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Our ref: PA01137325

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Dear Mr Flanagan

Pre-application Advice

CUERDEN HALL, SHADY LANE, BAMBER BRIDGE, PRESTON, PR5 6AZ

Following on from our previous meeting of the 1st December 2020, and our subsequent letter, a further meeting was arranged for the 19th March 2021. These comments follow this additional meeting, and we hope that they will aid you in taking the project forward.

Summary

Cuerden Hall is an attractive country house, of eighteenth-century origin, with significant phases of extension and alteration in the nineteenth century. It was most recently in use as a residential care home, but the applicant currently proposes to convert it back to a single dwelling.

We voiced our support for the principle of the change of use in our previous letter, as well as support for a considerable amount of the associated works proposed. We did, however, raise concerns in relation to a number of areas and asked for further clarifications in regard to others.

The applicant has submitted further information, which has resolved our previous concerns and means that we can support the overarching masterplan for the site. We therefore do not believe that further pre-application discussions will be necessary, but we would highlight some areas where further information and clarification of final designs will be needed when applications are submitted.

Historic England Advice

Significance

We set out the significance of Cuerden Hall in our previous letter, and we therefore would not reiterate this assessment in full in this follow-up response. However, in



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precis, Cuerden Hall is *a striking county house of multiple phases of construction, which exhibits a high standard of architectural design* and which allows a *visual understanding of the evolution of high-status domestic architecture*. It also derives significance from its association with Lewis Wyatt, a nationally significant architect, who worked on a number of other prominent country houses.

While the visual interest of the exterior of the building is well preserved, the interior of the building has suffered, due to the changes required to facilitate its use as a residential care home. This has meant that the survival of the internal decorative schemes and features is mixed. The house is listed grade II*, while the adjacent stable range is listed grade II. To the east of the house a pair of iron gates, and their associated piers, are also listed grade II.

Impact

a) Principle of Conversion to a Residential Use

Historic England would continue to state our underlying support for the principle of converting the building back into a residential use. Conversion back to this use will allow the building to function in a manner closer to that for which it was originally constructed, which in turn will allow its special historic and architectural interest to be better understood and read. We also noted in our previous letter that the proposals would allow for the later, more intensive, subdivision to be reversed. It is noted positively that the applicant intends to utilise this opportunity to reinstate the proportions of the highly significant rooms within the Wyatt section of the building. We do also note, following comments made in our previous letter, that the applicant now proposes to retain the existing configuration of the porch within the eastern wing of the house.

We did raise other concerns in our previous letter, including in regard to the proposed pool, conservatory and landscaping plans. We will consider these sequentially below.

b) New Conservatory

The proposals seek to instate a conservatory on the southern side of the original 1717 section of the building. While no such structure is currently in situ, there is evidence amongst archival drawings that a conservatory was envisaged by Wyatt, and the applicant suggested that there was also cartographic evidence that it was constructed. As such, while its erection would represent a reversal of the later evolution of the building, it would not be an intervention which is implicitly uncharacteristic. It would, however, obscure longer views of the southern elevation of the eighteenth-century core of the building. It would therefore have the potential to diminish the ability to read this as a separate phase of development.





Given the additional evidence provided, which supports the historic existence of a conservatory on this section of the site, we would no longer raise in principle concerns with its construction. We would also note that the indicative elevations and floorplans provided show an extension of a character and form which is in keeping with the high-quality nature of the building's architecture as a whole. It would, however, marginally diminish the ability to appreciate the southern elevation of the eighteenth-century core of the building, as it would be obscured externally. However, the proposed works require only minimal physical alteration to the elevation, meaning that it would remain readable from within the building.

For any application, we would expect to see details of the exact nature of the conservatory's construction, including sectional details of the windows, samples of the proposed materials, and details of how it will physically tie into the building. The indicative elevations also show a proposed roof lantern. While this feature is not incongruous, roof lanterns can often be jarring features if poorly designed. It will therefore be beneficial to show details of its proposed construction, as well as visualisations to show how the lantern will be appreciated in practice, as opposed to in elevation.

It should also be noted that the location of the proposed new conservatory, on the site of a previous conservatory, is also likely to mean that its foundations will impact on below ground archaeology. It is therefore suggested that you confirm with the local authority's archaeological advisor what level of archaeological mitigation is likely to be required.

c) Creation of a Pool

The owner also proposes to demolish an existing twentieth century addition to the building, in order to create a swimming pool. This is a section of the building which was identified within the submitted significance plan as being detrimental to the significance of the listed building. We therefore expressed no objection to the principle of redeveloping this area.

We did, however, wish to see further details of the proposed design of the replacement building. The applicant has now submitted this information, which includes a number of iterative designs which were rejected in favour of the chosen proposal. We would agree with the rationale set out in the drawings and the supporting narrative, that a glazed structure, which is attractive, but did not seek to be overly elaborate, is the most appropriate design approach to the site.

We therefore have no objection to the proposals, which it is noted would represent an improvement on what is currently in situ in this location, and which would ensure that this area of the building has an active use. Again, we would expect to see detailed sectional drawings of the component elements of the new structure, as well as details





as to how it is proposed to tie into the surrounding fabric. We would also highlight that this is another area of the proposals which may trigger the need for archaeological monitoring or investigation.

d) Hard and Soft Landscaping

We commented in our previous response that the proposed residential repurposing of the site also afforded the opportunity to *address the immediate setting of the listed building, whichcurrently makes a detrimental contribution to the way in which the listed building is experienced*. We therefore concluded that we would be *supportive of the proposals to reconsider the wider landscaping*, but that we would need to see more detailed hard and soft landscaping plans submitted to support any application. It is also highlighted that the landscape associated with the hall has been heavily curtailed, with a fair amount of the historic landscape now forming the Cuerden Valley Country Park. This, coupled with its highly tarmacked nature, allows a relatively blank canvas from which to produce an imaginative landscaping scheme.

The applicant has commissioned a landscape architect to draw up more detailed plans. These start from a position of formalising an area of the currently informal picturesque landscape, a change for which they accept that there is not an historic precedent. However, given the heavily altered nature of the landscape, it is not considered that its historic setting could be authentically restored. Therefore, it is agreed that this degree of historic licence would be acceptable, as it allows for the creation of an overall masterplan which would reinstate the house as the centre of a wider designed landscape, and thereby better reveal its significance.

It is also positive to note that the design has considered how to accommodate the necessary associated paraphernalia of modern life into this landscape in a discrete manner. This includes proposed areas for tennis courts and car parking, which are sited in less prominent locations, and with associated landscape screening. It would, however, be beneficial to see further details and visualisations of how these areas will appear in their final form, in order to ascertain the impact of these features on how the hall is understood and experienced.

It is also noted that the landscape proposals include a number of decorative and functional structures, including a glasshouse and water feature. It is concluded that the proposed landscape masterplan could accommodate these features, but that their overall appropriateness will be determined by their scale and design. It is therefore suggested that further information, showing their exact detailing, is included in any application.

e) Gate Lodges

The wider masterplan also proposes to introduce a pair of gate lodges, and associated





decorative metal gates, on the entrance road to the hall. These would be a modern creation, which are intended to create a grander sense of arrival when approaching the hall. This is considered necessary, as the historic entrance lodges have been divorced from the hall in later divisions of land.

These would be an ahistorical addition, which have the potential to create a misleading sense of the character of the estate. However, given that the revised landscape would itself be a modern reinterpretation, the creation of twenty-first century lodges would not incongruously integrate into this wider reimagining. It is perhaps suggested that all avoidance of doubt as to their historic provenance could be achieved by the inclusion of a datestone.

We therefore would not inherently object to their creation, provided that they remain ancillary to the listed building, and they are not proposed to be larger in scale than those shown on the indicative drawings. Given their indicative nature, we would expect to see more detail submitted in regard to the exact nature of their design with any application, including materials samples and details of the proposed fenestration, railings and gates.

Next Steps

Historic England therefore continues to support the principle of the proposals. It is also noted that the applicant has sought to fully understand the significance of the listed building, and to integrate this understanding into their proposed masterplan for the house and wider landscape.

It is considered that the additional information provided responds to the concerns which we raised previously, and we would have no objection to any elements of the proposals. We would, however, highlight that there are areas where more detail would be required to support any application, but would also conclude that this could form part of the suite of information submitted with the applications. We therefore do not believe that further pre-application discussion would be necessary, but would be happy to organise this through our extended pre-application service, if the applicant would find this beneficial.

Yours sincerely

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Information Provided

Cuerden Hall Draft RIBA Stage 2 Report
Cuerden Hall- Landscape Proposals



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