

<b>Agenda Item</b> A15	<b>Committee Date</b> 11 May 2009	<b>Application Number</b> 09/00126/LB
<b>Application Site</b> Packet Boat House Aldcliffe Road Lancaster Lancashire	<b>Proposal</b> Listed Building Consent for the conversion of the Packet Boat House to 2 no dwellings	
<b>Name of Applicant</b> H2O Urban LLP And British Waterways	<b>Name of Agent</b>	
<b>Decision Target Date</b> 9 April 2009	<b>Reason For Delay</b> None	
<b>Case Officer</b>	Mrs Jennifer Rehman	
<b>Departure</b>	No	
<b>Summary of Recommendation</b>	Approve with conditions	

## **1.0 The Site and its Surroundings**

- 1.1 The Packet Boat House is a building within the former British Waterways Depot, which is located on the south side of Lancaster Canal within the Aldcliffe Conservation Area. A more detailed description of the surroundings is provided in the report to application 09/00123/FUL, which is included on this committee agenda.
- 1.2 The structure is a Grade II listed building constructed circa 1833, at the south-western end of the site. It immediately abuts the Canal. The building is two-storey and is constructed from sandstone and slate, with irregular window and door openings.

## **2.0 The Proposal**

- 2.1 As part of the wider proposals discussed in application 09/00123/FUL, this Listed Building Consent application seeks permission for the conversion of the Packet Boat House to two dwellings; one on each floor.
- 2.2 The planning merits of the proposal are discussed in the main report. Most of the interior is a shell, and much of the historic features were lost during repair works undertaken in the latter-20<sup>th</sup> Century (which were necessary to secure the building's future). In terms of this Listed Building Consent, the proposal seeks to remove the existing, modern (temporary) internal staircase and make minor internal alterations to the flooring, including lifting of the stone flags to allow for modern insulation.
- 2.3 However the main changes will be external. Amended plans have been secured which allow for the retention of all existing windows on the main (eastern) elevation. The only notable changes on this elevation involve the provision of a new door opening to provide access to the ground floor unit, and the replacement of the old existing timber doors with new timber doors. All existing windows on the western elevation will be retained too, whilst the southern elevation will be relatively unaltered as well, with timber doors being replaced.

2.4 The elevation which is the subject to most change is the northern elevation (the end that fronts the Canal). At present this elevation is partly clad in timber and partly finished in stone. The stonework would be retained but the timber cladding is removed to provide two balconies, built into the main body of the existing structure. The internal splayed wall to the balcony would be stone, whilst the remainder of this elevation would be recessed glazing. Glass balustrading supported by timber handrails completes the balcony areas.

### **3.0 Site History**

3.1 The relevant site history is discussed in the report to application 09/00123/FUL.

### **4.0 Consultation Responses**

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory consultees: Consultees have been re-consulted on the amended plans. Any further comments shall be reported verbally at the committee meeting.

<b>Statutory Consultee</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>English Heritage</b>	Offer <b>no comments</b> on the scheme and advise the Council to determine the application in accordance with national and local policy guidance.
<b>County Archaeology</b>	<b>No objections</b> subject to conditions relating to removal of permitted development rights, details of all surfaces to be agreed (including road surfaces), and a restriction in size of vehicles during construction. These conditions would be imposed on the full application, should permission be forthcoming. No formal archaeological excavation is necessary, and no building recording is required because the existing buildings have few internal features. Some concerns were raised regarding the detailing and design of the Packet Boat House, in particular the staircase (now removed) and balconies.
<b>Lancaster Civic Society</b>	<b>No objections to the principle of the use</b> , however objections are raised to the conversion of the Packet Boat House to residential use, on the grounds that the nature of the conversion would undermine the historic interest of the building and therefore harm the character of the Conservation Area.
<b>Lancaster Canal Trust</b>	<b>Concerns</b> regarding the balconies and stairs on the Packet Boat House, and the possibility of non-residential reuse. Other concerns not relating to this individual listed building consent application are reported in the 09/00123/FUL report.

### **5.0 Neighbour Representations**

5.1 All representations are discussed in the report to application 09/00123/FUL.

### **6.0 Principal Development Plan Policies**

6.1 In terms of this Listed Building Consent application, the relevant Development Plan policies are:

#### **Lancaster District Core Strategy (July 2008)**

Policy SC5 - Achieving Quality in Design – This policy seeks to ensure that new development contributes to the positive characteristics of its surroundings and the quality of life of the District by improving the quality of development and promoting good urban design.

Policy E1 - Environmental Capital – This policy seeks to safeguard and enhance the District's Environmental Capital by, for example, enhancing and protecting urban greenspace, listed buildings and conservation areas.

## **Lancaster District Local Plan (April 2004)**

Policy E33 - Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings – Seeks to ensure that proposals for alterations to a listed building do not have an adverse impact on the special architectural or historic character of the buildings or their surroundings.

National Planning Policy Statement 15 (Planning & the Historic Environment) is also relevant.

### **7.0 Comment and Analysis**

- 7.1 In respect of this Listed Building Consent application, the main issues relate to the quality of the conversion and whether the alterations proposed are sympathetic to the fabric of the building and its surroundings.
- 7.2 As the applicant's Heritage Statement correctly identifies, much of the historic internal fabric of this important and prominent building was lost due to earlier remedial works. In some circumstances residential reuse of historic buildings can conflict with the retention of historic features, but this is not the case here. However the shape, siting and external appearance of the structure befits its listed status and it serves as an important reminder of the site's former use. It is therefore imperative that the exterior retains its architectural significance.
- 7.3 The Planning Service has secured amended plans which now retain all the existing window openings to this building. Previously, it was proposed to remove one window opening and fix an external staircase to the main eastern elevation. In our view this would have disrupted the visual integrity of the elevation to the detriment of the building. The amendments therefore, are a considerable improvement on the original scheme.
- 7.4 The programme of door replacements will be sympathetic too, ensuring that the existing commercial doors are replaced with new timber doors, in a style that is similar to their current appearance. With the exception of the doors on the ground floor of the eastern elevation, these doors will not be opening, but are included to respect the existing doorway openings.
- 7.5 Accepting that the door and window arrangements are therefore acceptable, and are appropriate in respect of the character and appearance of the listed building, the main issue therefore concerns the alterations to the north elevation. This elevation is the canal frontage and it is visible from the heart of the Aldcliffe Conservation Area. Despite its vacancy, this elevation is attractive with the combination of timber and stone working to good visual effect. Whilst the stone is retained, the removal of the timber and its replacement with recessed glazing is a dramatic alteration.
- 7.6 However there are many examples nationally of historic buildings which have been opened up with areas of glazing. Where this is done sensitively it can be very attractive, and indeed there are examples in the city where stone and glass combine effectively. In this particular case, the fact that the glazing is recessed under the canopy of the existing roof will ensure, in our view, that the material is secondary when viewed against the stone. Even the timber handrails to the balcony will be set behind the adjacent stonework.
- 7.7 It is therefore our view that the alterations, in their amended form, have been handled sensitively, with respect for the main form of the building and its setting within the group and the Conservation Area.

### **8.0 Conclusions**

- 8.1 This proposal forms part of a wider reuse of the site. The residential use does not conflict with the protection of historic assets, and much of the existing form of the building is retained. The northern elevation will be altered through the introduction of glazing but it is concluded that this will be a respectful and exciting contemporary feature.

- 8.2 In general terms reuse of the building is to be encouraged, and in concluding that there are no adverse impacts upon the listed building or its surroundings, this is a proposal that will be beneficial to the appearance and character of the locality. Members are advised that this proposal can be supported.

### **Recommendation**

That Listed Building Consent **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard Listed Building Consent
2. Amended plans condition
3. Development to accord with approved plans
4. All internal and external materials, treatments and finishes to be agreed
5. Schedule of details and finishes, including glazing, balustrading, handrails, windows, doors, heads, rainwater goods, eaves, verge, and balcony floor surfacing to be agreed
6. Specification details for any re-pointing to be carried out, including a sample.

### **Human Rights Act**

This recommendation has been reached after consideration of the provisions of The Human Rights Act. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the issues arising do not appear to be of such magnitude to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

### **Background Papers**

1. None.