

APPLICATION: MA/11/0912 Date: 1 July 2011 Received: 1 July 2011

APPLICANT: Mrs C Parks, Maidstone Borough Council

LOCATION: HAZLITT ARTS CENTRE , ROSE YARD, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME14 1PL

PARISH: Maidstone

PROPOSAL: An application for listed building consent for the introduction of a plant room and associated equipment and staircases to the roof and installation of radiators in Exchange and Rehearsal Rooms (formerly the Corn Exchange) as shown on the site location plan and drawing numbers 1111/BW/01, 1111/BW/02, 1111/BW/03, 1111/BW/04 and 1111/BW/06 and design and access statement, all received 3rd June 2011, and drawing number 1111/BW/05 received 9th June 2011.

AGENDA DATE: 21st July 2011

CASE OFFICER: Catherine Slade

The recommendation for this application is being reported to Committee for decision because:

- the Council is the applicant

1. POLICIES

- Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000: Not applicable.
- South East Plan 2009: BE6
- Village Design Statement: Not applicable.
- Government Policy: PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment
- Other: Maidstone Centre Conservation Area Appraisal

2. HISTORY

- MA/11/0912 Introduction of a plant room and associated equipment and staircases to the roof – CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION

2.1 The proposal site has an extensive development management history, in respect of applications for planning permission, listed building consent and advertisement consent, most of which are not directly applicable to the current proposal. The proposal is the subject of a concurrent application for planning permission, the details of which are set out above.

3. CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1 English Heritage: Comments are awaited and will be reported to Planning Committee as an urgent update.
- 3.2 Maidstone Borough Council Conservation Officer: raises no objection subject to the imposition of conditions requiring the submission and written approval of details of the cladding to the plant room and large scale details of the casings for convectors and pipework, and makes the following detailed comments:

“The external works will be at high level within a complex arrangement of roofs and will not be visible from ground level. There will be no significant impact on the character or appearance of the listed building or of the Conservation Area. The installation of radiators/ convection heaters within the building reflects the arrangements which previously existed prior to the 1980s and would be easily reversible without damage to the historic fabric.”

4. REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 No representations have been received to date.

5. CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Site Description

- 5.1.1 The application site is located within the town centre of Maidstone to the south east of Earl Street, the north east of Market Buildings and the south west of Rose Yard. The site comprises a group of Grade II listed two storey mid nineteenth century buildings of classical form, including a Corn Exchange, with later twentieth century additions and alterations to the rear (Rose Yard).
- 5.1.2 The buildings house the Hazlitt Arts Centre, including an auditorium, gallery and rehearsal and performance spaces, as well as ancillary uses including bars, offices, storage and dressing rooms. The ground floor fronting onto Market Buildings is occupied by retail and commercial units.
- 5.1.3 The site is located within the Maidstone Centre Conservation Area.

5.2 Proposal

- 5.2.1 The application seeks listed building consent for the introduction of a plant room and associated equipment and external staircases to the roof; introduction of an external door and internal staircase to the scenery store to allow access to the roof; the introduction of radiators and associated pipe work and casing to the main auditorium, Exchange Studio, Fourth Wall, Maidstone Room and Youth

Theatre Office; and the introduction of a hatch and retractable ladder to the balcony of the auditorium for access purposes.

- 5.2.2 The works to the exterior of the building would be limited to the roof, and would comprise the introduction of a plant room, and associated internal equipment, which would have a footprint of 26.25m². The proposed structure would be elevated in relation to the roof, and would have a mono pitched roof with a maximum height above roof level of 5m. The plant room would be sited centrally to the roof, and would be screened from view by higher structures to the north west, south west and north east, and immediately adjacent to a cone shaped light well to the interior colonnade to the Market Buildings, located immediately below.
- 5.2.3 The application also includes the introduction of external stairways to allow access to the proposed plant room for maintenance, as well as the introduction of an external door to the gable of the scenery store and associated internal and external stairways to enable safe access to the roof itself. Currently, access to the roof is gained either via an emergency ladder to the exterior of the building fronting Rose Yard, or through a hatch in gentlemen's W.C.
- 5.2.4 The application includes the replacement of existing radiators which would mainly replace existing fixtures, and the introduction of casings to the heaters. In the case of the auditorium, Exchange Studio and Fourth Wall, these would be located in existing alcoves located between pillars (auditorium) and window bays (Exchange Studio and Fourth Wall). Also included in the application is the introduction of a hatch and retractable ladder to the balcony of the auditorium to allow access to the roof space above the auditorium.
- 5.2.5 The purpose of the proposed works are to replace the existing boilers and hot water and heating arrangements within the Hazlitt Arts Centre and the Market Buildings, and to improve access to the roof space, both internally and externally.
- 5.2.6 The works to the exterior of the building, comprising the introduction of a plant room and associated equipment and external staircases to the roof; and an external door to the scenery store to allow access to the roof are the subject of a separate application for planning permission (MA/11/0908).

5.3 Assessment

- 5.3.1 The application is for listed building consent, and as such the only matter for consideration under the scope of the current application is the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Grade II listed building.

- 5.3.2 The comments of the Maidstone Borough Council Conservation Officer are replicated above.
- 5.3.3 The works to the roof would include the replacement of existing plant installed on the roof of unattractive appearance with a purpose built housing around plant necessary for the functioning of the building. The external staircases are proposed to be of a functional appearance, which is considered to be acceptable in the context of their purpose and the limited views that would be afforded of them.
- 5.3.4 The proposed structures would be subject to views from ground floor level, albeit limited to the plant room and a small section of an external staircase, being visible from the light well to Market Buildings, however it is considered that the scale and design of the external elements of the proposal are acceptable, and would make a positive contribution to the overall appearance of the listed building.
- 5.3.5 The proposed works to the interior of the building are not considered to be significant, and to effectively restore the character and appearance of the arrangement that existing prior to the installation of the current heating in the 1980s. The casings have been thoughtfully designed, and to be visually in keeping with the existing appearance of the interior. The works proposed to the heating system would be "easily reversible without damage to the historic fabric" in the words of the Maidstone Borough Council Conservation Officer. Although the proposed introduction of the hatch and ladders are not specifically addressed in the comments of the officer, these are considered to be minor and not to have any significant detrimental impact upon the fabric of the listed building. For these reasons the works to the interior of the building are considered to be acceptable.
- 5.3.6 Notwithstanding the above, it is considered necessary in the circumstances of this case to attach conditions to the consent requiring the submission and written approval of details of the cladding to the plant room and large scale details of the casings for convectors and pipe work, as requested by the Maidstone Borough Council Conservation Officer, in order to safeguard the quality of the development and the character and appearance of the listed building.

5.4 Other Matters

- 5.4.1 The works to which the application relate require the Hazlitt Arts Centre to be closed, due to the incompatibility of undertaking the necessary operations, and the use of the buildings by patrons and members of the public. The Centre is therefore scheduled to be shut during August and September 2011.

5.4.2 As a result of the pressing timescale for determination of the application which result from the planned closure period; the expiry date of the statutory publicity procedures for such applications, which expires after the date of the Planning Committee; and the need to refer the application to the Secretary of State the Planning Committee is respectfully requested in the circumstances of this case to allow the Planning Officer delegated powers to refer the application to the Secretary of State, recommending that listed building consent be granted subject to conditions, subject to no further representations raising new planning considerations being received.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the historical integrity and character of the Grade II Listed Building and would enhance its character and appearance, whilst having a limited impact upon that of the Conservation Area at ground level.

6.2 It is therefore concluded that the application should be referred to the Secretary of State, with a recommendation that Listed Building Consent be granted.

7. RECOMMENDATION

THAT, SUBJECT TO NO FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS RAISING NEW PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS BEING RECEIVED, I BE DELEGATED POWERS TO REFER THE APPLICATION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, RECOMMENDING THAT LISTED BUILDING CONSENT BE GRANTED, subject to the following conditions:

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 development shall not commence until full details of the following matters have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:-

a) Cladding to the plant room,

b) New internal joinery (casings for convectors and pipework including any metal venting grills) in the form of large scale drawings.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details;

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development and that the

historic appearance, character and significance of the building are maintained in accordance with policy BE6 of the South East Plan 2009 and central government planning policy and guidance in PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment.

The proposed development, subject to the conditions stated, is considered to comply with the policies of the Development Plan (Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and the South East Plan 2009) and there are no overriding material considerations to indicate a refusal of planning consent.