



**PLANNING COMMITTEE:** 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
**DIRECTORATE:** Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning  
**HEAD OF PLANNING:** Susan Bridge

**N/2013/0455:** Consultation on proposal to remove St Edmunds Hospital from the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Listed Buildings)

**WARD:** Castle Ward

**CONSULTATION:** English Heritage

**REFERRED BY:** Head of Planning

**REASON:** De-listing applications are made to and decided by English Heritage with a limited consultation with owners, applicants and local authorities. In this case Borough Council planning officers felt that as the building is of wider public interest there should be the opportunity for members of the public and interested groups to make representations about the historic and architectural interest of the building.

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**CONSULTATION BY ENGLISH HERITAGE:**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 St Edmund's Hospital (The Former Workhouse), Wellingborough Road. Northampton is a grade II listed building. English Heritage has received an application to de-list it. The Borough Council has been consulted as the relevant local authority. English Heritage can only consider the Special Architectural and Historic Interest of the buildings. Issues relating to the condition of the site, the planning history or future plans for the site cannot be taken into consideration. Due to the wider public interest regarding the site a decision was taken by Northampton Borough Council to provide members of the public and interested organisations the opportunity to make relevant representations which will be forwarded to English Heritage.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the Borough Council:

- 1) Advise English Heritage that it considers St Edmunds Hospital should retain its listed building status based on the architectural and historic merit of the building; and
- 2) Forward all relevant submissions from the consultation on St Edmunds Hospital to English Heritage for consideration.

## **3. SITE DESCRIPTION**

3.1 St Edmunds Hospital (The Former Workhouse) is located on the northern side of Wellingborough Road and now lies within the eastern suburbs of central Northampton. The building was originally located on an isolated site and was a purpose built workhouse complex developed following the New Poor Law of 1832. The surrounding area developed subsequently and the adjacent area is designated as the Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area.

3.2 The front central block of the workhouse was listed on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1976. The list description is as follows

*Wellingborough Road  
(North side)*

*Front central block of St Edmund's Hospital  
SP7660 6/576*

*Grade II*

*1837 by Scott and Moffatt. Originally a Workhouse. Traditional modified Georgian style. Red brick, hipped Welsh slated roof with central pedimented projection. 3 storeys, 1:3:1 sash windows under stucco lintels, those on ground floor rusticated above stucco impost band. Similar central doorway. Back extension probably original but with little architectural pretension; side wings probably later.*

*Listing NGR: SP76449 60972*

The remaining buildings on site are considered to be curtilage listed and are therefore protected by the listing.

## **4. PROPOSAL**

4.1 The consultation relates to the proposed removal of the building from the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

4.2 The de-listing application report (obtained under a Freedom of Information request) suggests evidence of a technical flaw and two minor factual inaccuracies in the original listing:

1. The listing describes the 'front central block' of the workhouse building, but does not cover the contemporary rear extension and side wings. It is generally accepted that a listed building is a single entity and that the listing applies to all of it equally. It is only possible to list a specific part of the building where that is clearly distinct from the rest in date, style and purpose.

2. a) The list description cites the architects as being Scott and Moffat, but the report demonstrates that Scott alone was responsible for the design of the building.

b) The building was designed in 1836 not 1837.

4.3 The application report claims that the building is of little architectural merit and is an average building of its era, that much of the original building has been lost or altered and that there is little evidence of innovation in the design of the building. The report claims that St Edmunds has a degree of historical significance as a reminder of a period of the nation's history, but that there are other buildings which better represent this.

4.4 The application report concludes '*On balance, using the present selection criteria, it is not considered to be sufficiently significant in historical, architectural or rarity terms to warrant remaining on the statutory list as a grade II building*'.

## **5. CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 The English Heritage consultation is limited to the owners of the building, the applicants for the de-listing and the local authority. In this instance it was considered appropriate, given the public interest in the site for the Borough Council to undertake a wider consultation. To this end there was a 21 day consultation period for members of the public and interested organisations. Site notices were placed in the vicinity of the building, an article put in local papers, the consultation was registered using the procedures for planning applications and advertised on Northampton Borough Council's website and local heritage organisations and relevant resident's associations were notified of the consultation. It was made very clear on all correspondence that the only issues that would be taken into account by English Heritage would be the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

5.2 A total of 14 responses were received (3 of these pre-dated the formal consultation, but are relevant to the subject so have been included for completeness). Of the responses 2 were broadly in favour of the de-listing of the site and 9 were against the de-listing, the remaining 3 did

not make a specific recommendation regarding the de-listing but were keen to see a solution to the problems on the site.

- 5.3 The responses in **support of de-listing** made the following points in summary:
- The building is a typical utilitarian building of the Victorian era, does not appear to have any special merit.
  - The building is attractive, but not serviceable.
- 5.4 The responses which **do not support de-listing** made the following points in summary
- The building was designed by the famous architect Sir GG Scott. (4 responses)
  - The building was one of the first generation of New Poor Law Union Workhouses (built between 1834-1841). (2 responses)
  - The significance of the building is enhanced by its association with neighbouring Boot and Shoe Quarter (5 responses)
  - The building is significant as a visual landmark within the town (4 responses).
  - The building is of significance in the social and historic development of the town (3 responses).
  - Locally significant architects including E Law and Harris were involved in later alterations to the building (1 response)
  - The building has communal / social significance as its transition from workhouse to hospital representing changes in attitudes relating to the sick, welfare provision and medical care (2 responses)
  - The listed element of the building is of special interest as it forms the principal entrance and administrative quarters of the building (1 response).
- 5.5 The consultation also resulted in a number of **management suggestions** in relation to the building. These included
- Demolishing the building (1 response),
  - Restoring / converting the building (3 responses)
  - Retaining the façade of the building (2 responses)
  - Ensuring the building is properly secured (1 response)
  - Taking legal action against the owners (1 response).
- 5.6 These responses do not relate to the historic and architectural significance of the building and do not impact on the de-listing application so will not be able to be taken into account by English Heritage in making a recommendation.

## 6. APPRAISAL

### Implications of De-Listing

- 6.1 St Edmunds Hospital (the former Workhouse) is currently on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

and is classified as grade II. The building is therefore subject to the provision of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and listed building consent is required for the alteration (interior and exterior), extension or demolition of the building.

- 6.2 If the building were to be de-listed it would be removed from the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and would no longer be subject to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The building would still be subject to normal planning restrictions. Under the terms of Part 31 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) demolition of the building would be permitted development for which planning permission is not required.

### **The Significance of the Building**

- 6.3 There have been a number of documents produced on the significance of St Edmunds Hospital including three building recording and assessment reports undertaken on behalf of the former owners in support of past planning / listed building consent applications:

- John Moore Heritage Services – St Edmund’s Hospital, Wellingborough Road, Northampton, Pre-determination evaluation, April 2003
- Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd – Historic building Survey: St Edmund’s Hospital, Wellingborough Road, Northampton on behalf of Rochmills Ltd, Bob Zeepvat, May 2004
- St Edmund’s Hospital (The Former Workhouse), Northampton. An Architectural and Archaeological Heritage Analysis, December 2008

- 6.4 The documents accumulatively draw out the core significance of the building, which include the date of its construction (in the early years following the Poor Law Act of 1834), its association with the architect George Gilbert Scott and the setting of the buildings and their relationship to each other. The documents all refer to the extensive degree of internal alteration and unsympathetic change.

- 6.5 The issues relating to the special architectural and historic interest of the building raised in the consultation responses can be grouped into two categories – national significance and local significance.

### **Factors Contributing to National Significance**

#### ***Significance of association with Sir George Gilbert Scott.***

- 6.6 The association of a building with a nationally significant architect clearly contributes to its significance. The design of St Edmunds Hospital by GG Scott is considered to be of particular significance as it

is one of only a few examples of GG Scott's classical work before he began his prolific gothic portfolio. It was one of 40 workhouse buildings he was associated with (including 8 in Northamptonshire) and an early commission due to local family connections. The building should therefore be considered in the group context in association with other works by Scott.

***Significance of building as one of the first generation of New Poor Law Workhouses which originated prior to the early 1840s.***

- 6.7 Several responses made reference to the fact that the building is one of the first generation of New Poor Law Workhouses which is mentioned as an indicator of significance in the English Heritage Listing Selection Guide 'Health and Welfare Buildings'.

**Factors Contributing to Local Significance**

***Significance of association with neighbouring Boot and Shoe Conservation Area.***

- 6.8 Several responses emphasised that the significance of the workhouse is enhanced by the link between the Boot and Shoe Conservation Area and the former Workhouse. The responses focused on the links between the workhouse and the people living and working in the surrounding streets (one respondent pointed to the fact that in 1881 50 inmates of the workhouse had been directly employed in the Boot and Shoe Industry), how the combination of the Workhouse and Boot and Shoe Quarter formed an integral part of the Victorian townscape and how the building today has an impact on the character and setting of the conservation area.

***Significance of building as a local landmark.***

- 6.9 Several responses highlight the significance of the building as a visual landmark in the town, making a contribution to the character of the locality. It is also key to the social and historic development of the town and is considered to be of social, historic, aesthetic and communal significance.
- 6.10 Northampton Borough Council undertook its own assessment of the significance of the building. A Statement of Significance was produced based on the assessment of significance outlined in '*Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment*', English Heritage, 2008.
- 6.11 Given the current condition of the building the Statement considered the significance of the building in both its current state and if it were to be subject to the necessary extensive repair and restoration required in order to bring it back into use. The report concluded that
- The **Evidential significance** of the building is very high in its current condition as much of the fabric of the building is exposed. The

evidential significance would be diminished by repair /restoration works to the building, but representative samples could be recorded archaeologically.

- The **Historical significance** of the building is high and would not be altered by repair / restoration works to the building.
- The **Aesthetic significance** of the building is currently low and would be significantly enhanced by the sympathetic repair / restoration of the building.
- The **Communal significance** of the building is complex as there are strong emotions about the building locally. Both in terms of its current condition and associated social problems and its past functions as workhouse and hospital. Attitudes to the building locally would be significantly enhanced by the sympathetic repair / restoration of the building.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 St Edmunds Hospital (former workhouse) retains significance in a national context (with specific reference to its association with GG Scott and its date as an early Poor Law Union Workhouse) and local context (with its association with the Boot and Shoe Quarter and as a locally significant visual landmark).
- 7.2 The building has been subject to significant neglect which has impacted on the condition of the building, but this cannot be taken into account in an assessment of its significance. The core significance of the building would not be diminished by the necessary repair / renovation works.
- 7.3 Therefore, based on the inherent special historic and architectural interest of the building, it is recommended that the Borough Council make a representation to English Heritage that it should not be de-listed.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications of this consultation response.
- 8.2 The decision on the de-listing application will be made by the Secretary of State, based on advice from English Heritage. The legal status of the building will change if the de-listing application is successful.

## **9. SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN**

- 9.1 In reaching the attached recommendations regard has been given to securing the objectives, visions and priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan together with those of associated Frameworks and Strategies.