

# **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**GREENHAUGH HALL  
GREENHAUGH  
HEXHAM  
NE48 1PP**



**Change of use from residential dwelling  
to  
Place of Worship and Buddhist Retreat Centre**

**For Land of Joy  
June 2014**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Greenhaugh Hall is an impressive Victorian villa standing in its own generous grounds, lying south of the settlement of Greenhaugh, Northumberland. Its current use is a single dwelling.

The house is a large dwelling with three reception rooms, ten bedrooms, three with ensembles and a family bathroom, along with minor rooms. A former housekeeper's cottage has been incorporated into the main dwelling. A detached range to the south west of the main house is described as the Coach House. Other buildings are on the site including original dog kennels, garages, stabling, etc.

The grounds include a large walled garden and well tended gardens.

The main access is off the main highway. The gated entrance is set back with curved flanking walls. It has a long drive leading to a large forecourt area to the front of the main entrance.

The interiors are particularly fine. The building fabric and interiors have been well maintained.

Land includes a woodland and grazing land.



## **PROPOSED WORKS**

The applicant is in the process of purchasing the building and site. The building and site will become a Buddhism Place of Worship and a Buddhist Retreat Centre.

The internal room layout will remain largely as existing (see plans submitted with the application). The reception rooms will be used as meditation spaces and meeting rooms. The existing bedrooms will provide overnight accommodation for retreatants. The existing kitchen will suffice for catering and one of the reception rooms will be used as the dining room.

Because of the change in use, the means of escape needs to be improved for the rooms on the second floor (attic level). A simple adaption of the existing stair will suffice to provide adequate means of escape and this is shown on the proposed plans.

The site will require two full time employees in residence. For retreats, additional part time staff will be needed. Bedrooms 6 to 10 inclusive will be used for staff bedroom accommodation.

The pleasant existing gardens will continue to be maintained to their current high standards. This will be conducive with contemplation and spirituality, compatible with the new use as a Buddhist retreat.

There will be continuity of land management for the woodland and grazing land.

## **MASSING & ORIENTATION**

The massing and orientation are not affected by the change of use.

## **ACCESS**

The existing access will be maintained for the new use. The existing forecourt area immediately in front of the main house will be used for general car parking. The plans show that 10 spaces can be easily accommodated. However, there is more than adequate space for overspill parking on the verges of the long drive. Retreats will be pre-booked which will control visitor numbers.



## **USE**

The building and site will have a new use as a place of worship and retreat centre. Retreats will be pre-booked thereby controlling visitor numbers. The bedrooms for retreatants will be fitted with bunk beds. This will allow the centre to accommodate for groups of up to 15 people.

The group will be involved in meditation discussions, etc. Although the main building will be the principle centre, the pleasant gardens will also be used for meditation.

## **AMOUNT**

The building will remain unaltered externally. The existing main building will be used immediately, following the minor modifications necessary for improving the means of escape. Subject to the success of the new use, the existing detached stabling block could be used in the future to provide additional bedroom space.

## **LAYOUT**

The layout of the buildings and site will remain largely unaltered.

## **SCALE**

There will be no change to the scale of the buildings and site as a consequence of the change of use.

## **LANDSCAPE**

The grounds are currently well maintained. It is intended that this will continue. The gardens, woodland and grazing land will be managed as existing.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF NNPA CORE STRATEGY PLANNING POLICIES**

### **Policy 1**

The new use as a Place of Worship for Buddhism and a Buddhist Retreat Centre is entirely compatible with the aspirations of the NNPA Core Strategy with regard to tranquillity, cultural heritage, geo and bio diversity. The philosophy and spirituality of Buddhism is in full accord with these issues.

### **Policy 7**

It is patently obvious that the building can be simply converted without the need for any significant alterations. The existing scale, layout and ambience of the existing rooms will perform admirably for the new purpose.

The new use, as a place of spirituality and tranquillity will be compatible with and will contribute to the NNP's special qualities.

The building will not require significant alterations and/or extensions. Whilst not included within this application there are other buildings, eg. the detached out-houses, the coach house, which could be converted in the future to provide further bedroom space, if needed.

### **Policy 5**

The application will comply with this policy as there will be no major new build required.

### **Policy 3**

The existing access to the highway provides good sight line visibility to the carriageway. The building and the proposed location for car parking is all set well back from the main road. These are not visible from any accessible point to the public. Car parking can easily be accommodated in the existing forecourt and the verges to the drive.

A right of way exists to the north west of the main building. This will not be affected by the new use and the applicant would welcome walkers. There may be opportunities to open the site to walkers to enjoy the centre and the gardens.

The gardens and environs will continue to be maintained. This will have a positive impact on the visual and local amenity.

### **Policy 25**

The applicant has commissioned a feasibility study to explore the implications of renewable energy in the project. A copy of the feasibility study is included in the application. This concluded that a biomass boiler with fuel store could be installed within the timber stables to the north east of the main building.



### **Area of Special Scientific Interest**

A SSI is located within 100 metres of the site. However, there will be no adverse affect on any protected species within the SSI.