

<b>Planning Committee Report</b>	
<b>Planning Ref:</b>	LB/2020/0909
<b>Site:</b>	St. Marys Guildhall Bayley Lane
<b>Ward:</b>	St Michaels
<b>Proposal:</b>	Listed Building Consent: Internal and external repairs and alterations including a new kitchen
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Liam D'Onofrio

## SUMMARY

Listed Building Consent is sought for various internal and external repairs and alterations to the Grade I listed St. Marys Guildhall in order to provide improved facilities and visitor experience. The Council's Conservation Officer notes that St Mary's Guildhall is one of the most important buildings in Coventry and possibly the United Kingdom and it has a long history as a public building, to which the proposed changes will extend and enhance.

## KEY FACTS

<b>Reason for report to committee:</b>	Requested by Councillor Bally Singh and more than five objections have been received.
<b>Status of site:</b>	Grade I listed building

## RECOMMENDATION

Planning committee are recommended to grant planning permission, subject to conditions listed within the report.

## REASON FOR DECISION

- The proposal will not adversely impact upon the character or setting of the Grade I listed building.
- The proposal accords with Policies DE1 and HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016, Policies CC2 and CC13 of the City Centre Area Action Plan 2016 together with the aims of the NPPF.

## APPLICATION PROPOSAL

Listed Building Consent is sought for internal and external repairs and alterations to the building in order to provide improved facilities and visitor experience. The scope of work includes:

- The restoration of the medieval kitchen, as part of the area open to the public.
- The demolition of a modern toilet block and erection of a new working kitchen extension at the rear (south elevation).
- A new platform lift and opening between the medieval kitchen to the Muniment Room.
- A new lift from the medieval kitchen scullery to the gallery outside the Great Hall.
- A new spiral stair within the Great Hall up to the Minstrel's Gallery.
- A new balcony and stairs linking the Armoury to the Bridge.
- The re-opening of the door from the entrance archway into the Mercer's Room.
- External repairs to the roof, rainwater goods, masonry, windows and doors.
- Internal refurbishment, visitor reception and improved WCs.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site relates to the Grade I listed St Mary's Guildhall. The building is located on the southern side of Bayley Lane opposite the Grade I listed Cathedral ruins. The Grade II listed Council House wraps around the east and south of the site and the Grade II\* listed Cottage and Castle Yard is located to the west. The site is within the Hill Top Conservation Area and the Cathedral and Cultural Area of the City Centre. The site is also within the Archaeological constraint area of the Medieval city.

## PLANNING HISTORY

There have been a number of historic planning applications on this site; the following are the most recent/relevant:

Application Number	Description of Development	Decision and Date
LB/2019/2321	Listed Building Consent for enabling works including removal of modern finishes within the kitchen area	Granted 08/11/19
FUL/2020/0908	New kitchen extension	Pending

## POLICY

### National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. The NPPF increases the focus on achieving high quality design and states that it is "fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve".

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) adds further context to the NPPF and it is intended that the two documents are read together.

### Local Policy Guidance

The current local policy is provided within the Coventry Local Plan 2016, which was adopted by Coventry City Council on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017. Relevant policy relating to this application is:

Policy DE1 Ensuring High Quality Design

Policy HE2: Conservation and Heritage Assets

### City Centre AAP 2016:

Policy CC2: Enhancement of Heritage Assets

Policy CC13: Cathedral and Cultural Area

### Supplementary Planning Guidance/ Documents (SPG/ SPD):

Hill Top Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

## CONSULTATION

No objections subject to conditions have been received from:

- Historic England
- The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)

- Conservation (CCC)
- Archaeology (CCC)

Immediate neighbours and local councillors have been notified; a site notice was posted on 07/05/20. A press notice was displayed in the Coventry Telegraph on 07/05/20.

13 letters of objection have been received, raising the following material planning considerations:

- The ugly spiral stair case is not a disabled access, why have it at all. There are many other ways to access to the Armoury than a big monstrosity in the middle of the hall.
- The proposed style of the spiral stair would spoil the hall as it must be in keeping with this 14th Century building as it looks like a modern carbuncle stuck onto the medieval balcony
- The spiral staircase is so out of character with the building and the historical architecture
- The spiral staircase is not in keeping with a building that should be the prize of Coventry. It's a wonderful loved building and what is proposed is vandalism.
- The staircase will destroy the perspective and look terribly modern.
- The spiral staircase is completely out of character, detracting from the building; a needless, overtly modern addition, which will not add to accessibility
- The spiral staircase is entirely inappropriate and out of keeping, ruining a listed building and should be redesigned to be more sympathetic.
- The proposed staircase is monstrous, not in keeping with the building.
- St Mary's is a treasure, it should be conserved, not "improved".
- The spiral staircase is out of character with the rest of the building and would be better and in-keeping with the building if it was to be made of wood and rectangular / perhaps an in-keeping straight stair instead.
- The 21st century design spiral staircase is out of character a design suitable for a 14th century building is needed

Four objections have been received that are unclear. It is understood that the Coventry Society raised concern with the spiral staircase on their social media and the following comments are therefore likely to reference this specific element rather than the wider scheme:

- Couldn't be uglier. Got married there 4 years ago and that would put me right off.
- This is not in keeping with the building.
- This does not fit in with the surroundings.
- Adequate access already exists for anyone without disability, visitor numbers to the hall have always been small with even fewer taking trouble to go up to the next floor, disabled access is unviable, so why bother with this pointless, out of context addition.

The Coventry Society initially objected to the scheme; however, they have subsequently confirmed no objection; but identify two major concerns:

- The proposed spiral stair has drawn over 200 negative comments on our social media. It could be made less dominant; but its location in the hall is the major concern and we have no alternative to offer
- Another concern is the proposed platform lift that would only connect the ground and first floors. It looks as incongruous as the stair lift that is to be removed. The plan is to move the bar from first to second floor. This would leave the bar inaccessible to those who can't climb a stair. This does not seem to comply with DDA or the Equality Act.

Would it be possible to move the lift southwards to be a freestanding glass tower serving 3 levels?

Councillor Bally Singh has asked for objections regarding the spiral staircase be considered by committee:

- the design is not in keeping with the heritage of the Guildhall and overpowers the sense of space inside. It is an intrusion to the historic building.
- Suggestions for an alternative would be to respect the Coventry weave heritage in the design, or maybe incorporate a more traditional staircase with glass sides to open up the sense of space.

Two letters of support have been received, raising the following material planning considerations:

- r) The application is supported but closing the Guildhall for building works during the City of Culture Year should be avoided
- s) Support for the levelling of the currently uneven flagstones in the yard area.

Within the letters received the following non-material planning considerations were raised, these cannot be given due consideration in the planning process:

- t) Health and safety of people using the spiral staircase (regarding slips and falls).

Any further comments received will be reported within late representations.

## **APPRAISAL**

The main issue in determining this Listed Building Consent application is the impact upon the character and setting of the heritage asset.

### **Assessment**

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting when considering whether to grant a planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting.

NPPF Paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. NPPF Paragraph 196 indicates that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, as in this case, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Local Plan Policy HE2 reflects NPPF policy and states that development proposals involving heritage assets in general and listed buildings in particular, should acknowledge the significance of the existing building and the area by means of their siting, massing, form, scale, materials and detail.

The CCAAP Policy CC2 'Enhancement of Heritage Assets' states, amongst other things, that all development relating to heritage assets shall be undertaken sympathetically and seek to preserve or enhance their setting.

The Council's Conservation Officer has raised no objection to the scheme, confirming support of the opening-up of the medieval kitchen to public display and enjoyment. The new kitchen extension is recognised as a necessary consequence of this benefit and it will be located in a less prominent area to the south side of the complex, enclosed by the Council House. The proposed design is considered simple and generally appropriate to its relationship with the main historic building and the new extension will also require the welcome demolition of a modern WC block.

In terms of the internal changes the Conservation Officer considers the installation of a new platform lift and passenger lift, a new balcony and stair from the armoury to the bridge, new WCs and the opening of the door to the Mercers' Room to rationalise circulation to be well considered and again follow as a consequence of the larger changes.

The Conservation Officer notes that the boldest intervention is the spiral staircase in the Great Hall, St Mary's finest internal space; however, the need for this intervention is considered justified in the supporting application documents and accepted. The staircase will be the signature of this phase of interventions into the building as other interventions such as Burgess's muniment room have their own value as phases in the building's evolution. The Conservation Officer considers that the spiral staircase will be highly visible and suggests a glazed or light timber balustrade to help give the staircase a distinct identity and underscore its status as a positive intervention.

Historic England and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Building's (SPAB) have also commented on the scheme and sought clarifications, including stonework repair details and design alterations to the spiral staircase (reflecting the Council's Conservation Officer comments). An amended set of plans has been received providing additional clarification details and an updated design solution for the spiral staircase.

Historic England confirm their support for the scheme on heritage grounds based upon the amended plans and additional supporting information and state that the revised spiral staircase design addresses the issue of providing a less intrusive design by introducing a metal balustrade and retains welcome design elements such as the proposed elephant finial. HE states that they take no issue with the need for a spiral staircase to improve the access to this part of the building, which is only possible at present via a difficult and very narrow spiral stone staircase. The location proposed is where the evidence indicates that there was a staircase historically (SPAB indicate this staircase was removed in C1826).

Historic England have requested conditions to secure an appropriate Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), conservation details for a 16th century wall painting on the west wall of the Great Hall and stonework repair details.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) state that they appreciate all the additional information that has been provided and do not object to the proposals. Although there are still some concerns regarding the spiral staircase specifically, SPAB confirm that they appreciate that the design of the spiral stairs has now been simplified, and that some clarification of their queries has been provided. Therefore, if considered appropriate by the Council's Conservation Officer, they lift their initial objection to the spiral staircase. In terms of other elements of the scheme SPAB consider there are areas where improvements could be made in terms of the detailing and design and in these

cases conditions are suggested to secure further information, in particular in relation to the window and stone repairs, where missing information includes details of the mortar mixes, shelter coats etc.

The scheme involves a number of internal and external repairs and alterations; although the proposed spiral staircase is the focus of concern for residents. These representations were received prior to the amendments to the spiral staircase design. Officers are content that this element has been properly justified and the design refined to the satisfaction of the Heritage consultees. Overall the harm to the Grade I listed building is identified as less than substantial.

The NPPF Paragraph 196 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. In this case the scheme seeks to provide improved facilities and visitor experience, providing significant public benefits.

### **Archaeology**

The site is within an area of archaeological constraint. The Council's Archaeologist states that some of proposed works have the potential to reveal earlier historic fabric or archaeological deposits. The Archaeologist echoes HE in requesting an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) condition.

### **Equality Implications**

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states: -

- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Officers have taken this into account and given due regard to this statutory duty, and the matters specified in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 in the determination of this application.

There are no known equality implications arising directly from this development.

There can be limitations to providing disabled access throughout a historic building. In this case careful thought has been given to improving public accessibility within the building and the proposed new lift to the Great Hall is a major access improvement.

In terms of the Coventry Society's comments regarding the moving of the lift south to serve all three floors, the applicant has commented that this would move the lift into the Medieval Kitchen damaging this space and access would breach the timber framing, which is far more damaging to historic fabric.

The applicant has clarified that at present there is a modern bar within the Gallery at the top of the stairs, at the entrance to the Great Hall; however, this is considered unsightly and restricts access within this historic space, which has fine tapestry wall hangings. It is proposed to remove the bar and return this space to a single volume. The only suitably sized alternative space that can be used for serving drinks is the Armoury; however, due to the age and complexity of the building this space cannot be made wheel chair accessible. The applicant has clarified that there is no one room which will be allocated as a bar, as drinks could be served from pop-up bars in the various function rooms. The Great Hall is the largest space and will have the most need for a bar.

### **Conclusion**

The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle and will not result in any significant impact upon the character or setting of the listed building. The reason for Coventry City Council granting planning permission is because the development is in accordance with Policies DE1 and HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016, Policies CC2 and CC13 of the City Centre Area Action Plan 2016 together with the aims of the NPPF.

### **CONDITIONS:/REASON**

1. The works hereby approved shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this consent.

**Reason:** *To conform with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)*

2. The works hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the details in the application documentation and shown on the following approved plans: Drg No. 01, 200E, 201B, 202B, 203B, 210, 211, 212, 217, 220C, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 230A, 231B, 232B, 234, 235B, 236B, 237B, 238C, 239A, 245, 246, 247, 248, 250B, 251, 253A (Floor plans), 253A (elevations), 254A, 255A, 256C, 257, 258, 259, 260, 320, 321, 322, 323A, 324B, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329A, 330, 331, 332A, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 400A, 401B, 402A, 1842-E100 P1, E100K P1, E101 P1, E102 P1, E200 P1, E201 P1, E202 P1, M100 P2, M101 P1, M300 P1, M700K P1, St Mary's Hall, Coventry: Kitchen - Roof and floor James Edgar, Historic Buildings Consultant Investigation & recording February 2020, St Mary's Hall, Coventry: Kitchen - North Arcade & South Wall of Hall James Edgar, Historic Buildings Consultant Investigation & recording February 2020, St Mary's Hall, Coventry: Kitchen - East wall James Edgar, Historic Buildings Consultant Investigation & recording February 2020, St Mary's Hall, Coventry: Undercroft James Edgar, Historic Buildings Consultant Investigation & recording February 2020, St Mary's Hall, Coventry: Kitchen - West wall James Edgar, Historic Buildings Consultant Investigation & recording February 2020, St Mary's Hall, Coventry: Kitchen - Scullery & Passage James Edgar, Historic Buildings Consultant Investigation & recording February & March 2020, St Mary's Hall, Coventry: Kitchen - South wall James Edgar, Historic Buildings Consultant Investigation & recording February 2020.

**Reason:** *For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that any works are carried out only in accordance with the terms of this permission in the interests of protecting this heritage asset in accordance with Policy HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016.*

3. No development or any other works shall commence unless and until a written scheme of investigation which shall detail a programme of historic building recording and analysis has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only proceed in full accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** *The submission of these details prior to the commencement of development is fundamental to ensure that an Appropriate record is made of the historic building fabric that may be affected by the development and to ensure that information regarding these heritage assets is preserved by record for this and future generations in accordance with Policy HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016.*

4. Prior to their incorporation into the development hereby permitted, the following details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority;
  - (a) Final material details and colour coatings/finishes to all elements of the spiral staircase and associated alterations to the existing gallery balustrade;
  - (b) External material samples for the kitchen extension;
  - (c) Details of the junction between the medieval building and the new kitchen extension; and
  - (d) Decorative finishes and colours to be used externally to the new kitchen extension's doors, windows, frames and external stairs.These details shall be installed in full accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development and thereafter shall be retained and shall not be removed or altered in any way.

**Reason:** *To ensure that the development has a satisfactory external appearance and protect this heritage asset in accordance with Policies DE1 and HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016.*

5. Notwithstanding the approved details, prior to the commencement of each of the elements identified below further details shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:
  - (i) A detailed technical specification of the elevational stonework repairs, lime mortar mix ratios and shelter coat details. It should be demonstrated that de-frassing of the stonework will be avoided as much as possible and only used where absolutely necessary given its potential to remove the patina of wear to soft stone;
  - (ii) A detailed technical specification of the window and glass repairs;
  - (iii) A detailed technical specification of the re-laying of existing stone flags to the courtyard. All stone flags shall be reused or repaired in the first instance. Where stone flags have to be replaced the report shall identify on plan and by photograph the relevant stone flags with (i) a brief explanation as to why they cannot be reused or repaired and (ii) materials details of new or reclaimed stone flags;



- (iv) Large scale drawings and joinery sections of the new outer doors to the Cloister entrance to provide simplified glazed design that does not compete with the historic architecture;
  - (v) A detailed report of the proposed extent and method of conservation of the 16th Century wall painting on the west wall of the Great Hall; and
  - (vi) A detailed record and analysis of the section of the Great Hall balustrade which will be removed to accommodate the spiral staircase.
- These details shall proceed and be completed in full accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** *To ensure that the development has a satisfactory external appearance and protect this heritage asset in accordance with Policies DE1 and HE2 of the Coventry Local Plan 2016.*