

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
23/00288/LBC	Christiana Shovlin	30 May 2023

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

Proposal: Installation of protective netting underneath decorative plaster ceiling panels

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: RG

DATE: 05 June 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 is for the installation of protective netting underneath each of the decorative plaster panels in the Great Hall in order to mitigate the risk of collapse.

RELEVANT 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

23/00084/LBC – approved – 03 May 2023

Replacement and repositioning of 4no' 20th century lighting columns.

22/01503/LBC – approved – 20 January 2023

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

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

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.

The applicant has submitted an impact assessment in line with the requirements of NPPF paragraph 194.

NPPF paragraph 199 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 (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.

NPPF paragraph 201 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.

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).

During the course of works, plaster conservators surveyed the decorative ceiling panels in order to facilitate their cleaning and restoration. At this point it was noted by a number of the conservators that many of the plaster panels had the potential to collapse. The plaster panels were consolidated to ensure their longevity. A "pull test" was conducted in certain places, ensuring that the repaired panels were structurally stable. Although this could not be carried out in all locations of the ceiling.

Therefore the building's insurers required that additional measures be taken in order to insure the Great Hall's accessibility to the public- a core tenet of the public benefit driving the restoration of the Grade I listed Town Hall. The Great Hall is classed as one of the highest significance areas; therefore, the applicant holds that the public deserves to interact with this space in particular.

Numerous consultations were held with Historic England, industry-leading plaster conservators, and structural engineers to come up with the best solution. The agreed approach is the proposed: to install 45mm hemp-coloured netting with 3mm twine. This is to be fixed to the timber nibs of the ceiling with stainless steel fixings, wire rope, and hog ties.

A test panel was given the netting treatment - photographs are appended in the application portfolio. These are agreed to be visually subtle, but do have minimal harm to the significance of the plaster panels and timber nibs.

The Heritage, Design and Access Statement states that whilst the netting will have some limited impact on the significance of the heritage asset, that this impact should be considered within the wider view of the public accessibility desired of the space; this public benefit is viewed to outweigh the less than substantial harm incurred by the netting. The heritage impact assessment cites section 16 of the Planning Act 1990 which states that the local planning authority has a duty to pay 'special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historical interest which it possesses.'

The assessment of the proposed serving a public benefit in terms of enjoyment of the heritage asset is agreed, and, in addition to being in line with section 16 of the Planning Act 1990, is in line with NPPF paragraph 197 & 202 and Policy P2 of the Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy.

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 Phase 2
- RTH-DIA-D5-XX-DR-A-0044-P01 – Phase 2 Section MM Netting Locations
- RTH-DIA-D5-XX-DR-A-0035-P01 – Phase 2 Section NN Netting Locations

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. Photographs of the netting from ground level, as well as a series of photographs showing the netting at close view are required for submission to the local planning authority after the completion of works.

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. Also to ensure that all works have been carried out as specified in the submitted Heritage, Design, and Access Statement.