

Dr Tom Taylor
Conservation Adviser
The Victorian Society
1 Priory Gardens
London W4 1TT

Dear Mr Kerr,

Thanks very much for consulting us about these proposals. I'm sorry our response is a little late, but hope that our comments can still be taken into account.

We have no objections in principle to this scheme. Although the proposed new additions are fairly extensive, they will cause little harm to the significance of either the stables or the hall by affecting their settings. The location of the additions mostly reflects lost historic elements, and although their design is unsympathetic, the massing is modest.

We endorse the comments of the AMS about the covering over of the fireplace in the groom's room, and the extent of the glazing generally. More specifically, however, we have serious concerns about the glazing in of the carriage-entrance. The existing archway is a key feature of the building; it is an important part of the setting of Cedar House and a defining element of the stable's architectural character, and hence makes a strong contribution to the significance of the listed building. The proposals are to glaze in this archway on both sides, and to insert a large new staircase against the northern opening. Both the glazing and the highly visible staircase will totally change the character of this part of the building, emphasizing the loss of the arch's function and the domestication of the stable block. This change will not only harm the significance of the stable block directly, but also harm the significance of Cedar House by altering its setting. We thus dispute the suggestion in the heritage statement that there will be a 'lack of significant change' on the north side of the stables.

In principle, we can see that a conversion of these stables would need to include the adaptation of the carriage arch as an internal space. The present proposals, however, are extremely insensitive to the qualities of the building at this point, in the way the adaptation is designed. As the AMS point out, a key part of the character of the stables is the extensive joinery (shutters, plank doors, etc.). Much of this joinery is to be destroyed and replaced by glazing, which will change the character of the building drastically. Perhaps the most prominent piece of the joinery is the pair of gates which close the carriage archway. These gates when closed make a strong contribution to the significance of the stable block by declaring its ancillary character on the building's most visible side. From the photographs provided it seems plausible that their fabric may also be historic, although that has not been made clear. The loss of these gates is not assessed in the application, in terms of either loss to fabric or change in character, but we suggest that it would have a large impact on the character of the building.

This impact could be much reduced if the existing gates were retained and fixed closed as part of the conversion of the archway to a staircase hall. The retention of the gates would preserve the character of the stables on this important side, and

would screen the new staircase from view. The gap between the top of the gates and the arch would still allow for some glazing here; the advantages to the applicants of floor-to-ceiling glazing in this arch are anyway not extensive — the opening is north-facing, will be partially obscured by the new stairs, and is not proposed as a point of entry. We strongly recommend that your authority seeks revisions to the proposals along these lines.

We must finally point out that the proposed landscape changes — the proposed new access drive, the associated loss of the driveway linking the vicarage and stables, and the planting of a new hedge between the two buildings — also represent a significant change on the north side of the site. The changes will obscure the visual link between the buildings, which will harm the significance of both. We recommend that this aspect of the proposals is reconsidered.

Overall, although we think the principle of conversion acceptable, we have concerns about the current application as detailed above, and recommend that your authority withholds consent and seeks revisions to the proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Tom