

NOTES FOR TECH		
APPLICATION PROPOSAL		Ref No 22/502021/LBC
Listed Building Consent for internal works and erection of single storey rear extension to facilitate conversion of offices to form 7(no) residential units.		
ADDRESS 17 Albion Place Maidstone Kent ME14 5EQ		
RECOMMENDATION - Application Permitted		
WARD High Street	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL	APPLICANT Mr J Mills AGENT E P Architects Ltd
DECISION DUE DATE 29/07/22	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 26/07/22	

Relevant planning history

22/502019 - Change of use from offices to form 7 residential units, including demolition of temporary cycle cover and erection of single storey side extension – Pending consideration

Site description

17 Albion Place is a semi-detached, Grade II listed, property on the western side of Albion Place and opposite the junction with Andrew Broughton Way. The former dwelling building dates from c.1830s; and until recently it had been used for office accommodation but is now redundant. The adjoining property (15 Albion Place), is also Grade II listed and there are other listed properties to the south. The current use of the building is as an office and there is vehicle access to the side of the property. For the purposes of the Local Plan the proposal site is within Maidstone town centre.

Proposal

The application is described as follows: *Listed Building Consent for internal works and erection of single storey rear extension to facilitate conversion of offices to form 7(no) residential units.*

Further details of the proposed works will be discussed further on in the report.

Policy and considerations

Maidstone Local Plan (2017): SP18, DM1, DM4
National Planning Policy Framework (2021) & National Planning Practice Guidance
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Consultee responses

Councillor English: Wishes to call in 22/502021 should it be recommended for refusal as in his view the application would be capable of providing a reasonable standard of design and habitability.

Conservation Officer: Raises no objection to proposal in heritage terms (see main report).

Georgian Group: Initially raised objection to development but made no further comments on the amended scheme (see main report).

Historic England: It is their view LPA do not need to notify them of this application.

Neighbour responses: No representations received.

CONSIDERATIONS

Main issues

In determining such applications, regard must be given to the statutory duty of section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, where special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, or their setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess, must be given.

Policy SP18 of the Local Plan relates to the historic environment and requires that (inter-alia) the characteristics of heritage assets are protected, and design is sensitive to heritage assets and their setting. Policy DM4 of the Local Plan also relates to development affecting designated heritage assets, and requires applicants to ensure that new development affecting heritage assets conserve, and where possible enhance, the significance of the heritage asset.

The NPPF sets out what should be considered in terms of conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 197 and 199 states:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Assessment

The key issues arising from this application are the impact upon the historic and architectural integrity of the Grade II listed building, its significance and its features of special interest.

The Council's Conservation Officer initially objected to the proposal for a number of reasons and concluded as follows:

At present, proposal is considered to cause substantial harm (at low end of scale) as it would result in loss of plan form, loss/harm to historic fabric and creation of inappropriate extension. There are several issues that have not been considered which could result in substantial harm to historic fabric.

There are some public benefits to scheme by bringing a redundant building back into active, sustainable use and improvement works, such as replacing standard doors with four-panel doors, but at present, these are not considered to be sufficient to outweigh the harm of the proposed works.

However, after raising these objections and then visiting the site, the Conservation Officer made the following comments (in summary):

Building is 3-storey, plus basement and semi-detached. Ground floor is partially rusticated, with offset front entrance door with columns and flat hood surround (which have been painted in textured masonry paint). Front entrance door is modern 6-panel door. Upper floors have mock ashlar/lined finish. Side elevation has painted render (cement) finish.

Ground floor sash window retains original bottom sash (with glazing bars removed) and new top sash with horns. On site, retention of this window was discussed, and it was agreed that window

will be retained. First and second floors retain original sash windows with glazing bars, and these will be sensitively repaired. Secondary glazing has (historically) been installed to much of building in form of lift out glazed units, and it is proposed to retain these but hinge them where possible. Discussion followed about impact of hinge (due to weight concerns) and further info was requested. Discussion also undertaken on slim-lite double-glazed units and use of safety/acoustic glass for front elevation windows (which do not appear to have historic glass).

As part of proposed works, external elevations will be decorated to match existing, which is currently a mix of textured and smooth masonry paint. Whilst applicant would like to remove cement render (mainly to side elevation), cost and concern for historic fabric underneath prevents this work. However, it was agreed that a low-level section of blown/cracked render would be carefully removed, with substrate allowed to breathe, before a new lime render applied, with a lime wash finish. (This will help control damp seen within internal wall and protect historic fabric).

Front elevation retains ornate balustrade, and part of proposal will be decorated with floor of balcony repaired. Front garden is currently laid to paving slabs, with original boundary fence between properties remaining. As part of possible future works (dependant on finding correct materials), owner would like to replace concrete slabs with stone slabs and improve boundary treatment.

Interior: Interior has been stripped of much of its wall covering, and where evidence remains, this was wood chip paper applied directly to lime plaster walls. There is evidence of former painted decoration on walls and where picture rails have been removed to ground floor rooms. Walls have had patch repairs undertaken (often in inappropriate materials) and part of proposed decoration works include replacing these and make good localised areas of impact damage with appropriate lime mortar.

To rear, original wall to side elevation has been retained but has suffered from use of inappropriate materials. Various options of repair were discussed, and it was advised on site to carefully remove sections of cement render at low-medium level and allow to naturally dry before applying a lime plaster. Some sections of plaster were lost with removal of wallpaper, but this does appear to have naturally blown/failed due to high moisture contents of softer brick.

Most ceilings have had textured wallpaper applied. Where previous alterations have been undertaken, such as light fittings, it is clear there is mix of lime plaster and modern overboarding. It was discussed on site most suitable solution, and a general agreement was made. Where there is textured wallpaper, a very fine skim coat of plaster could be applied to provide a smooth finish which would retain and protect fabric underneath. As paper has been painted with modern paint, there would be limited benefit of applying a lime finish. Some of rooms on upper floors have had asbestos tiles applied (noted as suspended ceilings in Heritage Statement), and proposed works look to remove these. Due to asbestos content, it was agreed confirmation of repairs/replacement/etc., would need to be agreed following removal and therefore could be conditioned, with basic agreement of possible options in place.

Much of original joinery remains, such as architraves, picture rail and dado rail (though additional dado rails have been formed within stairwell). Original panel doors have been overboarded, and as part of proposed works, these will be removed. (Heritage Statement noted removal of plain modern doors and replacement with new four panelled doors and upgrading of existing historic doors) To ensure suitable fire protection, smoke seals will be inserted into later additional timber door stops within door frame. Doors should be noted on a plan with upgrading/replacement and details of improving of smoke seals provided. It worth noting that all fireplaces have been historically infilled, and no vents provided. Heritage Statement notes that air vents will be inserted into chimney stacks to vent them.

To intermediate floor/room between ground and first (shown on proposed ground floor plan) which form closet wing, original timber cupboards remain. Again, low-level doors have been overboarded. Following discussions, these are to remain in-situ, with one retaining a function, but other could be over-clad to form a shower room if suitable solution could be provided to protect the fabric.

Principle room (front, first floor) retains decorative plaster coving, with centre being over-boarded with gypsum board and finished in painted paper. Within plaster work, there is evidence of removed picture rail and removed fire surround/infilled fireplace. Large sash windows still allow access to balcony. A discussion was had about safety and the needs of access.

Confirmation of any works to be provided following further discussion with design team and Building Control Officer. Some movement has occurred to building which has resulted in cracking to plasterwork. This appears to be historic and will be repaired/infilled with lime plaster.

Services: Concerns over creation of new services and SVP were discussed. At present SVP is to rear closet wing away from main building. Proposed location of new SVP would be to rear of main house and terminate in basement with existing drainage. Further details, including running of pipework internally needs to be provided to ensure there is no impact on historic fabric. Creation of shower rooms on floor plans was also discussed, and it recommended if this scheme progresses that they should be formed of pods, rather than extensive structures. This would allow protection of plasterwork by allowing a substructure to hang bathroom suite from and allow for partial concealment of pipework. Creation of vents would also need to be considered and details provided.

Rear Extension: Single storey extension is of modern construction (c.1930/40s) and of limited significance. Discussion was undertaken about possible redesign of proposed rear extension to retain linear appearance of property. Justification would be required for any proposed demolition.

Rear Garden: Rear amenity is currently laid to tarmac, with lightweight timber structure (presumably to offer smoking shelter). There is potential to improve appearance and use of large rear garden.

Sub-division: Proposed scheme looks to create 'units' to half-landing rooms to rear 2-storey closet wing, which on existing/proposed plans looks to form part of same level. Extent of sub-division and other options was discussed on site. Number of units would result in increase of need for bathrooms & kitchens, and associated impact of these on floor plan, fabric and loadings on existing structure. Minimal impact (due to reduced services) option would be to create HMO's, which felt to raise other planning concerns.

Drawings: Existing plan shows a wall dividing principle rooms on ground floor, but site visit confirmed this is a large arch which retains decorative plaster surround, and this will be retained on proposed plan. This is not a new opening (Refer to Fig. xiv/ p.18 of Heritage Statement). Onsite it was discussed existing doors should not be infilled but could be secured closed with original fabric retained.

Summary: House retains many original features and elements but has suffered from poor ad-hoc repairs with inappropriate materials. Floor plans remain unaltered. Conversion back to residential would be preferred use, but due to position of one of main roads in town, current owner raised concerns about viability of being used as single dwelling. Further info on viability of single dwelling should be provided as part of impact assessment on proposed harm caused by creation of proposed units. Further clarification should be provided, as noted above, including details of pod's (shower rooms) should be provided, together with understanding of proposed drainage and location of SVP.

Subsequent to the site visit where further discussions between the agent and the Conservation Officer took place, the agent has submitted amended plans for consideration. On review of these details, the Conservation Officer has further concluded as follows (in summary):

Following site visit, revised drawings have been submitted which provide details on services, fire/acoustic protection and amended design for rear extension. Proposed shower rooms have been reduced in size and formed of 'pods' with minimal services - These pods are considered reversible and could be removed with limited harm to fabric (creation of small holes for pipework).

To allow for fire/acoustic protection, it is proposed to install new suspended ceilings, which also allow for running of services. Whilst installation of suspended ceilings would result in a change of appearance of room, they would be reversible and provide a simple, workable solution for services, etc.

Revised scheme looks to retain existing joinery (cupboards, etc). Some cupboards may be overboarded, but this is considered reversible. Revised elevations look to replace ground floor sash window with glazing bars, and it is advised that this window should be retained as is.

Summary: Whilst ideally building should be retained as single dwelling, it is accepted this is unlikely due to position within town centre. Alternative solution needs to be found to ensure building has a sustainable use that causes no or limited harm to building. Revised scheme offers a solution with minimal intervention to historic fabric, and where new fabric (shower pods, suspended ceilings, etc.) these are reversible and will result in limited harm to fabric and significance.

Proposed extension/alterations to rear changes linear form, but simple link has been formed to provide some separation between spaces, allowing them to read as a change. Scheme has been developed and assessed against significance of site and its surrounding heritage assets (NPPF paras 189, 190, 193, 194, 196). Whilst proposed scheme is considered to cause a low degree of harm to historic fabric and form, this harm has been minimised (NPPF para 190) and remaining harm is justified.

The Georgian Group did initially object to the proposal, concluding (in summary):

In its present form, applicants supporting documentation fails to meet one of key requirements set in Chapter 16 of NPPF, that to justify harm which would be caused by proposed works. In order to safeguard significance of listed building's interior we would strongly urge applicant to withdraw application, reduce number of units proposed, and reduce number of harmful interventions within internal fabric. If applicant is unwilling to do so, then LBC should be refused.

The Georgian Group were consulted on the amended plans. This consultation was effectively to a fresh scheme and they have not provided any response to the 'new' development. On this basis, it is therefore assumed that they have no objection to the development.

It is considered that the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the property (at the low end), and in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF this harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Following the Conservation Officer's specialist advice, the significance of the building has been assessed and it is considered that the proposal would cause a low degree of harm to the historic fabric and form of the Grade II listed building. In summary, the less than substantial harm caused to the significance of this Grade II listed property is accepted, given the public benefit of safeguarding an appropriate residential reuse of the building in this sustainable location. On this basis, a recommendation of approval (subject to appropriate recommended conditions) is therefore made.

RECOMMENDATION – Application Permitted subject to the following conditions/reasons:

(1) The works to which this consent relates must be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

(2) The works hereby approved shall not commence until details of the following matters have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:

(i) New internal joinery (including details of: infilling doorways; formation of new doorways; and construction details for shower pods) in the form of large scale drawings (1:10 or 1:20);

- (ii) External joinery details in the form of large scale drawings (1:10 or 1:20) for the new windows in the rear extension hereby approved;
- (iii) Details of works to existing windows;
- (iv) Details of secondary glazing;
- (v) Details of repairs following removal of asbestos;
- (vi) Proposed details of the suspended ceiling; and
- (vii) Details of vents to chimney breasts.

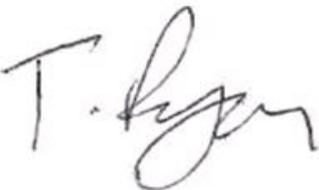
The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: To protect the architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building.

(3) The works hereby approved shall not commence until written details of the external materials to be used in the construction of the rear extension hereby approved have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be constructed using the approved materials and maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: To protect the architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building.

N/A

Delegated Authority to Sign:	Date:
 <p style="text-align: center;">¶</p> <p>PRINT NAME: T Ryan</p>	<p>29.07.2022</p>