



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR EASTERN REGION

Heron House 49-53 Goldington Road Bedford MK40 3LL  
Telephone 01234 79 6235 or 01234 79 Fax 01234 796341 (Planning) 796327 (Transport)

Mr C J Higenbottam  
Derek Rogers Associates  
Chartered Architects  
Church Square  
48 High Street  
TRING  
Hertfordshire  
HP23 5AG

PLANNING DEPARTMENT DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL						
Ref:					Ack.	
D.P.		D.P.	D.C.	B.C.	Admin.	File
Received - 5 NOV 1997						
Comments						

4 November 1997

Your ref: 2194/CJH/bt

Our ref: APP/A1910/E/97/813311

Dear Sir

**PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990 -  
SECTION 20**

**APPEAL BY ASHRIDGE (BONAR LAW MEMORIAL) TRUST  
ASHRIDGE HOUSE BERKHAMSTED HERTFORDSHIRE  
APPLICATION NO: 4/0947/96**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to refer to your clients' appeal against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council to refuse listed building consent for the removal of a section of wall between the dishwasher area and a corridor at Ashridge House, near Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire.

2. An officer of the Department has visited the building and has considered the written representations made in support of the appeal, together with those of the Council. A copy of his report is appended to this letter. The officer recommended, in view of the considerations expressed in paragraphs 11 - 16 of his report, that the appeal be allowed.

3. The Secretary of State has given careful consideration to the officer's appraisal and to all the arguments for and against the appeal proposals.

4. The appeal building is statutorily listed Grade I. In determining your clients' appeal, the Secretary of State has had special regard to section 16(2) of the 1990 Act relating to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

5. Government policy on the protection etc of listed buildings is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15). The Secretary of State has had particular regard to paragraphs 3.12 - 3.15 and C58 of the PPG relating to alterations to listed buildings and the need to consider their interior plans. Policy 56 of the Hertfordshire County

Structure Plan Review, incorporating approved Alterations 1991 and policy 109 of the adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan are also material to his decision. Under policy 56, the County Council will support District Councils in the protection of listed buildings and their settings. Policy 109 seeks, inter alia, to ensure alterations to listed buildings are carried out in a manner appropriate to their internal appearance and to resist interior works which would adversely affect their special character and interest.

6. The Council argued that the wall proposed for removal formed part of a corridor which was a key element in one of the three main axes of symmetry that ran through the plan of Ashridge House. The further removal of corridor wall would weaken the distinction between the kitchen space and the corridor. Consequently, the "plan form" of the building would be compromised. The Secretary of State considers that the main issue in your clients' appeal therefore is whether the proposed removal of the section of wall would be detrimental to the building's special architectural and historic interest, having regard in particular to its plan.

7. The officer was of the opinion, for the reasons given in paragraph 12 of his report, that the axis in question was barely noticeable within the appeal building. He also found that the corridor was very much a service corridor and an integral part of the kitchen complex. In the context of the recent kitchen refurbishment, the enlargement of the existing opening would be unremarkable. The Secretary of State sees no reason to disagree with the officer. He also accepts that the appeal proposal would be functionally sound. Although it would affect the appearance of the corridor, he shares the officer's view that it would still be seen as a corridor. The officer considered that no fabric of any visual importance would be removed, that the proposed alteration would not affect the legibility of the plan or its essential symmetry and that it could be easily reversed in the future. The Secretary of State accepts these findings and considers that they should carry some weight in the determination of the appeal.

8. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the appeal proposal is very modest in extent and impact and that it would not harm the special architectural and historic interest of Ashridge House as a whole. He also agrees that any harm, or incremental erosion to the building's character, that might be caused would be outweighed by the contribution the proposal would make to the continuing effective use of the building. Like the officer, he considers that the appeal proposal does not run contrary to the guidance in PPG15 or the Structure and Local Plan policies.

9. The Secretary of State intends to allow your clients' appeal and has considered what conditions should be attached to a grant of listed building consent. He will impose the standard time limitation condition and one which requires the making good of the exposed floor, wall and soffit areas, as mentioned by the officer.

10. For the reasons given above, the Secretary of State agrees with the officer's appraisal and accepts his recommendation. Accordingly, he hereby allows your clients' appeal and grants listed building consent for the removal of a section of wall between the dishwash area and a corridor at Ashridge House, near Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, in accordance with application no 4/0947/96 subject to the following conditions:

- i) The works hereby granted consent shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this consent.
- ii) The floor, wall and soffit areas which will be exposed as a result of the works hereby

granted consent shall be made good and finished to match the existing decoration in accordance with details which shall have been previously submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the local planning authority.

11. Your clients' attention is drawn to the fact that an application for any consent, agreement or approval required by a condition of this consent has a statutory right of appeal to the Secretary of State if consent, agreement or approval is refused, or is granted conditionally or if the authority fail to give notice of their decision within the prescribed period. This letter does not convey any approval or consent which may be required under any enactment, bylaw, order or regulation other than section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

12. A separate note is enclosed setting out the circumstances in which the validity of the Secretary of State's decision may be challenged by the making of an application to the High Court.

13. A copy of this letter has been sent to Dacorum Borough Council.

Yours faithfully

Andrew N Hayes

ANDREW N HAYES  
Authorised by the Secretary of State  
to sign in that behalf

File Reference:  
APP/A1910/E/97/813311

Tollgate House  
Houlton Street  
Bristol  
BS2 9DJ

To the Right Honourable John Prescott MP  
Deputy Prime Minister

Sir

1. I have been asked to advise on the appeal by the Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust, made under Section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, against the refusal of the Dacorum Borough Council to grant listed building consent for the removal of a section of wall between the dishwasher area and a corridor at Ashridge House, near Berkhamsted. I made an accompanied inspection of the building, on your behalf, on 18 September 1997.
2. The building subject of this appeal was added to a list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest on 14 May 1952. It is listed in grade I. The list description is lengthy and detailed; it is at Appendix 8 in the document accompanying the appeal and again with the Council's questionnaire.
3. This report contains a description of the appeal building, my appraisal (on the basis of my observations and the written representations of the parties) of the likely impact of the proposed works and my recommendation as to the decision which might be made in the case. A list of persons present at the site visit is appended.
4. My appraisal and recommendation bear in mind the duty imposed by Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in relation to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

#### APPEAL BUILDING

5. Ashridge House is a very substantial building standing in extensive and attractive landscaped grounds. The main body of the present house was built between 1808 and 1813 for the 7th Earl of Bridgewater. It was designed by James Wyatt but, after his death, completed and embellished by his nephew Jeffry Wyattville. It stands on the site of a 13th century monastic college which subsequently became a royal home. All that remains of the earlier building is the undercroft, incorporated as part of the basement, and a pair of carved oak doors at one end of the serving corridor on the ground floor.

5. The house has 3 main elements. The main entrance leads into a towering hall off which are the public rooms. To its east are private apartments and the orangery. To its west are the domestic offices, round a series of courtyards, and the chapel. The whole house is faced with Totternhoe clunch stone, which is nearly white in colour. It is one of the finest examples I have seen of an early Gothic revival mansion. I can do no better than quote the appellant's agent in the Grounds of Appeal. 'Its exterior, principal rooms and chapel are all stunning examples of the Gothic revival style.'

6. The house has been used as a college since 1921. Ashridge Management College was established in 1959. It is evident that considerable sums of money have been spent not only on repair and restoration but also in adapting sensitively to the demands of the present business. Reorganisation and refurbishment of the kitchen area has only just been completed. The proposal subject of this appeal was deleted from that scheme because of opposition from English Heritage and the Council's officers.

7. The application plans are at Appendix 1 of the document accompanying the appeal. Wyatt's plan of 1807 and Wyattville's plan of 1823 (as built) are at Appendices 4 and 5 respectively. The plan at Appendix 6 was not part of the application but is more easily compared with the historic plans. Neither was the drawing at Appendix 7 but it shows accurately the corridor elevation where it is proposed to remove part of the wall.

8. The corridor in question has a quarry-tiled floor, plain walls and a simple moulded ceiling cornice. There is an existing opening nearly 2 metres wide and 2 metres high on its west side, into the dishwasher area. A free-standing stainless steel fitting provides a counter and shelves for the passage or stacking of crockery for washing. There is a large dishwasher and various other stainless steel fittings, some mobile, within the dishwasher area. The glass washers stand in another room, otherwise a glass and crockery store, at the other end of the same corridor. A considerable amount of electrical switchgear is mounted on the wall opposite the dishwasher area and store.

9. At the southern end of the corridor, a simple opening, with no door or frame, leads into the serving corridor, which runs at right angles to it. This corridor has shallow pointed-arch openings and, at its western end, the oak doors from the earlier building. Beyond the serving corridor is the conservatory, now the main dining room. The layout is symmetrical but there is no connecting doorway on the axis. There is a niche where an axial doorway might have been. The doors between the serving corridor and the dining room are early 20th century alterations with an Art Deco influence. The doorway at the northern end of the corridor has perhaps the original door, in a simple moulded surround. Beyond that, on the opposite side of the main corridor, another door opens into Scroops Room which, still axially, has a now disused doorway to the outside, originally a staff entrance. Scroops Room appears to be the amalgamation of 4 original rooms. A modern breakfast bar stands in the room that is axial with the corridor.

10. The proposal is to enlarge the existing opening from 2.0 metres to about 3.3 metres wide, up to the position of an existing pier (part of an original wall) within the dishwasher area. The 2 glass washers would then be placed within the opening, probably facing into the dishwasher area. The saving in space compared with standing them against the internal face of the wall would be about 400mm.

## APPRAISAL

11. The Council points out that the corridor lies along one of the 3 main axes of the building (illustrated on the plan accompanying the Council's statement). That is true, but it is much more evident on plan than when in the building.

12. On the south side of the building, the conservatory, now the dining room, appears originally to have been open-sided. There is no evidence of any original connection to the corridor behind. The serving doors are clearly later insertions. The axial layout is more apparent on the north side, where a succession of doors leads to the outside, or would do if the external doors were not now permanently closed by a wall finish and radiator below window cill level. The layout has also been disrupted by the asymmetrical formation of Scroops Room from 4 smaller rooms. The axis has not been lost, and could be restored, but it is barely noticeable within the building.

13. This is also very much a service corridor, with purely functional finishes. It is not used by those attending the college as delegates or visitors. It is an integral part of the kitchen complex. In the context of the kitchen refurbishment, the enlargement of the existing opening would be unremarkable. Despite these recent improvements, the glass washers are left in an impractical position. Logically, they should be in the dishwasher area but the dishwasher and associated storage leave insufficient room for other equipment. The gain from removing of an area of wall some 400mm thick might seem modest but I consider the appeal proposal to be functionally sound.

14. The enlarged opening would affect the appearance of the corridor but it would still be seen as a corridor. It would become easier to see into the dishwasher area, and the kitchen beyond, but it is not a view seen by the public. The kitchen would not extend into the corridor. No fabric of any visual importance would be removed. Moreover, the alteration would not affect the legibility of the plan, or its essential symmetry. It could also be easily reversed in the future, were needs or the occupier to change.

15. In summary, I find the proposed alteration to be very modest in extent and impact. Although it would have a minor effect on the appearance of the corridor, I do not consider it would harm the special architectural and historic interest of Ashridge House as a whole. Even if there were thought to be harm, or an incremental erosion of the building's character, the (also incremental) contribution of the proposal to the continuing effective use of the building should weigh against it in the balance. All told, I do not consider that the proposal runs contrary to the guidance in PPG15, or the Structure and Local Plan policies referred to by the parties.

16. No conditions have been suggested in the event that the appeal is allowed. The only matter that might be addressed is the making good of the exposed floor, wall and soffit areas in finishes to match the existing. I imagine that this would be done as a matter of course, especially to comply with health and safety or hygiene regulations.

## RECOMMENDATION

16. I recommend that the appeal be allowed.

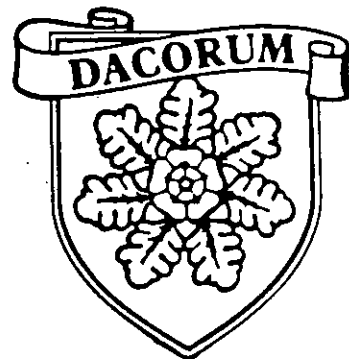
I have the honour to be  
Sir  
Your obedient Servant

JOHN L GRAY DipArch MSc Registered Architect  
PINS

## PERSONS PRESENT AT THE SITE VISIT

For the Appellant: Mr P Sayer, Ashridge Management College  
Mr C J Higenbottam, Derek Rogers Associates

For the Council: Mr C K Fulbrook, Head of Conservation, Dacorum Borough  
Council Planning Department



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Ref No. 4/0947/96

Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust  
Ashridge Management College  
Berkhamsted  
Herts HP4 1NS

Derek Rogers Associates  
48 High Street  
Tring  
Herts HP23 5AG

DEVELOPMENT ADDRESS AND DESCRIPTION  
=====

Ashridge Management College, Ashridge, Berkhamsted

REMOVAL OF SECTION OF WALL BETWEEN DISHWASHING AREA AND CORRIDOR

Your application for *listed building consent* dated 19.07.1996 and received on 22.07.1996 has been **REFUSED**, for the reasons set out on the attached sheet(s).

Director of Planning

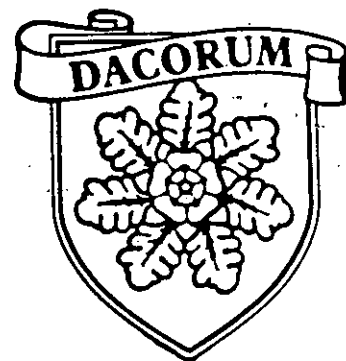
Date of Decision: 26.09.1996

(ENC Reasons and Notes)



REASONS FOR REFUSAL  
OF APPLICATION: 4/0947/96

Date of Decision: 26.09.1996



The proposed removal of a section of wall between the dishwashing area and corridor will be detrimental to the architectural character and historic form of this Grade I listed building because it fails to respect a principal symmetrical axis and causes an extension of the kitchen beyond the logical limit on the plan form. Views into the dishwasher area will be visible from the main adjacent corridor which leads to the chapel.