

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0219
Location: ROCHDALE TOWN HALL, THE ESPLANADE, ROCHDALE,
OL16 1AZ
Proposal: Replacement of existing external plasterboard ceilings with
oak timber v jointed tongue and groove boarding
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Rosalind Gralton

SITE

Rochdale Town Hall is listed at Grade I on the National Heritage List for England, placing it amongst the most significant historic buildings in the country. Designed by William Crossland, it is a fine example of a Victorian town hall as well as being an outstanding example of the Gothic Revival. Its original form is little altered except for the later tower, added after the original burned down. Internally original decorative schemes remain including in the Great Hall and the Exchange. The Town Hall has recently reopened to the public after undergoing a major restoration.

PROPOSAL

Listed Building Consent is sought for the replacement of plasterboard ceilings which have been applied to the exterior underside of the ceilings at the front of the town hall.

Some of these plasterboard ceilings have fallen and there is a need to replace them for safety reasons.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Places for Everyone joint development plan (PFE)

Places for People

JP-P1: Sustainable Places

JP-P2: Heritage

JP-P3: Cultural Facilities

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SO3 Improving design, image and quality of place

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3 Improving design of new development

SD1 Delivering sustainable development

DM1 General development requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

24/01130/FUL Alterations to Rochdale Town Hall during the Phase 1 & 2 works, (consented schemes approved ref; 20/00576/FUL, 20/00577/LBC, 20/00615/FUL & 20/00616/LBC) works included; installation of concrete slabs, stone cills. Removal of brick structure, service trench, bar benching, engineering works in basement, terrace grilles change in material.

Granted STC.

25/00840/LBC Installation of a bronze metal commemorative plaque 460 x 350mm for the late former Rochdale MP Sir Tony Lloyd. Pending Consideration.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Historic England - No comments to make, refer to the advice of the Conservation Officer.

Conservation Officer - No objections, neutral impact on the significance.

REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of notification were sent to surrounding neighbours, a site notice displayed in the vicinity site and an advertisement placed in the local press. No public representations have been received.

ASSESSMENT

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 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'

Current NPPF paragraph 213 states that ‘any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 215 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.

The above means that the local planning authority is required to place considerable weight (great weight in the terms of the NPPF) on the need for conservation. This means that changes to listed buildings which may result in some harm should be avoided or, if that is not possible, the impact minimised. The LPA may grant LBC for the works if the public benefit outweighs that harm.

The proposal is for the replacement of the plasterboard ceilings which have been applied to the exterior underside of the ceilings at the front of the town hall. Some have fallen and there is a safety need for these to be replaced. The existing ceilings are not original and do not contribute to the significance of the Town Hall. The original covering of these ceilings is not known. However, the use of oak tongue and groove boarding is considered appropriate, given that it is a natural, quality material and is reversible. The appearance would be an improvement over the existing plasterboards, albeit their location is well disguised from the vast majority of public viewpoints.

Summary

The proposed scheme is not considered to cause harm to the heritage asset and would have a neutral impact on the significance of the building. Subject to conditions and noting the reversibility of the proposals, it is considered that the scheme would not harm the significance of the Grade I listed Rochdale Town Hall.

On this basis, it is therefore considered that the proposed installations would have a neutral impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset and the scheme would comply with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, adopted Places for Everyone joint development plan policies JP-P1, JP-P2 & JP-P3, adopted Rochdale Core Strategy policies DM1, P2 & P3 and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (3)

- 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 development hereby consented shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the following approved plans:

- Location Plan
- Heritage Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- External ceiling second floor
- External ceilings
- External ceilings ground floor
- Oak TGV Boarding

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), along with the relevant policies contained within the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3 The proposed boarding shall be Oak TGV Boarding as per the approved plans and details pursuant to condition 2. The boards shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within policies JP-P1, JP-P2 & JP-P3 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, policies P1, P2, P3 & DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, saved policy BE/17 of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990) and the National Planning Policy Framework.