



Planning Statement

Oak Leas Manor

Spring Lane

New Mill

HD9 7EH

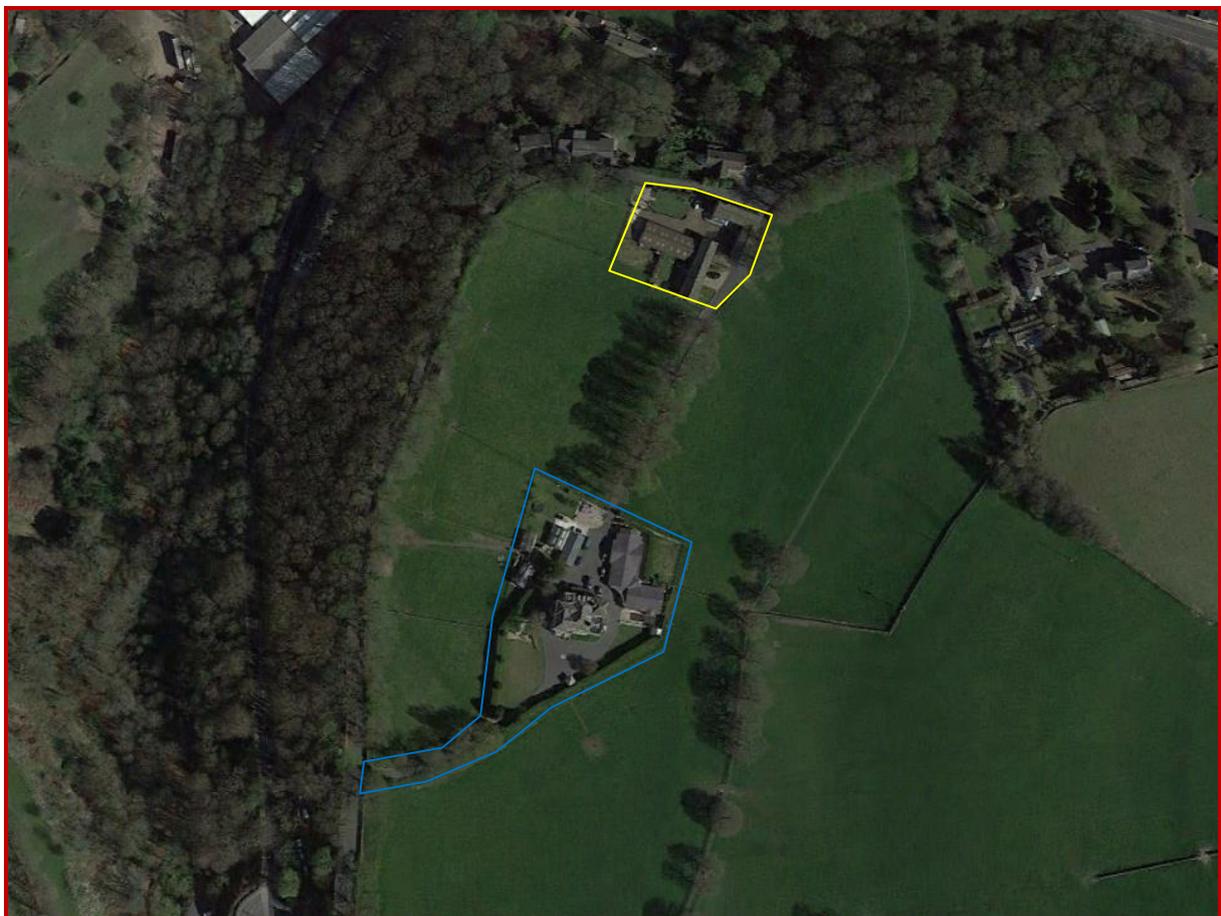
Introduction

This statement has been produced by AKPlanning in support of a planning application for the change of use of the existing dwelling and outbuildings at Oak Leas Manor, to a boutique wedding venue.

It is intended that the contents of this report cover the relevant planning policies and how the development complies with them.

Site Location and Description

The aerial and photograph view below shows the sites location and appearance.



Oak Leas Manor is a large single dwelling, with detached outbuildings, located in an isolated position with its own access (blue line to show buildings and access). The applicant also owns the surrounding fields and the adjacent residences (yellow line) to the north.

The Proposal

In detail the use is as follows.

- The proposal is to use existing buildings as a boutique and high-end wedding and celebration venue. Given the standard of the property, the business would seek to provide an exclusive service for guests looking for an intimate but luxury experience.
- It will utilise existing buildings on the land rather than developing new. Indeed, the only external addition is an open smoking area on the end of the proposed events room.

In overview the business will provide its guests with:

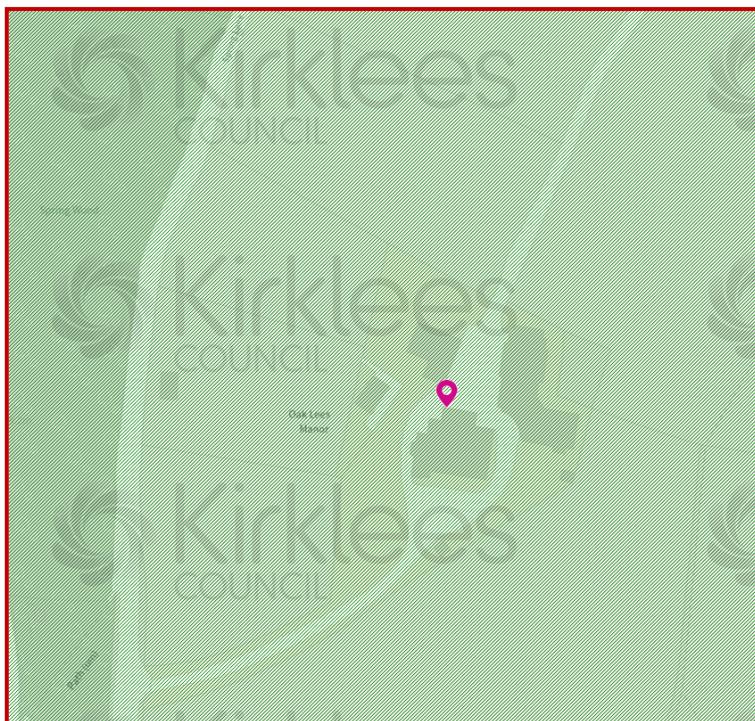
- An opportunity to use the existing house as a venue for a wedding ceremony, blessing or similar celebration where around [40-60] people could be in attendance for the ceremony seated within the main house building.
- The existing house would allow the main wedding party to stay overnight and enjoy the use of the property in the build up to their celebration. This would involve, for instance, the guests being able to have pampering, food, cinema or spa like experiences provided in the property.
- The existing pool building would be converted and used for a reception/entertainment and spa space that could be used as part of the celebration.
- The existing garages would be converted to one-bedroom ensuite sleeping pods for overnight guests.
- The major aspects of the business would be operated by a defined and small number of staff with services required for an event being outsourced so far as possible. This is intended to reduce the demand on infrastructure, waste and highways.
- It is proposed that the requisite licences and approvals will be obtained so that officiated services can lawfully be undertaken at the property and a license obtained for service of alcohol.
- Parking can be accommodated using the existing drive plus a parking area will be provided off the main driveway. Parking for 35 vehicles will be provided. This will be done by creating a reinforced mesh within the existing field so that there is no significant change in the landscape character. When cars are not parked in the field it will have the appearance of a grassed field. The car parking area is screened and separated from properties in the vicinity.

We believe that this “reinforced grass” surface is sufficient as the use has minimal movements. Guests arrive and leave, two movements with no constant ins and outs. The access to the site from Spring Lane is a private one.

- As the venue is an exclusive offering, it is not envisaged at this time that more than 1-3 events per week will be offered. Indeed, it is expected that the number of events will be at the lower of the range. Given the turnover time necessary between events (for cleaning etc.) three events a week will be unusual and if it does happen it is likely that one of the events will be very restricted in numbers and may only be, for example, the ceremony in the main house.
- Guest numbers (for an evening celebration) would be in the range of 100 - 150 and it is envisaged that the average will be to the lower end of the range (or lower still) given the trend for small, more intimate and higher value celebrations.

Planning Policy

The site lies within the Green Belt as shown on the extract from the current Local Plan below: -



The whole of the site is within the Green Belt

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains the following relevant planning policy: -

147. *Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*

Paragraphs 149 and 150 then define appropriate development as follows: -

149. *A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:*

(a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;

(b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

(c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

(d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

(e) limited infilling in villages;

(f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and

(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

150. *Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:*

(a) mineral extraction;

(b) engineering operations;

(c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;

(d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

(e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

(f) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Paragraph 150 Part (d) is relevant and allows the re-use of buildings so long as they are of permanent and substantial construction. There is no doubt that the buildings that are subject to this proposed reuse are permanent and substantial.

The Kirklees Local Plan contains the following relevant policy: -

Policy LP60

The re-use and conversion of buildings

Proposals for the conversion or re-use of buildings in the Green Belt will normally be acceptable where;

a. the building to be re-used or converted is of a permanent and substantial construction;

b. the resultant scheme does not introduce incongruous domestic or urban characteristics into the landscape, including through the treatment of outside areas such as means of access and car parking, curtilages and other enclosures and ancillary or curtilage buildings;

c. the design and materials to be used, including boundary and surface treatments are of a high quality and appropriate to their setting and the activity can be accommodated without detriment to landscape quality, residential amenity or highway safety.

This reflects national policy and is up to date.

Consideration Of Policy

There is no doubt that the proposal complies with the broad planning policy restraints contained within National and Local Plan policy insofar as the buildings to be converted are permanent and substantial.

Part b of Local Plan Policy LP60 adds qualifications to this, these being that: -

b. the resultant scheme does not introduce incongruous domestic or urban characteristics into the landscape, including through the treatment of outside areas such as means of access and car parking, curtilages and other enclosures and ancillary or curtilage buildings;

In our case the resultant scheme has two physical aspects that may affect the landscape character.

Firstly, an area to the side of the events building (currently the swimming pool area) will be covered with an open aluminium pergola. This will be over an existing patio and will provide an outside area for smoking which is required for the general comfort and convenience of guests. Given the size of the pool building and the house, the small area concerned, and the open sided nature of the structure it is considered that it will have no effect on the landscape character.

Secondly a 35-space car park is proposed. The new use will require a car park. There are existing spaces on the drive and in front of the house but given the aim of wanting to provide a quality venue it is considered that a car park is necessary so that cars are not left all along the drive and immediately outside the house providing visual clutter. 35 spaces have been calculated as reasonable given that people will arrive in groups within cars.

To minimise the impact on the landscape character a field as close to the buildings as possible has been chosen. This field already has boundary screening and is accessed directly from an existing tarmac road so no additional works for access are required.

It is proposed to provide two rows of parking to minimise the amount of space taken (no additional gaps between spaces/turning areas etc.). Importantly it is proposed to retain a grass appearance so that when there are no events the field will retain its current appearance. This will be achieved by using a reinforcing mesh within the grass. This is possible as the carpark use will be infrequent given that there will be a maximum of three events per week and people will tend to come and go once. Therefore, the number of vehicle movements in and out of the car park will be minimal.

Access to the venue is via an existing driveway off Spring Lane. This has sufficient sightlines and is a safe tarmacked road.

Discussions have taken place with the LPA regarding the proposed use and the possibility that it is a main town centre use as defined in the NPPF.

The use is sui generis, it is as a wedding venue. It is not explicitly listed in the definition of main town centre uses: -

Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

The use is not retail; it is not arts, culture or tourism; it is not sport or recreation, and in my opinion, it is not leisure or entertainment as defined above. The leisure uses listed in the definition as town centre uses are all open to the public to walk in 7 days a week and are all intensive. Common sense, and history, tells you that the uses listed are town centre – as that is where they are historically mostly located.

The proposed use is exactly the opposite of that, it has to be booked, is for a pre-determined low number of people and, in the main, will only be used once a week. It is a unique use that does not resemble, in its nature, the examples sited in the definition. I do not therefore consider that it is a town centre use as defined by the NPPF. Historically wedding venues are out in the countryside so that they can provide a much nicer setting for the wedding. It is much easier to find a venue in the countryside than in a town centre. This, in itself, shows that wedding venues are not town centre uses and the town centre policies were never intended to apply to this use.

It has been agreed that based upon the above the use is not town centre and therefore requires no sequential or exceptions test.

Access



There are two vehicular access points into Oak Leas. Neither will be altered within this proposal. The access to the south, which is gated, will be used for weddings.

Traffic Movements and Parking

The use will generate minimal traffic. People going to a wedding tend to arrive and then leave, only generating two movements. They also tend to arrive in groups i.e., more than one person to a car. This is because they will be family or a group of friends from one household. There will also be a number of people staying overnight, so the movements are spread over two days.

The maximum number of people will be 150 at night, this includes the daytime guests of up to 60 that will already be there. We are proposing to create a car park for 35 spaces, giving a rough allowance for around 100 people. Please note that the maximum is 150 and we believe that for most weddings at this venue (the business aim is high cost small weddings) will be around the 100 mark. Therefore in most cases the 35 spaces will be sufficient.

We have no wish to formally lay out any other areas as car parking as we believe this could detrimentally alter the appearance of the site. However, there are other areas available for parking.



This area (yellow) is used for car parking at the moment and can accommodate up to 10 cars, whilst still providing access to the overflow parking area to be created (red arrow).

Some will be parallel parked, but the area would be used for overnight guests who will be staying

the weekend so have no need to move their cars.

The whole of the blue area is used for current parking and can still be utilised for overspill parking at night. Cars can be parked at the side of the drive and in front of both the new accommodation and events building. We do not want to use this area during the day, but at night it could accommodate a further 15+ cars.

In total the car parking spaces are 35 new spaces, 10 at the side of the new accommodation block (for overnight guests) and a further 15 informally around the existing drive and outside the events room.

This gives 60 spaces for a maximum 150 guests.

New Structure

The only new structure proposed is a covered area on the end of the events room (as shown on the proposed plan) over an existing patio. This will provide a covered area for smoking etc. this will be an off the shelf structure as shown below: -



This will be attached to the floor and wall to make it safe.

It is made of aluminium and will be grey as shown.

Trees

There is a line of existing trees adjacent to the proposed car park along an existing secondary driveway.

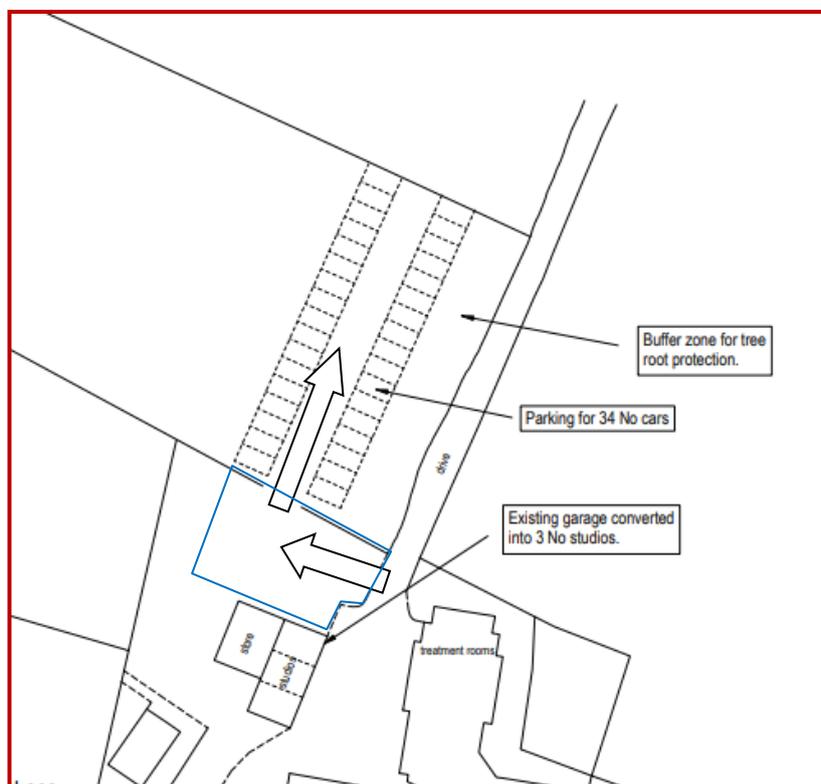
So as not to affect the trees it is proposed to surface the car park with Cell Pave. A product brochure is submitted for information. This will be laid on top of the existing ground. The existing grass will then be allowed to grow through the cells.

We have chosen this system for three reasons: -

1. We believe the car park use will be very light, two events a week with minimal movements.
2. We want to keep the car park green to lessen the impact on the character of the area.
3. It will have no effect on the existing tree roots as it is laid on top of the existing ground and allows drainage through.

We have commissioned a tree survey which has confirmed the above. The only recommendation is that some lower branches are removed, this will have no detrimental effect on the amenity or longevity of the trees.

The car park has been located outside the tree canopy and is accessed across an existing hardstanding as shown by the arrows below: -



The area outlined in blue is an existing hardstanding that is used for parking, it will provide an unchanged surface to act as the entrance to the proposed car park.

Conclusions

The reuse of buildings within the Green Belt is acceptable in principle if the buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction. There is no doubt that the current buildings on site satisfy these criteria.

In accordance with policy LP60 the proposed physical changes have a minimal impact upon the landscape character of the area and are acceptable.

Access is as existing and is safe, sufficient car parking for the number of guests is to be provided.

It is our conclusion that the proposals comply with all the relevant planning policy and can be granted planning permission.

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