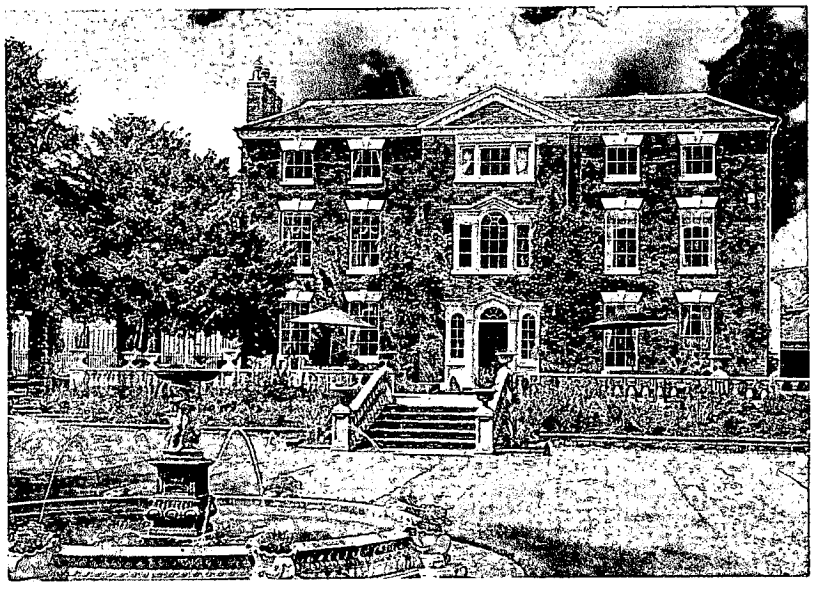
USE OF ODSTONE HALL AS A WEDDING VENUE DESIGN & ACCESS & PLANNING STATEMENT

The Proposal

1. The proposal is to use Odstone Hall as a wedding venue, for a maximum of 20 weddings a year, with up to 80 guests attending. Civil ceremonies will take place in the drawing room, a small number of guests will have use of up to six bedrooms with breakfast in the dining room, and the reception will be in a marquee in the grounds. The applicant anticipates imposition of relevant planning conditions on any consent.

Odstone Hall

2. Odstone Hall is one of the most significant historic listed buildings in the Hinckley & Bosworth area. The listing description describes the many seventeenth century timber framed internal elements, as well as the imposing eighteenth century symmetrical Georgian front façade.



Odstone Hall today

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3. Like many such buildings, the Hall deteriorated badly in the second half of the last century, to the extent that when it was bought by Mr & Mrs Woodward around nine years ago it was in such a poor condition that it was identified as a historic building at risk, and was in danger of being lost. Since then the new owners have restored the Hall back to its original splendour. Although this has only been achieved by massive expenditure on their part, working in close association with the Council's Conservation Officer and with English Heritage.



Odstone Hall before WWII



Odstone Hall in 2000

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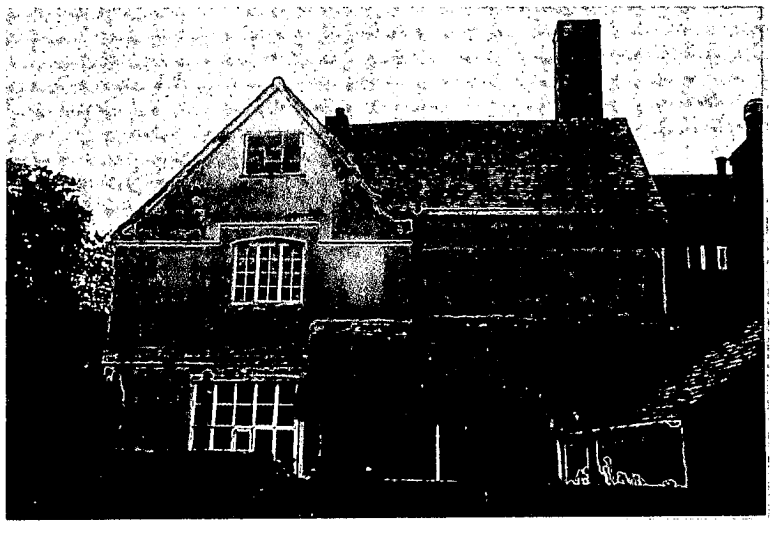
4. This is certainly not a unique situation, and this listed building is no different to any other one. Now it has been restored, it requires constant work to maintain it in that condition. In short, it is now imperative to establish a new and acceptable use for the building, compatible with its important character and listed status, to provide a source of income to fund this work.



The rear in 2000



The rear today

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The Wedding Venue Concept

5. A trend towards low key use of privately owned properties of character like this, as a venue for weddings is becoming well established throughout the country, even if not yet in this part of Leicestershire. It provides both a source of income for the property, and a unique and exclusive location for the bride's special day. Many local planning authorities have experience of evolving appropriate conditions to ensure the activity does not compromise the essential character of the site and property.

6. The established practice is for the venue to offer a complete package for a wedding, pulling together the whole range of other services, including photographers, florists, caterers, vehicle hire and the like. The venue is the catalyst to encourage use of a wide range of other local businesses and hotels.

7. The owners of Odstone Hall have researched the situation prior to submitting this application. Initial investigation of the internet has confirmed there is a clear demand for small tailor made weddings at exclusive small venues, just as it is apparent that there are no such available venues in this area. Odstone Hall would compliment and not compete with the facilities provided in the larger hotels such as Bosworth Hall, Sketchley Grange and The Hinckley Island, indeed use of Odstone Hall might encourage more wedding guests to stay in these hotels.

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Design Impact

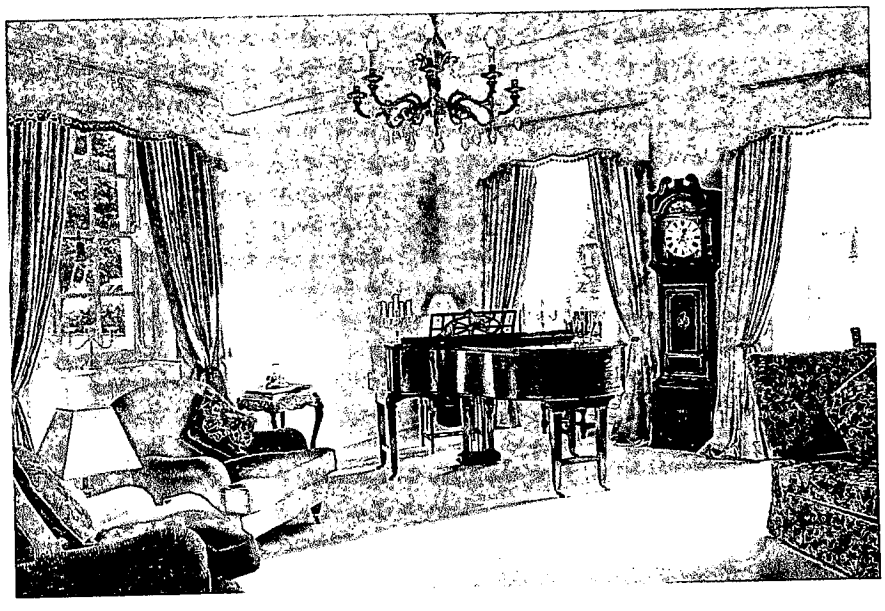
8. This low key use of the building will have no detrimental impact upon the character or structure of the listed building, because it is precisely the protection and preservation of that character that give the venue its attraction.

External Impact

9. Wedding receptions will not take place in the Hall but in a marquee located in the grounds on the tennis court in the south west corner of the garden. It will measure 24m x 12m (80' x 40') with a capacity to accommodate up to 80 guests. This location is already very well screened from the Hall and main garden by existing trees and shrubs, and the marquee will only be on the site when required for weddings. Odstone Hall is first and foremost a family home, and so the owners will certainly ensure that the marquee does not adversely impact upon the charm and character of the Hall or its grounds.

10. Locating the marquee on the tennis court means it is well away from any neighbouring property, with the nearest one being screened by the Hall itself. Nonetheless there will be strict control on noise from entertainment at receptions and all events must be over by midnight. The applicants will work closely with the Council's Environmental Health Officers in this respect.

11. Odstone is a small settlement, and the owners of the Hall are concerned not to upset or fall out with neighbours. This is why they have consulted them, and at the time of submitting this application they are not aware of any neighbour objection

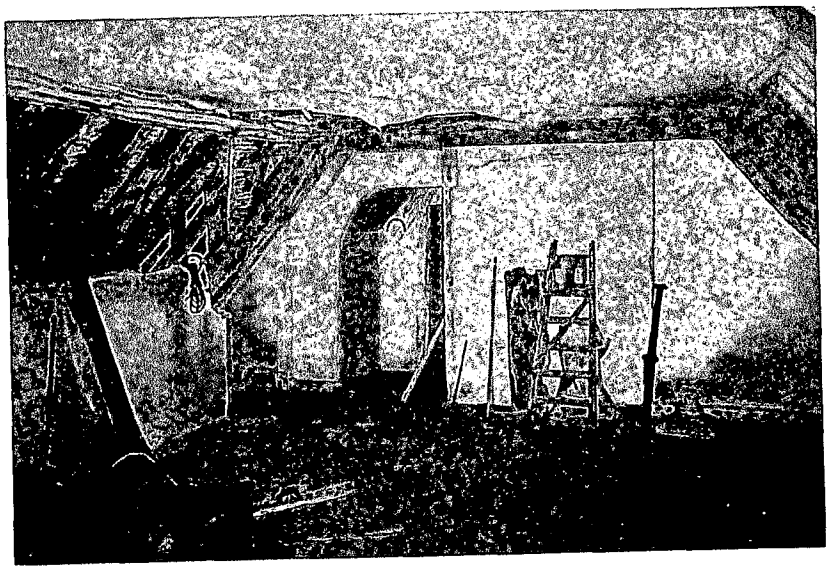


The Drawing Room



The Dining Room

12. Officers of the Borough Council have followed the progress of the Hall for a long time, and they have also been made aware of the present proposal. It is understood that there are no planning objections to what is seen as an ideal low key use for a listed building.



Upper floor room Before & After



Access and Parking

13. The one known concern about this proposal is on the part of the Highway Authority. Odstone Hall is at the end of the Hall Lane cul de sac serving a limited number of properties, however the junction with Barton Road has restricted visibility. More significantly, there is a long planning history of concern in Odstone, generally relating to unauthorised activities at a property to the east of the Hall, and often referring to traffic and highway conditions.

14. In conversation and correspondence with the relevant officer at the Leicestershire County Council, he has indicated that "In terms of consistency the Highway Authority will probably have to seek to resist the proposal on highway safety grounds linked to the Hall Lane/Newton Lane junction" He said he was "pretty much led" by the position of the County to oppose a 1990 application for a barn conversion off Hall Lane, even though the Borough Council did not accept that advice and the application was approved.

15. The owners of Odstone Hall understand this situation, however they do suggest that different circumstances require different consideration. Hall Lane is a cul de sac and it is not a through route. The junction with Barton Road is not ideal, but then this is not a main road, but a very quiet country lane between Barton in the Beans and Newton Burgoland. What is more, the junction is in a 30 mph zone rather than

the open countryside, and the wedding venue activity will only take place at very limited times at the weekend.

16. On site parking is not a problem. A maximum of 80 guests equates to no more than 30-40 cars even assuming no groups arrive by minibus, and at least 30 spaces will be made available by extending the hard surface (stone chippings) into the area between the existing hard standing and the garage to the east of the Hall. Additional overflow spaces, should they be required, will be made available on the paddock land to the west of the Hall.

Summary

17. In short, the proposal here is one where, in all considerations other than highways, it has advantages all round.

- It makes very satisfactory use of Odstone Hall in a manner that will facilitate continued maintenance without any compromise to its important character and listed status;
- It provides a new and welcome local attraction that will also stimulate interest in a number of other associated wedding service providers in the Borough;
- The owners will work with neighbours to ensure the low key and intimate scale of the facility will not cause any local nuisance.

18. If the Council is sympathetic towards this proposal, but it is reluctant to disregard what the Highway Authority says, then there is an obvious way forward here. National planning policy advice (set out in Circular 11/95) specifically refers to circumstances where it might be appropriate to have a "trial run" for a project so its full impact can be

assessed, provided that this period should be long enough to sustain any relevant capital expenditure involved.

19. A period of one year would not be long enough, partly because of the capital expenditure on the marquee, but primarily because wedding planning is a long term operation with bookings generally made more than a year in advance. On the other hand a period of two years would be long enough for a trial run to assess the impact of the activity. At the end of that period the Council would have the information it needed to know all about the highways impact, so the use would either be approved on a permanent basis or it would be refused.



December 2008



Odstone Hall

showing the location of the tennis court and parking areas