**From:** Jenny Ballinger
**Sent:** 11 December 2017 15:23
**To:** James Kirkham
**Subject:** The Old Malthouse, Banbury

**17/02168/LB**

**The Old Malthouse, St Johns Road, Banbury**

**Conversion of building from B1 (a) offices to 25 residential flats with ancillary parking, bin storage and amenity area**

The Old Malthouse is a grade II listed building which lies within Banbury Conservation Area. The building has had a number of uses including maltings, hosiery manufactory, engineering works, special libraries book service and latterly offices. The building is currently standing empty. The building has been altered for the varying uses. The Heritage Statement which accompanies the application states ‘*As a result of the several phases of quite radical internal changes to the building, its key elements in heritage terms of the building are the external shell – particularly the façade to St John’s Road – and the broad roof structure with its very unusual and ambitious trusses. The rest of the interior is not considered to be of any great heritage value’.* This assessment is considered to be broadly correct.

The core significance of the building is considered to lie in its roof structure and external envelope of the building. The design is unusual for a malting in that it had just 2 floors, a large number of windows and an elaborate façade. There is minimal surviving visible evidence of the functional operation of the building.

The proposals were the subject of pre-application discussions and the proposal partially reflects those discussions.

**Principle of conversion to residential**

There are no objections, from a conservation perspective, to the conversion of the building to residential. It is clear that a use is required for the building and there is no objection in principle to the division of the space into individual flats.

The subdivision of the internal spaces at ground and first floor is not considered to impact on the significance of the building. It is appreciated that part of the original character relates to the large, open spaces for the maltings, but all evidence of this process has been lost during subsequent changes of use.

The subdivision of the second floor will impact on both the historic fabric and the external envelope of the building.

* There are some required alterations to the floor levels within the building and to the historic roof structure (including the need to cut a small number of trusses and purlins). This will cause harm to the listed building, but the harm needs to be balanced by the public benefit of finding a new use for the building.
* The provision of accommodation at this level necessitates roof lights along the length of the building. The need for light is clear and the harm caused can be balanced against the benefit provided.
* There are particular concerns with the provision of terraces cut into the plane of the roof. This effectively create ‘holes’ in the roof and will interrupt the roof form (which is part of the core significance of the building). The harm caused by this element of the proposed development is not considered justifiable and the public benefit of these proposed terraces does not outweigh the harm. The flats are able to function without this facility and both indoor and outdoor communal amenity space is provided elsewhere on the site.
* It was suggested during the site meeting that a case may be able to be made for a terrace in the communal gallery space on the second floor. A review of the plans for this area, however, indicates that there is more than sufficient light to the area with the provision of 3 double rooflights and there are no substantial benefits to outweigh the substantial harm caused to the listed building.

The subdivision of the third floor, to create two additional flats, will create additional harm to the historic fabric and the external envelope of the building. Concern was raised about these at pre-application stage.

* A (confidential) viability statement has been produced which addressed the issue of the additional 2 units, but only at a high, generic level.
* Information needs to be provided at a detailed level about the costings of providing the additional 2 units (bearing in mind the additional structural loadings, need for additional floor etc).
* Information needs to be provided about the structural implications of providing the additional floor. The Structural Feasibility Report states *‘It is proposed to install a partial third floor at each side of the building. This floor will be timber construction, proposed to be built off steel channels bolted either side of the trusses. In this area it is also necessary to remove a timber lateral restraint strut to the truss members, but the introduction of the floor diaphragm will act as a replacement to this element’ and ‘In order to support the additional loads from the upper floors additional supports will be required at quarter points. It will also be necessary to raise a strut within the truss to achieve head height’*
* It was understood from the site meeting that the additional floor is required for additional structural restraint for the building, but it is not clear whether this is needed regardless of the additional floor or because of it. Further information is required in this respect.

**General design details**

* There are no objections to the removal of the 20th century internal staircases and the provision of new staircases and lift. The changes are generally considered to allow for greater appreciation of the building, with particular emphasis on the roof construction.
* In general terms there are no objections to the way it is intended the internal space will be divided. The proposal to allow the ceiling trusses to sit one side or other of the individual flats, so that they are visible, is welcomed.
* There are no objections to the proposal to conceal new steel, structural members within the internal walls to the flats. Where they need to be exposed, in the atrium area for example, there are no objections to them being expressed honestly. This is in keeping with the industrial character of the building.
* It should be noted that the structural wall referred to in the Design and Access Statement is a 20th  century steel construction presumably added to provide additional structural capacity during previous conversion schemes.
* A number of new window openings are proposed, but these are appropriately designed and positioned and there are no objections in principle. Full details will be required either prior to the determination of the application or as a condition. It is noted that the application states double glazed windows, but these should be slim-lite double glazing. There are some windows on the second floor where it is indicated that these will be ‘adapted to be bottom hung’. There are significant concerns with this proposal as the windows are currently sash windows and alterations such as those proposed will alter the character and appearance of the windows. Further information is required about the nature of the alterations and the need for them.
* New doors are also proposed, both in existing openings and in new locations (in order to aid the subdivision of the building). Careful thought will need to be given to these as the doorways do not sit as comfortably with the design of the original building as the windows.
* There is a precedent for rooflights on the building from the early 20th century. There are no objections to the removal of the existing rooflights and the Design and Access Statement claims that all proposed rooflights are designed to be reversible, with no loss of historic roof timbers. The number of rooflights on the building should be the minimum necessary to allow a future use for the building and adequate light into all living spaces.

**Detailed design issues**

* Fire resistance to roof trusses – the Design and Access Statement indicates that trusses which protrude through walls and floors will need to ‘*be protected with shrouds and fire barriers and intumescent paint / materials’*. Full details of the proposed solution are required in order that the impact on the historic fabric can be assessed.
* Further details will be required of the location of the mechanical ventilation units to the rear of the building and the slate vents.
* Further details are required of the heating system with particular reference to the air intake and flue outlets