

02/12/0002

MS B ANDREWS

## **REMOVAL OF FLAT ROOF, ERECTION OF FIRST FLOOR EXTENSION AND OTHER ALTERATIONS AT THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE, ASH PRIORS**

Grid Reference: 315212.129552

Full Planning Permission

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### **RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)**

Recommended Decision: Refusal for the following reason:

- 1 The proposed extension would, virtue of its scale, form, massing, design and lack of subservience constitute an incongruous and overpowering addition that would result in the complete erosion of the intricate character and appearance of the original building whilst also forming a prominent, detrimental feature within the street scene. The proposals are therefore considered to conflict with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1(D) (General Requirements), S2(A) (Design), H17(C) (Extensions to Dwellings) and EN14 (Conservation Areas). Further, as a consequence of this harm, the contribution of the building and its character made to the Ash Priors Conservation Area would be lost to the detriment of the designated area and therefore the proposals fail to satisfy the provisions set out within Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### **RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)**

Notes for compliance

### **PROPOSAL**

The application seeks planning permission for the erection of a first floor extension to The Old School House, Ash Priors. The existing footprint of the building will be increased by five square metres and a new first floor extension will be erected over the northern lean to element. The proposal will allow the existing one bedroom dwelling to be extended to a two bedroom property with kitchen, dining and living accommodation also. The extension will measure 10.4m x 6.1m with a height to eaves and ridge of 3.5m and 6.5m respectively; the proposal is of a pitched roof design with traditional gable ends and two pitched roof dormer windows to the north elevation.

The proposed extension will be finished externally in natural stone walls, artificial slate and oak effect uPVC fenestration. To the front of the property along the western boundary it is proposed to demolish a single bay garage, excavate ground and erect a retaining wall to form additional off road parking.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY**

The Old School House is a detached single storey building that provides one bedroom residential accommodation within the village of Ash Priors. The original school house building has stone walls with brick detailing, an artificial slate roof (hipped in design), white uPVC windows and timber doors. The original building has been extended previously by way of a single storey lean-to the north elevation, which has a felt shallow pitched roof.

The property is located within the Ash Priors Conservation Area and is surrounded to the north, south and west by residential properties whilst to the east is agricultural land. To the east the site is bound by 2.0m timber fencing whilst to the west the site is open, being set above the level of the highway. The gardens have mature domestic planting to the north and south boundaries.

## **CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES**

### **Consultees**

*ASH PRIORS PARISH COUNCIL* - Wholeheartedly support this excellent development to restore The Old School House. The design is in keeping with the style and proportions of the existing dilapidated property and will enhance the surrounding environment.

*SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP* - No comments.

*HERITAGE* - The Old School House has some historic significance for Ash Priors being built in 1833 by Sir Thomas Lethbridge who built the rectory and restored the church during this period. It was identified within the 2012 draft appraisal as being a locally important building and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Ash Priors Conservation Area.

Much of the buildings character, and by extension the contribution it makes to the Conservation Area, is derived from its small scale and appearance. The proposed scheme in no way respects this and would completely swamp the original building. It cannot be seen as subservient.

Replacing uPVC windows in the school room with uPVC does not constitute an improvement and further underlines the unsympathetic nature of this scheme.

While the existing extension is not ideal it has a relatively low impact. No form of two storey extension to this building would be appropriate. The scheme would cause unjustified harm to the significance of both the school room and wider Conservation Area and in line with PPS5 I recommend refusal.

### **Representations**

1 neighbour response with no comments.

1 neighbour objection received raising the following planning related matters:

- Policy H17 states that extensions will be permitted where they do not harm the

form and character of the dwelling and are subservient in terms of scale and design; this proposed extension is clearly not subservient in that it creates a 2 storey structure besides the original single storey structure;

- The proposed ridge height is much higher than the original building;
- The bulk, form, scale and massing will dominate over the original dwelling;
- This is a conservation area and consideration must be given to preserving the architectural integrity of the building which is 174 years old;
- The proposal will dominate the original thereby harming the form and character;
- The proposal will have first floor windows looking into our garden;

18 letters of support received raising the following planning related matters:

- The plans will turn a demolition site into a very presentable property in keeping with the surrounding properties;
- An excellent plan to take a lovely but dilapidated Old School House and make it a modern home while preserving the original look;
- proposals will not only enhance the present building but also the local area; a very sympathetic application;
- Project will resurrect an old and failing building and will be an enhancement to the village;
- The Old School House is a very interesting building although in a state of disrepair; the plans look sympathetic to the building and will enhance it;
- This is an appropriate plan to rescue a failing building;
- This is a very sympathetic restoration of the building;
- The proposed restoration and development can only have a positive outcome, removing the shed felt roof and carbuncle of a garage;
- Proposal will be a great improvement to the building;
- The proposed redevelopment will greatly improve the historic building enabling the property to be brought back into family use and enhance other properties adjacent to it;
- Existing building resulted from a very poor conversion many years ago, utilising outbuildings to form living accommodation; this is damp, dark and cold and no more than a lean-to shed;
- Many inferior and inappropriate materials have been used; the building is below standards for living in the 21st century; proposals will tidy up the appearance of the property, creating an in-keeping and attractive property without spoiling the look or visual impact of it;
- Proposals are very sympathetic but the windows must be replaced with timber; new and old have been combined well by the architect;
- General condition of the property is dreadful with ugly uPVC windows, DIY electrics, collapsing floors and asbestos roof on the garage; the plans are in keeping with the character of the original building but windows should be timber.

Comments received from applicants in return of consultee comments:

- The Design and Access Statement submitted by the applicant does NOT say that the replacement windows would be made of uPVC. The wording in the application at paragraph 5 the unsympathetically designed uPVC windows in the schoolroom will be replaced. Officer assumption is incorrect as it is intended to replace the uPVC windows with traditional timber-framed windows;
- The applicant respectfully contends that the existing extension is in such a poor state that it is not fit for modern habitation and its size is too small to accommodate a family in the 21st century.

## **PLANNING POLICIES**

S2 - TDBCLP - Design,  
H17 - TDBCLP - Extensions to Dwellings,  
EN14 - TDBCLP - Conservation Areas,  
S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,

## **DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

The pertinent issues that require consideration in determining the proposed development are thought to be the impact of the extension upon the character and appearance of the original building together with visual and residential amenity. In addition to these matters, applications for development in a conservation area must be considered with regard to the general duty in Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires that “special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”.

### Impact upon original building and visual amenity:

The Old School House is a small building, vernacular in character and has retained a number of historic features despite the numerous changes that have been made to the original structure since its conversion into a residential property. The original aspect of the school house is of stone walls under a slate roof, hipped in its design with a maximum height of 5.1 metres to the ridge. The building has, unfortunately, been subjected to unsympathetic extension(s) historically which have resulted in a large lean-to being erected along the north elevation; this extension also projects beyond the principle elevation of the dwelling to the west by approximately 4.5 metres.

The site is set above the highway to the west and is considered to occupy a prominent position within the street scene. As noted by the Conservation Officers observations, the building makes a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the Ash Priors Conservation Area. Notwithstanding the impact of the lean-to extension upon the appearance of the building, this positive contribution is in part the result of the original school building being the principle element that stands out within the site with the lean-to being subservient in scale and design. I acknowledge the degree of support that has been presented for the proposals and I agree that the site and original building requires some careful attention in order to improve its condition and contribution to the area. Notwithstanding this matter, it is important to ensure that any works respect the site and its surroundings, particularly where a vernacular building within a Conservation Area is concerned and such is a material consideration and set out within local plan policies.

The proposed extension will increase the footprint of the existing lean-to very slightly, however the principle concern arises from the increase in height to this section of the building. It is proposed to build over the lean-to constructing a pitched roof with a height of approximately 6.1 metres. As a result the extension will be significantly taller than the original school building and when this factor is combined with the enlarged element being set forward of the principle elevation of the building,

projecting towards the highway, it is clear that the proposal will dominate the original structure. The application includes details to remove the existing garage and to excavate the site alongside the highway to provide an extended vehicular parking area. The garage is relatively inconspicuous in its presence along the highway when viewed from the north and south; whilst this facet of the development is unlikely to result in any significant harm to the immediate area, it will open the site up along the roadside frontage and result in the enlarged element of the building new gable end to the west elevation forming a highly prominent feature within the street scene that will conflict with the visual characteristics of the site. The extension will range above the original building, dominating it in both scale and appearance. As noted by the councils Conservation Officer, much of the buildings character is derived from the buildings small scale; it is considered that this character would be completely eroded were the proposed extension to be approved due to the lack of subservience within the scale and massing of the proposal.

With regard to the design, whilst I acknowledge that the materials proposed generally reflect those of the existing dwelling house, it is considered that the proposals fail to respect key elements of the original building that contribute towards the unique appearance and character of the building. The proposed roof form, which incorporates gable ends, fails to replicate the design of the original building which has a hipped roof. This, together with the uncharacteristic dormer windows to the north elevation are thought to have evolved through the need of the applicant to provide additional living space at the property, however it is felt that providing such additional accommodation should not come at a cost to the original building. When viewed from along the highway to the west, which is open to public views along the road and public footpaths, significant conflict will arise visually between the original building and proposed extension virtue of the adopted design. The proposals will result in a contrived and unsympathetic addition to the dwelling as a result of its failure to respect the character and design of the original building.

#### Residential amenity:

The proposed extension will be located to the north of the building and away from the nearest property to the south; the land to the east is an agricultural fiend and to the north the residential properties are separated by a large degree of planting. Despite its increased height the proposals are not likely to result in any loss of light or outlook to neighbouring properties. Concern has been raised by a neighbouring occupant with regard to overlooking from the dormer windows; the only property which the windows would look out towards is approximately 50 metres away and separated by trees and part of an open field; as a result any potential loss of privacy is likely to be so minimal it would not warrant refusal. With regard to these matters the proposed extension is not considered to result in any significant detriment to neighbouring amenity.

#### Other matters:

Concern had been raised as to the use of uPVC windows within the proposals however the applicant has confirmed that timber fenestration will be used throughout and, were permission to be granted it would be possible to ensure that timber was used and retained by way of condition.

The proposal to remove the existing garage is, in principle considered to be acceptable. The site currently has one narrow parking space as the garage does not

look to be in a useable condition or of a scale that could accommodate a modern vehicle. The only space has a very steep gradient and in a location such as Ash Prior's, two spaces would be preferable for residential properties. Whilst there would be some harm visually within the street scene, the benefits to improving parking provision for the property and reducing the need for vehicles to park along the already narrow single lane highway are likely to outweigh these concerns.

### Conclusions

It is clear that the building is in need of repair and upgrading in order to bring it up to an acceptable standard of living however any proposal must respect both the original building, its surroundings and the Conservation Area. Having regard to the matters set out above, by virtue of its excessive scale and inappropriate design, it is recommended that planning permission be refused for the proposed extension.

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.**

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