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Consultee response

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From: Martyn White <Martyn.White@arun.gov.uk>
Sent: 28 August 2020 15:47
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Subject: EP/80/20/HH & EP/81/20/L

EP/80/20/HH & EP/81/20/L

Vista Point 21 Tamarisk Way East Preston BN16 2TE

Planning and Listed building consent to convert 2 existing garages to habitable accommodation to create a new family living space and enclose the existing outdoor link from the main house to the garage to form an indoor warm/dry link with alterations to the landscaping arrangements.

Vista Point is significant, both as a modernist building by Patrick Gwynne, but also because of its high level of material survival. Gwynne's most notable work, The Homewood, which was designed in the 1930s and given to the National Trust in 1999 is also largely preserved. Whilst 'The Homewood' was strongly informed by the International Style, Vista Point's overtly 'plastic' form is more reflective of the 1960s, although there still appears to be references to earlier influences such as Le Corbusier. Vista Point has been listed as Grade II, and as a consequence is a designated heritage asset.

Patrick Gwynne (1913-2003) produced a series of important and original houses during the post war period, developing themes first explored in "The Homewood", which was built in 1937-9.

Vista Point is a two storey detached holiday house on a coastal site. It is approached from the north and has an "hourglass" plan, broader at its south end with a linked garage for three cars fanning to the west. The garage block which is attached as part of the house contributes to its completeness and sense of modernity. Its unusual form expresses a sort of cellular containment, whilst the brick type is carried through to the house. The curved rear wall of the garages expresses the bays for three cars inside. In front of the house is a terrace with steps down to the garden.

Gwynne's playful style, with its fondness for unusual materials and increasing interest in curves, was well suited to the design of the holiday home, but Historic England state that this is his only example.

This is a very successful small, house with interior fittings of excellent quality. The Listing description considered that it is a good example of Gwynne's favourite centralised plan, given added interest by placing the principal rooms on the piano nobile and separating the ground floor into distinctive areas for owners and guests.

The house contains a number of original fitted furnishings which Gwynne would have included in order to provide a complete design solution. As such it represents an important element of the significance of the building. It is one of Gwynne's least altered surviving works and important as an example of his later more anthropomorphic style.

Given the simple, but strong appearance of the elevations, any new insertion/alteration proposed needs to be carefully considered so that it does not compromise this aspect of the building and its character.

Whilst statutory protected buildings of a more traditional modular form tend to offer opportunity for extension, buildings of a more sculptural and artistic quality such as Vista Point, are much harder to alter. This is partly to do with their organic qualities, but also because a building designed by a celebrated modernist architect, is likely to be considered 'conceptually complete'. Any alteration could therefore represent some level of harm to the listed building and its significance.

The Proposed Works

The proposed works appear to be as follows:

- Change of use of the former car port areas into usable accommodation
- Alteration to the external appearance of the garage building
- Enclosure of existing outdoor link to create a warm link from main house to the garage
- Alterations to the landscaping arrangements

These shall be discussed below

Change of use of the former car port areas into usable accommodation

This element of the proposal relates to the conversion of what was originally planned to be carports but was subsequently enclosed with garage doors.

The interior of the main house is largely as originally planned and it is positive to note that the owners do not want to compromise the key living spaces by introducing modern appliances such as tv's etc. The concept of utilising the existing garage (former car port) space into usable accommodation seems to be a logical one. By accommodating the proposed family room in two of the existing garages (originally the carport) the main house will remain unaltered.

The key element should be to ensure that the character of the building is not harmed as part of the proposal. Based on the level of information provided, this would appear to be the case.

Alteration to the external appearance of the garage building

It has been identified that the external appearance of the garage building has altered with the introduction of the two sets of garage doors to the car port. The proposal appears to be for new garage doors to be provided. It is assumed that this is based on the original set, or details based on the original drawing which have been provided?

It is interesting to note on the plans proved that the original garage door remains present (note reference 0.5: Existing original door to garage). This is helpful as it indicates what the proposed new double doors could look like for the games room element of the building. It is also not clear why the original garage door is to be replaced? Is it in a poor state of repair, and unable to be salvaged?

The lack of openings to the curved brick screen wall to the south side of the proposed family room and garage is a positive feature as it will ensure that its attractive, and original appearance, will remain unharmed. There will also be no loss of historic fabric.

Justification has been made for the use of the two rooflights (provide light when the doors are closed and no openings on the rear elevation), which if successfully, and carefully designed will, on balance, be acceptable. This is subject to a detailed design being approved by way of condition.

It would appear that the intention is to install new aluminium double glazed screens (item 3.1) behind the new double doors (item 3.5) of the games room. This is acceptable as it is a suitable method of providing light into the space when in use, whilst at the same time hiding the interior away from use when not. Details of the windows and doors should be provided for by way of condition, if you are minded to approve the application.

It is also noted in item 2.3 to 'Allow for ventilation between existing timber joists by installing grills in external walls. Subject to Heritage approval'. Details of this will be required in order to understand the impact that they will have on the building and the historic fabric.

Enclosure of existing outdoor link to create a warm link from main house to the garage

This element of the proposal will result in altering the link space between the garage and the house. At present the space forms part of the garage 'wing' and remains subservient to the main house.

It is considered that as long as this element of the proposal only affected the rear elevation of the space, it will have a neutral impact upon the building. However, this is on the basis that the new glazing should closely reflect that of the existing building. If minded to approve the application, you may wish to request further details of the glazing by way of condition.

Alterations to the landscaping arrangements

Landscaping proposals have been supplied which relate to the entire of the curtilage. It is assumed that the intention is to make the area more suitable for the property owners and potential occupiers when the property is let out over the summer months.

I believe that the proposal to separate off the pool area for safety when small children are staying seems to be a logical one. The idea to hide it within planting is considered to be a suitable one.

There are currently three sets of steps down from the terrace area by the house, two of which would both come down inside the proposed enclosed pool area. The proposal is to remove two of the sets of steps; the middle steps which would lead from terrace to pool area and some small steps at the right-hand end of the terrace. Whilst I would not wish to see the middle steps removed, if they were to be relocated to an alternative location (to the same design and constructed using salvageable/similar materials) I believe that in this instance, this would be acceptable.

It is noted that the small steps at the right end of the terrace are not original. It is considered that based on the information provided, that removing these steps would be acceptable.

However, it would also appear from the landscape plan that a new shed is to be located close to the eastern side of the house. Is this correct? Is it known why the shed is required and what it will be used for?

Conclusion

I believe that the intention to refurbish the garages and remodel their interior is considered acceptable subject to the issues of detail raised above, and the careful use of materials. Likewise, the intention to undertake works to the grounds would appear to generally reflect the character of the building.

Therefore, on balance, the application is considered to not cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset or its setting. As a consequence, it should be determined in accordance with the relevant policies within the Development Plan, along with these comments.

You will also need to take into account the contents of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

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