

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee: West/Centre Area **Ward:** Guildhall
Date: 17 September 2009 **Parish:** Guildhall Planning Panel

Reference: 09/00842/LBC
Application at: Library Museum Street York YO1 7DS
For: Internal alterations and refurbishment
By: Mrs Fiona Williams, City Of York Council
Application Type: Listed Building Consent
Target Date: 13 July 2009

1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 York Central Library comprises a broadly two storey brick and stone built Grade 11 Listed structure constructed by the local architectural partnership Brierley and Rutherford in 1927 and extended in 1938. It contains a significant Neo-Baroque interior characteristic of the partnership's work. The proposal which forms part of a wider scheme to refurbish and upgrade the range of facilities provided by the Library (including the cafe proposal reported elsewhere on this agenda ref:09/00841/GRG3) envisages the erection of a glazed entrance screen to replace the existing automatic sliding doors, the provision of a new handrail to the existing access ramp to additionally help provide access to the upper floor, the removal of existing shelving to facilitate the formation of a cafe and a relocated Children's Library, the removal and refurbishment of the existing fixed shelving in the fiction area to create a "flexible space", the refurbishment of an existing staff wc to form a "changing places" facility, the formation of a multi-purpose learning room with an acoustic suspended ceiling and a decorative suspended ceiling above the Children's Library. The scheme has been amended to deal with concerns previously raised in respect of the areas of suspended ceiling, the alteration and removal of the fixed timber shelving, the construction of the glazed entrance screen and the erection of a handrail to the main entrance ramp and staircase.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

Areas of Archaeological Interest GMS Constraints: City Centre Area 0006

Conservation Area GMS Constraints: Central Historic Core 0038

Listed Buildings GMS Constraints: Grade 2; Library, Library Square York YO1 2DS 0631

2.2 Policies:

CYHE4
Listed Buildings

3.0 CONSULTATIONS

INTERNAL

Design, Conservation and Sustainable Development

3.1 Raise no objection to the proposal as amended subject to a number of detailed conditions being appended to any permission given.

EXTERNAL

Guildhall Planning Panel

3.2 Raise no objection in principle to the proposal but express some concern with regard to the reduction in community display space, provision of appropriate toilet accommodation for the cafe and the reduction in book shelving.

English Heritage

3.3 Raise no objection in principle to the scheme as amended but wish to see a number of detailed conditions appended to any consent reserving elements of the scheme such as the glazed screen for further approval.

Third Party Objections

3.4 One letter of objection has been received objecting to the re-ordering of the accommodation within the library, the inclusion of a cafe within the scheme and the removal of the purpose built timber book shelving.

4.0 APPRAISAL

4.1 KEY CONSIDERATIONS: -

- Removal of fixed timber shelving
- Details of the proposed suspended ceiling panels
- Provision of handrails to entrance ramp and staircase accessing first floor
- Glazed entrance screen
- Exposure of original flooring

4.2 Central Government advice on Listed Building Control outlined in PPG 15 "Planning and the Historic Environment" sets out a clear framework for assess developments such the current one in paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13. Here it is argued that a balancing exercise must be undertaken between the need to maintain a building in its original and continuing use and the special interest of the building and its capacity to accommodate alteration. Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan similarly sets a firm policy presumption against development involving internal alterations, which would have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of a Listed Building. The current scheme comprises a comprehensive scheme of

refurbishment and modernisation, some elements of which are entirely acceptable and others which have given rise to significant issues of concern. The principles behind the proposed internal works are accepted as is the need to remove the existing offices within the Children's area , the removal of the book despatch area adjacent to the existing fiction area and the formation of a " changing places" wc. Each of the areas of concern will be examined in relation to the requirements of PPG 15 and Policy HE4.

REMOVAL OF EXISTING SHELVING

4.3 The existing oak shelving within the Library was purpose built for the structure by Brierley and Rutherford. Following extensive negotiations sections of the shelving would be retained where it directly abuts the internal walls of the Non-Fiction area. Sections of the existing island shelving would also be retained and up-graded or rendered movable and the currently under-utilised fixed shelving within the Children's Area would be brought back into use. The remainder of the fixed shelving and island shelving would be carefully removed and kept in storage for possible re-use. The remainder of the shelving within the existing fiction and children's areas is of more recent construction and so not considered to form part of the special interest of the Listed Building. New timber furniture which could easily be relocated would be brought in to satisfy remaining requirements. The applicant has stated their intention as being to create a series of flexible spaces in which shelving and seating can be relocated to allow for special events and particular promotions. The remaining areas of fixed and island shelving would be retained to give a clear indication of the earlier building design and layout. As amended the proposals for removing the existing shelving would preserve the historic character of the building in accordance with the advice contained in PPG15.

DETAILS OF SUSPENDED CEILING PANELS

4.4 Two sections of the refurbished area are intended to accommodate areas of suspended acoustic panelling because of the nature of the activities envisaged. The Children's Library and associated Play Area are intended to have a series of suspended acoustic panels of cloud design to lessen noise and to also act as a means of delineating the area. Also the learning room to be formed at the rear of the library complex would have three more substantial acoustic panels to deal with an existing problem of poor acoustics. Neither area of suspended ceiling would disrupt the understanding of the relevant section of the building interior and in each case fulfils a functional requirement associated with maintaining the building in use. Subject to the precise details of both elements being conditioned for further approval then the requirements of Central Government advice on Listed Building Control contained in PPG 15 would be fulfilled.

PROVISION OF HANDRAILS TO CENTRAL STAIRWELL AND ENTRANCE RAMP

4.5 The character of the entrance to the library with an open full height stairwell, the use of Doric pilasters and a John Carr style arch provides a firm statement of the building as a Neo-Baroque structure. As part of the scheme it is intended to extend a handrail to either side of the existing entrance ramp around the base of the stairwell in order to improve access for those with mild movement impairments. By negotiation it has been agreed to keep the fixings for the handrail away from the edge of the Doric

pilasters in order that the character of the space may be maintained. Details of the fixings and general arrangement have been submitted as part of the revised scheme, which show a minimal impact upon the character and appearance of the building in accordance with the terms of Draft Local Plan Policy HE4.

GLAZED ENTRANCE SCREEN

4.6 The applicant has requested the erection of a glazed screen within the entrance lobby incorporating a warm air curtain as a shelter against noise and draughts from outside and at the same time to act as an architectural statement in respect of the current programme of refurbishments. It would replace the existing wood veneered automatic doors that were inserted in the late 1980s and have come to look tired and dishevelled. As part of the amended scheme the applicant has submitted details of the screen, which would closely follow in terms of its proportions, layout and alignment the John Carr style foyer arch to the rear. The arrangement of the screen would enable the visitor to fully appreciate the proportion and overall appearance of the arch directly behind whilst at the same time making a clear statement in respect of the current alterations. The glass within the screen will need to be "faceted" to lessen the risk of collision; details of this faceting should be reserved by condition for further approval on any permission. On balance the details of the screen as amended would comply with the requirements of Central Government advice on Listed Building Control outlined in PPG 15.

EXPOSURE OF ORIGINAL FLOORING

4.7 It is intended to expose the stone flooring from the entrance lobby, which would emphasise the essentially grand Neo-Baroque nature of the space. The original flooring of the main library area was a varnished wooden parquet tile used to create the appropriate acoustic impact. The floor largely survives below areas of Modern carpet. The applicant has indicated a willingness to consider exposing sections of the flooring especially in the area of the bookcases to be retained. Sections are however in a poor state of repair having suffered from water ingress whilst others have slipped. Notwithstanding that, the future of the surviving flooring should be secured below what ever floor covering is chosen and areas which are suitable for exposure should be suitably treated and exposed for public use. This may be most appropriately secured by condition on any consent given.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 York Central Library comprises a broadly two storey brick and stone built early 20th Grade 11 Listed structure by the local architects Brierley and Rutherford. It also lies in an important location with the Central Historic Core Conservation Area. The proposal forms part of a wider package of measures to refurbish and upgrade the level of facilities available at the site, a planning application in respect of the proposed cafe is also reported on this agenda. Central Government advice in respect of Listed Building Control outlined in PPG 15 "Planning and the Historic Environment" highlights the need to undertake a balancing exercise between the desirable aspiration of retaining a Listed Building in the use for which it was built, the sensitivity of the proposed change and the capacity of the Listed Building to absorb any potentially

detrimental change. Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan similarly counsels against inappropriate alterations internal or external to Listed Buildings within the City. Following two amendments to the scheme, the development as proposed subject to appropriate conditions would have a minimal adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the building in line with the requirements of Central Government Guidance outlined in PPG15 and Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan.

COMMITTEE TO VISIT

6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Approve following Sec of State Decision

1 TIMEL2 Development start within 3 yrs (LBC/CAC)

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following plans: -

Drawing Refs: 0913/100 Rev A ; 0913/200 Rev A ; 0913/201 ; 0913/202 ; 0913/202 ; 0913/203 . Date Stamped 6th August 2009

or any plans or details subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as amendment to the approved plans.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.

3 Notwithstanding the application details hereby approved, full details including height, location, decoration and structural members of the glazed screen to separate the cafe area from the children's library shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work on site commences. Work shall thenceforth be undertaken in strict accordance with the details hereby approved.

Reason: To secure the historic character and integrity of the Listed Building and to secure compliance with Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan

4 Notwithstanding the application details hereby approved full details of the internal decorative scheme including details of paints and other decorative finishes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work on site commences. Work shall thenceforth be undertaken in strict accordance with the details thereby approved.

Reason: To safeguard the character and integrity of the Listed Building and to secure compliance with Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan

5 Notwithstanding the application details hereby approved full details of the glazed entrance screen including the heat curtain and manifestation contained within the glazing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work on site commences. Work shall thenceforth be undertaken in

strict accordance with the details thereby approved.

Reason: To safeguard the historic character and integrity of the Listed Building and to secure compliance with Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan.

6 Notwithstanding the application details hereby approved full details of the acoustic ceiling panels and associated lighting including colours and mode of fixing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work on site commences. The development shall thenceforth be undertaken in strict accordance with the details thereby approved.

Reason: To safeguard the historic character and integrity of the Listed Building and to secure compliance with Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan

7 Notwithstanding the application details hereby approved a method statement detailing the mode of removal of the existing fitted bookcases to be removed both free-standing and wall mounted, the method of restoration for those to be retained and the mode and location of storage for those to be removed, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work on site commences. Development shall thenceforth be undertaken in strict accordance with the details thereby approved.

Reason: -

To safeguard the historic character and integrity of the Listed Building and to secure compliance with Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan.

8 Notwithstanding the application details hereby approved full details of the proposed treatment for the existing wooden tile floor which shall include areas to be exposed and surface treatments where it is to be covered shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work on site commences. The development shall thenceforth be undertaken in strict accordance with the details thereby approved.

Reason: To safeguard the historic character and integrity of the Listed Building and to secure compliance with Policy HE4 of the York Development Control Local Plan

7.0 INFORMATIVES:

Notes to Applicant

1. REASON FOR APPROVAL

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal, subject to the conditions listed above, would not cause undue harm to interests of acknowledged importance, with particular reference to details of the proposed suspended ceiling panels, removal of fixed timber shelving, provision of handrails to the entrance ramp and staircase accessing the first floor, glazed entrance screen and exposure of original flooring. As such the proposal complies with Policy HE4 of the City of York Development Control Local Plan and Central Government advice on Listed Building Control outlined in PPG 15 "Planning and the Historic Environment".

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