

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 3 September 2019
DEPARTMENT: Planning Service
HEAD OF PLANNING: Peter Baguley

APPLICATION REF: N/2019/0836

LOCATION: The Guildhall, St Giles Square

DESCRIPTION: Listed Building Consent Application for the installation of permanent external ladder and landing outside the first floor Farmers Room flat roof and the installation of permanent internal access staircase and landing inside the Guildhall Clock Tower (including mansafe at roof level below parapet level)

WARD: Castle Ward

APPLICANT: Northampton Borough Council
AGENT: Stimpson Walton Bond Architects

REFERRED BY: Head of Planning
REASON: Council owned land and is the Applicant

DEPARTURE: No

APPLICATION FOR DETERMINATION:

1 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVAL subject to the conditions as set out below and for the following reason:

The proposed works would not cause significant harm upon the character and appearance of this Listed Building, whilst supporting the ongoing use of this important heritage asset. The level of harm to the character, fabric and historic layout of the building would be less than substantial. The proposal is therefore in conformity with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies BN5 and S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policy 1 of the Northampton Central Area Action Plan.

2 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 The application seeks Listed Building Consent for the installation of a permanent external ladder and landing outside the first floor Farmers Room flat roof and the installation of a permanent internal access staircase and landing inside the Guildhall Clock Tower (including mansafe at roof level below parapet level).

- 2.2 There have been discussions, including with Historic England, on how to improve the health and safety procedures within the Guildhall without causing harm to the character and fabric of the building. These discussions are reflected in the current application.

3 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The Guildhall is a Grade II* Listed Building, which was a purpose built town hall in 1861-4 by Edward Godwin in C13 Gothic style. It was later extended in 1889-92 by Matthew Holding, with interiors by Albert Jeffrey. In 1992 it was further extended to the eastern flank.
- 3.2 The Guildhall is constructed of stone with a slate roof and has an irregular shaped footprint. Its internal layout consists of rooms and chambers around a pair of central staircases and accessed of long corridors or galleries.
- 3.3 The application site is accessed through via the window of the Farmers Room, on the ground floor of the Guildhall. It is not accessible from any of the public areas of the building.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 N/1989/945 – demolition of 1 and 2 storey extension fronting Dychurch Lane, erection of 5 and 6 storey extension, alterations to form office accommodation. Approved 30/08/1989.
- 4.2 N/1991/14008 – Alterations to the Mayors Room, retiring room and related facilities with new bay window on wall to provide single reception room etc. Approved 03/04/1991.
- 4.3 N/2002/1659 – installation of audio visual facilities to Council Chamber, Great Hall and Jeffery Room. Approved 07/04/2003.
- 4.4 N/2004/0572 – provision of new entrance lobby in the courtyard to access a new one stop shop. Approved 24/06/2004.
- 4.5 N/2010/0910 – removal of stud partition walls erected since 1948, re-opening of an existing doorway, rewiring and improvements to lighting. Approved 23/11/2010.
- 4.6 N/2018/0397 – Listed building application for the installation of primary and secondary barriers and control access through existing opening with new sliding doors, door furniture and electronic locks. Approved 08/05/2018

5 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Statutory Duty

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014), Northampton Central Area Action Plan (2013),

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works to 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.

Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to preserving a listed building or its setting and to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

5.2 National Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current aims and objectives for the planning system and how these should be applied. In delivering sustainable development, decisions should have regard to the mutually dependent social, economic and environmental roles of the planning system. The NPPF should be read as one complete document. However, the following section is of particular relevance to this application.

Paragraph 192 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

5.3 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) provides an up to date evidence base and considers the current Government requirements for plan making as it has been prepared in full conformity with the NPPF. Policies of particular relevance are:

Policy BN5 - The Historic Environment and Landscape
Policy S10 - Sustainable Development Principles

5.4 Northampton Central Area Action Plan 2013

The Central Area Action Plan (CAAP) provides specific planning policy and guidance for the town centre and adjoining areas where significant regeneration and investment is proposed in the period up to 2026 and is in conformity with the objectives of the NPPF. Relevant policy includes:

Policy 1: Promoting Design Excellence – make efficient use of land by promoting an appropriate mix of land uses in order to increase the vitality and vibrancy of an area and a wider range of choice for users.

5.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Planning out Crime in Northamptonshire SPG 2004

5.6 Other Material Considerations

All Saints Conservation Area Appraisal

6 CONSULTATIONS/ REPRESENTATIONS

Comments received are summarised as follows:

6.1 **NBC Conservation Section** - The proposals were considered at pre-application stage and accepted as a proportionate response to the problem of providing safe access for gutter cleaning and maintenance work to high-level parts of the Guildhall. The level of harm to the building will be less than substantial but is justified by the wider benefit of providing safe access for maintenance.

6.2 **Historic England** - No comments are offered and advice should be sought from the Council's own Conservation Officers.

6.3 **Northamptonshire Police** - Satisfied that access to the foot of the external ladder will not be possible from anywhere other than from within the Guildhall building. It is highly unlikely that the 'roof runners' who access buildings in Northampton to scale the heights and take selfies will be able to access this ladder from the public domain and on that basis Northamptonshire Police has no objection to the application.

7 APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The proposed works are required following a review of health and safety matters relating to personal safety and working environment within the Guildhall, when it was identified that works were required to manage access to various parts of the building.
- 7.2 The works are separated into two areas of work:
- External ladder and landing outside the Farmers Room
 - Installation of a permanent internal access staircase and landing inside the Guildhall Clock Tower

External Ladder and landing outside the Farmers Room

- 7.3 The Farmers Room is located off the West Wing of the Guildhall, on the ground floor (next to the Leaders Office). Within the room there is a sash window that looks out onto a courtyard, the basement flat roof area and the service yards of 1-2 St Giles Square.
- 7.4 Currently access to the to the roof of the building is obtained by climbing through the sash window, onto the flat roof, a ladder is then pulled through the same window and rested against the gutter of a single storey element. To clear out the gutters to the narrow lead gutter, the person carrying out the maintenance has to then climb onto the slate pitched roof. It is understood that this process is carried out fairly regularly as the gutters become blocked resulting in flooding.
- 7.5 The proposal is to provide a new stepped ladder arrangement onto a platform, with a handrail to prevent falling and to avoid damaging any slates on the roof. This area is not in public view and due to the method of fixing, the structures could be removed with minimal damage to the fabric of the building.
- 7.6 It is considered that safe access is important in order to ensure regular maintenance of the building.

Internal access staircase inside the Guildhall Clock Tower

- 7.7 The tower of the Guildhall Clock is considered to be one of the most prominent elements of the Guildhall. It is an ornate stone structure and stands over 20 metres high.
- 7.8 Currently access and maintenance of the clock tower is achieved by climbing a 7 metres high timber ladder, onto a softwood gantry. It is currently fixed with a batten at the bottom and tied to the gantry with a rope. There is no guarding or protection from falling and the openings in the side of the clock tower mean that wind and rain can enter, adding to the potential health and safety risk.
- 7.9 The internal roof has suffered from water egress and staining and is in need of replacement. Currently this is a timber structure with an aluminium sheet covering. This covering has come to the end of its useful life.
- 7.10 The external parapet is approximately 700mm high and the guttering needs to be inspected and cleared regularly. It is unsafe to work in this environment (over 20 metres from ground level) without some form of safety harness.
- 7.11 The application proposes a 6 metre high aluminium ladder onto a new galvanised steel framed gantry. This would lead to a further gantry for an additional 1 metre in height. This will provide a long term and safer solution to the current situation.
- 7.12 The aluminium sheeting will be replaced with a high performance three layer felt, discharging to an existing outlet, therefore reducing the amount of sitting water on the roof.
- 7.13 To allow access to the parapet gutter, it is proposed to install a man-safe lanyard system to the internal rafters through the roof slate covering and protect this with lead sheath and flashing. These works will not project above the top of the parapet roof and it is considered that the works

will give a long term safe and secure solution, that will not result in an adverse impact on the external appearance of the clock tower and a minimal physical impact on the building internally.

- 7.14 As all of the proposed works are within the 'back of house' areas of the Guildhall building and are only visible from the service yard to 1-2 St Giles Square, it is considered that there is no adverse impact on the All Saints Conservation Area.
- 7.15 These Clock Tower proposals will give a long term secure and safe solution which will have no impact externally and minimum physical impact on the building fabric internally. No fixings are proposed into the ashlar internal stonework and whilst the brickwork fixings and pockets supporting the steel frames will be required, the harm caused is minimal and outweighed by providing a readily usable safe secure access arrangement to maintain the historic fabric of the building in a considered way.
- 7.16 Historic England were consulted on the application and have referred the matter to the Council's own Conservation specialists to give advice in respect of this proposal. No objections have been received from other interested parties and it is considered that the works would not result in demonstrable or irreversible harm to the Listed Building.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposed works are considered to be minimally obtrusive and would not have a significantly demonstrable impact on the historic fabric of the Guildhall. The benefits of the works outweigh any harm to the building and as such are considered to be acceptable.

9 CONDITIONS

1. The works hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 2018/06/101, 2018/06/102 and 2018/06/300.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to accord with the terms of the listed building consent application.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

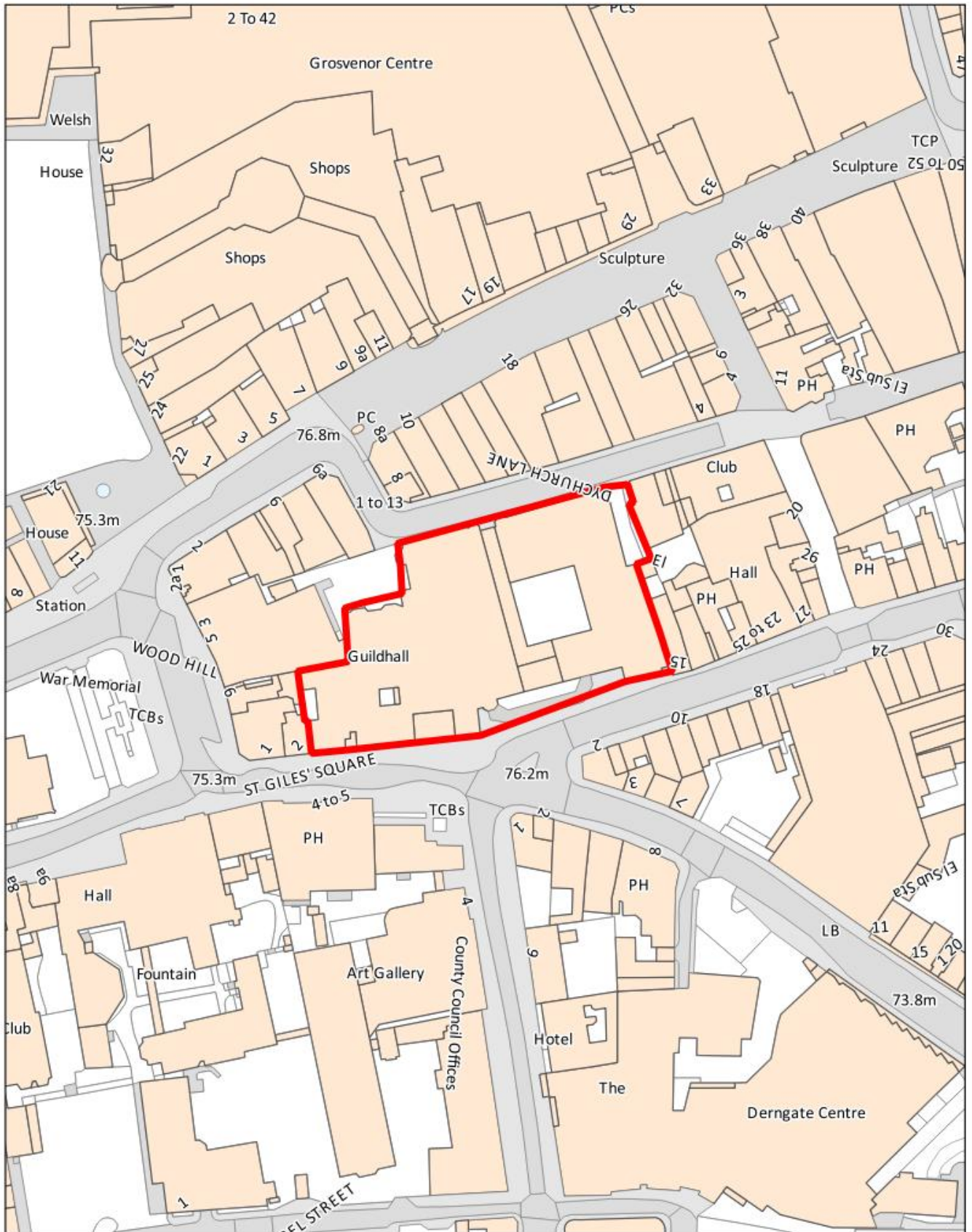
- 10.1 N/2019/0836.

11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The development is not CIL liable.

12 SUMMARY AND LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 12.1 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.



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