

The Workshop, Harlech Drive, Biddulph, ST8 7AN.

Objection. Recommended refusal.

The concept is not acceptable in principle.

Site:

Stables, Coach Houses including Coachman's Cottage and Lodge north of Knypersley Hall.
Grade II.

Knypersley Hall. Grade II*.

Firstly, it is important to understand condensation is created by heat and humidity which when settled on cold surfaces creates moisture. When this eventually evaporates, it leaves residue or particles which eventually turn black or grey, if this is left it can lead to mould growth. The reason for condensation in this building is the evident lack of vapour permeable materials, and the lack of use of windows to allow excess heat and moisture to escape. Rooflights don't simply 'cause condensation' on their own. It is the internal functions imposed on historic fabric, in this case single leaf masonry, and the lack of air flow. If modern materials are in situ, which it is highly likely they are, anything plastic based or gypsum based will guarantee this issue long term.

At 5.16 and .17 of the heritage statement whilst some issues are raised, there appears to be no resolve for the cause of the issue – lack of ventilation. Repetitive reapplication of modern plastic based paints will do nothing to alleviate the cause of condensation. The first floor bathroom whilst some revisions are envisaged, does not seem to provide ventilation and the situation looks to be encouraged by creating a 'smaller area'.

Secondly, the scale, form, and design of the proposed extension is wholly unacceptable and very poor. It is clear that the scheme does not respect or understand the character, merits for listing or survival of this building. It does not safeguard the historic interest for future generations nor has it been informed by anything on site in order to allow for some amount of harmony. It is also clear the significance, historic interest and survival condition is completely disregarded and seems deliberate. Though I will note that no real appraisal of these listed stables to their Grade II* host has been undertaken, and the discussion seems more concerned with what works have been done earlier. This building was never a domestic dwelling, this is not understood in the scheme and it is clear as such. Subsequently, new and further change is not informed by this and decisions instead look to substantially harm and substantially transform its survival condition into something it is quite simply not. There are no positive elements included, or any of the existing safeguarded. There are severe issues with the scale including height and banal design, devoid of any architectural harmony between it and its host. Instead the addition looks to be more at home at a generic modern terrace and sees no place against historic character, craftsmanship or historic scale. The current conditions are linear and natural for the vernacular, showing clear association to the courtyard of the Grade II* hall – it is not then default to contrive this historic stable building into some sort of long terrace with outshots.

The extension looks to cause substantial harm to the outward character of the collection of listed stables, their historic interest and that of the grain, interest and significance of the cluster of listed buildings at this site. This harm looks to transform the legibility of the buildings and therefore have direct impact on the setting and sense of place for the assets. The ability in which their interest is appreciated will come to harm. It is not acknowledged that this historic

site has a consciously inward looking form or arrangement, around a courtyard, closely hugging Grade II* Knypersley Hall. It demonstrates the Moorlands Historic Landscape, signs of age and prominence within what was an isolated area. Subsequently, the extension would actually be facing a wider and broader modern public area to the north, actively inviting a discord on the ability to read and appreciate the survival and character of the site and respective assets. This in terms of setting will be harmful. The scheme looks to treat the handsome outbuildings as lesser, and perhaps is more proactive in dissecting the site than providing enhancement with longevity, appearing to forget they are listed within their own right. All listed buildings are to be treated with as much respect as another regardless of historic uses.

I cannot and will not comment on other elements of this scheme at the moment due to the substantial issues with the project. For the avoidance of doubt this is not to be taken as an approval of other items.

To conclude:

I cannot support this scheme and recommend refusal.

The project does not successfully understand or acknowledge the history and architecture of this site. These buildings were never domestic, nor are they listed as such, nor are the reasons for their historic interest as such. Subsequently, any new projects or alterations need to demonstrate the listing status in mind and be more sympathetic and respectful of the survival, signs of age and historic significance. The scheme looks to sadly attempt to rewrite this at a particularly overbearing level, and does not seem proactive in conserving or preserving the listed building in a manner proportionate to its merits or associations to its Grade II* host. For example, there are unequivocal reasons why rooms are dark, small and such like in primitive buildings of this age and architecture. Applying a modern day stance to centuries old architecture is a misapprehension. Forcibly disfiguring a listed building in the manner envisaged is not acceptable.

It is clear the scheme has not been informed by any heritage support, and it appears Historic England guidance regarding alteration and extension, and good practice is contravened. The conclusion is poor and seems to again disregard the survival of the building and its listing status. It provides nothing at all *‘for’* heritage or the building. Heritage assets should not be expected to be constantly transformed over and over again as this defeats the object of their listing and national importance. Continuous unsympathetic exacerbation of change clearly does not have longevity in mind and will leave this listed building in a dire state. I do not see clear and convincing justification for the harm assessed at this time. The proposals look to provide two additional rooms to a building that was never domestic. The way in which this has been proposed is unacceptable and harmful and does not look to be an enhancement with the long term survival of the asset in mind. The reasons given are unfortunately not acceptable at this time, as they demonstrate further short term views as highlighted by the supporting information previously. The scheme ultimately demonstrates in this particular case that the listed building is no longer suitable for a very large modern family as would a large modern terrace and for example is better suited to a two occupant arrangement. It is not able to quickly adapt to modern demands, nor should it be as this is starkly against the principles of listing protection. I would advise a more reasonable outlook is taken seeking comprehensive heritage advice, with the best interests of the building in mind as perhaps a ‘one size fits all’ approach; is not justified.

In terms of heritage harm, there is harm imposed directly on the traditional listed building, its respective counterparts, historic interest and associations and setting as part of the Grade II* hall and courtyard arrangement. Due to the accumulation of elements in the scheme and active attempt to rewrite the architecture, outward appearance and historic legibility of the assets; this heritage harm is on the higher end of less than substantial. There are no heritage benefits to the scheme, nor are there public benefits seen to outweigh this harm. The proposals fail to preserve the special interest of the listed buildings contrary to Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Other policy:

NPPF 2023 paragraph 206 is at conflict where:

Any harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset from its alteration or destruction or from development within its setting should require clear and convincing justification.

B) assets of the highest significanceGrade I and Grade II* listed buildings....should be wholly exceptional.

The following local policy is at conflict:

Policy DC2 Historic Environment.

The council will conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance. This will take into account the desirability of maintaining and enhancing their significance and will ensure that development proposals contribute positively to the character of the built and historic environment.

Policy DC1 Design Considerations.

All development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and completing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's design guide SPD.

Notably:

2. be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance.

Historic England Advice Note 2. Making change to Heritage Assets.

SPAB Guidance and ethics.