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THE OLD COURTHOUSE, GEORGE STREET, BUXTON

CHANGE OF USE FROM A1 TO A3 TO FORM PROPOSED TEA ROOM AND DEMOLITION OF EXISTING STORE ROOM TO REAR OF FRENCH RESTAURANT TO ALLOW FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION FOR FOOD STORE/KITCHEN AND ROOF TERRACE OVER.

The purpose of the application is to seek permission for the change of use of the existing shared lobby space and 2No. retail units to form a proposed Tea Room within the existing floor area of The Old Courthouse building on George Street, Buxton. The application also seeks approval for the demolition of the existing rear 'garage' to the rear of the French Brasserie to allow for a new grit stone food store / kitchen building that will provide space for a rear roof top terrace over for a dedicated means of escape for The Lodge at first floor level. The proposed Tea Room is to sit adjacent to an existing wine bar and restaurants that have become very popular in this area and thus represents a use that is far more in keeping with the area and the changes that are taking place within the area with The Crescent.

The exact date of The Old Courthouse is unclear, but it was certainly in existence in 1850 as the earliest records relate to its use during that time. The construction of the building is likely to have taken place not long after The Crescent and its use related to that building as the Duke of Devonshire Estate Office. Since this use expired during the 1930's, the building has being used for various purposes over the last few decades, but the main use now relates to bar and restaurant facilities with only two small retail units remaining to the ground floor. It is understood that these two units are to relocate elsewhere in the town. The first floor use still relates to that of a Masonic Lodge.

The Old Courthouse is just one of numerous Edwardian buildings in Buxton, that along with the more recent Victorian structures in the town, gives the area its distinctive Architectural style. This building in particular is of considerable architectural merit that sits comfortably next to its somewhat grander neighbour in the form of The Crescent, which is of course undergoing major works to form a high quality Hotel. It is these works that have in many ways been the catalyst for the recent changes of use at The Old Courthouse and the future use of The Crescent will of course be of major benefit to the success of the units within the building.

The group of buildings that The Old Court House sits next to, including The Crescent, the old bakery and associated Cavendish Circus buildings(opposite), The Cavendish Arcade, The George Mansions and slightly further on – The Square and The Opera House, form what is probably the most important part of the Architectural Heritage of Buxton. Although The Opera House and The Square have been refurbished over the recent decades, major works are now proposed for the rear of Cavendish Circus, George Mansions and, of course, The Crescent. The Old Court House is an important Architectural Heritage building within this group and has itself, recently undergone the first seeds of refurbishment to capitalise on these surrounding changes. This application seeks to further enhance this building and its important architectural standing.

The recent works to The Crescent have involved the demolition of a building that used to adjoin the rear of The Old Courthouse garage building. It is these activities that have resulted in the desire to undertake works that will be of benefit to the functioning of the restaurants and bars in the building and also present a far more complimentary structure to the rear of The Old Courthouse, and indeed the way it is viewed from its larger neighbour.

The demolished structure that used to sit to the rear of The Crescent was adjoined to The Old Court House by the garage area that forms the structure intended for demolition as part of this application. The garage area seems to have been constructed as part of the use of the building as a Renault dealership several decades ago. This structure sits very uncomfortably within the listed status of the building and the important heritage of the area. The structure is of brick construction with a membrane flat roof covering and offers nothing to the character of the building or conservation area around it. The demolition and replacement of this structure would be of significant benefit to not only this building but also the important architectural heritage around it.

The intention is that much of the stone from the demolition of certain areas of the rear of The Crescent is to be salvaged for use in the construction of the new food store to the rear. This material being used to allow for a much more sympathetic structure in keeping with the architectural merit that has meant The Old Courthouse is grade 2 listed. Sitting over this building will be a roof top terrace that makes a use of the area that is required use for escape from the first floor Lodge building. The terrace will also make use in the future of the impressive backdrop of the newly renovated Crescent and the courtyard spaces that are intended to the rear. The use of metal balustrade, railings and associated spiral handrails etc will further respect the existing building as they are to match those details to the front elevation through both material, scale and finish. This area is not to be intended for use at night and thus will not be of any disruption to the guests within The Crescent. The fact that these guests will overlook ‘cafe culture’ as apposed to a flat roof extension is of course a benefit.

The location of the proposed Tea Rooms is of course the main driving factor in the landlords wish to seek approval for the change of use and the unit already has an end user in place should approval be granted. The works being undertaken to The Crescent, the proximity to the Buxton Opera House, The Pavilion Gardens and the town centre and also thriving business neighbours being of considerable benefit to a

more or less assured future for the proposed use. Looking into the future, the changes that will take place to The George Mansion building and the old bake house building will only further enhance this area as a successful restaurant/cafe/bar hub.

Limited pay and display parking is available on George Street itself, opposite the proposed tea room, and there are numerous pay and display car parks within short walking distance. It is worth noting that many of the visitors to such cafes are visitors to the town and likely to have walked to the unit anyway and as such, the impact on parking directly outside the building is minimal. The proposed use is also considered to be of considerable benefit to the aim of increasing tourism to this part of the town and the applicant welcomes the opportunity to be able to make a useful and positive contribution to the increased enlivenment of this area and hopefully the town as a whole.