

# Comments for Planning Application 18/00639/LBC

## Application Summary

Application Number: 18/00639/LBC

Address: St Josephs Convent Of Poor Clare Collentines Lawrence Street York YO10 3EB

Proposal: Conversion, alteration and part demolition of existing buildings (the Lodge and Extern House) to provide 10no. apartments and erection of 4no. dwellings.

Case Officer: Jonathan Kenyon

## Customer Details

Name: Dr David Fraser

Address: Fairfax House, 27 Castlegate, York YO1 9RN

## Comment Details

Commenter Type: Consultee response

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: The Planning Committee of York Civic Trust considered this application at its meeting on 10 May 2018.

The Trust does not object in principle to the conversion of the Lodge and Extern House buildings, as we believe that the use of a historic building is one of the most effective forms of conservation. We do however object to the proposal in its current form due to the loss of internal features, its integrity and the consequent 'readability' of these historic buildings.

The Convent of St Joseph, Lawrence Street, is a fine example of the Catholic Revival movement in England during the C19, and has extra importance in York due to the city's historic connection with Catholicism and the role that women played in this faith: notably Margaret Clitheroe and England's oldest Catholic convent, the Bar Convent. The Lodge and Extern House are handsome buildings of aesthetic and architectural merit, both being designed, like the rest of the original convent, in 1870-5 by George Goldie. Historic England has recognised the importance of the whole site as a Grade II listing.

The ability to read the whole site as a former convent has been greatly undermined since 2014 by development. Over 40 full, listed building consent, variations, and condition applications has delivered a large private student residential development, but this has been at the cost of the near complete loss of the historic connection of the site as a former convent. The Trust is therefore mindful that the current application should, where possible, conserve and promote the heritage of the remaining convent buildings: the Lodge and the Extern House. The Lodge in particular has great potential for this, due to its street presence on Lawrence Street.

The Trust considers that the historic fabric of the Extern and Lodge have not been taken into full account in the proposal in its current form. The listing description is quite explicit on the importance of the interiors of these two buildings:

'Externs' House: the interior is largely as built and retains many original fixtures and fittings. The entrance doorway opens into a small hall with decorative tiling and timber and glazed double inner doors. The ground and first floors both have a spine corridor with rooms to each side, with an oratory chapel at the north end of the ground-floor corridor. There is an adjacent staircase in the NW angle. The doors, staircase, and externs' cells on the first floor are similar in detailing to the main house. The attic has a series of rooms with boarded divisions, and a queen post roof with iron fixings.'

'Priests' House [ie The Lodge]: fixtures and fittings of interest include six-panelled doors, architraves, and a staircase with turned wooden balusters, moulded handrail, and turned newel posts with ball finials, now painted.'

The applicant's Heritage Statement refers to the continued presence of such interior features (pp.11, 13) and the numerous photos in this document are testament to this. It is therefore highly disappointing to find that many aspects of the interior that are referred to in the listing are to be removed, and with no detailed justification given. This includes staircases, handrails and balustrades, most of the six-panelled doors, glazed double inner doors (the Extern). In addition, all the original windows are to be replaced, as are the wooden carriageway doors on Lawrence Street (which again are referred to in the listing ('The segmental arch of the carriage entrance is infilled with a central ledge for a statue; there are double wooden doors'), including a cross bar with the name of the convent painted in a gothic font, and the ornate coloured tiles are to be hidden beneath a new floor covering.

Furthermore, the ability to read the original layout of these two convent buildings - which are again detailed in the listing as consisting of rooms connected to a central spine corridor - would be permanently removed in the proposal. This is a particular loss in the Extern House, where the existing spine corridor leads to the small oratory chapel - the most important historic feature of the building. The proposed removal of the corridor would therefore remove the readability and prominence of this historic feature. We do not believe the conservation of a historic building in a good condition should be the near complete removal of all of its internal fabric, reducing them to a shell for modern purposes.

Whilst the Trust is sympathetic to the difficulty in repurposing historic spaces for C21 uses, it does however note that the original approved scheme for the whole Convent site [14/02405/LBC] included floor plans that allowed the continued presence of the spinal corridors and many of the historic internal fabric that would be lost in the current proposal across both buildings. The Trust hopes that the applicant might be minded to use the 2014 scheme to reconsider their proposal in order to allow for greater retention of the listed internal features of the Extern House and Lodge.

In conclusion, York Civic Trust objects to the proposed scheme, in its current form, due to the loss of internal features that have been recognised as nationally important in the listing description of this site, and the consequent loss of the integrity and 'readability' of the Extern House and Lodge as historic buildings.