New Hall

Entrance arch and lodge. c1840. Red, Flemish bond brick with stone dressings and tile roof. 2-storey gateway with single storey lodges to either side. Road frontage: stone plinth with stone quoins and caps to turrets and surrounds to windows, some diapering in blue brick. Central Tudor-arched gateway. Tudor-arched passenger walkways to either side in slightly projecting square turrets which die to octagonal turrets with domed caps. Lancets to first floor of turrets with a 2-light casement window over central archway with shaped gable above. Lateral one-storey wings have 3-lights casement windows, with shaped gables above. Cast iron gates to central and pedestrian arches of diamond lattice pattern with armigerous shields imposed. Rear: similar to road frontage save that pedestrian walkways exist under the central archway instead of under the turrets on this side. C20 single storey additions to left and right.

The second listed building is the Stable Block used as the spa a Grade II Listed Building with the following list description:

4/48 Stable block at Mere Country Club and Golf 5.3.59 Course at Mere New Hall

Stable block. c1834. Red Flemish bond brick with stone dressings and blue brick diapering. Single storey courtyard plan with tower over entrance arch. East front: central Tudor archway. Square turrets to either side with stone quoins, dying to octagonal turrets. Slightly recessed tower stage above with stone quoins. One-light casement window with hood mould and stone surround. Circular clock face above, the lower half embedded in brick wall, the upper half in a lead cupola which is square in plan and of two moulded quadrant stages with a small semi-circular cap and weather vein above. To either side are brick walls divided by pilaster buttresses with stone quoins and cornices with octagonal domed tops. Central bays to either side have single-light casements with stone surrounds and small decorative gables. Small octagonal turrets to left and right-hand corners also with stone quoins, cornices and domed caps.

The hotel itself has a historic core, which has been extended and remodelled following fire damage in the 1970s. This can be considered as a non-designated heritage asset. The impact of the proposed development/works on the designated and non-designated heritage assets and their setting based on the revised scheme has been assessed by the Heritage Conservation Officer.

With regard to the Gate House, following the removal of the car parking area in this vicinity of the site there is now no concern as there is no material impact arising from the proposed development.

For the Stables Building, following the reduction in height and mass, the proposals are considered to have a neutral impact and will preserve the historic interest. The elegant stables building with its imposing main elevation depicting diaper brickwork features, a clock tower and stone details to the elevation creates historical context to the site along with a remaining 19th Century element to the hotel.

The revised proposal seeks to extend the leisure and spa facilities by enclosing more of the open elements at the rear and extending it sideways to create more usable indoor space. However, it excludes the first floor café element of the previous scheme, which is an improvement. There are no concerns regarding the proposed rear alterations/extensions.

The applicant has suggested an increase in wall height and a reduction in the proposed extension to the stable block such that the wall would now screen any impact of the extension. This part of the stable building is a modern addition and the impact of this when seen from the car park would be neutral.

For the Hotel, part of the hotel is made up of historic fabric. This has been extended and modernised to adapt to hotel use. The proposed hotel extension is large and has the potential to dominate the setting of the stable block. Whilst this building would have always been subservient, the original hall would not have extended as far.

The proposals come as a package of remodelling, therefore the main focal point of the building will change. The proposed design will give more legibility to the scheme as patrons will have a greater sense of arrival, which is currently toned down and confusing due to several entrance points including a service entrance. The materiality of the main extension providing the conference facilities and golf facilities is very important. The materials must be submitted to the LPA for approval, as the design is bold and therefore must be finished to a high quality standard, this includes the screening for the terrace and balcony areas.

With regard to the extension to the hotel, this mimics the existing design of the hotel bedroom extensions in terms of materiality, proportions and fenestration. This is acceptable however, again, materials must be submitted for approval to ensure that the match is acceptable.

For the landscaping, the proposals include the creation of a path and reinstatement of a wall to divide the spaces of the car park. The suggested illustrations appear acceptable and the council would seek quality natural materials to ensure that the landscape design achieves a high standard.

The applicants have submitted details of walls dividing the large expanse of car parking area located between the listed stable building and the hotel to 'break up the area' and this would generally reflect the historic layout. It is noted that there would have been a form of enclosure from the stable block to the original Hall. This is evident from the historic maps as lines/broken lines. It is considered that this would improve the appearance of the car park and reduce the dominance of the car park on the setting of the listed buildings. This is a positive impact subject to a condition matching materials to the stables and using traditional bond, mortar mix and natural stone details.

In terms of the impact of the hotel extension on the setting of the listed stables, it does have a slightly negative impact when viewed in context with the stables as one enters the car park due to its scale. However, this is considered to be offset by the improvements to the car park which will have a positive impact on the setting of the listed building. Overall it is considered that the development would have a neutral impact on the setting of the listed building and the proposals would comply with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and national guidance.

In terms of the proposed changes to the listed building itself, the extension would have a minimal impact over and above the existing extension that has had permission. The revisions to the proposals secured are such that the historic interest of the building is preserved. The proposals are therefore in accordance with the relevant Development Plan policies seeking the protection and enhancement of heritage assets in Cheshire East.

Representations

The Council's Conservation Officer has been involved in discussions regarding the amendments to the scheme in order to make them acceptable with regard to the Listed Buildings on site. The amendments have removed concerns and the scheme is considered to be acceptable and will not harm the heritage assets on the site.

One letter of representation was received from a member of the public, however this relates to the principle of the scheme overall and does not reference the heritage assets. This also applies to the initial comments received from the Parish Council which related to the initial scheme and did not discuss the heritage assets.

CONCLUSIONS

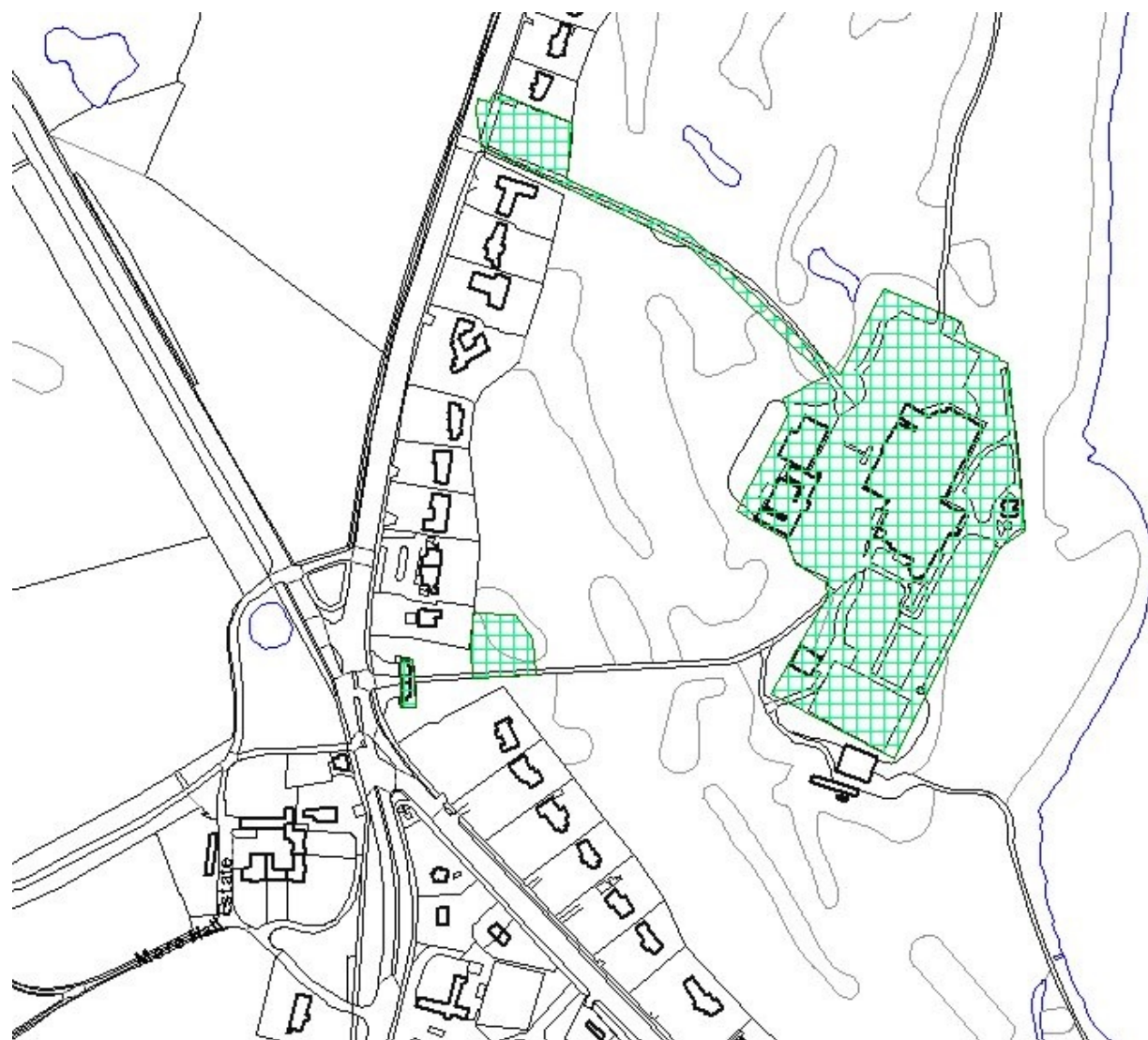
The proposals are considered to preserve the special architectural interest and setting of the heritage assets on site and would be in accordance with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Listed Building Consent is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

1. **Time Limit**
2. **Development in accord with approved plans**
3. **Submission of materials**
4. **Matching materials to the stables and using traditional bond, mortar mix and natural stone details**
5. **Hard and Soft Landscaping – Submission of Details**
6. **Landscaping (Implementation)**

In order to give proper effect to the Committee's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Chairman (or in his absence the Vice Chairman) of Northern Planning Committee to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.



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