

RIDGE

PROPERTY & CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANTS



**University of
Reading**

**ACACIAS BUILDING, READING
PORTICO & PORCH REPAIRS, LIGHTNING PROTECTION
RODS**

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Prepared for

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ridge & Partners LLP, acting on behalf of the University of Reading, have prepared further design proposals for external repairs to the Grade II Listed Acacias building on the London Road Campus Site.

This application relates to important repair works to the Grade II listed building, including the urgent replacement of the damaged timber soffit located to the front Portico and the revised design of a valley gutter located to the front timber porch.

Recent investigations have highlighted that sections of the timber soffit to the Portico have become loose and damaged, after prolonged exposure to water ingress from the flat roof above, presenting an imminent significant safety hazard. Repair works are considered necessary to secure areas of loose timbers, preserve building fabric and reduce the risk of future moisture ingress and possible harm to the building users.

The Porch is currently in a poor condition, and presents a significant health and safety hazard for maintenance staff that use the internal stairs to reach the basement. The existing valley gutter detail is poor and is causing damage to the surrounding brickwork and timber porch. Large sections of the timber glazing bars which support the roof glazing have become decayed. Temporary plywood has been fixed internally for safety purposes. Again, the repair works are considered necessary to secure the glazing panels, preserve building fabric and reduce the risk of future moisture ingress and possible harm to the building users.

The University have reviewed the requirement to install lightning protection to the building through the use of lightning protection rods. The building currently does not have this provision in place, and is at risk of being damaged if struck by lightning.

The purpose of this Design and Access statement is to inform the reader of the design principles influencing the design process and to provide valid justification for the proposed works.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The University of Reading London Road Site lies south of Reading town centre and approximately 0.9 miles to the north of the main University Whiteknights Campus on Shinfield Road. The London Road Campus is bounded by London Road, Redlands Road, Acacia Road & Crown Place. The site sits within the Kendrick Road Conservation Area which was designated in 2005.

In addition to local designation the building is subject to statutory protection, having obtained Grade II listed status in 1978. A number of other listed buildings and 'Buildings of Townscape Merit' are situated within the boundary of the campus. Listed buildings include Greenbanks, The Great Hall and The War Memorial Clock Tower.

The Acacias building (L043) is located to the North East of the site. The building currently provides residential accommodation on first and second floors. Meeting and assembly rooms are situated at ground and basement and lower stories. The University's Senior Common Room also occupies a lounge located on the ground floor and wine cellars at basement level.

3. DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

The proposal includes to remove the damaged and deteriorated Portico timber soffit and investigate the cause of the damage. Once this has been identified we can then make the repairs required and replace the timber soffit on a like for like basis, with similar materials and decoration.

The existing valley gutter located to the timber front porch is not fit for purpose, and is inaccessible for maintenance purposes due to its size. This has led to a significant build-up of leaves and other debris. Subsequently the surrounding stone work to the main building and timbers to the porch are significantly saturated from prolonged exposure to water, causing the timber glazing bars to become decayed and damaged. It is proposed that a new valley gutter detail be constructed between the porch and existing building. This would be constructed from Marine Grade Plywood, with a lead effect liquid applied coating. The valley would be raised slightly, approximately 300mm from the base of the existing, to provide a wider and more easily accessible gutter for maintenance.

Whilst undertaking these works, it is proposed that repair works be carried out to the timber porch. This would include removing the low-level glazing and installing plywood to form the new valley gutter. This would remove the health and safety risk currently caused by the glazing panels and significantly damaged timber supporting timber bars.

The proposed lightning protection would be installed with cables running down the rear, side and front elevation of the property. The cables can be provided in 'Stone' colour to best match the colour of the existing stonework. Rods are to be driven into the ground, in the locations shown in drawing BEST/01412/614/18. Careful consideration has been made to identify the existing root protection zones and existing services. Root Protection Plan to be read in conjunction with Lightning Plan.

4. ACCESS

No alterations are proposed to change access to or within the building. Vehicular access to the site will be via a gated entrance located on London Road.

5. JUSTIFICATION

The proposed further investigation and possible subsequent works is required to the timber soffit of the Portico. At current the soffit poses a significant health and safety risk to all building users and contractors currently on site. Without immediate attention the timber soffit could collapse down onto the entrance stairs below.

The works to the valley gutter are required to prolong the life expectancy of the front porch and existing stone work located within close proximity. At current the valley cannot be cleaned nor maintained properly. The timber glazing bars are significantly damaged with large sections of decay noted throughout. This poses a significant health and safety hazard to university maintenance staff currently using the stairs located below the glazing to access the basement. Without immediate attention, the glazing could become dislodged and fall into the stairwell below.

At current there is no lightning protection serving the building. This puts the building and users inside at risk. The proposed lightning rods are to be installed around the property. Root protection zones have been considered and locations chosen accordingly. Due to the current repairs underway to the property, it is seen as a good opportunity to include the installation of the lightning protection equipment now.

Careful consideration has been paid to the design and materials to maintain the existing appearance, minimise the impact of development and prolong the usable life of the building.

We consider the proposed works align with council policy, including appropriate use of materials and seeking to maintain the character and appearance of the building. Subject to approval, the proposed works will result in extended lifetime of the building fabric and reduced ongoing maintenance costs.

