

DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Greystead former church Institute



Creation of holiday accommodation.

January 2017

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BACKGROUND TO GREYSTEAD CHURCH INSTITUTE:

This redundant, late Victorian, stone building in Tarsset, dating to 1895, was formerly a Church of England hall used for church functions, but has stood empty, derelict and neglected since its sale by the Church of England in 1975.

It is now in a thoroughly deteriorated condition, with windows and doors no longer weatherproof, some plasterwork disintegrating through damp, and the building itself had been filled with debris from its usage over a period of some 40 years for storage.

THE PROPOSAL

The building was offered for sale in early 2016 following the death of the former owner, and is now the property of the three sons of the owners of the adjacent Old Rectory, Cottage (Coach House) and Old Church on the same Greystead site. . They are now applying to convert the Institute to holiday cottage use, in partnership with their parents as owners of the adjoining property. Mr. and Mrs. Monroe have a proven track record in delivering high quality holiday cottage accommodation (VisitBritain 5* and 4* Gold Award properties) at Greystead Old Church and Greystead Coach House (www.greysteadholidaycottages.com), and will be managing the restoration and conversion of Greystead Institute into a holiday let on behalf of, and in partnership with, their three sons. The Institute will then be managed by them on their sons' behalf as part of Greystead Holiday Cottages. In view of their experience in the holiday lets business, the Monroe family feels well qualified to take this project forward and deliver a third, high quality holiday cottage on the same Greystead site, this time sleeping 2-4 visitors. The proposal falls within the category of employment/tourism, and therefore accords with NNPA's core strategy, policies 7, 14 and 15, as well as relevant NPPF policies.



Plate 1. View of the north and eastern elevations. Note the existing boundary fencing, the large verge, the gateposts to be repositioned, and the timber shed.

APPEARANCE

The proposal's aim is to respect the existing building by every means possible, retaining its original form, and on the original footprint, only proposing changes required to bring the

building into modern use. The conversion proposal therefore seeks to meet NNPA Core Policies 1 and 3, delivering sustainable development and high quality design and construction. It also seeks to be mindful of neighbouring amenity and the surrounding landscape.

The proposed side extension, which will form a Garden Room, seeks to reflect the existing building, with a slate roof, stone walls, and timber windows and doors to match the existing building. The extension is located on the western elevation in the location of a previous lean-to extension, and is set back from the north 'frontage' gable wall, so its visual impact from the main road will be limited.

USE

By converting this redundant building there will be the creation of one two-bedroomed self-catering holiday cottage to sleep 2-4 visitors.

AMOUNT AND SCALE

The proposed works fall within the footprint of the existing building and have been designed to be sympathetic to the character and layout of the building's former use. The current building has a floor area of 108m sq., while the new extension will sit on the footprint of the former extension, and will have a floor area of 27m sq.

The building will have a new use, and its physical appearance will be improved through the sensitive approach to development such as retaining the fenestration pattern when renewing the rotten windows, incorporating the large internal space into the new layout, and retaining the building's internal features, ensuring that the building's history is not lost in construction.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

The principal interior space at the Institute is a fine late 19th century open-plan area, and would be retained as far as possible in its original form in order to preserve its very distinctive layout associated with its former use as a church hall. This includes preservation of the Institute's intrinsic characteristics such as the full height space over most of the interior, and the mezzanine gallery. The existing gallery above (at mezzanine level) would be extended to form a landing, with, behind, the master bedroom and en suite bathroom, accessed via a spiral staircase from ground level. This will offer, from the landing, views as before into the main space from above. The original gallery rail will be echoed by the new rail left and right of the staircase. Small-scale, heritage-style Velux roof-lights will allow light into this and other parts of the interior, but have been kept to a minimum in order to avoid overcluttering the roofslope.



Plate 2. Internal view towards the mezzanine gallery. Note the open character of the space, and build-up of debris.



Plate 3. Internal view towards the southern gable. Note the high-level gable window, which is to be extended downward to facilitate external views from the new living space.

On the ground floor, the main living space would remain open as originally, with an open-plan kitchen occupying the space to the north, below the extended mezzanine, while the rest of this large space would also remain open-plan as at present, forming the sitting room and dining areas, and thus allowing the space of this Victorian building to remain as much as possible in its original form. In the kitchen, the original chimneypiece would be retained, while a wood-burning stove (using an existing chimney flue) would heat much of the internal space. The two windows facing east would be conserved and repaired if they are not too far deteriorated to make this possible, or, if not, replaced in timber exactly 'as is' in their original form. The main gable end window, facing south onto field and fells, would also be repaired or replaced in its original form, but extended downwards vertically by three lights, to allow fell views and essential light into the interior. The three-pane extension at the bottom of the window has been designed to echo the three panes at the top of the window, thus providing a logical form to its extended shape.

The gable end space behind the main ground floor living space to the north, currently housing entrance, staircase and former kitchen, would be converted to form a single or 'occasional double' bedroom or study/office, with an en-suite bathroom beyond, thus again retaining the original partitions.



Plate 4. View towards the southern and eastern elevations. Note remnants of the original flue, the high level gable window, and the walled garden and tennis court to the west.

To the rear of the building is a large footprint which formerly housed a lean-to kitchen. This would now become a Garden Room (considered to be more appropriate in a National Park setting than a Conservatory), with solid, stone-built walls, with low dwarf wall below the glazing. There will be an entrance area to the north and a 'garden room' to the southern end of the extension. The structure will be set back from the front and rear elevations of the building as per the existing footprint, to ensure its subsidiarity, and aid in the full exposure of the stone quoins to the corners of the building. The wooden door and window frames have been designed to preserve the building's traditional feel, and the existing door openings along the western side elevation will be retained, although these will now have glazed panels to allow light to flow between the main and subsidiary spaces. The areas of glazing on the west and south exteriors of the extension will allow this inward-facing Institute (suitable to its former use, but not to contemporary living spaces) to look outwards onto the surrounding fine, unspoiled farmland. The walled garden, which contains a tennis court, is used by the guests of the Coach House, which is run by Mr. & Mrs. Monroe. The guests of the new holiday let in the Greystead Institute will also have use of the tennis courts. Therefore, these new windows will have no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses to the site.

The Garden Room roof will be in slate traditional to the area, and will echo the existing main roof, but at a lower level, allowing enough essential height to be retained, but respecting the main façade by its subsidiarity. A sloping lean-to roof was not feasible given the height restrictions involved. The previous tin roof was clearly at a very shallow pitch, which is not suitable for slate. In addition the requirement to include insulation in the roof construction would restrict any available headroom making a lean-to roof impractical. Similarly, a flat, glazed, roof and windows in the Conservatory style was not considered appropriate in this part of the National Park.

The existing Institute roof will be retained, and the abutment of the new extension will be below eaves level to avoid any disruption to the existing roof. A limited number of new rooflights are proposed, however the original ventilation slits to the north and south gable walls, the existing chimney and the loft spaces will all be unaltered and fully retained. In addition, no significant masonry repairs to the original fabric are proposed. Given the very limited works to the original fabric, it is considered the works will not impact upon bats. As advised by the NNPA, a bat survey has not been deemed necessary.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The former Institute currently has no utilities, and a key aspect of the conversion is to introduce water, sewerage, electricity, heating and a landline telephone to the building. Mains water is not available in this area of Tasset, so the applicants' parents, who, as indicated above, own the other three buildings on the Greystead site, have agreed to supply water from their own (filtered, EU approved) private water system (supplied by a borehole) by running a pipe from their filtration system in the Old Rectory/Cottage yard. Similarly, electricity would be supplied from the nearest point of supply, a pole in the Old Rectory front garden, with underground cable. The telephone landline can be more easily connected from an existing pole by the former Institute entrance.

A small water holding tank will be required for the water installation: this will be located in the existing old outdoor privy, which will be restored and made fit for purpose, but retained exactly in its original form. The property will be heated by an oil boiler, as the existing biomass boiler erected by the applicants' parents at the Old Rectory, which serves the other properties on site, is too far away from the Institute to make this viable.

As regards sewerage, it is not possible to connect to a public sewer, as this facility is not available in this area of Tasset. Sewerage would therefore be provided and connected by upgrading the current septic tank belonging to the applicants' parents (serving Greystead Rectory, Greystead Cottage and Greystead Old Church) into a package treatment plant, which would then provide sewerage safely and effectively for all four properties on the Greystead site.

None of the above infrastructure would impact detrimentally on the amenity of the surrounding area or neighbouring properties as all key services would be located underground.

ENERGY

The renewable energy requirement will be met by the installation of a wood-burner. The stove is located within the main open-plan living space so will provide space heating to a large volume of the overall building. As a holiday let, a woodburning stove is a popular facility, which will be used regularly and is therefore anticipated to contribute to more than 10% of the heating load on the house.

The new extension will be constructed to meet the thermal requirements of the building regulations. Where possible measures will be taken within the original hall to improve its thermal performance, but with consideration for the original historic character. Measures will include insulation to loft spaces, the installation of insulated plasterboard below the existing sloping plaster ceilings, insulation of the floor, and installation of insulated plasterboard where new walling is proposed.

ACCESS

As regards access from the Highway and parking, the entrance gate will be widened from the former somewhat narrow entrance, and the gate will be removed to allow safer access from the Highway. The original gate piers will be re-used (reunited with their original caps, which were found inside the Institute under a pile of debris), but will be repositioned, so as to locate the entrance safely away from the corner on the highway located just below the Cottage and Old Rectory entrances, and provide easier manoeuvring for turning. There is over 90m visibility at 2.4m back from the edge of the highway in both directions from the repositioned access drive. There is adequate space for two parking spaces together with turning spaces as required by the Highways for a holiday let sleeping up to four people. The new access from the highway will be formed to meet the Highways Department's specification of a Type B, finished with tarmac. The parking areas are to be gravelled. A small cycle rack is proposed adjacent to the existing shed building to support sustainable modes of transport, together with a stone paved area for refuse storage.

The refuse generated by the proposed use will be small scale and domestic in nature. However, it is proposed that the owners will use Northumberland County Council's Commercial Waste scheme, as operates already for the two existing holiday cottages at Greystead, which involves a fortnightly collection. A small paved area is proposed for bin storage.

LANDSCAPING

Externally the perimeter of the building will be cleared of overgrowth, and seeded for grass, with small areas of planting. A small patio area to the south of the new extension will be formed with stone paving.

A section of the dry stone wall will be removed along the boundary between the Institute and the Rectory walled garden to enable the extension to be constructed, enabling a link (via wicket gates) with the walled garden and tennis court, as the court will be available as a facility to guests to Greystead Institute. Currently the tennis court is available to the guests from the other two holiday cottage properties on the site.

The existing perimeter stock proof fence is very dilapidated and unsuited to form the perimeter of residential accommodation. It will be replaced with a traditional timber post and rail fence appropriate to the area. Similarly, a new timber post and rail fence with gate is proposed to separate the garden from the parking and drive area.

In terms of external lighting, which will be required for safety reasons at a holiday let, this will be kept to an absolute minimum given Dark Skies. We propose the installation of a downlighter located adjacent to the existing door, which will be connected to a PIR. A further downlighter will be installed on the new extension adjacent the front door, again activated by a PIR.