

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 10

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 6 September 2017

Ward: Abbey

Application No.: 170987/LBC

Address: Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading

Proposal: Internal alterations including, refurbishment of cafe and bar areas, replacement of bar area steps with new steps and wheelchair platform lift, replacement partition walls, refurbishment of toilets, replacement lighting and additional doors

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Date received: 19 June 2017

Application target decision date: 14th August 2017

Extension of time decision date: 11th September 2017

RECOMMENDATION

The application to be referred to the Secretary of State; and the Secretary of State to be informed that were the Local Planning Authority in the position to do so it would have GRANTED consent subject to the following conditions and informatives:

Conditions

1. The works to which this consent relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: in accordance with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Unless such work is clearly and specifically referred to on drawings or other documents approved, no features of architectural or historic interest such as cornices, decorative plasterwork, doors, linings, shutters, panelling, floorboards, fireplaces, lath and plaster ceilings may be altered, replaced or removed without the prior written approval of the local planning authority. Any such features encountered during the work but not specifically referred to in the approved documents shall be drawn to the attention of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building and in accordance with the requirements of Reading Borough Council planning policy CS33.

3. The following, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the relevant part of the work is begun:

a) Manufacturer's details of the insulation materials and the method of fixing to the roof are to be provided;

b) Plan and elevation, with materials annotated, of new secondary windows at a minimum

scale of 1:10;

c). Plan and section drawings, with materials annotated, of all new doors at a minimum scale of 1:10 with typical moulding and architrave details at a scale of 1:1.

d) Manufacturer's details of the wheelchair platform lift for the proposed works are to be provided; and

e) Typical details of handrails and balustrading at a scale of 1:10 including materials, finish and method of fixing.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building and in accordance with the requirements of Reading Borough Council planning policy CS33.

Informatives

1. This consent relates only to the following plans, drawings and documents and the works hereby approved shall be carried out in all respects in accordance with the submitted application, supporting information and accompanying drawings:

Location Plan CSS/16/001/TH/01 1:1250 @ A3

Block Plan CSS/16/001/TH/02 1:500 @ A1

Existing Floor Plan - Ground CSS/16/001/TH/03 1:100 @ A1

Proposed Floor Plan - Ground CSS/16/001/TH/04 1:100 @ A1

Existing Floor Plan - First CSS/16/001/TH/05 1:100 @ A1

Proposed Floor Plan - First CSS/16/001/TH/06 1:100 @ A1

Existing Floor Plan - Second CSS/16/001/TH/07 1:100 @ A1

Proposed Floor Plan - Second CSS/16/001/TH/08 1:100 @ A1

Site Plan - The Reading Story 1614-01 NTS @ A3

General Layout Plan - The Reading Story 1614-03 1:33 @ A3

Planning Statement, Design & Access Statement incorporating a Historical Analysis
Received on 16th June 2017

This is to ensure that the works carried out are fully in accordance with the approved drawings and details in order to protect the special historic and architectural character of the listed building, in accordance with Policy CS33 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015).

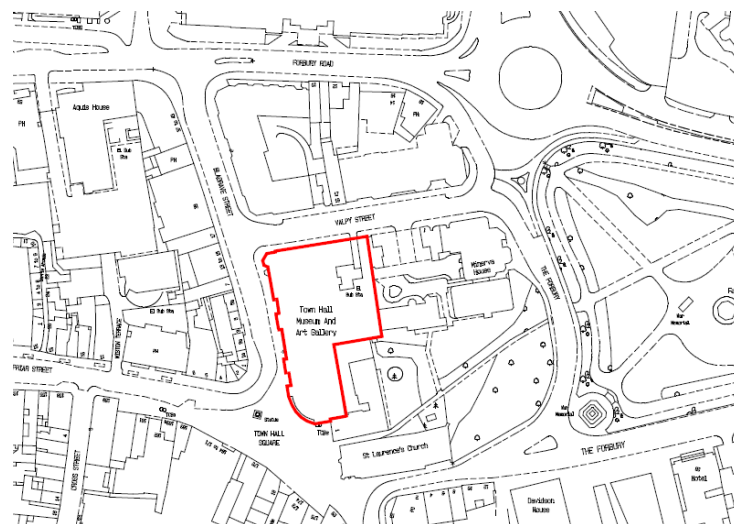
2. For the avoidance of doubt, no other works are approved except those as authorised by this Consent. Any other works required to the Listed Building may require a separate application for Listed Building Consent and/or an application for Permitted Works to a Listed Building.

3. Adequate protection and support to the building(s) and adjacent structures shall be provided to the satisfaction of the local planning authority at all times during the work. Sufficient care shall be taken in the design and execution of all work, including any demolition and the preparation and the erection of any scaffolding, to ensure that no damage is incurred to the historic fabric of the listed building.

4. Officers have worked positively and proactively with the applicant to enable consent to be granted.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Town Hall is a listed building located on the east side of Blagrove Street within Reading Town centre. The clock tower part of the building, designed by Alfred Waterhouse, is Grade II* listed whilst the other parts of the building are Grade II listed. The site is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The Town Hall was built in several phases between 1786 and 1897. The earlier Georgian part of the building is now hidden behind the later Victorian additions which front Blagrove Street and Valpy Street. The Victorian building's architectural styling was established with the building of the extension designed by Alfred Waterhouse in 1875. The building is in the French Gothic Style with red and grey brickwork facade with terracotta ornamentation. This has been carried forward in the additions that followed.
- 1.3 Waterhouse's design included a Clock Tower over the entrance which provides a focal point at the end of Friar Street and there is a second tower designed to provide a landmark feature from the Market Place. Within the urban context the towers signify the importance of this municipal building. The Waterhouse building is modest in its scale, comprising of two storeys (with attic space) whilst the Clock Tower is five storeys.
- 1.4 The town's municipal administration used the building until the Council decided to construct new civic offices. In 1976 the Council moved out to the newly built Reading Civic Centre. The library remained up until 1985, when it moved to the new central library on the King's Road. Following these moves there were plans to demolish the Town Hall and replace it with a new cultural centre but these were subsequently dropped in favour of a major restoration and refurbishment to the building. This work commenced in 1986 and was completed in 2000. The Town Hall now houses the Museum & Art Gallery of Reading, the Concert hall, the Waterhouse Chamber, the Victoria Hall, several conference rooms, a public cafe and the 3B's Cafe and Bar. The building also includes office accommodation for the Council's Arts and Theatre Service and the Berkshire Coroner.



2. PLANNING HISTORY

910804 - External sign (unilluminated) in 250mm high gold Times Roman Type face to read Gift Shop to west (Blagrove St) elevation - Granted

900527 - Internal refurbishment and alteration to provide enlarged museum facility with disabled access in materials to match existing - Granted

010573 - Installation of 2 no. vertical Sliding sash timber windows, to be in keeping with existing windows, to the Earley Charities Room, including soldier courses above heads to match - Granted

060052 - Exterior signage - 2no. Non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors - Granted

061330 - Exterior signage - 2no. Non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors - Granted

171223 - Erection of a galvanised walkway to assist with access for maintenance of ventilating plant to the roof of the Huntley & Palmers Gallery of the museum - Under Consideration

3. PROPOSALS

3.1 Listed Building Consent is sought for various internal alterations to the building. A detailed scope and description of works as well as annotated plans have been submitted as part of the application. In summary the proposed works include:

- Refurbishment of servery and bar installations in the 3B's Bar & Café area, original building fabric to be retained including wrought iron columns supporting the Victoria Hall above (Ground Floor).
- Steps and landing in the 3B's Bar & Café, leading to the toilets and entrance/exit are to be removed and replaced with new DDA and Part M compliant steps, landing and wheelchair accessible platform lift.
- Partitions in the Soane Room currently enclosing a store to be removed to increase space and natural light (Ground Floor).
- Existing Gallery area currently used to store and display museum loan boxes to have rolling storage racks and security screens removed to enable the creation of two formal Ceremony Rooms and Waiting area. Removal of timber louvres to windows and false roof beams together with installation of secondary glazing to windows and replacement light fittings also proposed (Ground Floor).
- Existing Servery and Café area behind the Main Reception Desk is to be stripped out and refitted for create new Reception Area and Souvenir Shop (Ground Floor).

- Display cases and graphics in the main Gallery to be replaced with enhanced new display cases and audio visual displays depicting "The Reading Story" (Ground Floor).
- Refurbishment of non-original customer toilets throughout, including replacement of all sanitary ware, cubicles, partitions, suspended ceiling and lighting and new timber entrance doors. To include DDA and Part M compliant unisex wheelchair accessible cubicles (Ground, First & Second Floors).
- Minor alterations to the Victorian Gallery and the adjacent Victorian Classroom to enable creation of Coroner's Inquest and Jury/Family Rooms. Including replacement suspended lighting rig, new fire resistant timber doors, formation of new doorway in non-original stud wall, new doorway to rear of existing store area to form new lobby corridor, removal of false beams and imitation classroom fittings and installation of sink unit and supply (Second Floor).
- New insulation to the roof areas of the Concert Hall, Silchester and Victorian Gallery, Victoria Hall and Madjeski Gallery. Sheep wool fibre between floor joists and 'Pavadentro' or similar 80mm thick rigid wood fibre boards installed between vertical wall studs and rafters coated with natural lime render with boards to be fixed in position via softwood timber battens screwed to studs and rafters (Roofspace).

3.2 The new spaces and room layout proposed will be formed using lightweight demountable partitions, which together with glass partitions and doors will allow for flexible layouts which can be removed or altered without structural implications.

3.3 The proposed alterations and refurbishments are internal only, no work is proposed to the exterior of the building.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Historic England

4.1 No comments, advise to seek the views of our own specialist conservation adviser.

RBC Heritage Consultant

4.2 No objections, subject to conditions.

Public Consultation

4.3 Neighbouring premises adjoining the site were notified of the application by letter and a site notice was displayed on Blagrave Street. The proposals were also advertised in the local newspaper.

4.4 No comments have been received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

5.2 In accordance with Part 13 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended) where a local planning authority requires listed building consent for the demolition, alterations or extension of a listed building in their area or conservation area consent for the demolition of a building within a conservation area in their area, the authority shall make application to the Secretary of State for that consent.

5.3 This application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008, 2015)

CS33 - Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

6. APPRAISAL

i) Effect on the Historic Character of the Listed Building and the setting of Heritage Assets

The alterations are largely confined to the ground floor of the building but general decoration and carpeting is proposed throughout to all floors as part of an overall refurbishment of the building. Toilets to all floors are also to be refurbished with reconfigured entrance doors, facilities and layouts. This relates to non-original features of the building and is not considered to affect its historic character.

Alterations of note include the reconfiguration of the gallery and loan box store areas to create formal ceremony areas. The reconfiguration relates to removal of existing modern addition reversible partition walls and replacement with new, also reversible, partition walls. Similar changes are proposed to the Soane Room. As per the existing situation these partition walls would create a new non-permanent configuration and do not affect the historic core layout of the

building. The use of lightweight demountable partitions and glass throughout will be reversible and would allow for the significance of the building to be revealed to the public and would not disturb original features of special interest. Similarly removal of non-original timber window louvres, ceiling beams and replacement lighting rigs would not cause harm to the historic fabric of the building. Should consent be granted it is considered reasonable to secure detailed plans of the proposed secondary glazing which can be secured by way of a suitably worded condition.

The proposed reconfiguration of the reception and cafe area relates to replacement of non-original structures, including desks, servery areas and display cabinets.

The refurbishments to the ground floor café area also relate to replacement of existing non-original installations such as bar, kitchen and servery areas. Whilst modest the most significant alteration to this part of the building is removal of an existing corner step and balustrade railings which lead up to the toilets and southern entrance lobby to the building. Historic plans have been submitted accompanying the application which indicate that these steps, balustrade and the landing are not original and together with the toilets were installed as part of work undertaken in the 1980's. It is proposed to replace these elements with a straight, rather than angled set of stairs, new DDA compliant wheelchair platform lift and new balustrade rail. Loss of these features is therefore not considered to result in any harm to the historic character of the building however, it is considered reasonable to secure details of the platform lift and replacement balustrade rail by way of suitably worded condition to ensure suitable materials and method of fixing of the original fabric of the building.

Within the café area it is noted that the original wrought iron columns which support the Victorian Hall above are to be retained. This is welcomed and is significant in preserving the historic character of this part of the building.

To the first floor the proposed alterations (other than to the toilets) are confined to the Victorian Gallery and the adjacent Victorian Classroom, to facilitate use of this part of the building and formal accommodation for the coroner. A new doorway is proposed to the rear of the existing store area for the classroom to form a new lobby area from the adjacent corridor. This is a modest alteration to the original fabric but to ensure suitable appearance (moulding and architrave) and use of materials it is considered reasonable, if consent were to be granted, to secure more detailed plans by way of a suitably worded condition of all new doors in order to ensure the historic character of the building is preserved. Other alterations to this part of the building relate to changes to non-original partition walls and removal of temporary classroom features fixtures and replacement light fittings which are not considered contribute to the building historic character.

It is considered reasonable to secure additional specification and details of method of fixing to the original fabric of the building for the proposed roof

insulation in order to ensure appropriate techniques which would preserve the historic character of the listed building.

The proposed internal alterations would not directly affect any features of architectural or historic interest and are largely confined to the re-configuration or to non-original features of the building. The proposals would enhance the visitor and user experience and would therefore help to sustain the building in an economically viable use compatible with its original function and are considered to accord with Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy 2008, 2015.

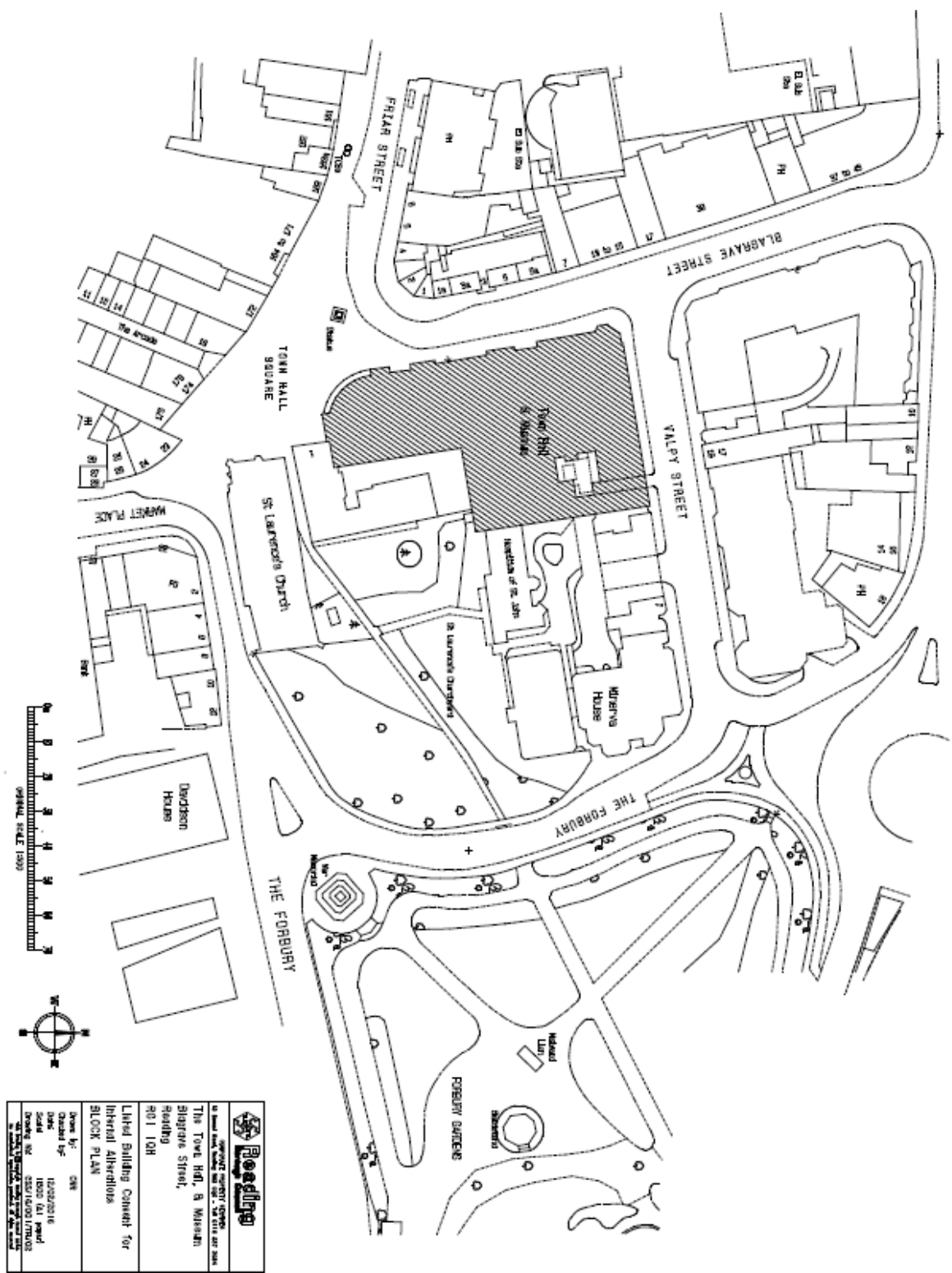
ii) Equality


6.13 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current application) that the protected groups would have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

7. CONCLUSION

The application to be referred to the Secretary of State; and the Secretary of State to be informed that were the Local Planning Authority in the position to it would have GRANTED consent subject to conditions and informatives.

Case Officer: Matt Burns



	
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The Town Hall, & Museum Shagreen Street, Reading RG1 1QH	
Latest Building Consent for Internal Alterations BLOCK PLAN	
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