



Mr S Withers  
Development Management  
Planning Services  
Herefordshire Council  
Plough Lane  
HR4 0LE

**Our Ref:** 23144  
**Site:** Field House

19<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Dear Mr Withers,

Site Address:	Field House, Credenhill, Herefordshire
Development:	Proposed conversion and extension of building to form restaurant

## Introduction

We write on behalf of [REDACTED] Lherbier [REDACTED], owners of Field House, Credenhill, Herefordshire in support of their planning application for the proposed conversion and extension of Field House to form a restaurant with ancillary accommodation. The submission consists of this letter, related plan drawings and bat survey report.

## The site and surrounds

Field House is a predominantly stone built former school house fronting Station Road, Credenhill. It was most recently occupied by a pre-school nursery but was acquired by the applicants after a period of marketing by the former owners, Herefordshire Council.

The site lies within the settlement boundary for Credenhill as per the made Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The building is set back from Station Road behind an area of hardstanding which was used as playground when the building was last in use. Vehicular access is to the south-west of the building via what is the staff/visitor access for Credenhill Primary School.

There is a dwelling to the immediate NE, the garden to which extends to the rear of Field House. To the SE there is a single-storey building understood to be a private members' club.

Field House comprises the principal element, which is asymmetrical in elevation and extended to the rear with a parallel range. The entrance gives onto the original school room which is vaulted and with only loft-hatch access to a large attic space. At the rear there is an extension comprising a further room, kitchen and inner hallway, with link to a toilet block. As per the figure 1, below, there are parking spaces to the building's fore.

Field House is not listed and lies within Flood Zone 1; land with the lowest annual probability of flooding and that preferred by policy for development.

The nearest listed building is the war memorial adjacent (SW) of the access to the school. It is our view that the application proposal would not affect designated heritage and we do not consider heritage matters further.

Our interrogation of the Council's online register indicates no presence of TPO trees or Conservation Area. There are no public rights of way over the site either.

*Figure 1: NW and SW facing elevations of Field House from Station Road*



## The proposals

The application seeks permission for the extension and re-use of the building as a restaurant. The applicants are restaurateurs with an extensive professional background in a number of restaurant ventures.

It should be noted at the outset that the lawful use of the building and the proposed restaurant use fall within the same Use Class (E) whereby planning permission is not required for the *use* of the building as such. It is the operational development via the extensions that require planning permission and the extensions themselves are considered essential to the viability of the restaurant.

Since taking ownership the applicants have commissioned a full measured survey of the building and taken advice from Chartered Building Surveyors in respect of fire safety and other Building Regulation matters. It has transpired that the introduction of a mezzanine floor within the main room cannot comply with the building regulations without recourse to unsympathetic alterations via external fire escape stairs, for example. This has limited the number of covers achievable, so instead an orangery style extension is proposed to the side of the building. This is a single-storey aluminium or wooden framed extension, that has been designed with the adjoining dwelling in mind and hence the flank elevation is solid in construction. The applicants have discussed this extension informally with the neighbours as a precursor to the application.

At the rear it is proposed to extrude the existing range in a south-westerly direction to create a suitable commercial kitchen at ground floor and office, store and bathroom at first floor.

The proportions of the existing rear range are such that the ridge height is lower than the existing 'main' range and the decision has been taken to truncate the extension such that it stops short of the SW elevation, thereby allowing the original building to remain dominant in views from Station Road. The extension's SW-facing elevation would be rendered on the basis that it would best complement the stonework of the existing building.

Vehicular access is unaltered, the existing hardstanding used for visitor parking as per the proposed block plan.

### Planning policy and material considerations

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The development plan comprises the Core Strategy only. Although a Neighbourhood Area was designated in 2014, there is no draft plan in preparation.

The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) is a material consideration for planning applications in England.

### Relevant policies of the Core Strategy

There is no policy relating directly to the change of use of buildings to restaurant facilities within the context of an existing settlement.

- **Policy SC1 – Social and community facilities.** The policy expresses support for the provision of community facilities.

- **Policy MT1 – Traffic management, highway safety and promoting active travel.** This policy requires that safe and appropriate access is available for all users of the public highway.
- **Policy LD1 – Landscape and townscape.** Requires applications to demonstrate that character of the landscape and townscape (whichever is appropriate) has positively influenced the design, scale and nature of the development.
- **Policy LD2 – Biodiversity and geodiversity.** Requires the conservation, restoration and enhancement of biodiversity assets.
- **Policy SD1 – Sustainable design and energy efficiency.** Confirms that new buildings should be designed to maintain local distinctiveness through incorporating local architectural detailing and materials and respecting scale, height, proportions and massing of surrounding development. Development should ensure that distinctive features of existing buildings should be safeguarded.

### National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF sets out the government’s policies for plan-making and decision-making in England.

**Paragraph 11** confirms the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

**Chapter 6 ‘Building a strong, competitive economy’** confirms that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. In the instant case it is also material that the 2020 changes to the Use Classes Order means that the previous lawful use (children’s day nursery formerly D1, now E (f)) and proposed use (restaurant – formerly A3, now E (b)) are now within Class E Commercial, business and service, whereby planning permission would not be required for the restaurant use proposed; it is the extensions that require permission.

**Paragraph 84**, under the sub-heading ‘Supporting a prosperous rural economy’ supports the enablement of the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. Although the application site is located at Credenhill, and is thus not in the ‘countryside’, the NPPF is not written in equivalent terms and so we feel paragraph 84 relevant to the application.

**Paragraphs 92 and 93** speak positively about the creation of social, recreational and cultural facilities and services that among other things, promote social interaction.

**Paragraph 111** confirms that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Chapter 12 'Achieving well-designed places' outlines the government's design policies, which underscore the importance attached to good design (paragraph 126). Paragraph 130 (f) requires that development promotes a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Paragraph 180 is the NPPF's equivalent to LD2, adopting a hierarchical approach to the conservation of biodiversity and requiring that significant harm be avoided, mitigated or as a last resort compensated for.

## Assessment of the main matters

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### The principle of development

The application site is sustainably located within the settlement boundary for one of the 'main villages' within the Hereford Housing Market Area. The application site is therefore sustainably located. Moreover, and as highlighted above, the use of the building as a restaurant does not require planning permission; the existing and proposed uses falling within Class E Commercial, business and service.

Given these two factors, it is uncontroversial to state that the principle of development is acceptable.

### Character and appearance

Both the Core Strategy, at LD1 and SD1, and the NPPF, promote good design. Both CS policies require demonstration that the scale and design of development proposals has been positively influenced by the site's context. A further requirement of SD1 is that important architectural features of existing buildings are preserved.

The original building is an attractive late Victorian former school, with cupola and stone mullioned windows. The rear additions are later and predominantly in brick. As explained above, the original intent was to accommodate the dining floor space in the main hall and within a mezzanine. However, the mezzanine could not achieve compliance with the building regulations without two staircases, which in themselves could not be accommodated without either compromising the ground floor circulation space or requiring an external fire escape. Accordingly the decision has been taken to create additional, accessible ground floor dining space via an 'orangery' extension.

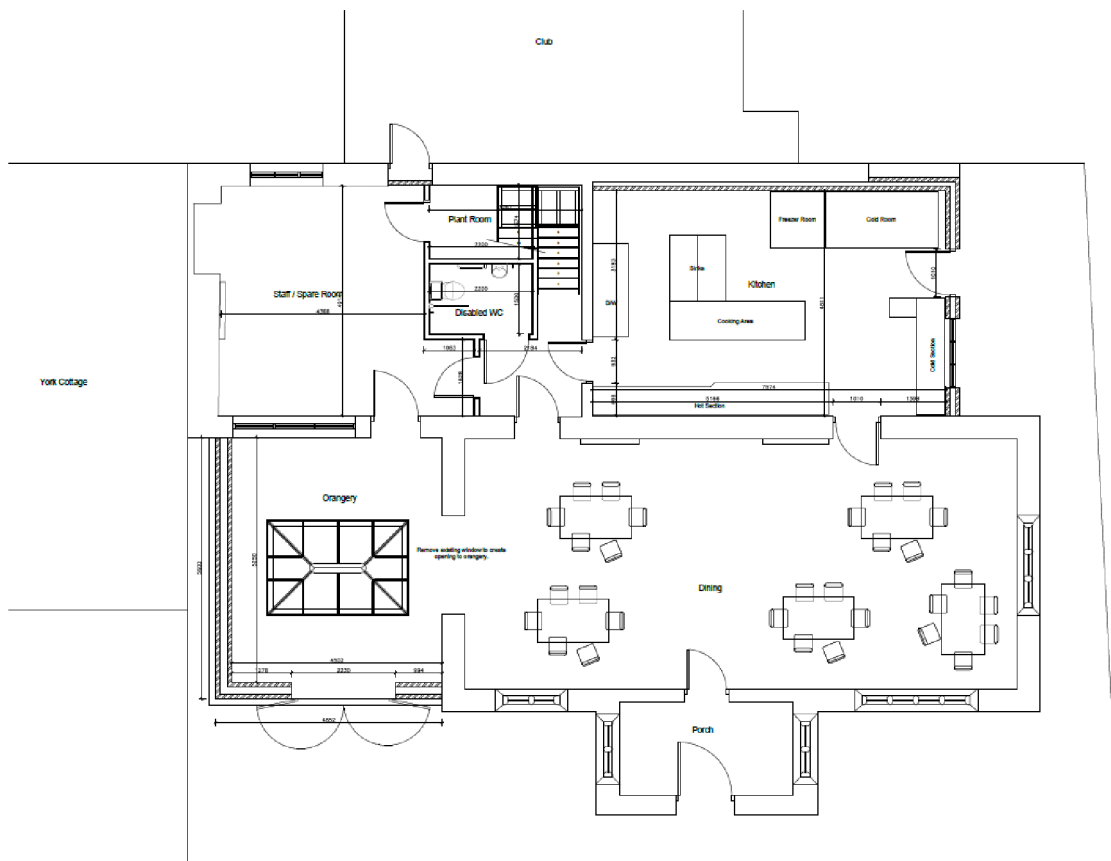
The 'orangery' would extend from the side (NE) elevation of the original building. It is limited to single-storey and set back slightly from the existing principal elevation. Its scale, materiality and related proportion of glazing in the NW facing elevation, render the extension subservient to the host.

At the rear, the extension of the existing rear wing via a replacement 1 ½ storey extension, is essential to providing the ancillary accommodation required to serve the restaurant but is likewise respectful of the need to ensure the original building remains the dominant feature, architecturally. This is achieved by making sure the gable end elevation stops short of the original by approximately 1800mm and is faced in off-white render. These attributes, coupled with the fact that the span is narrower and

consequently the height lower than the main building, again ensures that the extension is subservient to the original building, which is the characterful element of the building.

Taken as a whole, therefore, both extensions are demonstrably subservient to the host building and would be executed in a manner which ensures that the important architectural features of the host building are preserved in accordance with CS Policy SD1 and demonstration that the existing site's characteristics have positively influenced design in accordance with Policy LD1. In achieving compliance with SD1 and LD1, the application achieves good design as per Chapter 12 of the NPPF.

*Figure 2: Ground floor plan as proposed*



## Amenity

Policy SD1 and the NPPF at 130 (f) require that development achieves a high standard of amenity. As noted above, the existing rear range is in effect the site boundary to the neighbour, York Cottage, and the private club. There is an existing window in what is proposed as the staff room, looking out onto the garden to York Cottage. No change is proposed here.

The first floor above the staff room would be an office. Roof lights are proposed here but on the forward facing roof slope towards Station Road, so not adding to the number of openings towards the private amenity space at York Cottage. The remainder of the rear extension replaces and extrudes the



existing footprint away from York Cottage and so causes no effect in terms of overlooking or overshadowing.

The orangery extension, [REDACTED] has a solid flank elevation. It would extend forward of York Cottage slightly, but not to a degree that would result in unacceptable loss of light to the adjoining ground floor window. The applicants have also agreed to retain a 600mm gap between the orangery and York Cottage and to install a fence between the properties too.

As a non-residential private members' club, the building at the rear is not a sensitive receptor and in our view is unaffected by the proposals. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In our view, no other property could reasonably be said to be affected by the proposals, which therefore achieve compliance with Core Strategy Policy SD1 and the NPPF.

### Ecology

Core Strategy Policy LD2 and paragraph 180 of the NPPF act in parallel to ensure that development proposals do not cause immitigable harm to biodiversity.

The applicants commissioned Willder Ecology to conduct bat surveys. Four surveyors attended site on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to undertake an emergence survey. Whilst there was bat activity in the local area, only one bat was possibly detected entering the building via a very small gap in the eaves towards the end of the survey. Consequently a second survey is scheduled for next month (July) and the report will be forwarded thereafter. Early indications are that a) the level of activity is not significant; b) impacts are not immitigable and c) highly unlikely to present any impediment to the development.

The applicants envisage that habitat creation will be recommended and would have no hesitation in accepting a condition to that effect.

### Accessibility

The application site shares access with the primary school. The access is well made and has good visibility onto Station Road, which is subject to a 30mph restriction. The proposal is to use the existing hard-standing at the front of the building as car parking, with spaces laid out to create adequate aisle width such that vehicles can manoeuvre on site and leave in forward gear.

There is a bus on Station Road outside the application site, giving access to sustainable modes to staff.

Provision will be made for cycle parking on the site and for local residents, the site will be within walking distance. We do not discern any significant transportation matters of the magnitude that NPPF paragraph 111 seeks to forestall.

### Economic benefits – job creation/supply chain

The proposal, in promoting a commercial use of the building, will lead to job creation which is a benefit of the proposals. Based on their industry experience, the applicants anticipate that the restaurant will create 5 full-time equivalent jobs.

The proposal will also create opportunities for local food and drinks producers and hence support for the supply chain. Local provenance is of increasing importance to consumers and the restaurant will seek to promote local produce to as great an extent as possible.

### Summary and conclusions

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Section 38 (6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 confirms that *“if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”*

The foregoing chapters have explained the proposals in the context of the development plan and relevant provisions of the NPPF. It has explained that the principle of development is acceptable, the proposed *use* not requiring planning permission.

The extensions are proposed in a manner that is both subservient to the original building and respectful of the living conditions at York Cottage in a manner that complies with Policies SD1 and LD1 and paragraph 130 (f) of the NPPF.

The proposal will create jobs in the local economy and benefit the supply chain, which will include local producers.

It follows from the above that the development complies with the development plan and will give rise to economic and social benefits, whilst subject to a condition requiring habitat creation, there should be no environmental dis-benefits.

In such circumstances paragraph 11 c) of the NPPF confirms that planning permission should be granted without delay.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and we look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

Ed Thomas

**Director**