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For and on behalf of
Oshwal Association of the UK (OAUK)

EXTENSION TO OSHWAL HOUSE
To form a Dining Room / Restaurant for Staff and Visitors

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION
PLANNING STATEMENT

Oshwal House
Coopers Lane Road
Northaw
EN6 4DG

Prepared by
Neil Osborn BA(Hons) MRTPI
DLP Planning Ltd
Bedford

May 2016

Prepared by:



Neil Osborn BA(Hons)
MRTPI Senior Director

Date:

May 2016

DLP Planning Ltd
4 Abbey Court
Fraser Road
Priory Business Park
Bedford
MK44 3WH

Tel: 01234 832740
Fax: 01234 831266

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement is submitted in conjunction with a Planning Application for the extension of Oshwal House for the purposes of extending an existing dining room/restaurant used by staff and for entertaining visitors and guests to the headquarters of the Oshwal Association of the UK (OAUk). It follows from a previous permission granted in 2013 which was not implemented at the time and which has now expired. A separate Listed Building application has already been submitted, and registered 6/2016/0347/LB
- 1.2 The purpose of this Statement is to provide the context in which this application should be considered, in relation to a programme of works intended by OAUk which have been subject to various planning permissions issued by Welwyn-Hatfield Council and to the preparation of the Oshwal Strategy, which was submitted to the Council and has been subject to formal discussion and public consultation.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 The Oshwal Association of the UK (OAUk) represents some 20,000 Oshwals resident in Britain, more than half of whom are active members of the Association. The Oshwal Centre at Coopers Lane Road is both the headquarters of the Association and also its spiritual centre. The *Derasar*, or temple, at the Oshwal Centre is the focus for all those who practice Jainism, and welcomes visitors from all religious, ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

2.2 The Oshwal Association of the UK (OAUk) was founded in 1968 as a need was seen to create an organisation which would mirror sister organisations in India and Kenya and which would establish its own identity in step with the intellectual, cultural and religious ethos of the people it represents. OAUk became a charitable foundation in 1972. Its Vision is:

“To form a more perfect community, for the advancement of the Jain religion, the relief of poverty, the advancement of education and the protection of health for Oshwal Members.”

2.3 The ethos of the Community is defined by its cultural heritage and is one of self-support amongst its members, tolerance and inclusion which extends to all races and religions, hospitality, and care and welfare for all living creatures.

2.4 The OAUk is wholly dependent on its Members. It is a thriving organisation, enjoying an influx of new younger Oshwals volunteering for the many activities it undertakes. In the last three years nearly 1 in 10 of all members have volunteered their time and energies through becoming involved with a range of events and activities which bring benefit to the community at large.

Activities

2.5 The activities organised by the Association include:

- **Education**
- **Young persons activities**
- **Health care**
- **Women’s health and wellbeing**
- **Sports, social and community activities**
- **Religious and cultural**

- 2.6 All the OAUk's activities, its properties and its plans are funded by subscription and donations from its members, from the fees it is able to charge for events using its facilities and from other fund raising activities such as lotteries and raffles.
- 2.7 The Association has four centres. The Oshwal Centre at Coopers Lane Road near Potters Bar is the headquarters of the organisation and the hub of its activities. It is supported by three other local centres: the Oshwal Mahajanwadi in South London, the Oshwal Ekta Centre in Kingsbury, North West London and the Oshwal Shakti Centre in Hounslow. Whilst allowing greater access for many to weeknight activities, none supplant the importance of the Oshwal Centre to the whole community.

Oshwal House

- 2.8 One of the main objectives of the OAUk is the advancement of Jainism by the provision of a place of worship.
- 2.9 It was with this objective in mind that the elders of the community purchased the property known as Hook House in Coopers Lane Road, Potters Bar (Northaw) in 1980. Renamed Oshwal House, it is a Tuscan Style villa dating from 1839 and Grade II listed (listed in 1952), set in some 80 acres (about 32 hectares), around which OAUk has subsequently constructed the *Derasar*, Community Halls and associated carparking, and ancillary uses such as a children's play area.
- 2.10 Following its original acquisition, initial renovation of Oshwal House took place to provide office accommodation, meeting and seminar rooms and a small restaurant for staff and visitors, as hospitality is at the core of the Oshwal tradition. It also contains a flat, occupied by the resident priest.
- 2.11 After thirty years Oshwal House is in need of further renovation to enable OAUk to make best use of the available space and to ensure that the building is conserved in a manner appropriate to its status. The growing needs of the OAUk have made it desirable to extend some of its facilities, in particular the scope to provide hospitality to its guests and visitors.
- 2.12 A full planning application (ref: S6/2012/2549/FP) was approved in 2013 for a single storey rear extension and enlarged terrace area, however since receiving approval the

OAUk's priorities have lain with other projects such as the renovation of the Community Halls and investment in facilities at other Oshwal properties .

- 2.13 With these schemes completed, OAUk has refocused its attentions on Oshwal House. This now requires renovation with, as a priority, the replacement of all the windows, (which will be subject to a separate request for Listed Building approval) and other works to restore and repaint the external facades and to repair and replace rotten woodwork as necessary. These works are now considered to be a priority. It also provides the opportunity to implement the extended restaurant and dining room scheme (for which an earlier permission has now expired) as part of wider plans for the development of the Oshwal Centre to meet the current and emerging needs of the Community.

3.0 THE OSHWAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 3.1 The OAUK has carefully considered how it should respond to the social and cultural challenges that it may face over the coming years. It has recognised that it must make the best of the physical infrastructure that it has and it has put that programme into place with the refurbishment of the Community Halls and works it is now proposing to carry out to Oshwal House, as well as further maintenance work on the *Derasar* and proposals to rationalise other existing structures and buildings, such as those used for storage.
- 3.2 As part of this strategy OAUK has put together a Strategic Vision which has been discussed with Senior Officers of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and was formally presented to a Development Forum held in Welwyn in November 2015. The presentation included the proposals for the renovation of Oshwal House and for a revised proposal for the extension of the building which is now the subject of this application.

4.0 THIS PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Planning permission S6/2012/2549/FP was approved in February 2013 for the construction of an extension to Oshwal House for the purposes of extending existing dining facilities, however as noted, other priorities have taken precedence and the scheme has not been implemented.
- 4.2 The OAUk has taken this opportunity to review its needs in the light of the increased levels of participation from within the Oshwal Community and also the growing importance of the Oshwal Centre as a focus of wider religious and cultural importance. Accordingly it has been decided that in renewing the previous permission, the scale of the extension should be increased from 53m² to 108m², principally to relocate the kitchen to a site within the new extension, and that it should be implemented as part of the wider refurbishment and renovation of Oshwal House.
- 4.3 The increased floor area will enable the extension better to accommodate groups of visitors to the Oshwal Centre parties for which the catering facilities within the nearby Community Halls are disproportionately large but to do so more effectively and with greater spaciousness compared to the previous permission.
- 4.4 The current building can only accommodate around 28 seats in its present dining area. This facility is small given the important function of the building. As the headquarters of the OAUk, and given the strategic importance of the building to the Association, as the centre for key meetings and visitors - both members and guests - this limited capacity has proven to be insufficient and inadequate for key events, so unduly compromising the functionality and role of the building.
- 4.5 A proposal was consequently devised which would avoid the need to remove internal walls – which would be problematic given that the building is listed and so the fabric of the internal walls is deemed to have inherent historic merit – but would allow the demolition of a modern, single-storey, flat roof extension (which has little inherent merit and generally detracts from the appearance of the northern façade of the building), opening up a non-authentic replacement window enabling the creation of a cold store with minimal impact on the fabric of the building.

- 4.6 This proposal, limited the alterations to the removal of no more than 6.8 metres of the original fabric of the rear (north) ground floor elevation where there are already a number of existing large openings minimised the overall loss of the historic fabric and was accordingly approved.
- 4.7 The approved scheme increased the total dining area from 51m² to 104m², and from 28 seats to 80 seats, much improving the provision and the functionality of the building, supporting its community use. This extension would provide an increase to about 104 seats whilst relocating the kitchen and making more efficient use of space within the core of the original building.
- 4.8 The scheme now subject to this application treats the existing historic fabric in exactly the same way, however it marginally increases the depth of the proposed but adds to the width in order to provide the new kitchen which has improved direct service access to the outside and greater internal functionality. The extended width of the proposal also allows the removal of an existing unsightly and unsympathetic store extension from the rear elevation of the core building whilst the new extension avoid direct attachment to the main structure save for the demolition works that remain the same as those approved in the previous approval.
- 4.9 As previously, the fenestration will replace that found in that section of ground floor external wall at present, and so in effect, will bring forward the ground floor mass of the building, whilst seeking to retain as far as possible the character of the building and to minimise any overall impact on the openness or character of the Green Belt.
- 4.10 As such, in terms of the land use, this remains unaltered and therefore the use should be deemed wholly acceptable on this basis as it has already have been deemed appropriate in the Green Belt having regard to the principle of proportionate additions to existing buildings is expressly stated as being acceptable within the NPPF. Therefore, subject to matters of scale in the context of the existing building, the principle of the proposed extension should be deemed acceptable in planning policy terms and is in full accord with the Oshwal Centre Strategy as submitted for consideration by Senior Officers and Members.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The accompanying full planning application and previously submitted listed building consent application relating to the erection of a single-storey rear extension (to the north side) to provide additional dining space, with internal modifications to facilitate the extension, at the Oshwal Centre, Coopers Lane Road, Northaw follow on from the approval of a similar extension intended for the same purpose granted in 2013.
- 5.2 The restaurant extension is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt as detailed in the NPPF given the planning history of the site and the use of the existing building, as well as the modest and proportionate scale proposed. The principle is therefore acceptable in terms of planning policy, and in particular in Green Belt terms. It lies within the wider context of the Oshwal Centre Strategy which has been provided to the Council as a means of establishing the wider context of individual proposals and which has been subject to consultation through the means of a Development Forum.
- 5.3 The extension is of design and detailing which whilst marginally greater in scale than the previous permission, is wholly fit for purpose and visually in keeping with the form and character of the Grade II listed house. There would be no demonstrable harm arising to the character or appearance of the listed building or the Green Belt, and only minimal loss of historic fabric to facilitate the extension which has a lesser impact overall on the historic fabric of the building than other options. There is a net overall benefit to the historic fabric through the removal of present unsightly extensions to the core building which currently detract from its appearance and its historic integrity.
- 5.4 The extension will genuinely improve and enhance the operation of Oshwal House as the headquarters of the OAUk and will provide a modernised catering provision which is fit for purpose, functional and can be operated efficiently whilst also minimising the impact on the historic structure.
- 5.5 In light of the above, it is respectfully considered that planning permission and listed building consent should be granted for the proposed development.

BEDFORD - BRISTOL - CARDIFF - LEEDS - LONDON - MILTON KEYNES - NOTTINGHAM - RUGBY - SHEFFIELD

BEDFORD

4 Abbey Court
Fraser Road
Priory Business Park
Bedford
MK44 3WH

Tel: 01234 832 740
Fax: 01234 831 266
bedford@dlpconsultants.co.uk

BRISTOL

Broad Quay House (5th floor)
Prince Street
Bristol
BS1 4DJ

Tel: 0117 905 8850
bristol@dlpconsultants.co.uk

CARDIFF

Sophia House
28 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2064 6810
cardiff@dlpconsultants.co.uk

LEEDS

Princes Exchange
Princes Square
Leeds
LS1 4HY

Tel: 0113 280 5808
leeds@dlpconsultants.co.uk

LONDON

The Green House
41-42 Clerkenwell Green
London
EC1R 0DU

Tel: 020 3761 5390
london@dlpconsultants.co.uk

MILTON KEYNES

Midsummer Court
314 Midsummer Boulevard
Milton Keynes
MK9 2UB

Tel: 01908 440 015
Fax: 01908 357 750
miltonkeynes@dlpconsultants.co.uk

NOTTINGHAM

1 East Circus Street
Nottingham
NG1 5AF

Tel: 01158 966 620
nottingham@dlpconsultants.co.uk

SHEFFIELD / SPRU

Ground Floor
V1 Velocity Village
Tenter Street
Sheffield
S1 4BY

Tel: 0114 228 9190
Fax: 0114 272 1947
sheffield@dlpconsultants.co.uk

**WILBRAHAM ASSOCIATES
RUGBY**

18a Regent Place
Rugby
Warwickshire
CV21 2PN

Tel: 01788 562 233
info@wilbrahamassociates.co.uk