

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: 221578/LBC

Address: Almshouses, Castle Street, Reading, RG1 7SS

Proposals: Re-glaze, draughtproof and overhaul all existing sash windows to improve thermal performance and restore functionality. Replace windows to c1960 built extensions to east wing with thermally broken and double glazed steel windows to match existing in appearance. Replace windows to c2000 built extensions to west wing with modern timber framed double glazed casements to match existing in appearance.

Case Officer: David Brett

Applicant: Reading Almshouse Charity

Date received (valid from): 21 October 2022 **Target Decision date:** 22 December 2022

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal site consists of two terraced rows on Castle Street. 1-12 and 17-32 Almshouses are a group of Grade II Listed Buildings (List Entry Number: 1154678). The Listed Building description for Vachel Almshouses, 1-32, Castle Street is as follows:

“CASTLE STREET 1. 5128 (South Side) Vachel Almshouses Nos 1 to 32 (consec) SU 7173 SW 2/420 II GV 2. Founded by Sir Thomas Vachel in 1634 and then moved to this site. See plaques. Rebuilt 1864-67, architect William Henry Woodman. 2 storey cottages in 2 reflecting rows, stepped down to Holybrook in groups of 4. Vernacular style. Red brick with grey brick bands and decoration and with stone dressings. Tiled roofs with crested ridges; red brick ridge chimneys with grey decoration and cogged bands. Nos 5 to 16 and 21 to 32 : 5 windows, 2 being canted dormered bays flanking central entrance and 2 light windows with chamfered mullions. Pointed doorways with shouldered lintels and tumbled brick in arches, strap hinges. Nos 1 to 4 and 17 to 20: also 5 bays but in 3 staggered planes. 1st plane has corbelled 1st floor window to street and a bay to front. 2nd plane now has tower porch with encorbelled parapet, pointed entrance and trefoil headed side window. This part formerly (till 1957) had a turret over. 3rd plane has gabled bay. Low screen wall to street with cast and wrought iron rails and gates.”

The proposal site is within the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area. Local associations within the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation area include Sir Thomas Vachel, after whom the Almshouses in Castle Street are named (he founded the original Almshouses at St Mary's Church in 1634). The open space between the Almshouses is highlighted as a quieter area of the Conservation Area, as opposed to the extremely busy St Mary's Butts and the Gun Street/Castle Street junction (St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2008)).

Site visit date: 04/04/2022

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Re-glaze, draughtproof and overhaul all existing sash windows to improve thermal performance and restore functionality. Replace windows to c1960 built extensions to east wing with thermally broken and double glazed steel windows to match existing in appearance. Replace windows to c2000 built extensions to west wing with modern timber framed double glazed casements to match existing in appearance.

This application for Listed Building Consent follows pre-application advice submitted to the LPA in 2021, with a formal pre-application response provided following a site visit with the Council's Conservation & Urban Design Officer, and Planning Officer to the applicant in 2022.

Plans considered

- Design, Access and Heritage Statement- J1273-BA-RP-A-001_Design Access Heritage-P02
- Scope of Work - J1273-BA-RP-A-002_Scope of Work-P02
- West Wing - Window Schedule - J1273-BA-A-SH_0001-P02
- East Wing - Window Schedule - J1273-BA-A-SH_0002-P02
- Ironmongery Schedule - J1273-BA-A-SH_0003-P02
- Appendix A - Maps, Plans & Illustrations - J1273-BA-RP-A-003_APPENDIX A-P02
- Appendix B - Site Photographs - J1273-BA-RP-A-004_APPENDIX B-P02
- Location Plan & Site Plan - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0001 - Rev P02
- Existing Plans - West Wing - Ground Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0101 Rev P02
- Existing Plans - West Wing - First Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0102 Rev P02
- Existing Plans - East Wing - Ground Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0103 Rev P02
- Existing Plans - East Wing - First Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0104 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - West Wing - Flats 1-6 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0201 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - West Wing - Flats 7-12 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0202 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - West Wing - Side Elevs 1-6 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0203 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - West Wing - Side Elevs 7-12 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0204 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - East Wing - Flats 17-24 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0205 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - East Wing - Flats 25-32 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0206 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - East Wing - Side Elevs 1-6 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0207 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - East Wing - Side Elevs 7-10 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0208 Rev P02
- Existing Elevations - East Wing - Side Elevs 11-14 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0209 Rev P02
- Existing Sash Window Upgrade - Bay - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0301 Rev P02
- Existing Sash Window Upgrade - Double - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0302 Rev P02
- Existing Timber Casements - Double - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0303 Rev P02
- Existing Timber Casements - Single - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0304 Rev P02
- Existing Steel Window - Double Bay - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0305 Rev P02
- Existing Steel Window - Single - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 0306 Rev P02
- ~~- Proposed Plans - West Wing - Ground Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 1001 Rev P02~~
- Proposed Plans - West Wing - First Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 1002 Rev P02
- Proposed Plans - East Wing - Ground Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 1003 Rev P02
- Proposed Plans - East Wing - First Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 1004 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - West Wing - Flats 1-6 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2001 Rev P02
- ~~- Proposed Elevations - West Wing - Flats 7-12 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2002 Rev P02~~
- Proposed Elevations - West Wing - Side Elevs 1-6 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2003 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - West Wing - Side Elevs 7-12 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2004 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - East Wing - Flats 17-24 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2005 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - East Wing - Flats 25-32 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2006 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - East Wing - Side Elevs 1-6 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2007 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - East Wing - Side Elevs 7-10 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2008 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - East Wing - Side Elevs 11-14 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2009 Rev P02
- Proposed Sash Window Upgrade - Bay - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 3001 Rev P02
- Proposed Sash Window Upgrade - Double - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 3002 Rev P02
- Proposed Timber Casements - Double - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 3003 Rev P02
- Proposed Timber Casements - Single - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 3004 Rev P02
- Proposed Steel Window - Double Bay - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 3005 Rev P02
- Proposed Steel Window - Single - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 3006 Rev P02

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- Proposed Plans - West Wing - Ground Floor - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 1001 Rev P02
- Proposed Elevations - West Wing - Flats 7-12 - J1273 -BA -DR-A- 2002 Rev P02

Received on 16/12/2022

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Applications registered to 1 Almshouses, Castle Street, Reading, RG1 7SS

900935/FUL - Removal of existing boundary wall; renewal of wall to new boundary in new brickwork. - Application Permitted on 16/08/1990

940337/LBC - Erection of handrail beside path. - Application Permitted on 17/06/1994

990020/LBC - Proposed demolition of rear extensions of No: 1-16 and rebuilding to provide improved kitchen/bathroom facilities. Conversion of No 18 to meeting room, laundry and guest room. Insertion of new door and two storey extension at No 21. - Application Permitted on 22/08/2000

990613/FUL - Proposed demolition of rear extensions of No: 1-16 and rebuilding to provide improved kitchen/bathroom facilities. Conversion of No 18 to meeting room, laundry and guest room. Insertion of new door and two storey extension at No 21. - Application Permitted on 22/08/2000

060492/LBC - Replacing flat roofs of rear extensions to the East Wing with traditional carcassed timber roofs. - Application Permitted on 05/05/2006

060296/FUL - Construction of pitched roofs to match existing on 3 No. 20th Century rear extensions - East wing - Application Permitted on 05/05/2006

080676/LBC - New television aerial and satellite dish to west wing of Almshouses - Application Permitted on 24/06/2008

Applications registered to 1 Almshouses, Castle Street, Reading, RG1 7SS (works to a tree within a Conservation Area)

110707/TCA - Re-pollard one Ash and one Alder - Application Permitted on 01/11/2011

151923/TCA - Ash and Alder - Re-Pollard as routine maintenance. - Application Permitted on 23/11/2015

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

Reading Borough Council, Conservation & Urban Design Officer - Response received on 15/12/2022

- Generally, there are no objections to the listed building application it is recommended for Approval, subject to the following recommendations or conditions:
 - o Confirmation that the works shown as blue on the west elevation are actually meant to be green for new replacement, double glazed timber framed windows;
 - o There need to be a materials condition that the timber framed windows are to be painted with oil-based paints;
 - o The colours of the finished windows is to match the existing windows.

Officer Note: Amended plans have been provided which now demonstrate the relevant windows to be replaced with double glazed timber frames rather than steel window replacements. The agent confirmed that this was an error on the drawings and provided amended drawings on 16/12/2022.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee - No response received.

The site notice was displayed from Wednesday 2nd November 2022, expiring on Wednesday 23rd November 2022. A press notice was published on Thursday 10th November 2022, expiring on Thursday 1st December 2022. No responses have been received.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3 Adaption to Climate Change

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

EN1 Protection and Enhancement of The Historic Environment

EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas

CR2 Design in the Centre

SPG/SPD

St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2008)

6. APPRAISAL

Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

In accordance with policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, all proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. In addition, applications affecting Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their setting.

In accordance with Policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, development proposed within a Conservation Area will; “make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.”

As per section 16 of the NPPF (2021) proposals affecting heritage assets such as Grade II Listed Buildings, Local Planning Authorities will assess the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimize any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal. The principle of replacing windows and doors to a Grade II Listed Building is acceptable providing development complies with the Policies outlined in the Reading Borough Local Plan and NPPF.

The development proposed concerns the windows and doors to the front and rear of the West Wing and the East Wing at the Almshouses, Castle Street. Following the issue of pre-application advice, a Scope of Work document has been prepared that details the extent of work proposed to each opening at the Almshouses. The works proposed to each opening ranges from simply repainting, to overhaul works (repair, reglaze, paint, restore mechanisms), to replacements with like for like materials (timber to timber, steel to steel).

Where replacements are proposed, these have been specified to be like for like in terms of materials and design. It is acknowledged that double glazing is proposed to replace single panel glazing, however, upon review of the section drawing submitted it is considered that the double glazing proposed would not appear intrusive or harmful to the design and appearance of the overall development. The proposed double glazing to the bay windows for instance would be installed within the existing rebates with no significant alterations to the sash frames.

The development is therefore considered in accordance with Policies EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that; “Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Harm to outlook;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;

- Smell;
- Crime and safety;

Due to the scale and nature of the proposed development, it is not considered that undue harm would be caused to neighbouring residents. The proposed development is therefore considered in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

7. CONCLUSION

The development has been assessed and the works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and Listed Building Consent can be granted.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Application Permitted

Recommended Conditions:

Time Limit

The works hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this consent.

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

Approved Plans

The works to the Listed Building hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following approved plans or specifications:

- Design, Access and Heritage Statement- J1273-BA-RP-A-001_Design Access Heritage-P02
- Scope of Work - J1273-BA-RP-A-002_Scope of Work-P02
- West Wing - Window Schedule - J1273-BA-A-SH_0001-P02
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REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the Listed Building Consent hereby approved Policy EN1 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

Materials

All new external and internal works and finishes, and any works of making good, shall match the existing original fabric in respect of using materials of a matching form, composition and consistency, detailed execution and finished appearance, except where indicated otherwise on the drawings hereby approved.

The timber framed windows shall be painted with oil-based paints, with colours of the finished windows to match the existing fabric.

REASON: In order that the special architectural and historic interest of this Listed Building is safeguarded in accordance with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.