

Committee Speech - 20/00118/FUL Ashcroft Guest House Lantys Lonnen Haltwhistle

07/07/2020 Strategic Planning Committee

My name is Susie White and I represent the applicant's, Mr & Mrs James. I would like to thank the committee for allowing me the opportunity to submit this speech in favour of our proposals.

At the outset I would like to advise members of the planning committee that on reflection, the term 'porch', which we initially described the proposals as, does not give a true description of what is proposed. The structure is more correctly described as an open sided canopy structure, and not a porch which could give the impression of an enclosed internal area. This is not the case here and we have requested the case officer changes the description.

The Guest House is a small family run business located within 2 acres of award-winning gardens. It has a 5-star rating, gold award, and breakfast award from 'Visit England', and attracts guests from around the world who wish to visit this lovely area. The guest house has an overall 'excellent' rating, with over 730 reviews on various booking platforms, and it is hoped that this rating will continue for many years to come.

However, in order for the business continue to provide a benefit to visitors to the area, and to assist in the continued provision of services, and responding to client feedback, there is a necessity to upgrade the accommodation facilities.

When we were considering the design concept of the canopy we were well aware of the site location within the Haltwhistle Conservation Area. Therefore, we purposely kept the scale and massing down to the absolute minimum so as not to be disproportionately large, and certainly would not be a dominating feature on the property. We also wanted to retain as much of the original stonework features that surround the door and the dwarf wall adjacent, and ensure that they could still be visible and readable as part of the existing building, hence why the applicant opted for an open sided canopy as opposed to a fully enclosed porch.

We also considered the palette of materials so that they would enhance and compliment the existing building and the street scene. Noting this, we proposed the use of oak for the posts and trusses on the canopy because oak is used throughout the existing building and surrounding area.

A Heritage Statement was submitted in support of the application, demonstrating how we considered the proposals were in accordance with legislation concerning heritage matters, and local and national planning policy.

The applicant's sole reason for submitting the planning application for the proposed canopy is to provide a covered area under which guests can have refuge from inclement weather when either entering or leaving the premises. It should be born in mind that the entrance door is located on the prevailing corner of the building, therefore receives the worst of the elements in inclement weather.

It was therefore very disappointing to learn that your Building Conservation Officer, and in turn, because the Building Conservation Officer couldn't support the canopy, your Planning officer, could not support the proposals because they felt that the proposed canopy would be harmful to the significance of the property and the conservation area, and that they considered there would be no clear public benefits that would outweigh the identified harm. They further commented that they considered the canopy would provide limited protection from rain to guest house visitors would not be providing a real benefit to the public at large that would outweigh the identified harm. They did however advise that the canopy would not harm the significance of the nearby listed buildings.

Contrary to your Building Conservation Officers comments, we truly believe that the proposed canopy will assist in securing the buildings optimum viable use, by providing much needed protection from the elements for our guests, while still retaining this non-designated heritage asset's features and assisting in providing a service to tourism in the area. Further, we also consider that the proposals do provide a real benefit to the public at large. It is the public at large who we rely on for business, who stay with us, and who spend their money in the local area therefore assisting in the local economy. If they feel they have been provided with the best facilities, including in this case a facility to protect them from the elements, then they will continue to return and urge others to visit.

The Committee is therefore invited to fully support these proposals against your officer's recommendation and grant planning permission.

Thank you.

Susie White
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Crawford Higgins Associates