

FAO Mr Martin Chandler  
Development Services  
Cheltenham Borough Council  
Promenade  
Cheltenham

11<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Our Ref: djp0222 Snowdon & Shortland

## **TO BE CIRCULATED TO MEMBERS OF PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Dear Member,

**Ref: 14/00415/FUL & /LBC - Part demolition of existing outbuildings and rebuilding to provide garaging/workshop/bike store with new ancillary living accommodation at first floor - Devonshire House Wellington Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire**

I write on behalf of clients, Lisa Shortland and David Snowdon in response to comments made, and concerns and objections raised by neighbours and local residents in a number of representations submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council in response to the application for works to rebuild the existing garage and coach house buildings incorporating a small amount of ancillary accommodation at first floor/roof space within the rebuilt coach house.

The application has been carefully considered and is accompanied by plans and supporting documents explaining and justifying the proposals, including a report by Ellen Leslie Historic Buildings Research which provides an historical background and analysis of the development of the garden and outbuildings at Devonshire House.

The outbuildings positioned in the southwest corner of the site off service road Pittville Mews cannot in their current poor condition provide useful garaging or storage space for any of the four flats within Devonshire House and make no positive contribution to the appearance of the area. The coach house building has been significantly altered and has suffered as a consequence of these changes and more recently from changes to its immediate environs in the form of raised planting beds against its south facing external wall within the rear service/parking area to The Cheltenham Townhouse Hotel.

Rebuilt the new garage and coach house building would provide parking and storage facilities for residents of two of the four flats within Devonshire House and a very small element of ancillary accommodation for one. The result would be a reduction in on-street parking and parking on the front drive of this listed building which has, along with its gardens and boundary enclosure to both Wellington Road and Pittville Lawn, been carefully restored to the very highest of standards with the relevant planning and listed building consents.

The applicants have on more than one occasion during the restoration of Devonshire House sought the benefit of the advice and guidance offered by the Council's Conservation and Planning Officers. They engaged in pre-application discussions with Conservation and Planning Officers in advance of developing the proposals for the garage and coach house outbuildings which are the subject of the current planning and listed building applications.

Reference to withdrawn applications in 2003 and 2004 for similar works to the garage and coach house outbuildings have been cited by objectors as evidence of the unacceptability of the scheme. However, this is not the case. Mr Jeremy Jefferies, Conservation Officer, recommended that the similar 2003 application be granted consent. In his consultation response dated 10.9.03 he states "out-houses to buildings of this period were nearly always 2 storeys" and comprised "carriage/horse below, hay/ostler above or workshop one floor, stored materials on other". Census data submitted by the immediate neighbour as evidence that the building was only ever single storey is thus completely misconceived as these 2 storey out-houses did not always include accommodation for a stableman/ostler.

Aerial photographs taken over 100 years after the original coach house building was constructed are again not evidence of the original form of the building. It is widely accepted that the coach house building has been significantly altered throughout its lifetime and significant changes prior to 1951 and before the advent of the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act, which established the UK's system of town and country planning, cannot be ruled out.

Furthermore, similar 2 storey coach houses to buildings of a similar age and, most importantly, status remain in evidence today in both Pittville and Cheltenham and have been referenced in the supporting documentation.

Mr Jefferies regarded the 2003 proposal as a "definite improvement". Mr Simon Cairns, Conservation Officer, at the time of the 2004 application raised objections to matters of detail as opposed to the principle of a 2 storey coach house building being established on the site. His consultation response clearly indicates that he was seeking amendments and revised plans together with a justification statement before recommending approval and conditions of consent.

Neither of the earlier applications was thus withdrawn because a 2 storey building was unacceptable on the site of the current coach house. The support for the current scheme by the Council's Conservation Officer, Karen Radford, and recommendation by the Planning Case Officer, Martin Chandler, to Members of the Planning Committee to approve the applications is thus not at odds with the views put forward by Conservation and Planning officers considering the earlier schemes a decade and more ago and is the result of consultation, professional advice and historic research undertaken prior to submission of the scheme for consideration.

In respect of the suggestion that the relationship of the coach house to The Cheltenham Townhouse hotel at 12 & 14 Pittville Lawn is evidence of its original form it should be noted that Devonshire House was all but completed in 1832 when it was purchased by Captain Broughton and that the coach house appears on Henry Merrett's map of 1834. This was some 14 years before the buildings on the west side of Pittville Lawn were built in 1948. The coach house building would thus have already been in situ and complete before the buildings occupied by Cheltenham Townhouse Hotel were even built. It remains likely that historically the building was 2 storeys in height as was the coach house to neighbouring Pittville House which remains today.

Furthermore, Pitt's map of 1826 illustrated in Ellen Leslie's historical report suggests that outbuildings were proposed to the rear of every building benefiting from a rear service lane regardless of plot depth. It should also be remembered that at the time the rear of buildings were never given the care and detail bestowed on front elevations. It is thus unlikely that at the time the relationship of the coach house at Devonshire House to the rear of buildings in Pittville Lawn had any bearing whatsoever on the form of Pittville Lawn.

The single storey form of the existing coach house building is very much inconsistent with coach houses to similarly high status buildings of its time and there remains no evidence or sound reason why it would have been restricted to single storey in height.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of the development on the amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties. However, the following should be noted:

There is a distance of some 12m between 1 Pittville House and its rear boundary at its closest point and a further 3 metres to the coach house building, a total of some 15m. The height of the existing coach house is around 3m. The eaves of the proposed building is only 1.25m above this at 4.25m and the ridge to the shallow pitched roof at its highest point only 1.65m above this at 5.9m. Combined with the distances involved the additional 2.9m in height will have little or no impact on the occupiers of 1 Pittville House and its garden. With the much taller buildings of Pittville Lawn lying immediately to the southeast of the proposed coach house development and casting its own very long shadow over it for much of the day, the coach house will have little or no impact on neighbouring property in this respect. The north elevation of the proposed rebuilt coach house will have openings restricted to 3 rooflights. These will be 2m above floor level and will preclude any views over neighbouring property and its garden. The outlook from Pittville House is over their own rear garden (12m long plus) and down Pittville Mews, a service road serving many rear parking courtyards. With the relatively small increase in the height of the coach house structure the outlook will remain almost unchanged for the occupiers of Pittville House and will be much improved for others, as mentioned in a number of letters of support.

The distance between the proposed coach house and residential dwelling of The Coach House, at 7 Pittville Mews will not change. There will remain 6.5m between the buildings across the service road. As previously mentioned there is a relatively small increase in the eaves of the proposed building, only 1.25m above the existing. Above this is a gable with a blank window and a ridge height, at its highest point, of 5.9m. Because of the orientation and the shadow cast by Pittville Lawn buildings, the proposed new coach house will again have little or no impact on The Coach House on the opposite side of the service road. The development will also see the very unattractive decaying flat roof of the existing coach house replaced by an attractive shallow pitch slate roof. The crinkly tin roof of the adjacent garage will be replaced with a modern tidy flat roof. The neighbour at The Coach House, 7 Pittville Mews submitted a photograph illustrating the poor condition and visual unattractiveness of the existing buildings (see below) and letters of support including one from Evesham Road highlights the fact that the replacement of the buildings will represent a significant visual improvement.



The development will have no windows looking over the service lane. The only window is that which looks over the garden of Devonshire House itself. Given the orientation and distance involved across the service lane to habitable room windows in the Coach House 7 Pittville Mews, the proposed works would have no significant impact on either the living accommodation or the courtyard serving that property.



View towards The Coach House 7 Pittville Mews from the coach house roof as existing showing windows opposite behind courtyard

The proposed coach house lies adjacent to the boundary with The Cheltenham Townhouse Hotel, Pittville Lawn. There is a distance of 5.5m between the rear elevation of the proposed coach house and that of hotel. There is a high boundary wall running between the two structures separating the garden of Devonshire House from the rear courtyard and service area of the hotel. The coach house as existing sits at around 3m high and this section of the boundary wall rises to a height 0.5m above this to the rear of the hotel screening the garden of Devonshire House from hotel guests using a small decked area created at the back of the hotel in recent years. The rear courtyard and service area is open to views from Pittville Mews through the large vehicular access opening in the rear boundary wall and with it views of the decked area where guests can sit. Any views onto the decked area from the proposed coach house would be restricted and oblique and would not in any way compromise the privacy and amenity of guests either in their rooms or on the decked area. The only upper floor window to the proposed coach house would gain its primary view over the garden to Devonshire House. With the upper floor only used as occasional ancillary accommodation its impact would be minimal.

The eaves height of the proposed coach house stands only 0.75m above the height of the existing boundary wall with an attractive slate pitched roof which, with shallow pitch keeps the overall height of the building low with ridge height of 5.9m where it sits 2.2m away from the boundary with the hotel courtyard and service area. Because of modest height of the building and its orientation to the northwest of the hotel, the structure would not appear overbearing nor cast any shadow over the rear decked area. It would in no way compromise the use of the hotel or privacy or amenity of guests.





Photo from the garden of Devonshire House showing the boundary wall rising above the height of the existing coach house building



Pittville Mews to the rear of the hotel and the open rear car park and decking to same

In conclusion, the proposal which sees the existing garages in poor repair rebuilt represents a significant visual enhancement and the changes are undeniably small in terms of the increase on the existing building and the scale of surrounding buildings and structures. The scheme has the support of planning and conservation officers and would result in a definite improvement in the appearance of the area and views from neighbouring properties. Planning and conservation officers considering earlier schemes have held the same view.

The upper floor accommodation would be only be used as ancillary accommodation and it is not the intention to establish a separate dwelling as has been suggested. The garage and coach house will serve a need for parking for residents of 2 of the 4 flats within Devonshire House and be will be in the ownership of separate flats.

I trust that this letter has clarified matters for Members relating to the proposal and brings the scheme into perspective.

Yours sincerely

Diana Jones  
DJ Planning