

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

MEETING DATE: Tuesday 7 February 2017

BY: Depute Chief Executive
(Partnerships and Community Services)

SUBJECT: Application for Planning Permission for Consideration

***Note** - this application was called off the Scheme of Delegation List by Councillor Berry for the following reason: This application is for a building in a sensitive part of North Berwick conservation area and has aroused considerable public interest. I feel any decision should be taken by a full planning committee.*

Application No. **16/00832/LBC**

Proposal Alterations, extensions to building, erection of outbuildings, railings, gates, formation of steps, hardstanding areas and demolition of outbuildings

Location **Former Blenheim House Hotel
14 Westgate
North Berwick
East Lothian
EH39 4AF**

Applicant Mr Matthew Atton

Per LBA

RECOMMENDATION Consent Granted

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

The application relates to the former Blenheim House Hotel building and its grounds at 14 Westgate, North Berwick. The site is within North Berwick Town Centre, a mixed use area as defined by Policy ENV2 of the adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2008. The site is also within the North Berwick Conservation Area.

The hotel building and boundary walls are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest (Category B). The Historic Environment Scotland listing description notes that it is a 2 storey villa built around 1860 which originally had 3 bays with flanking single storey wings. The eastern wing was later raised (in 1895) to two storeys with another bay added. The stone frontage has been painted a light pink with the quoins and window and door surrounds painted a cream colour. A central feature of the original house is the tripartite classical style porch with pedestalled piers, cornice and balustrade. Modern additions were later added to the rear and west of the building. The interior of the building has been significantly altered for hotel purposes but it is noted

that many features remain, including the stone, dog-legged stair case with balustrade and the ornate corncing which remains in some rooms. From the 1960's to 2012 the building operated as a hotel and it has since fallen into a state of some disrepair.

The front of the building faces onto Westgate, which is a one-way, west bound, road. The car parking area serving the former hotel is located to the front (south) of the building. There is a modern, flat roofed garage to the front of the western wing of the building. A low stone wall runs along the southern boundary next to the footway, which has been partially painted white, and has a now established hedge behind it. There is evidence that there were railings along the top of this wall which have been removed. There is an existing vehicular access in the centre of the southern boundary and two pedestrian accesses, one on either side which have existing iron gates. The immediate area is characterised by a number of large, stone built, villa properties set within large grounds. Adjoining the site to the west is a 2 storey villa which is in residential use. This property, at 16 Westgate, is listed as being of special architectural or historic interest (Category C). The adjacent stone villa to the east of the site is listed as being of special architectural or historic interest (Category B) and is currently occupied by a bank on the ground floor with residential use on the upper level. The majority of the villas in the area have been altered to some extent with the addition of extensions to the side and rear. The former hotel is set back from Westgate by approximately 15 metres, and this building line is maintained by the villas to the east and west. The north of the site is bounded by Beach Road, which is a one-way, eastbound, road. There is an existing vehicle access from Beach Road in the north west of the site, which has a timber gate across it. There is a stone rubble wall approximately 2.6 metres high along the northern boundary and high stone and brick walls along the east and west sides of the site.

In September 2013 listed building consent (Ref: 13/00365/LBC) was granted for internal and external alterations and extensions to the building, demolitions and other works. In August 2013 planning permission (Ref: 13/00365/P) was granted for alterations and extensions to the building, erection of a garage and walls and formation of hard standing areas. The listed building consent permitted the demolition of the sun lounge to the rear, the side (western) extension and the original single storey flanking wing, and the flat roofed residential accommodation to the rear of the building. Permission was given to erect a single storey rear extension and a 2 storey side extension to the west with rendered walls and large areas of glazing. A double garage was approved in the rear garden with the parking retained at the front of the property. It was proposed that the building as it was approved to be altered and extended would be used as a guesthouse and included residential accommodation for staff. The remainder of the building was divided up into 5 en-suite guest bedrooms, a guest dining room, drawing room and computer area. There was no change of use considered as part of this application with it remaining a class 7 (Hotels and hostels) use.

The applicant has stated that after the above permissions (Refs: 13/00365/P and 13/00365/LBC) were granted they sought further advice and carried out market analysis regarding their implementation. This led them to conclude that given the costs of refurbishment against the level of return that might be possible, the development would be commercially unviable 'as a business proposition or return on capital investment' and therefore, the applicant has not proceeded with these permissions. However, the consents have been implemented by the demolition of buildings on site, including the bungalow to the rear, with a notice of initiation of development submitted for the 21 April 2016. Subsequently the consents remain extant.

Listed building consent is now sought for alterations and extensions to the building,

erection of outbuildings, railings, gates, formation of steps, hardstanding areas and demolition of buildings.

The proposal includes the following:

- 1) The demolition of the garage to the front of the property and the demolition of side and rear extensions;
- 2) Internal alterations to the layout of the building including the removal of existing walls, the erection of new walls and the blocking up of existing openings;
- 3) The repainting of the front of the building in a cream colour (RAL 9001);
- 4) The erection of a single storey rear extension with a roof terrace with glazed balustrade above which would be accessed from the proposed eastern, first floor flat;
- 5) The lowering of a first floor window cill on the rear elevation to allow access to the proposed terrace;
- 6) The erection of a 2 storey, flat roofed side extension on the west elevation. The ground floor walls would be clad in seared timber and the first floor walls would be finished in light grey fibre cement cladding;
- 7) Removal of the white paint from the low wall along the southern boundary of the site and the erection of railings along the top of the existing wall;
- 8) The formation of a new flat roof over the pend to the east of the main building to form part of the ground floor flat;
- 9) Formation of external steps in the rear garden;
- 10) Removal of uPVC windows on the rear ground floor elevation;
- 11) Installation of a rooflight on the flat roofed section of the existing building;
- 12) Laying of permeable paving to form paths and patio area in the rear garden; and
- 13) Laying of permeable paving to the front and formation of 6 parking spaces;

Amended drawings have been submitted subsequent to the registration of the application proposing some changes to the design of the proposed alterations and extensions.

The 2 second floor flats would be accessed from the existing front entrance and main central staircase. The western ground floor flat, which is predominantly within the proposed extension, would be accessed from a new door on the front (south) elevation. The eastern ground floor flat would be accessed through an existing door on the side (east) elevation. The front of the property would be landscaped around the proposed parking area.

Planning permission (Ref: 16/00832/P) is separately sought for the change of use of the hotel to form 4 flats and for alterations and extensions to the building. A report on that application is at this time on the Council's Scheme of Delegation List.

Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that the application be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan is the approved South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan (SESplan) and the adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2008.

Policy 1B of South East Scotland Strategic Development Plan (SESplan) and Policy ENV3 (Listed Buildings) of the East Lothian Local Plan 2008 are relevant to the determination of the application.

Material to the determination of the application is Sections 14 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 and the Scottish

Government's policy on development affecting a listed building given in the Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement: June 2016, Scottish Planning Policy: June 2014 and Historic Environment Scotland's guidance, 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Extensions' (October 2010).

The Historic Environment Scotland Policy Statement 2016 and Scottish Planning Policy echo the statutory requirements of Section 14 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 that in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works to a listed building the planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The planning history of the site is also a material consideration in the determination of this application for listed building consent.

14 written representations have been received to the application. Of these, 13 make objection to the proposal and the other 1 does not state whether they object to or support the proposed development.

The main grounds of representation are as follows:

- * The interior of the listed building is as important as the exterior;
- * Existing sash and case should be repaired where possible and replaced as a last resort;
- * The proposed change from a timber window above the door to a metal frame window should not be allowed as it would greatly harm the character of the listed building;
- * The extension is wholly out of character with the architecture in the vicinity and the general open character of the north side of the street. It is an 'industrial monstrosity' that residents and visitors should not be subjected to looking at which is proposed to bolt on to the building;
- * New development should accord with the size, proportions, orientation, positioning, materials and boundary treatment of nearby building;
- * The materials are not appropriate, for the building and the area. The use of black timber and metal appears incongruous;
- * The North Berwick Conservation Area Character Statement requires that, colours should be chosen to harmonise with the whole building;
- * The extension is too bulky, too dark, it jars with the existing building, it has an agricultural feel;
- * The extension adds little, is not needed and has a significant detrimental impact on the conservation area. It is visually dominant and will draw attention from the building. It does not respect the existing building and the mass and bulk inappropriate;
- * The extension is not appropriate for the listed building, a more sympathetic solution should be found. It diminishes the setting of the building;
- * An extension to replicate the eastern extension would be more appropriate;
- * The Conservation Character Statement for North Berwick states, 'views of the sea between buildings are part of the seaside town character' and that views from the higher ground to the south are important characteristic of the town. The proposed extension will greatly reduce views of the sea and lead to an enclosed feeling on Westgate and block views from ground to the south, particularly Bank Street, St Andrews Street and Marmion Road. The extension should be single storey;
- * An extension to the side is not needed as there is room to the rear, where the bungalow previously was;
- * The extension is too large, the current extension is single storey and this is typical for other extensions on properties in the area. The previous 2 storey extension was smaller;

- * The proposal could be reduced to 3 flats which could be accommodated within the existing building;
- * The extension is too close to the boundary and will have a detrimental impact on residential amenity and privacy;
- * Although contemporary extensions have worked elsewhere in North Berwick, it does not work here, the design is not good just because it is contemporary; and
- * The bin store would be better to the rear.

North Berwick Community Council do not object to the proposed alterations to the building. Although they noted that they were aware of public opposition to the proposed 2 storey extension the Community Council voted to support this aspect of the proposal. They also noted the strong interest and feeling of community ownership of the building and its future.

The building of 14 Westgate was originally built as a two storey building with a single storey wing attached to each of its east and west elevations. However the single storey wing attached to the east elevation of the building has previously been extended upwards and is now two storeys in height. Furthermore the remaining single storey wing has also itself been extended by the addition of a single storey extension to its west side elevation and to its rear (north) elevation. Therefore, due to those extensions, any symmetry created by the two single storey wings has already been lost. Therefore the demolition of the remaining single storey wing and the extensions that are attached to it, which are themselves secondary components of the listed building, would not harm the integrity of the listed building.

The flat roofed sun lounge that is attached to the rear (north) elevation of the building is also a secondary component of the listed building. It does not contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. Therefore its demolition would not be harmful to the listed building. The demolition of the garage building to the front of the hotel would not be harmful to the architectural or historic interest of the listed building.

It is also a significant material consideration that an extant consent (Ref: 13/00365/LBC) exists to remove these elements.

The alteration originally proposed to the window above the main entrance has been omitted and the original window will be retained.

The proposals include a 2 storey extension to the side (west) of the property and a single storey extension to the rear with first floor terrace above. Both extensions would have flat roofs.

The Blenheim Hotel is category B listed for its special architectural or historic interest. Policy ENV3 of the East Lothian Local Plan 2008 presumes against development which would have a detrimental impact on the character of a listed buildings or its setting.

Historic Environment Scotland's guidance regarding extensions on historic buildings states that they:

- 1) must protect the character and appearance of the building;
 - 2) should be subordinate in scale and form;
 - 3) should be located on a secondary elevation;
 - 4) must be designed in a high quality manner using appropriate materials.
- The guidance also notes that appropriate contrasting extensions can be effective while retaining a buildings special interest.

The proposed rear extension does not project any further than the line of the existing rear sun lounge, which it is proposed to demolish. It would be approximately 4 metres in height and would be clearly subservient to the main building, which would still be dominated by the two storey bays on either side. The majority of the rear (north) elevation would be glazed with fixed aluminium framed windows and sliding doors opening into the rear garden. The balustrade on its roof, which would form a small terrace, would be formed from glass and would be lightweight and minimally visible. The simple form of the proposed extension would be of a contrasting design to the existing rear elevation. However, this would result in an obviously new section allowing the original building to be understood without competing with it. The timber cladding material proposed would weather over time and would not conflict with the stone elevation of the walls. The removal of the existing unsympathetic sun lounge and ground floor uPVC windows would also improve the external appearance of this elevation. The alteration of the first floor window to form a door onto the terrace is the only such alteration to a window proposed on the building, would not affect a particularly sensitive feature and would be acceptable on this secondary elevation without detrimentally impacting on the character of the listed building.

The proposed side extension on the west would be located in the position of an existing single storey flanking section and later ground floor extension which projects to the side boundary. The proposed flat roof extension would be 2 storeys in height; with the first storey approximately 6.8 metres to eaves and the ground floor section 4 metres high. The ground floor section would extend from the west side of the main building by approximately 9.5 metres, with just over 1 metre to the existing stone boundary wall. The first floor would extend approximately 7.2 metres from the west side of the building, and would be stepped back from the front and rear of the main building elevations. The width and depth of the first floor section of the extension have been reduced slightly from that shown on the original application drawings. The walls of the ground floor of the two storey extension would be finished with vertical timber cladding, which would be heat treated to emphasise the grain and preserve the material. The majority of the walls of the first floor of the two storey extension would be clad in a light grey fibre cement cladding, laid in vertical strips. The finishing materials have been altered from those originally proposed, which were darker, with burnt timber and a dark grey metal cladding, after concerns were raised that this would not complement the building. The proposed materials are lighter and should give a softer finish which would reference the stone of the neighbouring buildings, the side of the hotel and the grey of slate and zinc also used in the area. The materials, particularly the timber, would age over time to give additional texture and interest. This would be a modern addition and, as with the rear extension, would be clearly visually different to the main building, allowing the older sections of the building to be clearly seen. It would be lower in height than the main building, would be stepped back from the frontage and would be secondary to the main building. Flat roofed extensions are a feature of a number of the villas in the area, existing on the single storey west flank and is seen on the existing single storey extension and garage to the front. Although the materials proposed are not traditional, the simple form would not be obtrusive or incongruous and would not detract from the predominance of the main building. A small part of the front, ground floor glazing would be covered in louvered timber cladding which would serve to give privacy to residents and add further movement and interest to that wall. In all of this, the proposed two storey extension would preserve the architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

Historic Environment Scotland raise no objection to the proposal. They comment that they support in principle the proposal that will enable a sustainable use of the building. They did recommend that the location of the photovoltaic modules on the roof were revised, and these have since been removed from the proposal. They also advised that

the main door and associated details should be preserved and the proposal to reconfigure the window directly above it with an aluminium door frame giving access to the decorative balustrade should be strongly resisted due its adverse impact to character and historic fabric. This alteration has also been omitted with the original window now retained.

In terms of the proposed two storey side extension, they commented that it “expresses itself in a modern and contemporary language, offering a contrast to the appearance and special interest of the villa. Overall its impact and contribution as a design intervention to the listed building is self-effacing and a back-drop to the listed building. We would, however, recommend that the rear 1st floor is moved back from the elevation, allowing the villa to retain its hierarchal prominence, and a reduction in the size of the first floor element generally would be welcomed”. The first floor has been stepped back from the rear elevation in response to this and the ground and first floor would be set back from the front elevation. The width of the first floor section has been reduced by approximately 50cm slightly reducing the massing of this element.

Overall the proposed extensions would be acceptable additions to the listed building which would allow it to retain its special character while providing additional accommodations in a contrasting yet acceptable manner.

The original windows to the front and rear are to be retained and refurbished, apart from one to the rear which would be altered to form a door. Therefore, this important feature of the listed building would be preserved. The re-painting of the building frontage in a cream colour would be a sympathetic alteration. The proposed railings to the front would be of a simple design but would not conflict with the design and style of the listed building. This would re-introduce railings along this location which would create a sympathetic, open but formal boundary treatment to the street. Minimal changes are proposed to the main sections of the existing building and the proposed extensions and alterations would be sympathetic to the building and would not detract from it, preserving its overall character and key features of special interest.

The proposed internal alterations would not compromise any features of special architectural or historic interest that exist within the building. Accordingly, they would not harmful to the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. Although the internal alterations would not be inherently damaging to the special interest of the building, it would be preferable to allow previous door openings to be read within the building. A condition can be attached requiring the submission of full sectional details prior to works commencing to allow the treatments of these door openings to be fully considered.

The majority of the main internal wall structures would be retained with some new partition walls erected. Potentially the most significant change to the original layout would be a new opening proposed between the proposed livingroom and kitchen of the first floor eastern flat. This would not extend to the ceiling and the original wall could still be read. Overall the size and character of the rooms would be retained and restored. All ceiling cornicing features, the bay windows and the long, arched window to the rear would be retained. One of the key features of the building is the stone staircase within the central entrance hall which would be retained and restored. The staircase in the eastern part of the building would be removed, however, this is a secondary stair with timber balustrade and not a key special feature and its removal would not have an unacceptable impact on the character of the building.

Taking all of the above into account, and subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal would comply with Policy 1B of South East Scotland Strategic Development

Plan (SESplan), Policy ENV3 of the adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2008, and with Scottish Planning Policy 2014 and HES guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

That listed building consent be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The works to implement this listed building consent shall begin before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this grant of listed building consent.

Reason:

Pursuant to Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997

- 2 Prior to the commencement of development, full details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority of all existing internal door openings which are to be blocked up as shown on approved plans 16040(PL)201A and 16040(PL)200A. This shall include sections and details of the material to be used.

Thereafter, the details shall be implemented as approved.

Reason:

To allow the consideration of details yet to be submitted in the interest of protecting the character of the listed building.

- 3 Prior to their use in the development, a schedule and samples of the materials to be used to externally clad the proposed extensions shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

Thereafter, development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so approved.

Reason:

To allow the consideration of details yet to be submitted and in the interest of the architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

- 4 Prior to the commencement of development full details of the materials to be used to form external hard surfacing, including the steps to the west of the proposed garage and the permeable paving, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.

Thereafter, the materials shall be implemented as approved.

Reason:

To allow the consideration of details yet to be submitted in the interest of the setting of the listed buildings and the conservation area.