

REPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE Report No.

Date of Meeting	5th November 2008
Application Number	08/00877/LBC & 08/00876/FUL
Site Address	The Stables, Grittleton School, Grittleton
Proposal	Alterations and Extensions in association with a Change of Use to a 100 bed study centre and 5 residential units
Applicant	Mr A. Shipp
Town/Parish Council	Grittleton
Grid Ref	386116 179654
Type of application	Full application and Listed Building Consent

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

This application has been submitted to the Committee for decision under the scheme of delegation in force after the 8th April 2002 because Councillors Meadows and Scott have requested that the application be considered by committee to assess the effect upon the local countryside, residents and listed buildings.

Summary of Report

Grittleton Stables is a group of no. 8 Grade II listed which form part of the historic estate of Grittleton House, a grade II* country house, now used as an independent school. The owners of the school have recently acquired the site from the Neeld Estate. The site was purchased with extant consent for no. 3 residential units, together with a new dwelling and consent to convert the clock tower block into offices (ref: 00/03001/COU & 00/03002/LBC). In the permitted scheme a number of the stable blocks were left unconverted as it was decided that they were too sensitive to alteration, and their special interest rendered a conversion unachievable. As part of that permission a legal agreement was signed which ensured that repairs and recording of the buildings took place prior to any conversion work. This current application proposes the conversion of the entire group of buildings to provide no. 5 residential units together with a 100-bed study centre. The site lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Grittleton Conservation Area but outside any village framework boundary. The key points to consider are as follows:

- Impact of the conversion and extensions upon the special interest of the listed buildings
- Impact upon the setting of the Grade II* Grittleton House and surrounding parkland
- Implications on DC Core Policy C3 and Policy BD6 (Re-use of rural buildings)
- Effect on the residential amenity of existing properties
- Design and scale of the development
- Highway implications
- Density of development
- Impact on the Conservation Area/AONB
- Impact on trees/fauna/flora

Officer Recommendation

Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent be REFUSED.

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Proposal and Site Description

Grittleton Stables is a group of no. 8 Grade II listed buildings, and form part of the historic estate of Grittleton House, a grade II* country house, now used as an independent school. The site lies within the Cotswold AONB and the Grittleton Conservation Area. The House and stables date from 1835 and were originally the family seat of the Neeld family. The outbuildings and stables are a fine and complete example of a historic stable yard and include intact examples of a hay barn, three sets of stables, a range of stable managers and grooms accommodation and a coach house. The group is configured in a double courtyard, with the centrepiece of the group being the clock tower which sits at the north end of the site, and is distinguished by the impressive clock tower that dominates the skyline. The group of buildings sit immediately to the south of the school, and is separated by the historic park and garden.

The house was sold to the Shipp family in the 1960's, while the Stables were retained in the ownership of the Neeld Estate. Grittleton House has been the home of the Grittleton School for over 40 years. The Shipp family have recently acquired the stables and began negotiations for redevelopment with the planning authority in 2007. The site was purchased with extant consent for change of use to no. 3 residential units, together with a new dwelling and consent to convert the clock tower block into offices (ref: 00/03001/COU & 00/03002/LBC). A number of the stable blocks were left unconverted as it was agreed that they were incapable of residential conversion given the sensitivity of the historic interiors, which have survived intact.

The repair of the buildings to remain unconnected was secured through a legal agreement.

The current application proposes the conversion of the entire group of buildings to provide no. 5 residential units interspersed with a 100-bed study centre. The residential units would be occupied by the Shipp family, including Mr Shipp senior and his two sons. The remaining two units would be reserved for the manager of the study centre and the chef. The study centre offers 90 student places together with accommodation for 10 members of staff. The study centre would be run independently of the main school, and would offer short courses to mostly international students. It is understood that the majority of the studying would take place off-site and limited lectures would be provided on-site. The study centre also provides a canteen with activity hall and offices.

Planning History		
Application number	Proposal	Decision
00/03001/FUL	Conversion to dwelling, replacement dwelling, change of use to office. Erection of boundary walls/railings, reposition gate pier at site access.	Approved
00/03002/LBC	Internal and external alterations. Erection of new walls/railings, works to dovecote. Demolition of garden bungalow, reposition gate pier at site entrance.	Approved

Consultations

Parish Council: comments are awaited.

County Highways raises no objections to the proposal subject to conditions being attached to any permission granted.

Environmental Health has no objections.

Wessex Water raises no adverse comments subject to an informative being attached to any permission granted.

Landscape Planning Officer: comments are awaited.

Asset Design and Regeneration: The Historic Building Officer objects to the scheme and concludes that the scheme is "*intensive and intrusive*" and considers that Grittleton Stables is a remarkable survival of a model farm/stable complex which the proposed scheme will severely detract from.

English Heritage strongly objects to the scheme on the basis that it will harm the setting of the grade II* country house and considers that the application is inadequately supported to fully assess the impact of the scheme upon the fabric of the listed buildings.

Representations

No letters of support or objection from local residents have been received.

Planning Considerations

Principle of development

The conversion of the stable buildings to a study centre is acceptable in principle, subject to the proposal being in accordance with Policy BD6 and C3 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2011).

Impact on Listed Building

Grittleton Stables are a remarkable model farm complex dating from the 19th century. The proposals are wide ranging and complex. The following assessment considers each building individually in an attempt to rehearse the relevant listed building issues as simply and succinctly as possible:

Hay Barn (Unit A)

The extant consent allows for the creation of two first floor bedrooms, with a third bedroom on the ground floor, retaining approximately two thirds of the original volume of the barn open. The submitted scheme is significantly more intensive, showing four first floor bedrooms. A two-storey extension to the north elevation has been deleted from the initial scheme, however, a rear glazed extension to the rear single story range has been proposed despite officers raising objection. In summary, the increased degree of internal vertical and horizontal division, together with increased number of openings and enlarged footprint, is harmful to the listed building.

Percy's Cottage and stable (Unit C)

It is proposed to convert this building to provide two units, one 1-bed (Chef's unit) and the other 4-bed (managers unit). The extant consent allows for one 3-bed dwelling. The more intensive subdivision and alteration to the historic floor plan, together with the additional new openings and lowering of floor levels, all have a cumulatively harmful effect, both in terms of loss of historic fabric as well as the impact upon the character and appearance of the building. The creation of two units instead of the approved single unit represents additional demands upon the listed building which are both damaging and insensitive.

Carriage House South block (Unit D)

The proposals show the use of this building as an activity room, retaining the full volume of the space. The extant consent showed a conversion to provide a four-bed dwelling. However, this building has arguably the least sensitive interior to change, and it is surprising that the scheme does not

acknowledge this. Officers have suggested that it would be possible to mezzanine this space to provide dormitory spaces rather than the cellular spaces within the clock tower range and stable range immediately to the north of the carriage house (which are much more sensitive buildings, as detailed below). It is disappointing that the opportunity to reinstate the original full height screen of the coach house has not been taken.

Northern block (Unit D)

It is proposed to convert this building to provide a total of 78 bed spaces (assuming each bed shown is a bunk bed) within 12 dormitories with substantial rear extension measuring 7.8m by 28m. The extant consent retained this building unaltered. It is not considered that this building is capable of the proposed residential conversion given the sensitivity of the interior. In addition, the scale of the proposed extension is excessive and will cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the small stable block, effectively doubling its volume. Furthermore, the application provides wholly inadequate detail on the manner in which the building would be converted and the implications for the historic building fabric. No detailed information has been provided regarding floor finishes and treatment of the timber stalls. The scheme fails to appreciate the quality of the interior and the proposed timber partitions are considered to be a crude approach that will look incongruous. Furthermore, the large extension to the rear of the property is without justification.

Clocktower Building (Unit E)

The proposed conversion to a refectory with a total of 15 bed spaces on the first floor raises a number of significant issues, namely: the impact of the conversion on the historic floor plan and fabric of the building. The extant consent retained the stables unconverted and provided a change of use to office space leaving the first floor largely unaltered. The submitted scheme shows a kitchen, lounge and all the stalls being converted as eating booths, on the first floor a total of 15 bed spaces are proposed, revised from the original 28 (assuming each single bed shown represent a bunk bed) and a total of no. 4 bathrooms. The reduction in subdivision on the first floor is welcomed, however, the degree of subdivision and servicing of such a use is considered to be overly intensive and would result in significant damage to the character and interest of the building. It is not considered that this building is capable of residential conversion given the sensitivity of the interior. Furthermore, the application provides wholly inadequate detail on the manner in which the building would be converted and the implications for the building fabric. No detailed information has been provided regarding floor and wall finishes, and treatment of the timber stalls. The proposed timber partitions are considered to be a crude approach that will look incongruous. The scheme fails to appreciate the quality of the interior.

Stable (Unit G)

It is proposed to convert this building to provide two residential units, no. 1 two-bed and no. 1 one-bed dwelling. The extant consent left this building unconverted. It is not considered that this building is capable of residential conversion given the sensitivity of the interior. Furthermore, the application provides wholly inadequate detail on the manner in which the building would be converted and the implications for the building fabric. No detailed information has been provided regarding floor and wall finishes, and treatment of the timber stalls. The proposed timber partitions set to the rear of the stalls are considered to be a crude approach that will look incongruous. The scheme fails to appreciate the quality of the interior and would result in serious harm to the character and interest of the listed building.

Landscape, Trees and Setting

Members should be aware that English Heritage have strongly objected to the proposals due to the impact on the setting of the Grade II* building and lack of information and justification.

Comments from the Council's Landscape Planning Officer are still awaited and will be included in an Additional Information report prior to the committee meeting.

The applicant was made aware that the development site is covered by an area Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and requested to submit a tree survey showing species of all trees to be retained and all

those to be felled, in addition to a landscaping plan showing all existing and proposed planting/landscaping. This additional information is required to fully assess the impact of the development on the existing tree coverage and landscape of the site.

The applicant has subsequently submitted a plan showing very superficial information with regards to existing and proposed trees, and highlighting those to be felled. However, no information as to the species, sizes or condition of the trees has been submitted and the new planting has not been detailed. The plan remains very sketchy and unacceptable for a development of such a scale.

No information with regards to and the impact the proposed development will have on the protected trees has been submitted. It is considered that very little regard has been given to the existing trees and landscaping and their high amenity value.

In addition to the adverse impact the proposed conversion will have on the character and appearance of the Listed Buildings, it is also considered that the proposal will be detrimental to the trees that form part of the setting of this group of buildings and the surrounding parkland.

The proposal includes the creation of garden areas for some of the residential units and the erection of 1.8m high close boarded fences. Such features will appear as incongruous additions which would have an adverse impact on the character, appearance and setting of this group of buildings which has an open and unconstrained character.

Impact on Conservation Area/Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The development site is located within the Grittleton Conservation Area and Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB). As such, the proposal needs to be considered against Policy HE1 and NE4 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2011).

With regards to the impact of the development on the Conservation Area, the proposal includes a number of extensions and external alterations to existing buildings and the creation of an access drive through the school grounds. With the Grittleton Stables becoming very domesticated in character and appearance, it is considered that the cumulative impact of the development will neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would have an adverse impact on trees and the surrounding parkland.

On the basis that the proposal is for the change of use of buildings and extensions to existing buildings, but does not include large area of new build, it is considered that the proposed development will have no significant adverse impact on the natural beauty of the landscape.

Local Wildlife

It is acknowledged that a bat and badger survey was undertaken in July/August 2007. This survey revealed the presence of bats and roosts on the site and within the majority of the buildings to be converted. The report confirms that a DEFRA licence will need to be obtained prior to works commencing, together with an appropriate mitigation package, to ensure that the net impact of any proposed work is not detrimental to bat populations. This procedure can be conditioned if planning permission is to be granted.

This same report states that no badger setts were found. However, it is unclear from the information submitted how much of the site has been investigated. On the basis that the proposal also includes a new driveway linking the stables to the main school building and parking areas, it would be advisable that a revised badger survey be undertaken incorporating these additional areas.

No information has been submitted in relation to the impact of the proposed development on newts, voles and other amphibian species. Such a survey has been requested but has never been submitted. The new coach parking area and driveway are to be sited close to an existing pond and in an undeveloped part of the site and it is therefore essential that a survey be submitted to ensure that the local amphibian wildlife is not adversely affected by the proposals.

Highways, Access and Parking

County Highways have been consulted on the application and have raised no objections subject to a number of conditions being attached to any permission granted. Conditions would include: details of the internal road layout being submitted and the track being completed prior to the occupation of the new development, and the accommodation to be provided to be ancillary to Grittleton House School and to be occupied only by persons that are connected to the school.

The information submitted and relating to highway and parking issues still appears to be rather vague and based on assumptions.

It is acknowledged that the previous approval for this site included a new access track to the rear of Building G. However, the track has been increased in width from 3.2m to 5.5m and is to swing round the buildings to a greater extent. In addition, this proposal includes a new driveway running north to south - from the Grittleton House School main building to the existing stables. No north to south cross-section drawing of the proposed driveway and coach parking area has been submitted and it is therefore impossible to assess the impact this new access/parking area will have on the surrounding landscape. The land slopes down towards the stables and it is therefore likely that some engineering works will be required. In addition, curb, surfacing and lighting details for the proposed driveway have not been provided but are likely to have a detrimental effect on the historical park and garden, and the setting of the listed buildings.

Overall, and based on the information submitted, it is considered that the proposed track to the rear of Building G, the new parking area for cars and coaches and the proposed access track linking the main school building and the proposed conversion will have a significant adverse impact on the listed buildings and on the setting of the surrounding parkland.

Impact on amenity

Concern has been raised in relation to the more intensive use of the site and the impact this will have on the amenities of local residents. The proposed activity centre is to be located very close to the boundary with one of the adjoining properties. The agent states that conditions could be used to regulate noise levels on the perimeter of the site. However, it would be unreasonable and difficult to condition noise levels to this extent.

Facilities and other Issues

The plans fail to show any bin storage facilities for the site as a whole or any laundry facilities. These should form part of the development and should be shown at this stage.

No details have been submitted with regards to external lighting. The agent has requested that this be added as a condition but due to the nature of the site, it would be helpful to have this information when determining the application.

Financial Viability

Officers have requested a development appraisal to be carried out to demonstrate the viability of the scheme and to establish, if at all, the heritage deficit of the extant scheme. This would require a residual valuation setting out the repair costs of the heritage assets, as well as the development costs of the proposed development. Although a valuation of the scheme has been provided by an estate agent, together with some limited financial information, it is not considered adequate to fully address the concern regarding the viability of the scheme. The applicants have decided not to provide any further financial information to support their proposals.

Conclusion

While the reunification of the house and stables is welcomed, the impact of the proposals upon the listed buildings is considered to be harmful to their character, appearance and setting. The proposed study centre and intensification of the residential conversions appears to be both unjustified and ill conceived. The case for introducing a study centre in addition to increasing the number of residential units to 5 fails to take into account the fragility of these buildings and their sensitivity to change. Furthermore, the impact of the drive and car/coach park upon the house and historic park and garden is considered to be very harmful to the historic landscape. The submission does not adequately make a case in support of a study centre, nor does it satisfactorily address how the detailed scheme would safeguard the character and historic fabric of this important group of listed buildings.

Recommendation

Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent be REFUSED for the following reasons:

In respect of 08/00877/LBC:

1. The proposed alterations and extensions to the complex of stables and outbuildings known as Grittleton Stables would, by reason of their size, detail and intensification of use, have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the listed buildings. Furthermore, the means of access and car/coach park would have a seriously detrimental effect upon the historic setting of the grade II* Grittleton House and parkland contrary to S.16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and government guidance set out at PPG15.

In respect of 08/00876/FUL:

1. The proposed alterations and extensions to the complex of stables and outbuildings known as Grittleton Stables would, by reason of their size, detail and intensification of use, have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the listed buildings. Furthermore, the means of access and car/coach park would have a seriously detrimental effect upon the historic setting of the grade II* Grittleton House and parkland contrary to S.66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, government guidance set out at PPG15 and Policy C3, BD6, HE1, HE4 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2011).

2. The proposal, by reason of the lack of information submitted, fails to demonstrate that the proposed development would be acceptable in terms of protecting the amenities of local residents, its impact on the protected trees and on the local wildlife. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy C3, NE9 and NE14 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (2011).

Appendices:	None
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	1.20, 2.02, 2.24, 2.32, 3.03, 4.02, 4.07, 5.01