

Akhurst School – Proposed Residential Redevelopment

Note of Meeting with Architect: 28/4/05

Planning/Conservation/Landscape/Highway access/PRoW

Architects propose to design rear area for car parking. Existing direct route of FP through parking area. Aim to divert to N through area of trees. Optimum route to be surveyed

Points to be considered

- Is diverted route acceptable in planning/conservation context?
- How are trees affected?
- Security
- Boundary fence
- Width of path

PRoW Issues

Recording

- Owners to dedicate diverted route, HA s. 25
- Deemed route to be deleted under TCPA s. 257
- If diversion not approved, Mod Order entire route?

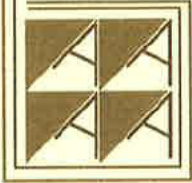
Completion

- Agree width, e.g. 2.5m
- Stone surface, sympathetic with remaining route through The Grove
- Owners to maintain

Record Remaining Footpath through The Grove to Jesmond Dene Road by Modification Order

440765

Dear Mr Dawson,
Please find enclosed copy
letters to Mr Rippon.
Kind regards,



THE GROVE
JESMOND
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
NE2 2PN

TEL. [REDACTED]

akhurst

Mr J. Rippon
Senior Planning Officer
Regeneration Directorate
Civic Centre
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8PD

Akhurst School
The Grove
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 2PN

1st July '05

Dear Mr Rippon

Following the on site meeting (21st June) held at the premises of the former Akhurst School we write regarding the footpath on the Grove which runs directly past the site leading down to St Mary's Well.

You may be aware that we purchased the school in 1983 and ran a nursery and prep school on the site until the enforced closure in July 2004 as a result of medical advice given to Mrs Derham. The untimely closure of the school did not allow for plans to be made regarding the future of the site. We have therefore had to maintain the buildings and the site in 1st Class order for a further year in order to comply with insurance regulations. However we have been informed by our insurance company that they are not willing to renew our insurance when it expires at the end of August (2005). Understandably this poses a major problem to us. Having spoken to other insurers the situation is exactly the same as no-one wishes to insure unoccupied buildings of a high vulnerability and age such as those at Akhurst.

It is well known in the area that the buildings are unoccupied and such news has had a devastating effect on the site. Certain dog owners have allowed their dogs to foul right beside the buildings knowing that there is little chance they will be spotted. Gangs of youths have adopted the Grove as a football pitch and we have replaced broken windows as a result of youths being at such close proximity to the buildings, kicking balls and throwing stones and various other missiles at the windows.

The steps of the main Grade II listed building provide a meeting place for the smokers, drinkers and drug addicts. Whilst this has always been the case the problems have been exacerbated over recent months. The protection of the buildings on the Grosvenor Avenue side is of a high level but unfortunately on the Grove the footpath in such close proximity to the buildings allows them to become a blank canvas for graffiti (which we have had to remove) and also some rather unsavoury items pushed either through the letter box or left on the steps (lager cans, bottles, needles, cigarette packets, matches – struck on the buildings itself – and indeed a miscellany of litter and vomit has continually to be removed.

The police are only too aware of the problems within this vicinity and they have used the Grove as a site in which to park unmarked vehicles and plain clothes detectives to investigate drug trafficking in Jesmond.

The buildings and site at Akhurst have proved not to be readily saleable: The Grade II listed building, the zero response to any new build on the site together with the pedestrian access on the Grove pose complications to the majority of would be purchasers.

We know from speaking to local residents ourselves coupled with feedback from our local councillor Mr Armstrong (himself a resident living opposite the school) that a return to residential use for the site is the most preferable option. The Banks Group as you are aware have, together with the architects Waring & Netts put together a scheme for housing that would require the minimum alteration to the existing buildings. We know that the residents would favour this scheme wholeheartedly especially as it would involve providing far less car parking facilities than would be required for an all apartment scheme. However with any residential development no one would wish to purchase high calibre properties be it flats or houses with people walking so close to their property and being able to see through the windows thus invading both their privacy and protection.

The area on the Grove unfortunately is not used solely by pedestrians. People are riding bikes and motorcycles over a large gravelled area (gravel constantly needing to be replaced) past the buildings and also parking cars and emptying ashtrays on our land. Over the years we have always maintained the area with due consideration for others although this has clearly not been reciprocated in many cases. Your predecessor Mr Tams was well aware of the many problems we encountered.

We would strongly urge support for the right of way to be sited further from the buildings as indeed it was when we purchased the school in 1983. A right of way at that time was beside the lampposts by the boundary fence meandering through the trees. The fencing off of the areas as it is today was done by ourselves only to create safe play areas free from dog fouling for nursery children (now no longer relevant).

The Grove from Osborne Road meanders past Manor Cottage (another target for graffiti) and used to follow the line of the lampposts which clearly is not a straight line. The scheme proposed by Banks would certainly both enhance and upgrade this entire area and would without doubt provide greater protection both for the buildings and those within. Our financial situation does not permit us to continue to maintain the site at its current level which to date has involved employing a full time person together with the high maintenance costs involved in the management of such a site. We are sure that no one (in particular the council nor ourselves) would wish to see such beautiful buildings deteriorate and become further vandalised thus attracting more undesirables to the area – a worrying prospect for local residents and a continuing nightmare for Mr Derham (now aged 70) and his wife with health problems.

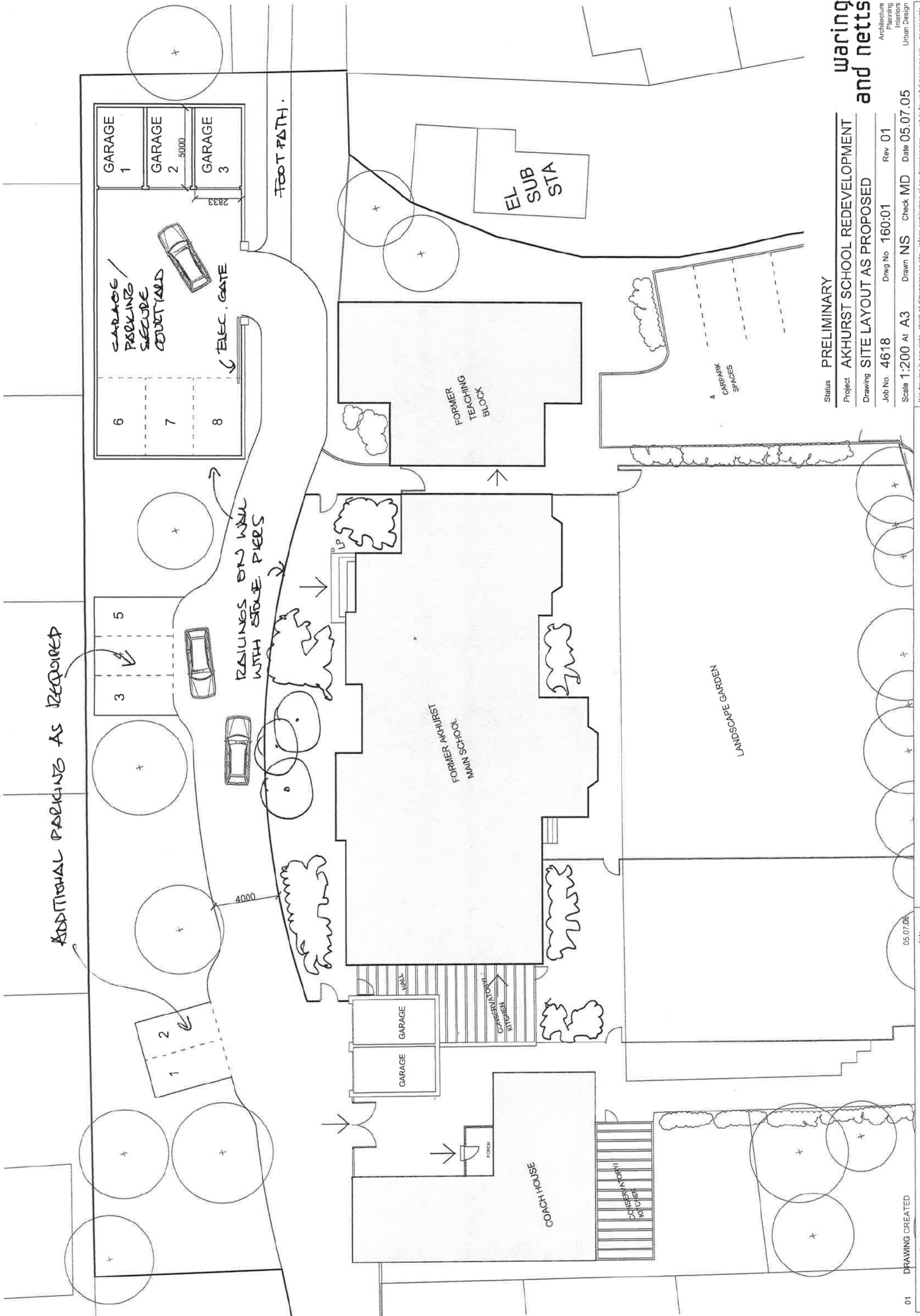
We would sincerely hope that a favourable compromise can be reached regarding the right of way to enable Jesmond Cottage to be returned to its former glory.

Yours sincerely,



R.J. & F.M. Derham

c.c. Mr K.Dawson Public rights of way Officer
Councillor R.Armstrong



wareing and netts
 Architecture
 Planning
 Interiors
 Urban Design

Status: PRELIMINARY
 Project: AKHURST SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT
 Drawing: SITE LAYOUT AS PROPOSED
 Job No: 4618 Dwg No: 160:01 Rev: 01
 Scale: 1:200 At: A3 Drawn: NS Check: MD Date: 05.07.05



Planning & Transportation
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Harvey Emms, Head of Planning and Transportation
Regeneration Directorate

Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8PD

PH **SUPERSEDED.** 098
mail .uk

**NEW OWNER
& APPLICATIONS
see planners**

erson Direct Li

To: Ken Dawson - Fodhpam Officer

Date: 21/07/05

- As requested / expected
- For information
- For your action
- For consideration and comment
- For completion and return
- For noting and return
- For your approval
- Note _____

**CONVERSION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS TO
RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS AND ALTERATIONS TO THE EXTERNAL**

GROSVENOR AVENUE, JESMOND

Sent by: Karen

Tel: x28976

CR295/1

With Compliments

I am writing further to your proposals to convert the existing school buildings at Akhurst School into residential dwellings.

I have now had an opportunity to fully consider the proposals and have the following comments to make.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character therefore residential use on the site is considered to be acceptable in principle. However, there are a number of issues relating to the detail of this particular proposal. I will deal with each issue in turn below.

External layout

As you are aware our main concern is in respect of the proposed external layout of the site and I have the following comments in respect of this matter.

Grosvenor Avenue side

All of the trees on the site are protected with a Tree Preservation Order. All of the external works must take into account the existing trees and there is a presumption against any felling or works within the rooting zones of the trees.

Continued...

SUPERSEDED.
NEW OWNER
& APPLICATIONS
see planners

Our Reference: A2/NORTHJESMOND/GROVE

Your Reference:

This matter is being dealt with by Karen Davinson Direct Li

21 July 2005

[Redacted]

Waring & Netts

[Redacted]

Newcastle upon Tyne

[Redacted]

Dear Sir

PROPOSAL: CONVERSION AND EXTENSION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS TO RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS AND ALTERATIONS TO THE EXTERNAL LAYOUT OF THE SITE

LOCATION: AKHURST SCHOOL, THE GROVE, JESMOND

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Continued...

It is proposed to create a new vehicular access off Grosvenor Avenue, in between the existing trees, to serve the former teaching block. A tree survey has not yet been provided and I understand that the location of the trees shown on the plan submitted so far may not be accurate. The plans do not identify the trees to be removed, but it is clear that some removal would be required to facilitate for the access and the necessary visibility splays. Tree removal in this location to allow for such a vehicular access is considered to be unacceptable. It is considered that the loss of trees on this part of the site would have a negative effect on the landscaped character and appearance of the site within the street, which is an important feature of this part of the conservation area. It is not considered that the creation of a new access off Grosvenor Avenue is not necessary and this tree removal is not justified.

In addition to this, it is also considered that the proposed car parking spaces to the front of the former teaching block would have an unacceptable impact upon the landscaped setting of the buildings, the appearance of the site in the street scene and the character of the conservation area.

Both the access and car parking off Grosvenor Avenue are therefore unacceptable. All access and car parking for the properties should be to the rear of the site, off The Grove.

In addition, it is proposed to site two refuse stores to the front of the site adjacent to Grosvenor Avenue. In principle it is considered that these could be acceptable provided that they do not impact upon the trees and are designed to ensure that they have minimum impact upon the appearance of Grosvenor Avenue. Further details of the size and appearance of these refuse stores will be required in order to fully assess their impact.

The Grove side

As you are aware, the most significant issue with the scheme is the proposed diversion of the existing footpath. Two proposals have been put forward and I will comment on each of them.

The first and original proposal submitted shows the diversion of the footpath around the perimeter of the site, adjacent to the boundary with properties on Reid Park Road and Reid Park Court. It is proposed to separate the footpath from the rear of the properties by enclosing the site with railings, so that the footpath is outwith the site. Three car parking spaces, three car ports and two garages would be provided within the curtilage of the residential site. The footpath would be located around the back of this space, amongst the existing trees and along the external boundary.

Although not on the definitive map, the footpath is an important historical route through this part of Jesmond. It is a route between Osborne Road and St Mary's Well, St Mary's Chapel and Jesmond Dene which has historical significance and is highly valued by many residents of Jesmond. Maps indicate that it existed prior to 1844. The route and associated spaces are an important feature in the area that were specifically identified to form part of the conservation area. The character of this space is the sensation of passing through a narrowly closely confined path into a much more open space dominated by the façade of the listed building. The existing route and site layout is considered to be extremely important and should not be substantially altered or adversely affected by development.

The proposed diversion on the first scheme would significantly alter the quality and function of the route. The existing direct line of sight along the footpath would be lost as a result of the proposed changes. The footpath would be narrowed and would be routed between the trees, with the existing close boarded fence on one side, and railings on the other. The quality of the environment on this new footpath would be significantly poorer than the existing situation. The clear line of sight would be lost which would increase the perceived and actual threat to personal safety. It is considered that this first proposal would have a significant adverse impact upon the historic route of the footpath and is therefore considered to be unacceptable. As a result of the impact upon the established footpath route, it is considered that the proposed development would be harmful to the character of this part of the conservation area. This proposal is therefore unacceptable.

Notwithstanding the issues in respect of the impact upon the footpath, there are other issues regarding this particular proposal.

As stated previously, the trees are protected and any proposal must take into account the existing trees with a presumption against any felling or works within the rooting zones of the trees. The proposed diversion of the footpath would impact upon the rooting zone of the mature trees in this area, which is unacceptable.

It is proposed to provide 8 car parking spaces for the 3 units contained within the coach house and the main school building. This represents an overprovision of parking, conflicting with Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 'Transport'. The City Councils parking standards contained within the UDP require 1 car parking space per dwelling and 1 per every 3 dwellings for visitors. Only 4 spaces in total are therefore required for the coach house and the main school building. The level of car parking proposed is not justified and should be reduced. In addition, I am concerned about the impact of the car port structure on the trees, the visual appearance of the site, and the residential amenity of the neighbours. A tree survey is required in order to fully assess the impact upon the trees but I am concerned that the structure is likely to impact upon the trees as existing.

It is also considered that the proposal would have an adverse impact upon the existing residential amenity enjoyed by the occupants of Reid Park Road and Reid Park Court. The development would result in the footpath being moved adjacent to the boundary with these properties. The occupants of these properties would therefore experience additional noise and disturbance as a result of the footpath being located closer to their properties. It is likely that significant objection would be received from residents to this aspect of the proposal and any comments received would be taken into account when a decision is made on any application.

The second proposal submitted shows the footpath running through the site, but being changed in shape from a straight line to a curve. A secure parking courtyard is proposed, accommodating 6 parking spaces in total. An additional 5 external parking spaces are proposed adjacent to this. The proposal to retain the footpath route through the centre of the site is essential, however, it is considered that the proposed curved route is not acceptable as a direct line of sight along the route is still lost. The proposed route should be a straight line as existing and the landscaped area alongside the main building should be reduced to no more than 1-2 metres in width. In addition, the proposed high railings and trees within this landscaped area are not acceptable as they would further obstruct views along the route of the path. It is considered that any wall or railing along this boundary should be low in height to ensure that the existing open character of the site is retained.

Appendix Z - Akhurst School planning related documents

There should not be any trees in this area, just low level landscaping. This would retain the existing open

character of the area whilst provided a 'buffer' between the windows and the footpath. The windows on this side of the property are not principal windows as the main outlook from the property is to the south. It is therefore considered that this treatment would be adequate.

The amount of car parking on this proposal has been increased to 13 spaces for the 3 properties. It appears from the plan that these parking spaces are in addition to the 4 spaces accessed from Grosvenor Avenue. Again, this is overprovision of car parking and is not acceptable. The car parking off Grosvenor Avenue should be removed. The car parking shown to the rear of the site is still over provision even for all 6 units. I am also concerned about the impact that the secure courtyard area would have on the visual amenity of the area and the neighbouring properties, and the impact of all of the parking upon the trees. Some car parking in this area may be acceptable, subject to the trees, but it should not be formally enclosed by any walls, railings and gates. As stated previously, a tree survey is required before the impact upon the trees can be assessed.

In summary, I would recommend the following changes to the external layout plan:

- make the route of the footpath straight with a direct line of sight;
- narrow the landscaped area adjacent to the building, including removing the trees and lowering the wall or railings;
- remove the access and car parking off Grosvenor Avenue;
- provide all car parking off The Grove;
- reduce the total number of car parking spaces to 8 to meet the UDP standards;
- remove the secure courtyard area and replace with 2 small garages for the 2 properties in the main building; and
- provide adequate secure cycle and refuse storage for each property.

Details of the above matters should ideally be submitted for further pre-application comment.

The proposed alterations to the listed building

Turning to the proposed alterations to the main school building, the property is a Grade II listed building and is located within the Jesmond Dene Conservation Area.

In general, it is considered that the proposed conversion of the main school building to 2 dwellings would be relatively sympathetic to the original character and layout of the listed building. However I have some comments to make on the detail of the proposals.

It would appear from the plans that it is proposed to insert a number of new windows, however, no proposed elevational plans have been provided. Elevational plans and large scale details of any new windows are required in order comment on the principle of such windows. Similarly, details of the proposed bay window and the conservatory to the main school building are required in order to comment on these aspects of the proposal.

All existing windows should remain as they are. All existing internal features, such as doors, doorframes, fireplaces, ceiling details and staircases should be kept. Where doorways need to be moved the historic door and doorframe should be reused. Where the historic doorway no longer survives, the new doorway should be modelled on surviving examples. Where it is proposed to insert new internal openings, precise details of these and their location are required. Where rooms are being subdivided, this should be done in a manner that allows for their removal without having an impact upon the historic building (i.e. partitions should be scribed around existing features).

The level of additional plumbing to be installed is a concern. Details of the location of all new pipework are required in order to fully assess their impact upon the property, they should not create clutter.

You will be aware from the above comments that the proposal so far is not considered to be acceptable. I would recommend that the comments provided are taken into account and the plans are amended accordingly. Once you have amended the plans I would recommend a further meeting with the relevant officers in order to continue discussions on the scheme.

The above comments are informal officer advice only and are given without prejudice to any decision the City Council may make on any planning application submitted.

Yours faithfully



Karen Davinson
Planning Officer

Copy to: , Banks