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<th>DECISION DATE</th>
<th>APPLICATION NO.</th>
<th>PLANNING COMMITTEE:</th>
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<td>27 September 2006</td>
<td>06/00964/FUL A22</td>
<td>16 October 2006</td>
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### DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED
Refurbishment and extension to Gardyner House to create 60 place boarding house and staff accommodation and external play and amenity spaces.

### SITE ADDRESS
Lancaster Royal Grammar School
Gardyner House
Quernmore Road
Lancaster
Lancashire
LA1 3EB

### APPLICANT:
The Governors
Lancaster Royal Grammar School
Lee House
East Road
Lancaster
Lancashire
LA6 3EF

### AGENT:
Thomas Worthington Design

### REASON FOR DELAY
None.

### PARISH NOTIFICATION
None.

### LAND USE ALLOCATION/DEPARTURE
The site lies within the urban area of Lancaster and does not benefit from any specific land designation.

The woodland site immediately to the north is an area of Urban Greenspace as defined by the Lancaster District Local Plan 1996-2006.

East Road/Quernmore Road is an Access Corridor.

### STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

**County Highways** - The proposal does not add any significant traffic movements to East Road and therefore there is no objection.

**County Archaeologist** - No further archaeological response is necessary.

**United Utilities** - No objections.

**Environmental Health Service** - Conditions regarding land contamination and hours of construction are requested.
**Environment Agency** - Pleased to note the use of sustainable drainage systems. They have no objections but do provide general advice regarding best practice.

**Lancaster Civic Society** - The development is appropriate in scale but there are a number of concerns relating to roof design, relationship to Gardyner House, the use of zinc, artificial stone, white render, aluminium windows and cladding, and the number of window openings. The Housemaster’s dwelling is considered to be an unsympathetic addition. The Arboricultural Impact Study is accepted.

**OTHER OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED**

Councillor John Whitelegg has commented on the application. He acknowledges that the development will be constructed to a very higher environmental standard and incorporates excellent energy management ideas. The removal of the car park and replacement with a games area is also supported. The removal of trees was an initial concern but the replanting proposals justify the methodology adopted. In summary Councillor Whitelegg supports the application.

A letter has been received from a local resident. The issues raised include: -

- Incongruous design style and siting of the Housemaster’s accommodation;
- Grey render would be preferable to white;
- A slated roof would be preferable to zinc;

**REPORT**

**The Site and It’s Surroundings**

Gardyner House is an unlisted Victorian villa set within a walled garden on the northern side of Quernmore Road at its junction with Derwent Road. It forms part of the Lancaster Royal Grammar School’s (LRGS) sixth form accommodation but has historically been used for teaching.

The grounds are extensive and comprise of a number of trees, some of which are protected by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 364. Beyond the northern boundary lies a pleasant but underused area of planted open space. To the west lies residential property to Quernmore Road and, at a lower level, to Park Road. The southern and eastern boundaries of the site abut the highway network.

**The Background to the Proposal**

LRGS operates a system of boarding for almost 20% of its pupils. As part of a programme of phased redevelopment of the boarding facilities, a 60-place boarding house now known as Storey House was constructed on the southern side of Quernmore Road in 2001.

Boarding accommodation is also provided at Ashton House, which is located opposite the Derwent Road junction, and at School House, which is sited within the old school buildings on East Road and is a Grade II listed building. Ashton House can be maintained and upgraded to provide modern boarding facilities, but the constraints posed by the internal arrangements and general orientation of School House means that renewal of this building for boarding facilities is no longer viable or desirable. The need to provide single study rooms with en suite showers to replace long dormitories is a main driver of change.

Therefore this proposal seeks to replace the accommodation at School House, which could in turn be utilised for the sixth form centre now occupying Gardyner House.
The benefits of improving the standard of accommodation also extend to the more preferable location of the development. Providing the boarding accommodation at the upper end of the school's site, close to the other two boarding houses and the evening dining hall, reduces the distance travelled by pupils and their need to cross the road at the Moorgate junction. In pedestrian safety terms it is a more acceptable location for the facility, especially during dark winter months.

The Proposed Development

The built forms of the proposal are best described as four inter-related structures that will effectively create a ‘horseshoe’ of buildings with Gardyner House remaining prominent and largely unaltered in its physical external form on the southern side of that horseshoe.

On the left of Gardyner House will be a two-storey monopitched structure providing accommodation for the Housemaster, connected to the villa by a lightweight glazed link. The property will be constructed from facing stone at the ground floor level with render above and will have a standing seam metal (zinc) roof.

On the right of Gardyner House is a single-storey entrance and reception area which is also predominantly glazed but enclosed by a slightly curved stone wall. This reception provides direct access to the two boarding accommodation wings; the adjacent two-storey East Wing and the three-storey North Wing. The height of the North Wing takes advantage of the drop in land levels at this end of the site.

Both Wings will have standing seam zinc roofs and will be connected in the north-eastern corner by a three-storey glazed link. The proposed materials will match the Housemaster’s dwelling in that facing stone will be used at the ground floor with render the predominant material above. However the elevations are large and the architect has sought to break up the expanse of render by inserting areas of zinc rainscreen cladding, in a colour to match the roof, rainwater goods and the proposed aluminium windows. On a light render, this could be successful and provide an interesting contrast. The applicant proposes a ‘near white’ render, citing the render colour used on part of the Roundhouse development as an example of a similar colour being recently introduced into the Lancaster townscape.

There is some debate as to whether quoins should be used on the new wings. The applicant has proposed to reflect the dressed stone quoins and window surrounds of Gardyner House, although there is a view that a modern development incorporating dressed quoins as opposed to the traditional ashlar quoins used on Gardyner House would not compare well, and that as a consequence quoins should be omitted altogether. This is a design detail that can be agreed via a planning condition should approval be forthcoming.

Due to the sloping nature of the site the western elevation of the North Wing appears as 3.5 storeys when viewed from Park Road. Care has been taken to avoid overlooking windows at this height, and the sole long, narrow window in this elevation serves the internal corridor.

The development necessitates the removal of a number of trees and the specific details are referred to in the Arboricultural Section of this report.

The existing parking area, which is located beneath the high boundary walls to Derwent Road, is removed and replaced with a play area and ball-court. The fencing to this court will be 3m in height, but will not protrude beyond the existing height of the Derwent Road wall due to the significant increase in land levels. Perimeter fencing to the northern elevation will measure 1.8m in height. The boundaries to the west and south are untouched, except for new steel railings at the site entrance, to be built off the existing stone gateposts.

The play area court will be used for the contractor’s compound during the construction period, should this application be successful.
The changes to Gardyner House include the construction of an access across the ‘secret valley’ that currently exists on the roof. This over-roofing will allow for improved maintenance and the most prominent feature of the construction, the bulky access hatch, has been removed from the plans. In turn this has removed the Local Planning Authority’s objection to this element of the scheme.

The two elevational chimney stacks to the front elevation will be retained but the applicant proposes the removal of the two stacks at the rear of the building is proposed due to complications arising during maintenance of the nearby roof timbers and lead flashings behind the chimneys.

**Assessment of the Built Forms**

The design of the scheme has prompted concerns from the Lancaster Civic Society, who advocate the use of materials to match Gardyner House and the replication of roof forms to reflect the existing structure.

The large wings will have pitched roofs and will have subservient glazed links. The shape of the roofs is acceptable and not uncommon in Lancaster, although it is accepted that the shape does not match the steep pitch of Gardyner House and the hipped roof that protrudes on the front elevation. However the eaves and ridge will be lower than their equivalents on Gardyner House and despite the scale of the extensions the villa will retain its visual significance.

The shape of the Housemaster’s accommodation provides a different challenge. Because of its relationship with the most visible part of Gardyner House, the architect chose to avoid any replication of the existing built forms and proposes a shallow monopitched design, interrupted by the glazed link. The presence of glazing is key here and is not an unusual feature on Gardyner House; an Orangery used to occupy a position on the western elevation.

Once the shape of the buildings has been established, the range of materials can be assessed. There are two competing views in this instance. It is generally accepted that a contemporary approach can be undertaken in a wide palette of materials, including the use of natural stone and slate or, as is proposed in this case, more modern alternatives such as facing stone, render and zinc. The former is a safer option although this approach has often been criticised in Lancaster as leading to ‘pastiche’ development. Whilst this is an unfair criticism, the Local Planning Authority is of the view that in this particular case the use of natural stone and slate on most, if not all of the new buildings now proposed would lead to a heavy appearance and would weaken the appearance of Gardyner House. By preferring the lighter materials, the villa will retain its prominence because of its striking use of darker stone and slate.

The setting of the buildings is a determining factor. The Housemaster’s property is set back behind the line of Gardyner House by over two metres whilst the reception entrance is also recessed. The most visible part of the entrance will be the natural stone curved wall, which is almost flush with the existing front elevation.

A curved domestic fence measuring 1250mm in height would provide a domestic curtilage to the Housemaster’s dwelling. The type and detail of boundary treatment can be conditioned on any planning permission.

The local planning authority has concerns regarding the removal of the two chimney stacks at the rear of the site. However it does not believe that this is sufficient reason alone to resist this largely beneficial proposal. It is therefore suggested that a condition be placed on any consent requiring further investigation of the two rear chimney stacks and a schedule of works to be agreed with the authority.
Neighbour Amenity

The applicant engaged in pre-application discussions with interested members of the public and advises that these comments were fed into the development process.

The western elevation of the Housemaster’s property is the nearest elevation to existing domestic property. There is a paved terrace that provides access to the living room patio doors. A secondary family room window and kitchen window is also proposed on this elevation, with two secondary bedroom windows and 2 obscure glazed bathroom windows above.

The minimum amenity distances advocated in the Lancaster District Local Plan are maintained and in addition the belt of trees on the western boundary provides a perfect screen for this dwelling. It is therefore considered that the residential impact is acceptable.

Arboricultural Impact

The applicant has been proactive in involving the Authority’s Tree Protection Officer in the application process. They have developed an Arboricultural Impact Study, which has been amended during the lifespan of this application.

At the time of compiling this report the latest letter from the applicant (dated 21 September 2006) clarifies that 25 trees will be removed to facilitate the development, four of which are specifically protected (3 aspens and 1 sycamore) and two areas of sycamore protected under a general group designation. A 28-metre length of conifer hedge is also to be removed.

The replanting proposals far exceed those to be removed; a total of 100 trees comprising of 25 heavy standard species and 75 ‘whips’ are proposed. The heavier trees comprise of 5 limes, 10 mountain ash, 5 ash and 5 birch specimens, whilst the whips will comprise 25 hazels, 25 hawthorns and 25 holly trees.

The landscaping proposals will improve the variety of species on the site and provide useful and attractive areas of planting to replace the current specimens.

Renewable Energy

The scheme has always adopted an impressive strategy for sustainable development. Aside from the benefits of increased tree planting, the design of the extensions allows for solar panels ground-source heat recovery for space heating, extremely high levels of insulation and, where possible, rainwater harvesting.

The proposals rate as ‘very good’ on the BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) Schedule.

Conclusion

The proposal aims to repeat the success of the Storey House boarding accommodation. This site is less visible from the wider public area than Storey House although it still occupies a visually prominent position.

There are difficulties associated with developing this site, not least the status of the trees and the impressive façade of Gardyner House. By devising a positive replanting strategy and insisting on a totally contemporary approach to the design and shape of the extensions, the prominence of the villa is safeguarded. The local planning authority believes that the design approach adopted is the right one for this site.
LRGS already has an excellent reputation for its pastoral care and the wellbeing of boarders, which is reflected in the latest Commission for Care Standards Inspectorate report. The investment in boarding facilities will ensure that the infrastructure will match those very high standards.

It is on this basis that the application can be supported.

**HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

This application has to be considered in relation to the provisions of the Human Rights Act, in particular Article 8 (privacy/family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). Having regard to the principles of proportionality, it has been concluded that there are no issues arising from the proposal which appear 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.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That **PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions: -

1. Standard three year consent.
2. Amended plan condition.
3. Development as per approved plans.
4. Samples of all external elevational materials (including rainscreen cladding and Kalwall system) to be submitted and agreed.
5. Details of windows, doors, eaves verge and rainwater goods to be submitted and agreed (including a 100mm setback of all new windows and the use of RAL 7023 on the aluminium windows and all rainwater goods).
6. Render colour to be agreed.
7. Quoin detail to be clarified and agreed.
8. Over-roofing to secret valley to Gardyner House to be agreed.
9. Schedule of works to be agreed regarding the rear chimney stacks.
10. Details of solar panels to be agreed.
11. Landscaping proposals as per approved Arboricultural Impact Study.
12. Tree protection fencing to be agreed and implemented at all times during the land preparation and construction phases;
13. Details of the colour, type, appearance and precise height all boundary treatments (including the front gateposts, play area fencing and domestic timber fencing) to be agreed.
14. Schedule of a Level II Building and Garden recording to be undertaken prior to the commencement of work.
15. Land contamination (Desktop Study) condition.
16. Hours of construction condition.
17. As required by consultees.