

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Redlands

App Ref: 221385/LBC

Address: Royal Berkshire Hospital, North Block, London Road, Reading, RG1 5AN

Proposals: Permission to carry out urgent repairs to the building's fabric to make safe structurally and watertight. Repair works to stonework, replacement roof, stripping of rotten timbers internally, removal of defective plaster and removal of floorboards and ceilings to allow access through the building to inspect and make safe roof structure.

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

Date received (valid from): 16/10/22 **Target Decision date:** 21/6/23 (Ext)

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises the east wing of the Royal Berkshire Hospital on London Road. The building is three storeys tall and is a Grade II* listed property and has been unoccupied since 2008. It is of traditional construction, comprising loadbearing masonry, suspended timber upper floors and timber roof structure and the external elevations are mostly clad with Bath stone.

The submitted Design and Access Statement explains that “the interior and exterior of the building are currently in poor condition”, confirmed on a site visit on xxxxx. “Much of the upper floors and roof is suffering from wet and dry rot. The main staircase between the ground and first floor has collapsed and areas of the upper floor have been reported as unsafe due to rot. An environmental investigation has highlighted the risk of toxic mould. Rainwater ingress has been halted due to the installation of a temporary roof and weather protection to the elevations.”

“Due to localised poor ground conditions .. the northern end has subsided, evidenced by significant cracking to the walls visible from inside and outside of the building. Consent was granted in June 2021 for a concrete piled underpinning solution to the subsidence (201826). This was a very intrusive solution and involved the installation of a large volume of concrete.”

A more recent application (221067) for a ground stabilisation scheme to reduce the impact of the ground works on the existing structure was approved 3/3/23.

The listing for the building reads as follows,

“Main block 1839 by local architect and builder Henry Briant (who won the competition for designing the hospital). As King William IV took such a keen interest in the hospital before it was built, his Arms, not Queen Victoria's appear on the central pediment. Two storeys and basement. Bath stone - very large ashlar blocks used to front. Slate roofs. eleven bays with seven bay central break projecting pedimented hexastyle Ionic portico. Glazing bar sash windows. Corner piers. Channelled basement. Astragal to moulded cornice (dentil cornice to portico) and parapet. Recessed side entrance bays. Wide steps to portico with excellent contemporary lamp tripods with guilloche ornament.

Interior: colonaded stair hall, cast iron balusters to stairs which divide at landing. 1882 chapel with contemporary fittings reached from under landing. (By Joseph Morris who made considerable extensions to the Hospital at that date). The main block has flanking wings added 1865 to designs by Joseph Morris. Three storeys also Bath stone and long side wings forming a large courtyard added 1881-2. The latter are also of Bath stone, have 5x5 end pavilions with three bay pedimented breaks and are linked to side wings by a Greek Doric colonade (east side) and a 1911 block (west side). In front to street is a dwarf-stone wall with moulded coping and five retraining ashlar gate piers with block modillions to moulded capping.”

The surrounding site is a mix of residential and commercial. The RBH site is also adjacent to, but not within, two conservation areas - Eldon Square and Kendrick Road.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Listed Building Consent is sought for repairs and replacement of certain structural elements and is summarised as follows:

- **Roof Repairs** - As shown on Drawing: Proposed Roof Plan 6947.211 and summarised as follows:
 - Provide scaffold inside building
 - Strip slates, battens and sarking to expose roof structure
 - Inspect structure including wallplates and replace timbers as necessary and spray treat the timber to remain
 - Fit new sarking boards, Tyvek membrane, battens and slates
 - Re-form all flat roof areas and gutters with new timber and renew all leadwork
 - Making sure rainwater outlets work correctly
 - Provide lead overflow pipes through parapet to prevent build-up of standing water
 - Clear out loft space and insulate check with 200mm wool insulation
- **Repair of Stonework** - Poor ground conditions have led to subsidence of the building and there is the need to repair/ undertake localised rebuilding of the stone façade once the ground stabilisation works have been completed (as approved under 221067). This is designed to restore, as far as practicable, the original load distribution, stabilise existing elements of the walls and where necessary replace damaged elements. As set out within the Schedule of works by PAYE, which includes 2 drawings - Initial Assessment of Proposed Structural Repair Works Sheet 1 of 2 and Sheet 2 of 2 (dated 07/2022). Stantec
- **Windows** - Repair including replacement glass where required and some replacement ironmongery, sash cords and weights to allow the refurbished windows to operate properly. Drawing ref: 6947.261-264 shows the typical sash windows.
- **Staircase** - The staircase is badly damaged and will need to be remade. Permission is sought for removal of the staircase to a joiner's shop storage, so that an exact replica, incorporating any salvageable parts of the original stair,

can be made in the future. This removal is required so that timbers affected by dry rot fungus are removed from the building to prevent it from attaching new joists/ floorboards to be installed.

- **Floors** - Works proposed are as shown on Drawing no: 6947.271, which in summary will include:
 - Removal of timber boards, (marked and recorded so that they can be replaced in their original positions) and treated for reuse. Any boards that have perished due to rot and damp and those replaced with OSB and plywood will have new matching boards supplied in their place.
 - As Dry Rot fungus has developed all defective timbers will be replaced, ensuring that all contact surfaces are coated with a timber water repellent fungicidal fluid and wrapped/ capped or laid on PVC DPC membrane. All exposed timbers will be treated with a fungicide fluid.
- **Ceilings and Cornices** - Works proposed are as shown on Drawing no: 6947.272. Much of the original lath and plaster has been removed and replaced with plasterboard, which occurred during the building's use as a clinical area. It is proposed that:
 - That most if not all of these ceilings will be removed and replaced with lath and plaster.
 - Areas of cornice that can remain will do so, but casts will be made of all areas so that replacement matching cornice can be manufactured.
 - All areas of plaster damaged by water ingress and the damp will be removed. It's replacement will take place as part of a future stage of works in order to all the structure to dry out; temporary heating will be provided to facilitate this.
- **Renew or repair Drainage** - Rainwater goods will be refurbished to allow them to function correctly and the drainage repaired to allow rainwater to be disposed of correctly. No internal drainage alterations are proposed as part of these works.

Plans and other documents submitted received 16th September 2022 unless otherwise stated:

- Drawing no: 6947.100, Location Plan, dated December 2020
- Drawing no: 6947.211 - Roof Plan as Proposed, dated September 2022
- Drawing no: 6947.271 - Works to Floors as Proposed, dated September 2022
- Drawing no: 6947.272 - Works to Ceilings as Proposed, dated September 2022
- Drawing no: 6947.261 - Existing Elevations Showing Windows, dated August 2022
- Drawing no: 6947.262 - Window Repair Specification, dated 16/9/22
- Drawing no: 6947.263 - Typical Window Elevation, dated August 2022
- Drawing no: 6947.264 - Photos [of existing windows], dated 16/9/22
- Façade Structural Repairs - Schedule of works by PAYE, dated 14th July 2022 ref: TB-E.9266-001
- Structural Condition Statement Technical Note, ref: 330510682-STN-XX-XX-TN-S-0002, dated 8th August 2022, by Stantec
- Design and Access Statement, dated 16/9/22, by GBS Health

- Heritage Report, dated May 2021, by Worlledge Associates, received 16th October 2022

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

201826/LBC - Listed Building Consent for a new piled underpinning scheme to foundations, together with a new below ground drainage network (including soakaway). - Consented 22/6/21

221067/LBC - Listed Building Consent - Injection grouting to stabilise building - Consented 3/3/23

4. CONSULTATIONS

Conservation Officer - No response.

Historic England - There are benefits in the proposed methods put forward. Typically, within an application all those details that are to be recreated or rebuilt (like doors, skirting, architraves etc) should be recorded as far as possible before work starts, in an inventory. This is then the basis from which, alongside physical samples, new detail can be made. As the building is in very poor condition this may not be possible, but I encourage attaching a condition to attempt to get this detailed info that will be useful for the restoration phase of the build.

Also encouraged is looking for opportunities to improve insulation, sensitively and with building conservation in mind, as part of the renovation scheme.

A site notice was displayed. An advert was also published in the local press.

No letters of representation have been received.

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.

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

ER3: Royal Berkshire Hospital

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.

6. APPRAISAL

Development at Royal Berkshire Hospital

In accordance with Policy ER3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, development will be supported where it complies with the following criteria:

- *Development will conserve the listed main block on London Road and 17 Craven Road, ensuring that their use is consistent with its conservation; and*
- *Development would not result in adverse effects on the setting of listed buildings and conservation areas.*

Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

The NPPF details 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. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be, and any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

In accordance with Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, proposals affecting Listed Buildings are acceptable where it will not:

- *Have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their setting.*

The proposed works are required to protect and extend the life of a listed heritage asset through repairing the roof, ceilings, floors and other elements affected/damaged by water ingress, repairs to the external stonework which have resulted from the subsidence of the building and repairs to windows. All the works are to ensure the water tightness of the building and to ensure that internal elements affected by the water ingress are repaired and/or replaced where necessary, using appropriate materials and methods, which would follow recommended conservation practice. Works to stabilise the building were consented under 221067.

Historic England have no objection to the works.

It is considered that the repair strategy has been sympathetically devised using like for like repairs, salvaging surviving fabric as far as reasonably achievable, and any replacements would match the details of existing. A condition is included to ensure the submission of an inventory of areas to be recreated or rebuilt along with a schedule of materials and physical samples where appropriate.

Overall, the proposed works are considered a necessity to stop the further deterioration of the building and it is considered that any less than substantial harm that may occur from the proposal would be outweighed by the heritage and public benefits of removing risks to the listed building by repairing the decaying structure. Moreover, the proposals will seek to protect and enhance this historic asset, contributing to its longevity.

It is not considered that the works would have any adverse impact on the setting of the listed building, nor would they have any detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the listed building. The proposal is, therefore, considered to accord with Policies EN1, CC7 and ER3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the NPPF.

7. CONCLUSION

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

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT LISTED BUILDING CONSENT subject to the following conditions:

Time Limit

Materials and inventory to be submitted and approved - pre-commencement

Approved Plans

INFORMATIVES

1. Terms
2. Building Control
3. Complaints about Construction
4. Positive and Proactive working
5. Pre-commencement condition