Historic England

Ms Megan Simpson
Marrons Planning
Two Colton Square
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE1 1QH

Direct Dial: 0121 625 6870

Our ref: PA01197574
Your ref: N/A

17 November 2022

Dear Ms Simpson

Pre-application Advice

ON LAND AT THE BLUE BELL INN (39 HIGH STREET) COMPRISING ITS ASSOCIATED CAR PARK NO'S 37 HIGH STREET AND 2A MAIN STREET , DESFORD, LEICESTER, LE9 9JF

Significance

The application site is located in the Desford Conservation Area and opposite the grade II* listed Old Manor House.

The application site (i.e. the red line boundary) contains The Blue Bell pub, and 37 High Street/2a Main Street, both of which are identified as “Significant Local Buildings” on the conservation area map.

Old Manor House is a farmhouse built circa 1630- 1640 for Thomas Muxloe, a member of a well known Leicestershire family. It is built from red brick with sandstone dressings and quoins. The buildings height (Two storeys plus attics), its position close to the edge of the road and the high boundary wall makes it a key building in the street scene. The Swithland slate roof having three raised stone coped gables and two square ridge stacks with strapwork decorations. Between the second and third is an impressive two storey gabled porch with jetty above. Attached timber frame along the street frontage. Three light stone mullioned windows. To the left is an attached brick barn with a 17th Century timber framed wall of square panels.

The Desford Conservation Area Appraisal details its status in the village “*This building had been the most important none secular building in the village for several centuries”.* The house’s more than special interest are reflected in the grade II* listing which places it in the top 5.8% of listed buildings in the country.

Impact of the proposals

The proposals would convert and extend the adjacent properties; 37 High Street and

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.
We respect your privacy and the use of your information. Please read our full privacy policy for more information
https://www.historicengland.org.uk/terms/privacy-cookies/

2a to form a convenience food store.

37 High Street and 2a are identified in the conservation area appraisal as “Significant Local Buildings”. We defer to the Local Planning Authority on the assessment of impact on the Significant Local Buildings. Our advice relates to the impact on the setting of Old Manor House and the Desford Conservation Area.

a) Setting of Old Manor House

The Desford Conservation Area Appraisal states; “*Of particular note is the elegant frontage of Manor Farmhouse on the northern side of the street. The additional height of this three storey building is intended to set itself apart from other properties in the street. This is emphasised by refined detailing and the use of iron railings rather than low brickwork to separate it from passersby*”.

The scale, design and materials of the proposed extensions would not make them overly prominent in the setting of the Old Manor House. In our view Old Manor House would remain the dominant building in the street scene and there would be limited to impact to the significance it derives from its setting.

b) Desford Conservation Area

We have no issue with development in this location given the historic precedent as demonstrated in the Heritage Statement. This would to some degree re-instate the historic sense of enclosure along High Street.

i) Design

The Desford Conservation Area Appraisal gives details of the characteristics of the existing built form; “*These buildings are normally two rooms deep with steeply pitched gabled roofs parallel to the street broken with occasional projecting gables onto the street. Decorative features include dentil eaves courses, polychromatic brickwork, applied gable framing and patches of render. Openings are vertical with segmental arched or flat stone lintels with keystones and projecting brick sills*”.

The proposed extension is large in scale and would include a large area of flat roof hidden behind a small mono-pitch on the north-eastern and north-western elevations. This detail is not prevalent in the conservation area and would fail to preserve or enhance its character and appearance. Is this scale of extension necessary or could it be reduced? If it cannot be reduced it may be possible to decrease or omit the area of flat roofing by introducing further single storey gable extensions.

With regards to design we can see effort has been made to break up the massing and reflect that of the local character. The proposed roof pitch replicates the existing steep slopes, we welcome this.

Blind openings have been used to break up the expanse of masonry, they would be more successful if they were active openings. Additionally, more could be done in terms of additional detailing and brick patterns/bonding to break up the massing and create a more active elevation.

The majority of the fenestration is innocuous and would match existing windows on the building, there is the potential for an enhancement on the existing arrangement. We note that the windows proposed on the north-east elevation at first floor are not in keeping with the host building or conservation area. These could be amended to better reflect the host building and preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In sum, while the design efforts made to reduce the building's impact and assimilate it into the Desford Conservation Area go some way we consider changes to design and detailing would better preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

ii) Materials

The Conservation Area Appraisal states; "*The principle building material in the conservation area is brick.... The brickwork has generally been laid in Flemish bond which was common in the 19th century. In a number of instances the brick walls have been finished in rendering which appears in recent times to have been used to cover disguise or protect poorer quality brickwork. This is not unpleasant but it is not a traditional material. The roofs of several older buildings are covered in swithland slate in diminishing courses which is important to retain. There is also widespread use of Welsh Slate particularly along Main Street and the High Street. Clay tiles and thatch are not characteristic roofing materials in the settlement although there are isolated examples. (The Old White Cottage (thatch), Priory farm (clay tiled) and The Old Bluebell Inn (clay tiled).*

Natural materials, particularly Welsh slate, should be used on all new development. Imported or reconstituted slates or concrete roof tiles are not part of the historic palate and are inappropriate in the conservation area".

The supporting letter details that the extensions will be constructed from red brick, and the existing buildings re-rendered in white. We consider this would be appropriate to the character and appearance of the Desford Conservation Area. The information we received does not detail the proposed roofing materials. Inline with the Conservation Area Appraisal, to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area the pitched roofs should have welsh slate.

iii) Landscaping

The area between the proposed convenience store and public house is proposed for car parking, bike store, play area and beer garden along with a potential beer garden on the edge of High Street. We note there is an additional area of hardstanding in the north-east corner of the car park. While this is at the rear of the site and is not prominent in views the addition of hardstanding in this area would cause additional negative impact to the conservation area.

The proposals bring about an opportunity to enhance the appearance of this part of the conservation area which could justify the additional hard standing. The current proposals for planting and the introduction of better-quality materials would improve the appearance of this area but further enhancement, particularly to the character and appearance of the conservation could be achieved through the introduction of a boundary wall.

Legislation, policy and guidance

Our advice reflects guidance in the good practice advice notes produced by Historic England on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum in GPA 2; Managing Significance in Decision- Taking in the Historic Environment, GPA 3; The Setting of Heritage Assets.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out clear guidance for decision-makers, including chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

We also refer you to paragraphs 197, 199, 200, 202 and 206.

Paragraph 197 encourages local authorities to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 199 outlines that ‘great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)’.

Paragraph 200 details that ‘any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification’.

Paragraph 201 states that ‘where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal’.

Position

Historic England have considered the proposals in accordance with Legislation, policy and guidance.

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.
We respect your privacy and the use of your information. Please read our full privacy policy for more information
https://www.historicengland.org.uk/terms/privacy-cookies/

We do consider that improvements could be made to the application to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, as detailed in our advice above.

Next Steps

Thank you for involving us at the pre-application stage. We are broadly content with your proposals, subject to you addressing the issues as outlined above before any statutory approval is sought.

Yours sincerely

Janine Dykes

Janine Dykes
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas
E-mail: janine.dykes@HistoricEngland.org.uk

ON LAND AT THE BLUE BELL INN (39 HIGH STREET) COMPRISING ITS ASSOCIATED CAR PARK NO'S 37 HIGH STREET AND 2A MAIN STREET , DESFORD, LEICESTER, LE9 9JF
Pre-application Advice

Information Provided

Existing Elevations
Proposed Elevations
Existing Site Plan
Proposed Site Plan
Heritage Statement
Cover letter dated 25 October 2022
Location Plan
Proposed Visualisations 1-4

Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any Information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.
We respect your privacy and the use of your information. Please read our full privacy policy for more information
https://www.historicengland.org.uk/terms/privacy-cookies/