

APPLICATION NUMBER: 22/01503/LBC

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
22/01503/LBC	Catherine Fenghour	20 January 2023

Address: Rochdale Town Hall, The Esplanade, Rochdale, OL16 1AZ

Proposal: Listed Building Consent for replacement of Westmorland slates to Vermont slates above the Bright Hall

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	Press Notice expired?	Y

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	n/a
	Neighbour comments received?	N

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	n/a
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	n/a

RECOMMENDATION	Grant subject to conditions
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: AT

DATE: 03.02.2023

SITE

The application relates to the Rochdale Town Hall, a Grade I Listed Building, widely regarded as one of the finest Victorian town halls in Britain. The building was completed in 1871 at a cost of £155,000. The frontage and principal entrance of the Town Hall faces The Esplanade and the River Roch and comprises a portico of three arches intersected by buttresses. The building has a roughly symmetrical 'E-shaped' plan, and is broken down into three self-contained segments: a central Great Hall and transverse wings at each end. The present clock tower, which has a stone spire, was built to replace the original tower destroyed in a fire in 1883 and rises from a plinth with four stages including a gable-headed clock stage topped with a small stone spire. The Town Hall continues to be used for cultural and ceremonial functions.

The building was first listed at Grade I on 25th October 1951.

The site also lies within close proximity of a number of other Designated Heritage Assets, including:

- Market Cross – Grade II
- St. Chad's Church – Grade II*
- Wall by St. Chad's Church – Grade II
- Former Rochdale Museum – Grade II
- County Court – Grade II
- Rochdale Cenotaph – Grade I
- War memorial lamp-posts – Grade II
- Rochdale Post Office – Grade II
- Broadfield Park (Registered Park & Garden – grade II)

A number of non-designated heritage assets are also in close proximity and are locally listed buildings, including:

- Empire Hall
- Flying Horse
- Church Steps
- Natwest Bank
- Former Town Hall Chambers
- Memorial Gardens

The Town Hall is situated in the heart of the Town Centre Conservation Area and forms an integral part of the Esplanade and square.

PROPOSAL

The proposal relates to the inner (western) slope of the Bright Hall (roof number R2a on the submitted roof plan). The proposal seeks consent for the re-covering of this roof with a Vermont slate rather than the Westmorland slates found elsewhere on the building.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 16(2):

"In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the

desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

Policy P2 – Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

No relevant policies

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

22/00020/VRCON – approved – 18 February 2022

Section 19 application for minor material amendment to listed building consent 20/00616/LBC to revise conditions 6 and 8. Condition 6 will be amended to update the agreed Ecological Assessment. Condition 8 will be amended to provide no restriction to works during the 2022-2023 breeding seasons, on the basis that the Peregrine Falcons will not be nesting on the tower.

21/0705/VRCON – approved – 17 February 2022

Section 73 application for minor material amendment to planning permission 20/00615/FUL to revise conditions 8 and 10. Condition 8 will be amended to update the agreed Ecological Assessment. Condition 10 will be amended to provide no restriction to works during the 2022-2023 breeding seasons, on the basis that the Peregrine Falcons will not be nesting on the tower.

20/00616/LBC – approved – 22 September 2020

Restoration and refurbishment of Rochdale Town Hall incorporating civic spaces together with ancillary functions, including events, exhibition and interpretation spaces, upgraded bar and café. Works to include; glazing of Porte Cochere and tower link, new terraced access to building perimeter, external repair works, specialist repair of decorative interiors, restoration of key internal spaces and selective window replacement; new services including lifts, plant and equipment; new facilities including exhibition, toilets and storage; and associated works (Phase 2 of restoration and refurbishment works to facilitate the building's continued use)

20/00615/FUL – approved – 22 September 2020

Restoration and refurbishment of Rochdale Town Hall incorporating civic spaces together with ancillary functions, including events, exhibition and interpretation spaces, upgraded bar and cafe. Works to include; glazing of Porte Cochere and tower link, new terraced access to building perimeter, external repair works, specialist repair of decorative interiors, restoration of key internal spaces and selective window replacement; new services including lifts, plant and equipment; new facilities including exhibition, toilets and storage; and associated works (Phase 2 of restoration and refurbishment works to facilitate the building's continued use)

20/00577/LBC – approved – 22 September 2020

Enabling works to Rochdale Town Hall; including internal strip out, asbestos removal, structural works, installation of dry risers and a trial replacement window (Phase 1 of restoration and refurbishment works to facilitate the building's continued use).

20/00576/FUL - approved – 22 September 2020

Enabling works to Rochdale Town Hall; including internal strip out, asbestos removal, structural works, installation of dry risers and a trial replacement window (Phase 1 of restoration and refurbishment works to facilitate the building's continued use).

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS)

No further archaeological investigation is recommended in advance of or during delivery of the proposed works.

The Coal Authority

As a listed building consent application, a coal mining risk assessment is not required. Please attach informatives

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

Initial comments requested more information on the potential of the proposal to impact on bats and peregrine falcons.

Following on from submission of a copy of the licence from Natural England, GMEU confirmed that no additional information was required and conditions should be added as previous.

GM Fire Service

Comments regarding the need to meet Building Regulations in respect of Access and facilities for the fire service.

The Gardens Trust

No comments

Historic England

No advice offered in this instance. Please seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisors

Joint Committee of National Amenity Societies

No reply

REPRESENTATIONS

None received

ANALYSIS

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) states that in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Similarly, Section 72 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

The applicant has submitted a detailed heritage statement in line with the requirements of NPPF paragraph 194.

NPPF paragraph 197 states that 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.

NPPF paragraph 202 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.

Planning practice guidance identifies that substantial harm is a high test and may not arise in many cases. Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the NPPF. In determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

This application follows on from previous listed building and planning applications for the restoration of the Town Hall. Phase two of these works is currently on site (approved by 20/00616/LBC). This includes the re-roofing of the building, re-using the existing Westmorland slates on the building and stored within the basement.

However, on stripping the roof, it was found that many of the slates higher up on the building were in poor condition and not capable of re-use. Two options were initially considered to make up this shortfall: reclaimed Westmorland slates from elsewhere and new riven Westmorland slates. Unfortunately neither of these options were considered to be feasible. The reclaimed slates were coming to the end of their useful lives, and the riven slates were not available, within the costs of the programme, without impacting on other restoration work. An on-site meeting between the project team and the Conservation Officer also confirmed that the riven slates were of a markedly different texture to the Westmorland slates found elsewhere on the building.

The project team has proposed using a Vermont slate on the (inner) Western slope of the Bright Hall. This inner slope is largely screened in most public viewpoints, due to its position in relation to other roofslopes. The Heritage Statement considers the roof over the Bright Hall as being of high significance. The inner slope, which is the subject of this application, is considered to be of medium significance. This assessment is agreed.

The proposed Vermont slate has been reviewed on site by both the Council's Conservation Officer and Historic England. The specification for the slate has also been reviewed by specialists at Historic England, who have advised that the proposed Vermont slates can be a suitable match for Westmorland slates.

While the visual impacts stemming from the use of the Vermont slates would be limited, there would be some harm to significance from the re-use of a material which is not original to the building. The overall level of harm would be less than substantial.

As above, it is noted that attempts to source an alternative Westmorland slate have not been successful. The submitted heritage statement puts forward the following justifications in support of the use of Vermont slates:

- Supporting the long-term conservation of the Grade I listed building
- Enabling the re-roofing to be undertaken within program and budget
- Protecting available budgets for other conservation projects including the Zodiac Room

Given the above, and the potential implications for the restoration of other key spaces, including the Zodiac Room, it is considered that this harm has been clearly and convincingly justified.

The proposed re-roofing works are part of a wider programme of works to restore and refurbish the Town Hall and regenerate the town centre. This programme of works carries with it substantial public benefits, both in terms of the enhancement of the historic fabric and social and economic benefits for the town as a whole.

It is considered that the public benefits stemming from the programme of works as a whole would outweigh the less than substantial harm identified, and would comply with NPPF paragraph 202. When taken as a whole the works would preserve the special interest of the building and would not conflict with the requirements of Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Given the position of the roofslope, the proposal would not harm the significance of the Conservation Area and would not adversely impact on the setting of other nearby heritage assets.

The request from GMEU for the imposition of conditions relating to bats and peregrine falcons is noted, however further conditions are not considered necessary given that the works to the roof are underway, appropriately licensed by Natural England.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to following conditions

1. The works must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. This consent relates to the following plans and documents

- RTH-DIA-D5-XX-DR-A-4070 P01 - location plan
- RTH-DIA-XX-50-DR-A-0028 P01 - roof plan
- Hilltop Natural Roofing Slate EN 12326 slate report by Independent Building Investigation Services, dated March 2017
- Heritage, Design and Access Statement by Donald Insall Associates, dated November 2022
- Unfading Green Slate ASTM
- Sample Guarantee for Unfading Green Slate

and the works shall be carried out in complete accordance with these plans and documents hereby approved.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of works in accordance with the policies contained within the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The slate to be used for the western Bright Hall roof slope (roof 2a) shall be "unfading Hilltop Natural Roofing Slate", in accordance with the details set out within the Hilltop Natural Roofing Slate EN 12326 Testing report by Independent Building Investigation Services, dated March 2017.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Report Author Catherine Fenghour