

ADDENDUM REPORT

Planning Committee



Item Number: 7.2

Site: Blake Lodge, Seymour Road, Mannamead

Application Number: I6/02073/FUL

Applicant: Mr Andy Atkinson

Members' attention is drawn to the comments of the Council's Historic Environment Officer.

Historic Environment Officer (HEO) Comments:

Key points

- To the south of the main house, within the grounds of the Lodge, there is a mid-20th century flat roofed concrete building which until recently has been used as a fitness centre. This was built prior to the main house being listed in June 1996.
- The original access from Mannamead Avenue was blocked up in the 1970's and the ground levels substantially raised.
- The principle of developing the site with flats specifically for the use of the Deaf Association is supported, and if consented, the residents will have use of the communal garden space shared with the main house.
- At pre-application stage it was noted that the floor area of the proposed new development was considerably larger than the existing building, and this was considered over-development of the site. The floor area has therefore been reduced very slightly, but is still significantly larger than the existing fitness centre and the site therefore appears rather densely developed. Further consideration should be given to reducing the number of flats from 10 to 8 which would allow more space for access and landscaping, and it would help to reduce the impact on the neighbouring properties.
- To help address the mass and the impact of the proposed development, it is intended to significantly reduce the ground levels in this part of the site, and thought has been given to how the flats will appear from the main house, so for example, a green roof has been introduced to soften their visual impact. However, it is not clear how this will work with the proposed photovoltaic panels. Combined with a carefully thought through planting scheme, this should help to screen the flats from the neighbouring dwellings.
- The proposed materials are generally well thought through, although the use of slate hanging would be discouraged as although it is found in parts of the city, is it not a familiar cladding material in the Mannamead Conservation Area. Natural zinc cladding is suggested instead along with the smooth render finish, and we would encourage the use of the render systems that are less prone to staining. Further consideration may also need to be given to the windows on the west side of the flats to avoid issues of overlooking. Rainwater goods should be powder coated aluminium and not PVC-u, and the materials proposed for the balconies may require further thought as the use of timber effect planking is not considered appropriate.

- There may also be some scope to introduce more natural limestone plinths, particularly where the render is at present proposed to come to ground level, and possibly also to break up the north elevation. The green roofs will help to soften the appearance of the flats from the main house. Other details such as the glass balustrades should be simple and lightweight.

Southern Boundary Wall

- To the south of the site dividing it from the neighbouring property “Woodville”, there is a high limestone rubble wall. Although not listed in its own right, this wall and the others forming the boundary to the garden and the entrance from Mannamead Avenue are curtilage listed, and therefore need to be treated as if they were listed.
- This wall is currently supported on the north side by the higher ground level but obviously this support will be reduced when the ground levels are lowered. This wall is covered in vegetation in places and in a poor state of repair generally with tree stumps growing through it. A detailed method statement will be required to show how this wall will be partly taken down, the roots and vegetation removed and then it will need to be partially rebuilt.
- Details will also be required to show exactly how the levels of the land will be altered and how the entrance on to Mannamead Avenue will be widened to accommodate vehicles and pedestrians. It is expected that the existing gate piers will both be retained and reused.

Summary of response

These proposals will undoubtedly have some impact on the Conservation Area and the neighbouring properties, but on balance this impact is felt to be less than substantial. Proposals within Conservation Areas to develop or redevelop sites should aim to preserve or enhance the character of the area and to contribute positively to its wider regeneration. New development is expected to be of the highest quality design and to positively respect and enhance the special interest and character of the Conservation Area.

There is no doubt that the proposals are a substantial improvement on the existing fitness centre, and that they will in time help to regenerate Blake Lodge. Although the proposed development is considered a little too large for the site, considerable thought has been given to its appearance and lessening its impact. It will help to support the Deaf Association and hopefully allow them to maintain and remain at Blake Lodge for many years to come, and therefore in this instance the benefits are felt to outweigh the harm.

The HEO's comments include a number of recommended planning conditions. The report before members includes a condition to ensure that the southern boundary wall is constructed in the best interests of the listed building and the amenities of the neighbour. Additional natural stone has been negotiated to certain parts of the building and the previously proposed hanging slate has been replaced with natural zinc, in accordance with the HEO's views.

No amendments are proposed to the officer recommendation as a result of the Historic Environment Officer's comments.