

Alterations, extension to house, erection of greenhouse, domestic studio, shed, 3 holiday let units and associated works

Auburn, Walled Garden and Former Art Gallery Manse Road Dirleton North Berwick
East Lothian EH39 5EJ
Ref. No: 19/01106/P

Alterations, extension to buildings, erection of buildings, gates, demolition of buildings and walls

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Comments of the Dirleton Village Association

The Dirleton Village Association is a conservation organisation dedicated to the encouragement of good design and planning in the Dirleton conservation area in order to preserve the historic character of the place. It is a community charity which holds open meetings and its committee is democratically elected every year. It responds on planning applications, and carries out its own village enhancement projects.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whilst welcoming the well-considered proposals for the restoration of the frontage of the old school house known as Auburn, we have a number of serious objections to the proposal to replace the former Laundry (also known as the Gallery building) with higher, longer and larger buildings dominated by car garaging and parking facilities. The derelict laundry building itself is industrial in character, and its form was derived from its function. However, its design paid no regard to the highly sensitive nature of its location next to the historic church group of buildings- but then it was built before the planning system was introduced to control such matters.

The opportunity now exists to replace it for the next 100 years or more with a more sensitive, higher quality design which is derived from a proper analysis of its conservation context and its immediate historic setting.

The proposed design of this planning application however is not an improvement from the conservation point of view, and its impact on the conservation area and the character of the adjacent listed buildings would be, in a number of ways detailed below, worse than the impact of the existing industrial laundry building. It is higher and longer, and blocks out more of the

view of the church tower from the east. Its mass is approximately twice that of the laundry. It also contains less stone in its design, and removes more listed stone walling. It even retains the industrial look by incorporating a continuous, full length steel beam running through and between all three of the box-like structures.

We therefore object to these proposals because it would be inappropriately designed over-development which would harm the historic character of the conservation area.

As well as objecting to its design, we also object to the proposal because we are concerned about road safety issues, about its impact on neighbours' privacy, amenity and daylighting, and about its impact on the important group of mature, heritage trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders on the north east corner of Church Green.

We therefore agree with the comments of the planning officer at pre-application stage which, in our view, still apply: *"The proposed positioning, massing and large extent of the proposed new dwellings to Manse Road have a detrimental impact on the surrounding listed buildings, daylight availability to Beadle cottage and the viability of existing trees"*.

MISSING, CONFUSING AND MISLEADING INFORMATION

We could not find enough information in the applications on external materials and colours. We found the website difficult to fathom, with its predominance of superseded drawings and obscurely titled documents. There are, for example, a number of files simply entitled 'report'. We cannot find references to the colours of garage doors, harling and exposed steel beams or any detailed references to external paving materials.

The colours of garage doors, steelwork, doors and window frames should be provided. These should be recessive in colour.
Proposals for external paving and parking bay materials should be provided.

The elevational views which show the church tower do not show it in its correct position or from true key viewpoints at ground level.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The DVA's general view regarding new architecture in the Dirleton conservation area is that it needs to be compatible with the historic architectural elements in the village, be at least neutral in its impact, and be of a high quality in order to enhance the historic place. This is because Dirleton is a place of unique historical architectural and landscape quality and beauty which should be treated as a special heritage case by architects and planners.

As required by the Reporter in the Foreshot Terrace application appeal report, (planning appeal reference: PPA-210-2064, planning application reference 16/00710/PM) the design statement for any proposed building project in Dirleton should produce an analysis of the conservation area, including an identification of the visual, architectural and landscape elements in the village which make it worthy of conservation area status, and should describe the immediate surrounding context. The design statement should then show how the design relates to the character of the conservation area. This application does not carry out such an analysis. A proper conservation analysis would conclude that a new design should not use any elements from the laundry building, but should instead relate to the conserved listed buildings.

The DVA has appraised the application against the following design criteria:

Mass

The proposed positioning and increase in mass and extent of the proposed new buildings will have a detrimental impact on the setting of the surrounding listed buildings group.

Preservation of Listed Stone Walls

The western boundary of the site at present consists of a listed stone wall approximately 2.5 metres in height. Because the wall is listed, new openings in it are to be avoided. A number of openings are proposed.

Views



There is an important heritage view of the church tower from the public footpath along the fronts of the houses opposite and from the roadway of Manse Road, which at this point forms part of the John Muir Way long distance walking route. Once the old laundry building is demolished, this view will be further enlarged and enhanced. Such an important view must be kept open and, where possible, improved. The proposed two storey buildings will block almost all of it. Given that the proposed gaps between the 3 proposed new buildings do not align on the church tower, and because of the depth and positioning of the proposed blocks, there will be no real view of the tower from between the blocks.

Built Form

All the existing listed structures west of the laundry building, with the exception of a small gravediggers' shed, have pitched roofs. The flat roofs of this proposal retain the industrial look of the laundry building, and clash with the roofscape of the listed building group. The current proposal gives the impression of wooden boxes balanced on top of concrete and metal garages from the Manse Road side, and sitting on top of a historic wall from the churchyard side.

The proposal to include a continuous, long steel beam running into and out of the 3 buildings is an alien, intrusive element which would conflict with the character of the conservation area. The design report says that it 'deftly' highlights the slope of Manse Road. It would be far better to deftly highlight the form of the surrounding buildings left after demolition by omitting it.

It relates of course to the linear industrial character of the laundry which in turn is related to its use and industrial process. As that will be gone, the replication of such a linear connection becomes meaningless.

Building Material and External Finishes

The site is located next to the highly sensitive listed buildings and walls structure grouping west of Manse Road. This group is built entirely of local stone and timber. To relate to its context in the conservation area and its immediate setting, any new building(s) must harmonise with this, and not repeat the mistakes of the laundry building. The extensive local stone which exists within the laundry garage and frontage walls (In addition to the listed rear boundary wall to be preserved) has an extremely high conservation value, is difficult to replace or match, and should not be lost to the village. It should be salvaged, cleaned off and re-used in any new building/s.

The proposal to include lime mortar render as well as stone and timber in the wall construction breaks down, complicates and confuses the simple form of the buildings. A much simpler conservation-guided approach using fewer materials- stone, timber and pitched slate roofs, is required.

SAFEGUARDING OF PUBLIC ACCESS AND SAFETY, NEIGHBOURS' PRIVACY, AMENITY and DAYLIGHTING

Public Access and Safety

The eastern boundary is hard on Manse Road which is also the John Muir Way. This is a busy route which serves as a footpath, cycleway and bridleway. This raises safety issues with regard to the layout, principally relating to garaging and parking proposals.

The John Muir Way is part of the national long distance footpath network running from the west coast to the birthplace of John Muir in Dunbar. It is used by walkers, cyclists, joggers, horse riders and disabled people.

The parking and garaging layout proposals do not incorporate sightlines past the corners of the proposed buildings. This would create potentially dangerous inter-visibility issues as vehicles attempt to exit on to the road.

There are 14 houses in the Glebe and on the northern extension of Manse Road to the north of it for which the road fronting the proposed development is the only access. Full twenty-four hour access along Manse Road will be required for local residents, emergency, service and delivery vehicles and John Muir Way users for the whole of the construction period.

Loss of Privacy and Amenity

East Lothian Council, as Planning Authority, applies general rules for controlling distances between overlooking windows and terraces/balconies and garden boundaries. These are: a minimum of 18 metres between facing windows and 9 metres between a window or terrace/balcony and a garden boundary.

The windows of the houses along the Glebe, which are potentially overlooked by any development, are the following distances from the existing laundry building: 15.5 metres to the windows and 6.5 metres to the garden boundaries.

The proposed windows and terraces/balconies overlooking the houses opposite would therefore be the same, at 15.5 metres from the windows and 6.5 metres from the garden boundaries. They therefore do not comply with the requirements, and they would therefore cause a loss of privacy and amenity to neighbours according to the regulations.

Beadle Cottage has a window facing the proposed north gable of the north building. The distance from window to window will be 11.5 metres. This is also 6.5 metres closer than the regulation allows. The distance from the same windows to the garden boundary of Beadle Cottage would be 5.18 metres, again not complying with the 9 metre regulation.

Loss of Daylighting

The proposed, level, north building wall gable is 5.88m high with three north facing upper floor windows. It is located 11.33m south of Beadle Cottage gable which contains a south facing window with its cill at approximately 1 metre above ground level. According to the architect's calculations, this gives a daylighting angle of 25 degrees. The winter solstice angle at Dirleton is 11

degrees. Daylighting to Beadle Cottage will therefore be reduced for 3 winter months.

There is also a proposal to rebuild a stone wall 6.32 metres from Beadle Cottage. The height of this proposed wall is currently unknown, but the existing wall is approximately 2.5 metres high.

TREE PROTECTION

There is an important group of heritage trees at the south end of the site. This is group G9 on the Tree Preservation Order plan. To comply with the British Standard for trees in relation to construction, no excavations or site construction operations are allowed within the root zone. The rootzones of trees 594, 595, 596 and 597 (refer to the Donald Rodger tree report) all extend to the edge of the adjacent buildings.

This application proposes the construction of a parking bay between trees 594 and 595, close to the trunks. Excavations for this will damage the trees' roots, and machine operations so close to the trunk are likely to damage it. We therefore object to this parking bay proposal. There is also a proposal to cut off the top of tree 594 in the tree report, because it has a 'lean'. It is leaning away from the proposed building, and should not be lopped or cut.

There is a valuable collection of different varieties of mature apple trees in the garden. These need to be preserved and protected from any construction works.

To comply with the British Standard, both groups of trees require to be fenced off before construction works start with 1.8 metre high fences fixed into the ground to prevent the contractor opening and moving the fences about.

OTHER CONSERVATION AREA ISSUES

Control of Wirescape



The DVA campaigns for overhead telephone wires in the public open space and road areas of the conservation area to be avoided by undergrounding or routing through backlands. There is currently a line with a pole running through the protected tree group to Auburn, and a second overhead wire to the former Gallery from a pole on the other side of the road opposite the former laundry garage.

Planning conditions should be used to prevent new wires to the 4 proposed properties being 'flown' across Manse Road/The John Muir Way. This would be detrimental to the conservation area.

We ask for all existing line wires and the pole in amongst the mature trees to be removed, and for any new proposed telephone wires to be taken from the supply on the opposite side of the road via an underground duct.

Paving Materials for footpaths and car parking bays

No information is given. These materials need to be either stone paving units, such as recycled setts and whinstone kerbs, or gravel of colours to match the conservation area and local quarry gravel. (Brown or grey) .Concrete pavers would be alien to the listed building context.

Fence to Stone Wall of Front Garden of Auburn/former school master's house

The existing fence and gates to the front garden of Auburn are of the same style, and may actually be the same, as appear on a pre-1920 photograph of the Green. Restoration should be on a like-for-like basis.

Old Horse Trough and Water Pump

The DVA seeks to retain and protect historic items such as the old village pump currently located in the corner of the tree triangle. This should be protected during the period of the works.

Old Cast-iron Lamppost

There is a cast-iron lamppost column at the north corner of the tree group. This should be preserved. We would ask for it to be refurbished and re-used in the development or for it to be gifted to the community for re-use elsewhere.