

Appendix to reports 10/00671/LBC and 10/01272/LBC

OFFICERS REPORT (07/00014/LBC)

Site Description

Mount Wise House is a large, double fronted, corner building located at the southern end of a terrace on the eastern side of George Street in Devonport. Originally built as two large townhouses its principal elevations are to the south, facing towards Admiralty House, and to the west where it contributes to street scene in George Street. Like the terraced properties to the north its plot extends to the east in a narrow curtilage, which contains more recent rear extension as and outbuildings. Unlike the terraced houses to the north, it has until very recently been contained within the Mount Wise military enclave and inaccessible to the public. Whilst most of the original external features survive, notably the well proportioned Georgian frontages; the long period of military use has led to extensive internal adaptation and alteration. The property is listed Grade II.

Proposal Description

Listed Building Consent is sought to convert and extend the building to provide 1,668sqm of employment space, 510sqm in a new extension.

The Design, Access and Listed Buildings Statement submitted by the applicant's consultants in support of the application states that the interior of the building will be sympathetically restored, with all later modern plasterboard partitions removed, and all interior areas, such original staircases and associated lobbies carefully renovated. Externally the dilapidated and unsympathetic accretions attached to the east of the building and freestanding workshop will be removed and replaced with a sympathetically designed modern extension to provide additional floor space and DDA compliant access to the upper floor space.

Plans show a two storey extension on the eastern side of the building, a steel framed structure with glazing, external teak blinds and a stone stall riser in completely contrasting style to the existing building.

Although a separate listed building consideration, to be determined on its own merits, the application relates to and is compatible with the wider outline application for Mount Wise; reference No. 06/01646/OUT.

Relevant Planning History

None

Consultation Responses

Plymouth Design Panel - the Design Panel have not been consulted specifically about this application, although they have commented upon the wider outline application that includes this site.

Representations

Site notices were posted, but no representations have been received about this application.

Analysis

Human Rights Act - The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, and in particular Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8 of the Act itself. This Act gives further effect to the rights included in the European Convention on Human Rights. In arriving at this recommendation, due regard has been given to the applicant's reasonable development rights and expectations which have been balanced and weighed against the wider community interests, as expressed through third party interests / the Development Plan and Central Government Guidance.

The key issues in this case are:-

- Principle of Change of use from Military residence to offices (policy CS03 of the Core strategy)
- Impact upon the character and setting of the listed building (policy CS03 of the Core strategy)

The Council follows Government advice in PPG15 (Historic Environment) in seeking retention of listed buildings in the use for which they were originally built in the first instance – which in this case is a residential use. However, it is accepted that the internal arrangements (position of access staircases, scale of rooms etc) do not lend themselves easily to residential conversion and, in this location, subdivision. A commercial office use is therefore an acceptable alternative.

The internal alterations are limited to minor openings on the third floor, a new access corridor to lift extension subdivides rear room plan, a large rear sash window is blocked for a new lift tower on the second floor, the removal of partitions to the landing, the blocking of a rear window to new lift extension on the first floor and minor alterations blocking windows to accommodate toilets on the ground floor. These are considered to be acceptable by the Council's expert Historic Environment officer, subject to a stringent conditional regime relating to details. This is set out in conditions recommended.

The extension is located to the rear garden/courtyard of the building and replaces some poor quality minor additions, fire escapes and a large garage/storage building which covers about half the open courtyard space. The extension incorporates an existing 2m plus Plymouth limestone rear boundary wall. The new extension is proposed as a light weight construction with glazing to the south elevation under a projecting flat roof on piloti. The glazing will have louvers to reduce solar gain. It responds to its context with the thin flat roof aligning to the soldier course between ground and first floor of the main house and the piloti create a bay rhythm similar to that of the main house. Its massing is reduced by adding a set back mezzanine floor which is top lit by a clerestory type window. The result is a well executed but clearly subservient building with an honest, clearly new architectural style which does not compete visually with the listed building.

In addition, as discussed above, a four storey glazed lift core is located tucked behind the last bay of Mount Wise House. It also provides the physical link

between the buildings and lift access to all but the attic floor in the Listed Building. This glazed link will require blocking in of rear windows but is well located and subject to detailing and materials is acceptable

A short section of limestone boundary wall attached to the side elevation of the House will be retained to assist in integrating the existing and new build and adding historical and architectural a texture, contrast and interest.

The previous proposals replicated the general mass of the existing building which was considered to be detrimental to character of Mount Wise House.

Section 106 Obligations

None on this LBC application

Conclusions

The internal alterations to the Listed building are limited to opening up staircases and recreating the main room plan. Services are located to the rear (east) in the smaller rooms and the link to the new glazed lift tower from ground /1st/2nd and 3rd floor and the 2 storey new extension. The new extensions replace minor later additions and a large modern storage building to the rear courtyard. The proposed new build extension appear architecturally well executed and honest in their contemporary approach. Subject to details controlled through condition this proposal is considered to be acceptable.