

## **CAAG COMMENT ON THE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CENTRE SITE PALACE STREET. November 2021**

The planning application 21/02292/FUL falls into two discrete parts. The restoration of the 1754 Mansion House which is Grade 11\* listed to create office and training spaces and nine flats. The other section is to construct a workshop/garage and two new houses to the rear. The boundary wall to the front was listed Grade 11 later (1971) because of the spiral volute which exists where the wall joins the pier.

The site of this proposed development lies within an area enclosed by the earlier Edwardian and later Elizabethan Walls, themselves scheduled and listed. Any development must be sensitive so that the sight lines from the ramparts which as the Character Appraisals of the Berwick Conservation Area says are extremely detailed and varied into the town and beyond, will not be lost as these are appreciated by residents and visitors. This area has seen continuous occupation since at least medieval times and now lies within Berwick Conservation area. This proposed development has the potential to affect the setting of the Town Walls and Conservation area as a designated heritage asset. Such a site would suggest that the potential for significant archaeological remains is high and must be investigated

CAAG encourages the refurbishment and re-use of old and derelict buildings. The proposal to provide affordable housing for young people and employment in Berwick Town Centre is laudable but does the proposal make acceptable use of this historic building and adjoining land?

The mixture of Georgian and Victorian sash windows as part of the frontage and to the rear of the Mansion House should be retained or replicated with single glazed panes as they are a principle feature. The grand front door should also be retained.

The mass use of lime render on the house frontage raises concerns as this would conceal historic masonry. If it is the cheaper option, as stated, this is not an acceptable reason.

Concern is expressed at the replacing of the gated front garden and adjoining grassed area with limited landscaping and car parking. This garden would have been a significant feature and should be reinstated. Landscaping schemes using native plant species would be likely to support wildlife.

Internally while features have been lost to heritage crime because of poor guardianship those that remain such as decorative cornicing, timber detailing, shutters and fireplaces should be retained.

The ground floor partition walls should be retained in their original position and not realigned in order to maintain the historic format. The Victorian School Hall with its unusual scissor truss ceiling and triple arched windows are architecturally sympathetic and should not be compromised.

The removal and token relocation of the stone arch has not been justified.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century wall at the rear of the property must be preserved as it is listed

The second phase of the proposed development does not take note of the fact that the existing open site to the rear is an integral part of the Mansion House and its Victorian addition.

The proposed garage/workshop building is too high and wide and it is agreed that light industrial use is not appropriate so close to residential properties.

The proposed siting of the new build houses in such close proximity to the Walls is not replicated elsewhere in the area and the mixed design does little to add to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Again excessive concrete and hard standing to allow car parking is not appropriate in this setting.

Concern was raised about a legal covenant that exists on the site relating to educational usage and this may restricts new development. The developer will be unable to neither lease nor offer freehold to buyers of the two homes if, as we understand, the covenant is limited to educational use.'

CAAG objects to the restoration of the Mansion House site in its present format and further objects to the application as it relates to the garage and houses to the rear of the property.

Margaret Shaw.

Honorary Secretary to Berwick Conservation Area Advisory Group (CAAG)