

7 DCNC2004/0182/F - CONVERSION TO SNOOKER HALL AND BAR AREA AND FOUR FLATS AT BROOK HALL, 27 BROAD STREET, LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR6 8BT

DCNC2004/0183/L – AS ABOVE

For: Mr. M. Roberts per Mr. T. Margrett, Green Cottage, Hope Mansel, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5TJ

Date Received:
19th January, 2004

Ward:
Leominster North

Grid Ref:
49556, 59240

Expiry Date:
15th March, 2004

Local Member: Councillors Mrs. J.P. French and Brig. P. Jones CBE

Introduction

These applications were deferred at the June meeting for further comment/appraisal by the Chief Conservation Officer. These have been received and reported at paragraph 4.3.

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Brook Hall, a Grade II Listed Building, is located on the west side of Broad Street, between the restoration shop and Vicarage Street. It is in the Leominster Conservation Area and within a primarily residential area as shown on the Leominster Town Centre Inset Map in the Leominster District Local Plan. It is a two-storey building with attic rooms, faced in yellow brick under a Welsh slate roof. The building is vacant, the ground floor was last used by New Life Church, with vacant residential flat at first floor.
- 1.2 This application proposes the use of the ground floor as snooker hall and lounge bar. The upper floors are to accommodate 4 residential flats. The plans show that 4 car parking spaces are proposed along the side of the building fronting onto Vicarage Street.

2. Policies

- 2.1 PPG1: General Policy and Principles
PPG6: Town Centres and Retail Development
PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment
- 2.2 **Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire)**

A2 – Settlement Hierarchy
A18 – Listed Buildings and their Settings
A21 – Development within Conservation Areas
A54 – Protection of Residential Amenity

2.3 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan (Deposit Draft)

HBA1 – Alterations and extensions to Listed Buildings
HBA3 – Change of use of Listed Buildings
HBA6 – New development within Conservation Areas

3. Planning History

98/0142 - Internal works. Approved 17.8.98.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

4.1 None required.

Internal Council Advice

4.2 Head of Engineering and Transport: No objection.

4.3 Chief Conservation Officer:

'Character/ Architectural Importance:

Brook Hall is deceptive. At the rear is a long, early C20 hall and to one side there is a C19 addition. But the importance of Brook Hall is in the front portion that faces Broad Street.

Behind the early C20 brick facing lies a remarkable timber-framed, two-storey with attic, C16 house with a jettied cross wing to the north. A brief survey undertaken some ten years ago revealed that this is a quality building whose high status is shown by its close studding and chevron decoration on the north side which is now also hidden by a rendered covering.

The early floor plan, believed to be a ceiled hall with cross passage, is evident and much of the timbered structure remains. At first floor level, there is evidence of some remarkable and rare wall paintings one of which is partly visible behind a more recent covering of fibre-board. These paintings may well be part of a larger sequence, contemporary with the C16 house, waiting to be recovered.

A feature of the property is the open space of the loft which, with its jettied dormer that overhung the former Pinsley Brook, is thought to have been for the storage of goods. Given the quality of the house, its position in the town and its proximity to the Pinsley Brook, a man-made medieval watercourse, it is likely that Brook Hall was the home of a wealthy merchant. It is a rare and important survival of that period.

Later changes to the house are also of significant interest. One of the rear first floor chambers contains surprisingly complete C17 fielded panelling and a moulded fireplace. Features from an C18 fashionable 'makeover' include the plastering of internal floor beams, some of which contain decorative mouldings; moulded architraves, heavy six-panel doors and deep skirtings. All of these add distinction and character to the property.

Brook Hall is a property of great historical and architectural interest. In view of its status and of its surviving features, it is considered to be approaching the category of a two star rated building.

Impact of proposals.

While there is no concern in principle to the use of the C20 hall for snooker there is a strong and firm objection to the proposals for the older part of the property. Of major concern is the fact that proposals disregard the significance of the existing features and the existing plan form. This proposal will severely affect the special historical and architectural character of this house and is likely to destroy some of its special features.

The intention to remove the ground floor internal walls will obliterate the plan-form of this historic house. If permission is granted, the fact that this was a ceiled hall with cross wing to the north side will no longer be discernible and the cross passage relating to the hall will disappear. The C16 timbers and posts within the partitions will be removed, as will the C18 features. It is likely that the moulded plaster cornices will be damaged during the works. The proposed new doorway into Vicarage Street will also destroy important timber framing.

The significance of the plan form relating to historic buildings is recognised by PPG 15 (C58) which advises that '*The plan of a building is one of its most important characteristics. Interior plans and individual features of interest should be respected and left unaltered as far as possible*'.

The proposals for the second floor are also severely invasive. The two main upper chambers, in particular, will be heavily compartmented so that their significance will be radically reduced, if not destroyed. Timbers are likely to be removed during the process of providing new openings and of grave concern is the fact that the small panelled chamber is to be opened up, thus robbing the room of its completeness as well as removing the panelling. The wall containing the rare paintings is scheduled, inappropriately, to become a kitchen.

The importance of retaining original spaces and features within a listed building is made clear in PPG 15(C58) which advises that, '*Internal spaces, ...panelling, doors and doorcases, mouldings..... and wall-decorations are part of the special interest of a building and may be its most valuable feature*'.

The fact that the C18 work is more recent is not to be taken as an excuse to remove it. Once again PPG 15 (C5) advises that subsequent changes to a listed building, '*..are often of interest in their own right as part of the building's organic history*'. Generally, *later features of interest should not be removed ...*' C16 '

4.4 Environmental Health and Trading Standards: No objection.

5. Representations

5.1 Leominster Town Council: 'Recommend approval conditional upon there being no major alterations to the fabric or character of the building.'

5.2 17 letters of objection, including a petition with 37 signatories, have been received. The main points raised:

- a) This is not an appropriate location for a snooker hall.
- b) Noise nuisance.
- c) Unsociable behaviour.
- d) Inadequate parking.
- e) There are already enough snooker halls in Leominster.
- f) No need for another bar in the town.

5.3 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Northern Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford, and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 Brook Hall is located within a primarily residential area as shown on Leominster Town Centre Inset Map in the Leominster District Local Plan. The ground floor of the building was last used as a place where people congregate. Uses included place of worship, day nursery and other group activities.
- 6.2 This application proposes a snooker hall within a large hall, which is at the rear of the building, and the front part of Brook Hall to be used as a lounge bar. The first floor and attic rooms are to be altered to provide 4 flats.
- 6.3 Generally snooker halls do not cause noise nuisance that would give rise to loss of residential amenity. While, it is acknowledged that there may be some unwelcome and undisciplined behaviour of patrons when leaving the snooker hall, it is not considered that this will lead to unacceptable disturbance. However, given the location of the building, it would not be unreasonable to restrict opening times to coincide with licensing hours. Further, a scheme of sound attenuation that would protect the residents of the flats from noise and activities of the bar and snooker hall would be reasonable.
- 6.4 Matters of competition with other snooker halls and other licensed premises in Leominster are not material considerations in the determination of this application.
- 6.5 The site's central location allows access to employment and local services by modes of transport other than car. While 4 car parking spaces are shown, this is considered acceptable in this locality. The site is close to a large public car park, coupled with the availability of public transport. Its close proximity to these facilities lends itself favourably to under-provision of parking, thereby creating a sustainable form of development.
- 6.6 To bring this building into alternative use will require the removal of internal walling. While, there is no in principle objection to the proposed uses the alterations proposed to bring this building into alternative use will adversely affect the historic fabric of this Listed building, and accordingly the recommendation reflects this.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission Listed Building consent be refused for the following reason:

- 1. It is considered that the proposal does not recognise or respect the special qualities of this Listed building. The alterations required to bring this building into alternative use are considered invasive so as to adversely affect and destroy its architectural and historic character. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy A18(D) of the Leominster District Local Plan (Herefordshire).**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.