

CAVERSWALL CASTLE



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



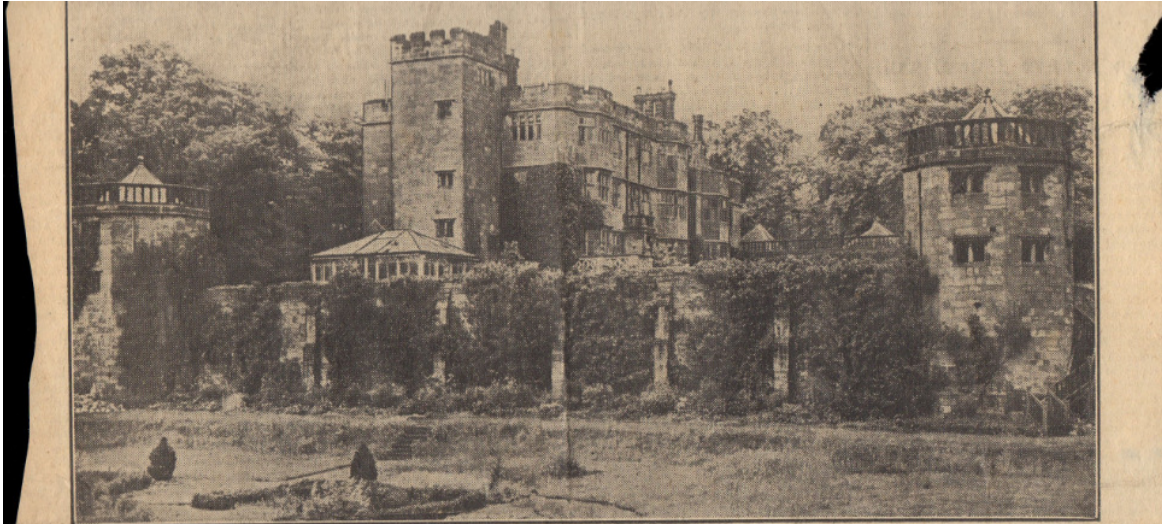
CAVERSWALL CASTLE

INTRODUCTION

Caverswall Castle is a Grade I listed building completed in the early C17th, probably no earlier than 1611 by Mathew Cradock, Mayor of Stafford. Although putatively built on the remains of a medieval castle, of which some of the stonework in the basement could plausibly be related, the house was an entirely modern contrivance. Very much in the prodigy vein and ascribed by many to have Robert Smythson connections; it would however have been conceived very late in his life (died October 15th 1614 aged 79) and of somewhat stunted proportions for the great man, but nonetheless a house of magical qualities. Doubtless as at Slingsby the concept of a castle ethic if not its detail was deemed essential to add authority to the recent wealth of its constructor, but in any case fitted with the stylistic fascinations of the day, in an age when the study of Palladio was still in its infancy. Like many such houses, Caverswall has had its fair share of Victorian intervention, rich potters adding to the work of Cradock, making the old look older and the detail more abundant and intricate than was typical in the C17, helped by the antiquarian dealers of the day. Despite its existence through much of the C20 as a convent the only damage wreaked on the building has been its subdivision into two dwellings and the unfortunate C20 extension on the north of the smaller part. The house has now been brought together again into a single unit.

The Birmingham Post, Tuesday 4th July 1933

FUTURE OF CAVERSWALL CASTLE



(Photo: "Birmingham Post.")

Caverswall Castle, a Jacobean house near Stoke-on-Trent, which stands on the site of a fourteenth century stronghold, amid charming surroundings, has recently been acquired by a religious community known as the Sister Servants of the Holy Ghost. For nearly two years the castle (shown above) has been empty, for it appeared that the upkeep of such a large building was beyond the power of a private purse in these penurious days. It was at one time feared that nothing could be done but to strip the castle of its valuable oak panellings and its tons of lead, and leave its bare walls to the ravages of time. Fortunately, however, this now will not happen.

The special aim of the Sister Servants of the Holy Ghost is to co-operate with priests in the evangelisation of pagan peoples. The community is of Dutch origin, but the Sisters will use Caverswall Castle as a novitiate in which to train British subjects for the propagation of Christianity in the British Indies. In addition to work on behalf of the Foreign Missions, the Sisters will have some home

activities. It is the desire of the Archbishop of Birmingham to have in his diocese more houses to which lay people can go for a week-end retreat. The roominess of Caverswall Castle, its beautiful gardens and walks, its quietness and seclusion make it an ideal place for this purpose. Also, as several of the sisters are trained nurses, it is proposed to use a portion of the building as a private nursing home.

Caverswall Castle and its gardens form a very striking and unusual composition, their individuality arising from the fact that a seventeenth century builder used for the hall not merely the remaining materials but also the surviving plan and outline of a fourteenth century stronghold. Defence was no longer deemed necessary when James I was King, so the new house rose openly in the centre of the ancient bailey, the curtain walls of which were reduced to parapet height, while its flanking towers were converted into garden pavilions. From the terrace before the house or from the high-perched formal garden

occupying the site of the bailey these present a low appearance; but from the lawns and parterres, which now replace the lake-like moat of the castle builder, the garden-houses can be seen towering up to a three-storeyed height and connected with each other by a great buttressed wall of splendid masonry.

The builder of the original castle was Sir William de Caverswall, a knight who lived in the days of Edward III, and whose ancestors had already been seated in the neighbourhood for some generations. Sir William or his builder must have been of an engineering turn of mind, for the water defences of the castle were on an elaborate scale. His son Richard, who was alive in 1340, was the last of the line, his daughter and heiress carrying the estates to the Montgomeries, a noted Staffordshire family. Later the castle, which had passed more or less into decay, came into the possession of Matthew Cradock, of Stafford, who turned the ruin into a Jacobean house and pleasure.

No exact date can be assigned to Matthew

Cradock's work of re-edification, and the evidence of its structure compels one to dismiss the tradition that Inigo Jones designed it. The tower that rises up on the west side is, no doubt, a remnant of the Edwardian castle repaired and rewinded by Cradock. As with the windows, so also the balustradings at Caverswall are in the Jacobean or even Elizabethan manner. Like so much work of that period, they are links between the purely Gothic and purely classic manner. Cradock's house was built on conservative lines. It closely followed Elizabethan traditions and, considering its various vicissitudes and changes of ownership, it has, at least externally, escaped with singularly little damage or alteration. Except for the draining of the moat, the whole delightful composition—house, bridge, pavilions and retaining walls—have lost little of the original character given them by the builder who so successfully grafted the forms and details of his day on the medieval ruin which he took for his skeleton.

Quoted from paragraph 1 of the above newspaper article:

“For nearly two years the castle (shown above) has been empty, for it appeared that the upkeep of such a large building was beyond the power of a private purse in these penurious days. It was as one time feared that nothing could be done but to strip the castle of its valuable oak panellings and its tons of lead, and leave its bare walls to the ravages of time.”

1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 Caverswall Castle last existed as a self-sustained estate in 1933.

1.2 The Castle was owned from approximately 1855 by the Radcliffe family, devout Catholics, who also constructed the Catholic Church, St Philomena in 1872 on land then belonging to the Castle. At this time the moat was drained and the formal gardens laid out. From 1878-1890 the Castle was rented by the Wedgewood family whilst building another house, (presumably not Barlaston Hall which was built in 1756) and then purchased in 1890 by William Bowers, a Stoke merchant. The Bowers Family set about considerable enhancements, constructing both the east and west lodges now outside the present curtilage, the former dated 1891 and inscribed to WE and A Bowers. The north east range of the Castle was constructed at this time as well, designed by C Lynam, adding approximately a further third to the floor area, which is also dated 1891. Stables were added on the north side of the moat, again on land outside the current curtilage. Crenellations were added over the parapets and much of the interior decorative finishes date to this period, carried out in an antiquarian style, which was at the height of its popularity at this time, which served to considerably enrich the interiors. However, this was not destined to last. William Bowers died in 1911 and both sons were lost to the First World War. The widowed Mrs Bowers stayed on until 1932 when the Castle was auctioned in a distress sale, separating the Castle from its surrounding land and other properties. The buyer at the auction was clearly looking for a commercially successful turnaround and sold the property on to institutional use. This was a typical outcome for large houses in this period.

1.3 The Castle lot itself was bought by the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Ghost. This missionary order was founded in Holland by a Dutch priest, Father Arnold Janssen, in 1889 with the specific aim of converting and bringing salvation to the heathen and pagan peoples of the world.

1.4 At its peak the order had missions worldwide but political upheaval in China and the First World War saw it withdraw, from China, Togo and Mozambique. The first Sisters of the Order arrived in England in 1930.

1.5 In 1933 Caverswall Castle was chosen as a suitable base for a training institution which could produce English speaking sisters with a view to extending the work of the order in the countries of the Commonwealth. The first English postulants were received in 1934. The Castle was also developed as a base from which sisters who wished to teach could gain an English

Teachers' Certificate. Rooms were also rented out to "respectful" ladies for visits, forming what in effect, was a guest house.

1.6 To meet the requirements of the order some structural changes were made, among which was the conversion of the billiard room into a chapel. There was also a brick extension to the Moathouse part of the castle (North east side), to extend the accommodation for the nuns. This was over 3 levels - basement, ground and first floor. The Nuns also used the stables (still in the tenure of the Castle at this time) to the North side for further accommodation. They also lived in the Castle basement, sectioned off with curtains. Considering there were over 16 bedrooms in the main part of the castle itself it suggests that there was a very large number of residents in total. The nuns who used to live here have confirmed that there were over 50 people living in the Castle at various times. The lift was installed around 1960 to aid with nursing care.

1.7 Through the late 40s and early 50s the Castle grounds were thrown open on one day in the year for a garden fete in which all village communities joined. Between 1940 and 1965 the Sisters made a significant contribution to the education of Catholic pupils in the area by taking over and running St. Filumena's school. The contribution made by Sister Eloise (H.E. Waldorf) as Headmistress was an important one and gave the school a much needed period of stability. At this time the grounds were open to the public, virtually unimpeded and this has carried on until recently, leading to much frustration between village and castle, the former assuming rights that did not really exist over the latter.

1.8 The Missionary Sisters actually may have been the third religious order to reside at the Castle. Between 1811 and 1853 it was home to a community of Benedictine Nuns who had fled from Belgium to escape the troubles of the Napoleonic Wars. Before that, at some date around 1515 to 1540, it seems to have been a 'Priory Channons'; a priory of canons; for Leland refers to it in his Itinerary as 'late a Priory Channons, sumtyme belonging to the Montgomerikes now to the Giffards'. A modern translation suggests however that this may be a misreading of two references compounded by confused writing since the contemporary version reads: A castle or attractive fortress at Caverswall four miles from Stone. At Stone there was a priory of canons, which once belonged to the Montgomery family now to the Giffards.

1.9 The first Sisters arrived on 27th June 1933 when it passed to an allied order calling itself Daughters of the Heart of Mary who ran the Castle essentially as a guest home for elderly ladies. Although the need for the services of the Order did not diminish, recruitment to it did and by 1977 the Castle had become surplus to the requirements of the Order.

1.10 In June 1978, after no purchaser had been found and multiple commercial applications had been made, the castle estate was allowed to be split by the council and the subsequent individual units were sold to a group of families named respectively Milner, Bellamy, Bunn, Sherlock, Ham, Mallett and Lucas for a sum reputed to be slightly in excess of £100,000.

1.11 Part of the Castle changed hands again in 1993 when Brian Milner left for health reasons and Mr Sargent purchased his portion of the Castle. Part of the main building and corner towers were converted into unusual bed and breakfast accommodation.

1.12 The present applicant acquired the main Castle building in April 2006 and subsequently the attached “Moat House” (referring to the north east wing) in 2011. The lodges, however, had been previously sold off by the religious incumbents. The demesne was therefore still incomplete.

1.13 Since the religious Order left in 1977 there has been a continuous planning history relating to the main building, with 20 applications over a period of 36 years. Not one of these applications relates to any enhancement of the domestic use, with all of them either directly or indirectly looking for commercial possibilities. Only three of the applications were actually approved over this period. Clearly domestic use was not a priority.

1.14 Notwithstanding previous use as a monastery, over the last hundred years the building has been used as an institution for 44 years, as a commercial guest house for thirty years, as a single residence for twenty years and looking for alternative uses for the remainder.

1.15 Since 1933, a period of 80 years, the building has either been institutional or supported by some form of commercial backing.

1.16 A single application for a given purpose could be excused for being idiosyncratic, multiple applications by the same owner possibly dogmatic, but a planning history of 36 years all pushing in exactly the same direction, has to be taken very seriously indeed. A few opportunistic attempts are one thing, but a persistent tide is another. If Caverswall Castle was suited to its original purpose as a single residential unit, then by and large it would have remained as such, notwithstanding the occasional neglect that any building can fall victim to from time to time. This building was last used as a single home in 1933, eighty years ago, so clearly without the legislation of consents, the use of the building as already stated, has actually largely predicated itself. Residential freehold would now in reality be a reversion in use, not a continuation.

1.17 In the previous application English Heritage stated in their report (P0076722) that “English Heritage consider that the current use of Caverswall Castle is as a private residence. The Listed Building is of sufficiently small a scale to be able still to function effectively and comfortably as a single family residence.” With the conversion of the turrets included, which offer scope for two bedrooms each, the Castle has a possible capacity of twenty four bedrooms and at least ten reception rooms. This could only be called small scale to the most quixotic observer.

1.18 The location of the Castle is obviously sensitive, but use as a single residential freehold has in truth been so long been abandoned that it is now anachronistic, beyond the widest claims of authenticity. Agents claim that Stoke-on-Trent is not suitable for such an elaborate, large and maintenance-heavy building.

1.19 The building as it currently stands has 20 bedrooms and therefore the potential of at least 36 occupants, which is considerably larger than the maximum of 10 bedrooms that the residential market demands for a large house. As the bedrooms are secondary spaces in the upper parts of the building it would be difficult to ascribe other uses to them. Typically when a country house is brought up to date, bathrooms take the place of smaller bedrooms, which modernises the layout and also reduces the number of bedrooms to a manageable number. This has already been done at Caverswall, and the numbers of bedrooms are still excessive. In this respect late nineteenth century houses (or those significantly altered in the nineteenth century, as these) are usually the hardest to handle, as it was the heyday of the industrial revolution, leaving as a testament vast houses built on industrial wealth with the primary purpose of domestic leisure: Countless guests supported by legions of staff. This is confirmed by the Census of 1881 and 1890. In the period before this houses were generally more modest and therefore more easily adaptable. Georgian houses remain perennially popular as they more often than not do not exceed ten bedrooms, beyond which the space is simply not required for ordinary residential use. The English Heritage statement which may have been relevant to the last applicant is therefore inappropriate in reality to the building forming the body of this application.

1.20 Since purchase of the Castle the applicant placed it on the market with Savills, Knight, Frank and Colliers in 2007. This resulted in 120 mailings, 5 viewings and no offers, all based on the potential of commercial use.

1.21 Subsequently from 2011, the building has been offered by Strutt and Parker with 90 mailings of particulars resulting in 8 viewings and one offer (on a commercial basis) which could not subsequently be substantiated by proof of funds.

1.22 Both agents report that although the building is extremely attractive, its location close to Stoke on Trent and total lack of essential ancillary or service buildings have mitigated against its potential within the country house market.

1.23 If used as a country house, even part occupied with some level of staff, there would be in the region of five cars, or more, with for example twice daily traffic movements for each as a minimum. With garden staff and any kind of affiliated use on the remaining land this would involve another three cars and similar additional traffic movement. As a starting point therefore, when considering the impact of any proposals, the operational base for the building would start at 8-10 vehicles with 2-3 movements each, daily. There are currently four people at the Castle 3-4 days a week.

1.24 The existing formal gardens are on the south east of the house, originally laid out in the nineteenth century, where an oval sweep of gravelled drive is entered from the gate house. With parking laid out nose to tail all over the frontage, no more than thirteen vehicles could be accommodated. To allow free independent access for each vehicle would reduce the capacity to five or six cars at the most and these would be right in front of the principal elevation, private garden and amenity space. The perfect country house should present an uncluttered principal elevation, usually achieved by providing for parking, both family and staff to the rear or service side of the building. Caverswall does not have this, backing onto a moat all round other than on two elevations. Everybody coming to the house has to make do with the limited space available in front of the building, like a roadside pub, which in the current age decidedly mitigates against the desirability of the house. On this basis every country house managed by English Heritage or the National Trust attempts to keep parking away from the main approach to its houses, there being no worse place for the setting of a Grade I Listed Building.

1.25 Even single family occupancy of a house of this status would be likely to exceed the number of vehicles that could be parked here and with multiple-occupancy to make use of all the bedrooms, would swamp the available space or impact on the garden layout, either intentionally or otherwise. Historically this was improved by a coach house to the south east of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century and a double garage constructed in the fifties, the original stables and coach house were on the north side of the moat, now outside the curtilage. As the house has had such limited full residential use in the intervening period these buildings are now in poor condition. If the formal garden layout is to be retained then parking has to be precluded in this area, as the two are unlikely to co-exist successfully. Each and every managed country house moves parking to some form of remote location, to improve the appearance of the frontage.

1.26 In one of the very few planning approvals related to Caverswall Castle, parking was approved under SM90/0502/FUL in relation to use of the stew ponds for fishing. This was situated in open ground on the west side of the River Blythe on land now beyond the curtilage owned by the applicant. Rather than being on the edge of the green belt, the approval was set right in it and if this was clearly an acceptable location for parking, any proposed alternatives should be able to use this as a precedent or starting position as it represents the Council's view.

1.27 The country house is a status symbol for the owner, the design and layout is conceived to impress, way beyond the needs of mere accommodation. At its highest level the harbinger of this show is the lodge or lodges, constructed to evolve an entrance into an event. As Caverswall was originally related to a fortified demesne, the original lodge was the gatehouse, superseded in the late nineteenth century by the lodges built by the Bowers family. These are set at the entrance of the available access points to the site: There is no other feasible way to get in.

1.28 The lodges are now in separate ownership and in much same way that a farmhouse that has sold off its barns is compromised, so is a building like Caverswall, possibly even more so, as status is such a huge consideration to the country house market. Loss of lodges is a very real indication of decline in a building: Note Pelwall, Yeaton Peverey, Patshull, Apley, Cound etc. This is a last resort, akin to selling topsoil. Ironically if Caverswall never had lodges this would have been less of a problem than having lost them: The setting is incomplete in most perceptions. Even if that were not the case, the access still has to come right underneath somebody else's window, by this default. Even in a village setting this is not perfect for such a grand house.

1.29 Country houses on the edge of villages are not uncommon, particularly with early houses, as it was not until the eighteenth century that the Great House was deliberately set apart from the community from which it evolved, often by direct contrivance, with villages being deliberately abandoned, such as at Tatton. Cotswold villages are particularly rich in country houses attached to the back of the settlement such as at Stanway, and this does not detract from the calibre of the setting. If the village location is to work, the 'Big House' should at least have an open aspect beyond and at Caverswall this has at least been retained, with open countryside to the south west. However there is not sufficient land to provide for a sustainable estate. Neither is the land that there is, of sufficient quality to be of any use without major work. At the very least purchasers are concerned to have sufficient woodland to support a biomass boiler or sufficient pasture to support a pony. In either case of course further buildings would be required which may not meet the "special circumstances" of development in the green belt and so despite the possible potential in the acreage available, this may be scuppered by planning policy, unsympathetic to the needs of a large house.

1.30 A country house in decline lives in a vacuum, where the changing world of the periphery bears in on the house within: people naturally take advantage of the position with the amenity of those around it beginning to take precedent over what was once more significant and a building that formerly was predominant, can find itself subservient to its surroundings. This is already happening at Caverswall and before this becomes entrenched the position should be clearly understood. Caverswall Castle is a Grade I Listed Building and as such represents approximately just 2% of all listed buildings. In order to provide a sustainable future for this building, which clearly exists in uncertain circumstances, some compromise will have to have taken by those around it, to reinstate what is the principal heritage asset of the village.

1.31 Caverswall owes a debt to the Castle for the setting which it provides. Where planning policy can help sustain this important heritage asset, it should do so. This application is a request for the building to be more fully understood to provide for its sustainable future. It is a very large building which inevitably means demands are large, both for sustained use and its needs for maintenance, the former providing for the latter.

1.32 The Castle has been underused for some considerable time and impact on amenity should not be judged from the point of view of a vacant site, which is currently the case of most witnesses, but rather from the position of the potential of full and regular domestic use, which is a rather different proposition.

PROPOSALS

2.0 PROPOSED USE OF THE CASTLE AS A SINGLE DOMESTIC FREEHOLD

2a Domestic use

This is to include all the accommodation in the Castle. The applicant may well bring in members of his wider family to take advantage of the space available. As this is the accepted use as acknowledged by the LPA this does not need to be justified. Clearly the extent of the existing building allows for far greater numbers of people to be involved and this of course was the intention of the original use of the building, or at least for the short heyday that it was actually used as a country house.

2b Access

For domestic use both the East and West Lodge approaches will be used with no governing strictures on time, frequency or number of vehicles. This will include all family vehicles, supermarket deliveries, couriers, post etc. including contractors' vehicles for maintenance and repair of the Castle and grounds.

2c Parking

The additional provision for parking made out elsewhere in this application, should also be employed for the domestic use of the Castle for the reasons given in the introduction to this application, both to avoid crowding in front of the main elevation and damage to the formal gardens. The existing parking in front of the Castle will be retained, but by providing a viable alternative its use would be discouraged.

2d Lighting

No further exterior lighting is required for domestic use particularly in association with parking in the courtyard. Limited lighting as shown on the plans is to be used to make the access to the proposed parking area safe.

2e Amenity

Governed by the rules of acceptable neighbourly behaviour there is nothing in the use of the Castle as a single residence that could justifiably discriminate against the amenity of any neighbours.

2f Alteration to the fabric

No alteration to the fabric is required for domestic use.

3.0 PROPOSED USE OF THE CASTLE AS A WELL-BEING CENTRE

3.1 In the Planning Appeal decided on 23rd December 2010 the inspector dismissed the appeal for wedding venue use as being inappropriate development in the green belt on the basis of the scale of the development and therefore loss of amenity and separately dismissed the car park on the same basis.

3.2 The Head of Development Services, Mike Green is reported in the minutes of the planning committee meetings of Thursday 20th August 2009 as follows: “The principal issues of concern for officers were why residential use was not viable and that there is insufficient justification on financial grounds for introduction of the commercial use.” The Context section of this report demonstrates the pattern of use over the last hundred years and shows that the Castle has struggled with residential use for over eighty years, or as reported in the Birmingham Post in 1933 “for nearly two years the Castle has been empty, for it appeared that the upkeep of such a large building was beyond the power of a private purse in these penurious days. It was at one time feared that nothing could be done but to strip the castle of its valuable oak panellings and its tons of lead, and leave its bare walls to the ravages of time.”

If more or less continuous institutional use is not enough proof for the Local Authority, it is highly unlikely that anything could change this entrenched view.

3.3 It may also be useful to quote from the planning report from the last application 20th August 2009 which areas of the previous ‘change of use’ proposal to a wedding venue the committee found acceptable: “Councillor **Worthington** confirmed that he was impressed with the all the works that had been undertaken to the Castle and that works by the applicant were complimenting the Castle and the money spent was enhancing the Castle. (He) accepted that something had to be done with the building and it could not be retained as just a single residence. He concluded with the use such as a weekend retreat for guests would be fine.”

“Councillor **Fisher** considered that up to 80 events would be ok, but up to 120 guests plus car parking could impact upon the fabric and setting of the building and would have an impact on neighbours. The Bed and Breakfast or small hotel use would be more appropriate if the sole residential use could not be supported.”

“Councillor **Jebb** acknowledged that it was a requirement to allow a new use. In the past the building had had different uses and there was a more acceptable use for the building that would not have such harm to amenity.”

3.4 It is important therefore to make clear distinctions about the current proposals to define the difference between what is proposed and what was dismissed.

3.5 In the first instance there is the principle of commercial use for the building. The inspector was rather woolly on this but he does clearly state that "first and foremost is the need to secure a viable future for Caverswall Castle" and "I find that the need to maintain this Grade I Listed Building in a viable use and a satisfactory condition is capable of being a very special circumstance to justify inappropriate development in a green belt". It is extremely important to take note of the historic pattern of use of this building, showing that domestic use has been in the minority over a considerable period of time. Single domestic use is therefore a rather romantic ideal rather than a realistic proposition.

3.6 English Heritage in their defence of single residential use stated that "the listed building is of sufficiently small a scale to be able still to function effectively and comfortably as a single family residence". Admittedly the Moat House has now been brought back into what was originally (or since 1871) the body of the original building but eighteen bedrooms is not small scale, even by country house standards. This statement is therefore inaccurate and misleading. The selling agents also confirm that anything over ten bedrooms is beyond market requirements, putting Caverswall Castle decidedly in the unmanageable sector. The pattern of use of this building over the last eighty years should also indicate that the Castle is not an ideal family house.

3.7 Use therefore needs to be provided commensurate with the scale of the building, matching it as closely as possible.

3.8 At the time of the appeal no particular case was put forward to demonstrate that there was little demand for residential use and proof was requested by English Heritage. This application provides that, in the information available from the appointed selling agents, as described in the introduction.

3.9 No examination was made either of the planning history of the Castle or the pattern of use over the past century, both of which are now attached in the introduction, to show that residential use of this building has been a secondary use for nearly a century.

3.10 The inspector agreed that commercial use could adequately provide the means for maintenance and repair.

3.11 A wedding venue would have generated large gatherings of over a hundred people, often at night time and involving music and alcohol. The number involved in the Well-Being Centre would be much smaller, the hours of use sociable and the activity demure.

3.12 Caverswall Castle now includes the Moat House (part of the nineteenth century alterations to the main dwelling), providing in all eighteen bedrooms. Use of the building as a Well-Being retreat with reference to the proposed operator's current use of other buildings indicate that this is normally a single occupancy business, which would result in guest accommodation for 15 persons (the owner would set aside a bedroom specifically for his own use), also allowing for one residential manager. To allow for some double use would be sensible, so that the application should be totally realistic and indicate a worse possible situation so a figure of 30% double use has been included, increasing occupancy to 22 persons. As the Castle has sufficient bedrooms for this number, no physical alteration is required to accommodate these guests. This is a similar number to the previous withdrawn application, based on the available bedroom space.

3.13 The existing kitchen and dining room are also of sufficient capacity to cater for this number of guests, without addition or alteration. The kitchen is already set up as a commercial installation and there is no further requirement subject to building control that would affect this. Ventilation of the kitchen remains as existing. No alterations are proposed.

3.14 The Castle already has sufficient bathrooms for this number of guests, mostly on an ensuite basis and no further alteration or provision subject to building regulations is required. Ventilation remains as existing.

3.15 Detailed discussions have previously taken place with the Fire Officer and Building Control in support of up to 150 people using the building and there are no further alterations to be made to provide for additional or improved means of escape.

3.16 On account of the relatively small number of guests and the large capacity of the building, residential use and Well-Being Centre use can co-exist with no specific alteration required to change one from the other at a moment's notice. Well-Being Centre guests take advantage of the arrangements as they exist for residential use, with no alteration.

3.17 No other alterations to the fabric are required for the change of use. No protective measures would be required either, as proposed numbers are commensurate with no more than domestic levels and no more.

3.18 Well-being use would co-exist with domestic use and would be available as such for no more than six months of every year. The timing of use as a Well-Being Centre would be related to specific bookings, dependent on market demand related to the business plan of the operator, and would be available as market conditions demand.

3.19 Only one member of staff would be fully residential, to take care of health and safety in emergency and the remainder of the staff used in the well being retreat would be daily and part time, involving the following pattern:

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Hours</u>
1 fitness trainer	9.30 - 19.00
1 consultant	9.30 - 19.00
1 chef	7.00 - 19.30 on shifts to schedule
2 kitchen assistants	7.00 - 19.30 on shifts to schedule
2 cleaners	7.30 - 13.30
1 maintenance assistant	9.00 - 17.00
2 management / reception	on shifts, one residential

3.20 In residential use the house would be run with two part time cleaners, two part-time gardeners, and one full-time maintenance staff full-time. The additional staff for the Well-Being Centre would therefore be no more than seven.

3.21 As a guideline, guests would arrive on Sunday at 15.00 and depart the following Saturday at 13.00 with six nights' accommodation. This is a residential retreat, not open to the public for day visitors or part-time guests.

3.22 Staff would arrive at different times as annotated above and would use the West Lodge access only as a priority.

3.23 On the basis of the operator's current business plan at other centres, guests would be collected at the station in the centre's own minibus or arrive in their own transport.

3.24 The minibus would use only the West Lodge for access.

3.25 Independent guests would be directed by instruction to the entrance by the West Lodge, for ease of access, as this is closest to the logical approach to Caverswall Castle from the main arterial system (A50 and M6). Printed and satellite navigation mapping made available to guests will be provided only for this access point.

3.26 As all guests would be provided with a comprehensive information pack, the route to the West Lodge would be carefully explained. It is in any case, as mentioned above, the easiest access to find and the first arrival point from almost any main road route.

3.27 On account of the information provided to guests as above, no signage would be provided or required at either access which would also serve to discourage ad hoc visitors or make any implication that the Centre would be open to the public on an informal basis.

3.28 As much food preparation as possible would be completed off site, at other centres used by the operator. Food delivery to the kitchen would be by vans and two deliveries a day are anticipated. This would be by the East Lodge, as direct access to the Castle courtyard is required to get as close to the building as possible to transport produce, and this route avoids the sharp turn at the bridge over the Moat. As suppliers are independent it is hoped that this would simplify the operation and avoid possible damage to the copings of the bridge by eliminating the sharp turn. This pattern of use would be largely comparative with domestic use. The parking previously used by the formerly separate north east wing would be used by delivery vehicles, adjacent to the moat.

3.29 By its nature the centre is remedial, tranquil and subdued in its operation. All activity is directed by staff, all catering is alcohol free, early nights are encouraged. In contrast to the wedding venue, this is a controlled and subdued use involving limited numbers, with activity only in normal working hours. Numbers are restricted by the amount of beds available and there is no capacity for ad hoc additional guests, day visitors or external events. This is not a health spa or a gym open to the public on a daily basis, but a pre-booked retreat style operation.

3.30 Occupation and use of the centre is based on either a weekend or a one week course, the same for all guests, involving a structured programme throughout the week, which in itself cuts out random or sporadic traffic movement. All guests are doing the same things at the same time during the programmed course.

3.31 Use of the individual rooms is indicated on the proposed plans, all of which are capable of accommodating the numbers required, based in any case on the bedroom capacity of the Castle. All Castle rooms retain their current purpose, thus making a harmonious connection between commercial and domestic use. It also retains the ability for the property to be used as a domestic residence with no alteration.

3.32 Movement and intensity of staff traffic can be inferred from their working hours. There are no night shifts and the Centre would “close” for the evening by 22.00.

3.33 During the weekly course a minibus would be used to take guests to the Yarnfield Centre in Stone. As the Well-Being Centre is to operate on a single group basis this would be a maximum of one return trip each day using only the West Lodge access.

3.34 Including the arrival on Sunday and departure on Saturday it is anticipated that the maximum minibus movement would be two inward and two outward over seven days of the week.

3.35 The Well-Being Centre requires no additional lighting and signage and no application has been made for this and as a consequence (except for the parking area which has been treated separately and is to use limited lighting to assist the connection and access from this area to the Castle).

3.36 Wear and tear on the building subjected to the proposed use is no more than that associated with domestic occupation, particularly as this is to be run on a retreat basis without the incidence of events, parties or alcohol. No additional statement is provided to back this up as the pattern of use is virtually identical to a domestic pattern and of no greater intensity, given the scale of the building. None of the group activities involve high impact on the fabric with classes only involving light exercise and lecture based seminars. The centre focuses on the ambience of a retreat not an exercise regime. It is therefore likely that the impact on the fabric would be less substantial than for family use.

Sample Programme:



Academy 4 Wellbeing Proposals

by Bob Bowers, Chairman

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Methodology

1. What is the Academy 4 Wellbeing and what does it do?

Are fitness, weight, nutrition and wellbeing areas of your life you just can't seem to control? Many people who are successful and happy in lots of areas of their lives just can't seem to get their weight, eating, fitness and overall wellbeing right. At the Academy 4 Wellbeing, we understand. We understand that you don't want to be patronised with basic lifestyle 'advice', punished with a military style workout or pushed in to a meaningless diet that doesn't reflect your daily life. The Academy 4 Wellbeing has been created as the antithesis of these; it is a nurturing, caring and supportive resource for anyone wanting to regain control of their wellbeing. Based on a unique structure called The Three Pillars of Wellbeing, the Academy brings together the UK's, and indeed the world's, leading experts across all forms of life including Physical Wellbeing, Nutritional Wellbeing, Emotional Wellbeing and Health and Weight-Loss Benefits.

The lessons you will learn during just a 7-day stay at The Academy will stay with you for the rest of your life.

2. Who are we?

The Academy 4 Wellbeing is the UK's most effective Health, Fitness and Weight Loss retreat, based at the idyllic Trentham Estate and guaranteed to transform your life. Based on the beautiful Trentham Estate in Stoke on Trent, The Academy 4 Wellbeing is home to the UK's leading wellbeing experts. Your 7 day stay gives you first-hand access to their knowledge, expertise and advice, designed to empower you to make the changes in your life that you have always wanted to make. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to The Academy; our activities are tailored to each and every guest's requirements.

All of the Academy team are registered on the Health Professional Council, the resident fitness expert is registered with REPS (Register of Exercise Professionals) and the Academy is a member of the Fitness Industry Association.

The Academy is not a miracle worker or a quick fix but we do claim to change your life forever. We do this by educating and empowering you. Our expert team aims to give you every tool you need to change your own life for the better. By the time you leave the one week residential course you will have a complete understanding of your own body, its mechanics including its nutritional and fitness needs. You will feel fitter and have more energy. You will understand HOW and WHY your health and wellbeing is so critical. You will know what food your body needs to stay in tip top health. You will know what physical activity is best for you to stay in excellent shape. You will feel empowered and in control. You will have all the tools you need to continue your life in a positive and healthy way. You will have an ongoing support network and no doubt have made some friends for life.

3. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

The Academy 4 Wellbeing programme complies with the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) which provides evidence-based guidelines on the most effective treatment for weight management. In particular its specific Guidelines on Obesity treatment and fully meets the Recommendations for the Management of Obesity by Commercial and Community Settings. Academy 4 Wellbeing work to the standards in terms of best practice, staffing and facilities set by NICE (2006) Section (1.6.9.2) for the management of Obesity by Commercial and Community Settings.

The example programme attached is to illustrate the type of activities we will be putting on and are subject to change.

This programme can be delivered at other venues such as the proposed Caverswall Castle. The team can set up and deliver all of the programme from Caverswall Castle on a residential basis.

4. 7 Day Academy 4 Wellbeing , Health, Fitness and Weight Loss Programme

Our 7 day Academy 4 Wellbeing, Health, Fitness and Weight Loss programme has been safely and scientifically structured by our very eminent team of health and wellbeing Specialists and is tailor made to each client.

Please see our team here: <http://www.academy4wellbeing.com/ourteam.html>

It offers you the opportunity to take part in a variety of interactive workshops, discussions and seminars on Nutrition, Food recipes and tips, Exercise Prescription, Postural Awareness, Muscle Imbalance and Core Strength as well as our Emotional Wellbeing sessions by Dr Anthony Schwartz (visiting Professor at Staffordshire University and Chartered Psychologist) covered the cycle of change through affecting changes in your behaviours, your relationship with food, emotional eating and triggers. You will also be introduced to the concepts of Mindfulness and self help tools such as Journaling to help you keep on track.

You will also have access to a variety of different indoor and outdoor group fitness classes throughout the week as well as the opportunity for one to one sessions with our experienced health specialists. The Fitness sessions have been specifically designed so you will be able to progress throughout the week at your own pace, whilst having fun in the breathtaking scenery. Our Certified Health Specialists and instructors will give you the knowledge and practice to create a fitness plan that you can incorporate in to your own lifestyle.

The course begins on a Sunday with our guests arriving between 15:00-15:30 in time for a 16:00 Welcome meeting followed by orientation of the site a healthy gourmet dinner together.

Guests then must adhere to a 12 hour fast that evening so we can take Blood Tests the following morning to determine: Total Cholesterol, Low Density Cholesterol, High density Cholesterol, Triglycerides, Fasting Glucose. Other health measurements are taken such as: Blood Pressure, Resting Heart Rate, BMI, Hip-to-Waist Circumference Body Composition including % Body Fat & Lean Body Mass and Basal Metabolic Rate. This gives our clients an initial baseline to compare against at the end of your time with us and in the future weeks and months after as you learn to keep on programme with and without our assistance.

The course also includes all your tasty, healthy gourmet food and drinks a Our “Delicious” Restaurant overlooking the Trentham Lake taken from our Deliteful wellbeing Menu designed by our consultant Chef Cathryn Matthes, from the USA, who is one of the USA’s leading Wellbeing Chefs. See this link to find out more about our Certified Executive Chef from the USA (Cathryn Matthes, www.chefc.tv).

This Deliteful Wellbeing Meal Plan provides you with 1200kcal/day* and will consist of 6 separate eating times per day. The Wellbeing meal plan is based on well researched scientific principles. The meals are nutritionally balanced and calorie controlled with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, they are low in fat, low in sodium, low in refined carbohydrate and high in multigrain cereals with realistic portion sizes.

Our programme works because it provides you with the tools, knowledge and practice within a real life setting, whilst you have the support of expert staff alongside you. This will help aid the transition back into your normal lifestyle when you leave us less of a shock and therefore your health and weight loss goals more achievable. Alongside this, our programme is based equally on ALL the 3 pillars of wellbeing that directly relate to sustainable weight loss and the after course support we offer will mean you will have the knowledge, skills, practice, support and confidence to not only lose weight but keep it off!

5. The Concept of a Wellbeing Centre at Caverswall Castle

To provide a ‘Monastic, Health, Fitness and Weight Loss Retreat’.

Key features:

- Tranquility
- Alcohol-free
- Instructor-led programme
- Guests retire to bed early
- Course opens Sunday 15:00pm
- Course finishes Saturday 13:00pm

6. Number of People in the building at any one time

A maximum of 22 guests at any one time and 10 staff comprising the following:

- 1 x Fitness Trainers
- 1 x Consultant per day (Delivering Workshops).
- Catering Staff: 1 x Chef, 2 x catering assistants.
- 2 x cleaners (existing)
- 1 x maintenance staff (existing)
- 1 x management
- 1 x Front of house

The majority of these staff are part time.

7. Hours that the Retreat operates

- Guests are resident from Sunday 15:00pm to Saturday 13:00 hours (6 nights).
- Fitness staff and consultants only attend to deliver their individual modules.
- Catering Staff hours are between 7:00am – 19:30pm (based on split shifts).
- Cleaning Staff hours 7:30am – 13:30pm

8. Parking and Traffic Movement Plan

- Guests: Will arrive Sunday 15:00pm by a mixture of own transport or Academy Mini Bus from train station. Bags will be dropped at reception and valet will park guests cars adjacent to current derelict swimming pool, where they will be left until Saturday 13:00pm departure. Guests will be taken off site by Academy minibus to Wellbeing Park, Yarnfield, Stone for some outdoor activities.

- Staff: Will use the West Lodge entrance for vehicle access and park alongside guests and proceed on foot via the footbridge into the Castle
- Daily deliveries of food products are planned for between 10:00am – 12:00 noon. No more than two deliveries per day.
- Food deliveries will be primarily by 1 x Transit sized vehicle
- Food will also be prepared and cooked on the premises.
- Based on 22 guests maximum and a total of 10 staff (mainly part time) the parking requirements would not exceed 21 vehicles.

9. Use of Individual areas of the Castle

- Bedrooms
- Basement: Gymnasium
- Dining Room
- Kitchen
- Drawing Room (Relaxation)
- Library (Workshops)
- Billiards Room (Yoga, Core Strength)
- Roof Terrace (Relaxation)
- Gardens (Exercise)

10. Public Involvement

This is a private, Monastic retreat with no number increase, no parties, no day guests and no ad hoc guests.

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4.0 ADDITIONAL PARKING FOR DOMESTIC AND WELL-BEING USE

4.1 The Appeal Inspector decided due to the scale of the previous application for parking (42 spaces) that this was inappropriate development in the green belt. He agreed however that parking could be a special circumstance for development, in order to secure the viable use of a Grade I Listed Building.

4.2 An application for 53 parking spaces in a car park was approved at Caverswall Castle in 1990 in a location which would have been plainly visible from the surrounding green belt. The inspector approached this issue by referring to it as “borne in mind” but side stepping it thereafter, as it clearly indicates the precedential position of the local authority. Any future appeal should legitimately focus on this in detail as it indicates the council’s position clearly on parking infrastructure that has not in any other way altered significantly.

4.3 Neither the inspector or the pre-application advice give any helpful indication of what parking arrangements would be preferred other than “there seem to me to be possibilities for parking small numbers of vehicles less obtrusively” by the inspector, and a similar guidance by the LPA. Both the inspector, English Heritage and the local authority use as their principal objection (other than scale) of the proposed parking, to be the visual impact, as it is in line of “the principal view from the Castle” and “it will be visible in views towards and from the hall (sic) and be harmful to the setting of the Grade I Castle”.

4.4 Even for domestic use the parking provision at Caverswall Castle is inadequate as already described and to secure the full potential of the building to provide a viable use, sufficient parking should be secured, particularly for such a large dwelling. Present arrangements really do leave parking right outside the principal elevation and view. This could not be worse in amenity terms for a Grade I Listed Building. Definite measures should be employed to improve this, even and possibly primarily, to improve amenity for domestic use.

4.5 The land at Caverswall Castle is a mixture of the inaccessible to the north and west, the marshy (and conspicuous) to the south and west, leaving only the east as a viable location for parking.

4.6 The site as illustrated has the following possible areas for parking:

DRAWING 01_LOCATION PLAN (A3)

Relating to the Areas Identified on the Adjacent Location Plan:

Area 1 – This area is marshy, open to the greenbelt and at some considerable distance from the Castle itself. Whilst suitable for parking use, possibly in connection with the pond, this area is otherwise too exposed to views from the greenbelt and too remote. It is however screened by mature trees from views from the Castle.

Area 2 – Parking along the drive, which runs south west (as the only viable alternative to the proposed location) has been recommended by the local authority several times, but as the drive is on a raised causeway this would be highly visible both from the Castle and green belt and probably the most visually exposed position on the whole site. This would also be damaging to tree roots, and would become totally disorganised, as the verges would be carved up and without any provision for passing or turning, which would result in a chaotic morass. Neither the appeal inspector or English Heritage have indicated any alternative. In summary, as this location would be the most exposed position on the site, would cause damage to the setting, is in proximity to mature trees and would cause confusion in practical use: there could be no worse a location on the site for parking. Their comments of course related to the scale of the previous proposals.

Area 3 – This is the old cricket ground and whilst set on a lower level than the drive as described above, the parking here would be most visible from the Blythe Valley. It is also unscreened from the west terrace of the Castle, with no planting of any scale between the two. The embankment for the drive would only protect views of this area from the north west, which would contain views from the approach road only. The land here is also subject to marshiness during the winter period and would have to be substantially reconstructed to allow for parking. The distance from the Castle is also considerable.

Area 4 – When drained in the 1870s this area was occupied by the formal laid out gardens. As at Powis Castle, the castle terrace provided an excellent viewing platform to take in the geometrical design of the layout, popular in gardens of this period. The moat, which is fed by natural springs has now occupied this area. If it were drained again and a secure base laid, the natural depression of the layout of the moat would form a well-concealed area for parking, with access from the west drive. For reasons already explained however, the parking would be highly visible from the west terrace.

As existing, the moat on the west provides a perfect setting for viewing the site and to drain it for parking would seem a shame, notwithstanding the considerable engineering work required to do that. In addition, in order to provide a base suitable for vehicles, substantial excavation may be

required in an archaeologically sensitive area. Overall, the cost of providing parking in this area would be too weighty to be worthwhile.

Area 5 & 6 – A track winds round the outer side of the castle moat on the north and west sides, forming the access to the coach house and fields beyond the pond. This area is now well planted and forms a screen between the castle and surrounding village. There is not a lot of space in between the boundary and the edge of the moat and to provide space for turning would require the clearance of a considerable amount of planting. As amenity issues are high on the agenda of this application, parking in this location would be an insensitive proposition given the location of this area closest to the village.

Area 7 & 8 – This area has the existing garage and outbuilding and was clearly the area used for parking, storage etc. It is conveniently close to the Castle and well screened from every side. As a consequence, parking in this area has been examined in more detail elsewhere in this document. The historic graveyard is not affected by the proposals as these are further south.

Area 9 – The field in front of the proposed parking area is on ground falling to the River Blythe and it is this area (and not the site proposed to the east) that would be exposed to views in and out of the green belt, as little screening exists.

DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF AREAS 7 & 8

4.7 Historically, car parking was clearly positioned to the south east as the two existing buildings testify. Therefore use of this area is no more than a continuation of an existing facility. It is simple for directions and convenient for access to the main building. Much more important, despite vague suggestions otherwise, this is the only area that could accommodate parked cars, whilst still giving relatively easy access and provide an acceptable degree of screening.

4.8 Photographs taken in winter, as attached to this document after 4.11, clearly also show that despite the firm statements by the authorities this area is actually very well screened by trees and not “readily seen” as suggested, particularly towards the north eastern boundary.

4.9 The current proposals have of course significantly reduced the number of car parking spaces proposed, providing further screening with an extension to the garage building and generally grouping the proposed parking of 20 spaces much further north and east to take full advantage of the existing screening.

4.10 The unsightly swimming pool building has been removed and a low built, timber framed tiled roof cartshed put in its place, but with the principal access northeast – southwest to shelter the view of parked cars from the Castle. The building is smaller than the pool that it replaces, constructed in traditional materials and subservient to the existing range of buildings to which it is attached. Planting will further screen what is already proposed as a low key building.

4.11 The swimming pool building is in any case an eyesore and it is proposed to remove this to allow parking to be brought in close to the existing stone outbuildings on the west side where there is also a 1300mm level change, allowing for more discreet positioning. Grouping the parking close to the outbuilding also helps to screen it. Further existing and proposed screening on the southwest side, screens the parking area from the greenbelt. Images are attached demonstrating the visual impact of the proposals. (see following pages - **Visuals 1, 2, and 3**)

4.12 If the Castle is to have a viable use and a future, further parking is required. The area proposed is the only feasible alternative to the Castle courtyard itself. Given that the last time the castle was properly inhabited as a dwelling was 1933, it would be disingenuous to argue that refusing change is a beneficial option. The pool building is a permanent eyesore, parked cars are temporary and their mass more dispersed than the bulk of the existing structure.

4.13 The proposed use of Caverswall Castle has been whittled down in these proposals to provide the minimum possible impact in the use of the buildings, allowing the car parking to be commensurately reduced as well to less than half of what was previously proposed. The amount of parking is now largely no more than the level that upmarket domestic occupation would dictate for a building of this scale. Any less would impact on the viability of the building for almost any use. As such this falls within the remit of special circumstances that the appeal inspector recommended.

5.0 PROPOSED CARTSHED BUILDING TO PROVIDE FOUR PARKING SPACES

5.1 The proposed open cartshed measures 6215mm x 12514mm with a floor area of 77.7m compared to the existing swimming pool building which is 1850mm x 6500mm, with a floor area of 120.25m² which is 55% larger than the proposed building.

5.2 There are two existing garages which have capacity for 2-4 vehicles and the hardstanding on the north side of the existing stone building has a capacity for a further three parking spaces.

5.3 In total this application involves 22 parking spaces of which 4 are existing and 18 are proposed.

5.4 Space for informal parking has been taken up which is outside the root protection area of surrounding trees.

6.0 LAYOUT

6.1 The existing swimming pool is detached from the other outbuildings by a gap of approximately four metres. By contrast the proposed building is shown attached to the existing outbuilding to form a more cohesive profile, when viewed from the Castle and to draw the development as far to the north east (and out of the open land) as much as possible. This would bring the outline of the proposed building into the shelter of the mature trees to a greater extent.

6.2 The cartshed is open on the south east side, so that parked cars are not visible from the Castle and also the proposed parking area is concealed from the Castle behind the building, which forms a physical screen.

6.3 The proposals include for a cartshed with four parking spaces, in replacement of the existing swimming pool. An open parking area is tucked in to the south east of this building allowing for eleven spaces. A further three spaces have been added behind the existing mature screen of trees.

6.4 The proposed open car park is therefore now divided into two separate, but well screened areas of 11 spaces and 3 spaces. This is considerably less than any previous proposal and now directly commensurate with the scale of the Castle itself even as a single dwelling, bearing in mind the eighteen bedrooms.

6.5 Relocation of the parking has definite conservation benefits by reducing wear and tear to the formal landscape in the castle grounds.

7.0 SCALE

The scale of what is now proposed in terms of parking relates much more closely to the Planning Inspectors acceptance of the concept that the needs for parking could be justified as an exceptional circumstance. The proposed cartshed is set on lower ground than the existing building to which it is attached and taking benefit of the 1300mm difference, the ridge of the proposed building is nearly two metres lower than the existing building. This substantially reduces the visual impact of the proposals.

8.0 APPEARANCE

8.1 The open cartshed is to be oak framed with larch boarded elevations and a reclaimed Staffordshire Blue tile roof to match the outbuilding adjacent. Larch boarding has been used on account of its low key appearance and indication of subservience to the existing building. Setting the building on the lower ground plane, also helps in this respect. The style of the building has been purveyed as a simple vernacular structure. This has proved to be an accepted formula in other sensitive sites elsewhere such as the recently completed shop at Little Moreton Hall, the shop at Rievaulx Abbey, Boscobel House etc. This kind of development of ancillary buildings in relation to country houses has now become typical rather than exceptional.

8.2 The visual studies show clearly the extremely low impact of the proposals on views from the Castle and green belt. This issue which has been promoted previously as being of great consideration, clearly does not exist when actually reviewing the site itself.

8.3 There has been some discussion subsequent to the previous application concerning the use of Terram grass protector or similar for the parking area. These systems are ideal on flat ground for lightly used and seasonal parking. It is less suitable laid on a gradient or for more regular use. When untouched the surface looks very good, but with the slightest use, starts to look unattractive. It is also very tricky when wet, particularly for pedestrians and on sloping ground.

8.4 Terram is ideal for summer overflow parking at country houses but would look like an overworked affectation in this location.

8.5 Gravel is already laid right in front of the castle and to match the finish in a well compacted material would be more attractive than Terram and with a material precedent. The parking has in any case been kept as far to the north east behind the tree screen and behind the proposed and existing buildings as possible, so that very limited surface would be visible. The ground also slopes to the south of the existing building (this fall has been used to reduce visual impact) and would prove dangerous if laid in Terram. New planting screens the surface as much as possible from as many viewing points as possible, so the surface itself is of reduced importance.

8.6 Small 35w LED uplighters are proposed at approximately 5000mm centres, operated on a timer by PIR, along the base of the sandstone wall, sufficient only to light the way back to the Castle for pedestrians. Every care has been taken to the lighting level being kept to a minimum. These have also been used, where they are concealed behind the proposed cartshed. An illustration of the fitting is attached to the plans.

CAVERSWALL CASTLE PROPOSALS

IN RELATION TO THE

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Proposals: Change of use of Grade I castle from 'residential' to 'residential and well-being retreat centre with guest accommodation and associated parking', and demolition of existing summer pool enclosure and replacement with a covered parking area, including alteration and extension of the existing outbuilding to provide ancillary parking and garaging for the dwelling house.

The current National Planning Policy Framework has been examined in relation to this development to provide a focus for the duty of the Local Planning Authority to make a balanced decision on this application.

The points have been taken straight out of the Guidelines of the March 2012 edition of this Framework.

6.

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 18 to 219, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.

This development is based on an existing heritage asset and sustainability is essential for retention, maintenance and repair of the asset, which is the focus of the application.

7.

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- an economic role
 - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support

growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

The economic role is provided in this application by making a viable commercial use for a heritage asset that has not successfully been used for its original purpose for a considerable period of time. This is a sustainable solution to a problem that has not yet been resolved satisfactorily.

- a social role

– supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;

The social role. The proposed use provides future life for a nationally important heritage asset in the centre of a community, of sufficiently low key nature not to adversely affect amenity.

- an environmental role

– contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

The environmental role is provided by adaptation of an existing building to perform an extended role. This is sustainable development in its most simple form and more environmentally friendly than any form of new build enterprise in terms of use of resources.

9.

Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people’s quality of life, including (but not limited to):

- making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages;
- moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;
- replacing poor design with better design;

- improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure; and
- widening the choice of high quality homes.

This proposal provides employment for local people in a local community. The proposal provides jobs and brings benefit to the community in terms of visitors. The proposal uses an existing heritage asset to do this without major works.

14.

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

For plan-making this means that:

- local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

For decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

Planning history and occupation pattern over the last hundred years has indicated that this building has struggled with its original use. What is proposed is a sustainable alternative with very little impact in any aspect of its foundation. The proposed use is viable, has been proven locally elsewhere and can be implemented with little change. The LPA has so far been subjective as opposed to objective in the apprehension of these proposals, which is contrary to government guidelines.

17.

Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These 12 principles are that planning should:

- be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area. Plans should be kept up-to-date, and be based on joint working and co-operation to address larger than local issues. They should provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency;
- not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities;
- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;
- encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;
- promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);

- conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and
- take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

The onus on the Local Authority is clear here, which in relation to these proposals has not yet been proactive or collaborative.

19.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

This proposal embodies sustainable economic growth and is therefore available to be supported. The Local Authority has been notified previously that no change is not an option in the circumstances of this building in order to provide a sustainable future.

20.

To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century.

Multiple use of buildings is a concept for the 21st century and the ability of heritage assets to multi-task is happening all over the country in other authorities. The onus is on the Local Authority to be proactive in this absolute classic example of the evolving model of future development. Emphatic adherence to a perceived status quo, as has been the case to date, would be unrealistic in the circumstances.

28.

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres;
- promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

The proposals involve local employment and visitors to the area which will contribute to tourism. It will revitalise the community of which the heritage asset is at the heart. The view of the local authority to date has been negative and unsupportive, viewing potential issues of amenity as more important than the preservation of the heritage asset.

84.

When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.

The Green Belt has been used by the Local Authority as a deterrent to sustainable development

86.

If it is necessary to prevent development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt.

If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used, such as conservation area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.

Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.

Caverswall is a conservation area and Caverswall Castle and its setting is the principal reason for this. As a consequence the importance of this asset and the need to sustain it should take precedence over the considerations of the Green Belt.

89.

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

The proposed development involves a tiny amount of new construction on a brown field site and does not compromise the openness of the Green Belt. A building is to be replaced by one that is no larger than the existing structure and is less prominently located. Existing buildings are reused to provide sustainable development and parking provision is no more than commensurate to attain sustainability.

90.

Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are:

- mineral extraction;
- engineering operations;
- local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and
- development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order.

The buildings are all reused, with one replaced.

126.

Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment,²⁹ including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Not enough account has been given of this by the Local Authority as the strategy has been entirely negative to date.

128.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

A historical and archaeological assessment has been made appropriate to the development which involves no alteration to the fabric of the heritage asset, or intervention into archaeologically important areas.

131.

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The Local Authority has only viewed the negative side of viable alterations and over a long period the heritage asset has been strangled by preventative policy.

132.

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. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled

monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

A viable use for commercial purposes requires commensurate maintenance to promote that use successfully and allowing a degree of market force stimulates the desire for maintenance of the heritage asset.

134.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

This proposal involves no harm to the heritage asset and a lot of good including public access. The application embodies the direction required by the heritage asset, demonstrated by the pattern of use of a century. This surely would be a demonstrative account of “securing its optimum viable use”.

137.

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

Public access helps reveal the significance of the site by shared consideration.

169.

Local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment. They should also use it to predict the likelihood that currently unidentified heritage assets, particularly sites of historic and archaeological interest, will be discovered in the future. Local planning authorities should either maintain or have access to a historic environment record.

There is no data base, other than the list description held by the Local Authority.

188.

Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.

Pre-application advice has been at best negative.

189.

Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they do offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community before submitting their applications.

No encouragement was given in any aspect of any advice from the Local Authority.

190.

The more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, the greater the benefits. For their role in the planning system to be effective and positive, statutory planning consultees will need to take the same early, pro-active approach, and provide advice in a timely manner throughout the development process. This assists local planning authorities in issuing timely decisions, helping to ensure that applicants do not experience unnecessary delays and costs.

No pro-active approach was made.

193.

Local planning authorities should publish a list of their information requirements for applications, which should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development proposals and reviewed on a frequent basis. Local planning authorities should only request supporting information that is relevant, necessary and material to the application in question.

No list was published.

197.

In assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The presumption should therefore be in favour of this development.