

## COMMITTEE REPORT

**Committee:** West/Centre Area  
**Date:** 15 July 2010

**Ward:** Guildhall  
**Parish:** Guildhall Planning Panel

**Reference:** 10/01089/FUL  
**Application at:** De Grey Rooms St Leonards Place York YO1 7HB  
**For:** Use as theatre workshop and ancillary theatre uses including rehearsal space, costume making, costume hire and storage.  
**By:** Mr Ian Daniels  
**Application Type:** Full Application  
**Target Date:** 13 July 2010  
**Recommendation:** Approve

### 1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 This application seeks planning permission for works associated with the proposed change of use of the De Grey Rooms for use as theatre workshops and ancillary theatre uses that include rehearsal space, costume making, costume hire and storage. The proposal would result in the Theatre Royal occupying the building as the sole tenant for mainly school/ youth theatre workshops.

1.2 The ground floor of the building was previously occupied by Tourist Information Service and its associated call centre. The Theatre Royal currently uses the ballroom, cocktail bar and Oak Room for youth theatre workshops. The rooms in the basement have been used as secure stores by the Trading Standards department, and a first floor office has been used as a base for the York Voluntary Guides.

1.3 The proposed internal changes are covered in detail in the related application for listed building consent ( LPA Ref. 10/01089/LBC ). The only external change that would affect the appearance of the building would be in the side passage where an existing side entrance to the basement level would be adapted to accommodate wheelchairs via a levelled access. The agent has advised that a future assessment of the heating and ventilation of parts of the building will be carried out, and that the mechanical ventilation system will be redesigned (to include the removal of unsightly and prominent ventilation ducts). This detail will be submitted in a future application for listed building consent.

### CONTEXT

1.4 The De Grey Rooms and De Grey House are now owned by the Yorkshire Conservation Trust following their purchase from the City of York Council in 2005. The building is an example of an early Victorian Assembly Room built by private subscription in 1841-2. It is associated with Col Rt Hon Earl De Grey KG and officers of the Yorkshire Hussars who had an annual assembly in York, though the scale of the principal room, reception areas and large kitchens made it suitable for various types of meeting and exhibitions. It was designed by the notable York architect GT

Andrews and is a good example of late Regency architectural design. It is listed at grade II\* and it is situated within the Central Historic Core conservation area adjacent to Bootham Bar.

1.5 Councillor Brian Watson has requested that the listed building and planning applications for the works are the De Grey Rooms are referred to the West/ Central Sub- Planning Committee for determination because they relate to an important city centre building.

## **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 CONF

DC Area Teams GMS Constraints: Central Area 0002

Listed Buildings GMS Constraints: Grade 2\*; Tourist Information Centre De Grey Rooms St Leonar 0669

2.2 Policies:

CYHE3  
Conservation Areas

CYHE4  
Listed Buildings

CYGP1  
Design

CYGP12  
Access to upper floors

## **3.0 CONSULTATIONS**

INTERNAL

3.1 Design, Conservation and Sustainable Development- No objections

EXTERNAL

3.2 Guildhall Planning Panel - No comments at the time of writing

Public Consultation - No representations have been received.

## 4.0 APPRAISAL

### KEY ISSUES

- Proposed use
- Visual Impact on the listed building/ conservation area
- Access

### RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

4.1 National Guidance- Planning Policy Statement 5 " Planning for the Historic Environment " seeks to ensure that the special characteristics of listed buildings and conservation areas are not adversely affected by inappropriate developments.

4.2 Local Plan- Policy HE4 states that consent will only be granted when there is no adverse effect on the character, appearance or setting of listed buildings and Policy HE3 seeks to protect the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. Policy GP12 encourages new proposals, including change of use applications, to facilitate improved access to upper floors from the ground floor.

### PROPOSED USE

4.3 The building has been under-occupied for some time and recently the Visitor Information Service on the ground floor vacated the premises. The management of the York Theatre Royal has a long held aspiration to increase its space and facilities by reusing both De Grey House and the De Grey Rooms, and on an intermittent basis the company has been using the larger spaces within the De Grey Rooms for Youth Theatre workshops. The current proposals would facilitate this use within the De Grey Rooms where it is intended to accommodate school groups within theatre workshops. The premises would also create further space for a costume making workshop, costume storage and costume hire following relocation from premises in Walmgate. The proposed works would also upgrade the existing WC's provision for the intensified use. The proposal to make the building more accessible for all members of the public by providing a level access to the basement and improved internal access will enhance the building for the proposed and future users.

4.4 Recent national planning policy contained in Planning Policy Statement 5 advises that uses of heritage assts should be viable, not just for the owner but also for the future conservation of the asset. It is considered that the building can accommodate the proposed range of uses without significantly harming the listed building and would be compatible with the long-term conservation of the asset. The existing uses within the building have been relocated elsewhere without losing their contribution to the vitality of the city. The proposed employment numbers would be similar to employment levels for the existing uses. The hours of operation from 09:00- 23:00 would be acceptable in the city centre, and would result in greater use of an important heritage building. The alterations affect the groundwork of the passageway would not obstruct the existing vehicular and pedestrian access to the buildings at the rear.

4.5 The De Grey Rooms make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the intensification of use for the proposed activity would assist in maintaining the building's public role within the conservation area. Its external appearance would be unchanged though further signage might be required. The scheme would satisfy the aims of policy HE3 of the Local Plan and policy HE7.4 of Planning Policy Statement 5. The policy requires local planning authorities to take account of the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to the maintenance of sustainable communities and to economic vitality in the conservation area.

## VISUAL IMPACT ON THE LISTED BUILDING AND THE CONSERVATION AREA

4.6 The proposals have been designed to have minimal impact on the special significance of the listed building or the wider conservation area. The building would be adapted for the new uses with minimal alteration to the original fabric, and the proposed new works would be sympathetic to the special interests of the listed building. The proposed alterations in the side passageway to improve access to the building would not be visible from public vantage points. It is therefore concluded that there would be no adverse impact on the character and amenity of the conservation area. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy HE4 of the Local Plan.

## ACCESS

4.7 The De Grey Rooms are located in the city centre close to the pedestrianised zone, well served by public transport modes. There is no on-site car parking but there are nearby car parks. It is not anticipated that the proposal would harm highway safety.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The proposed works to the listed building would be acceptable changes that would not detrimentally harm the very special interests of the Grade II\* listed building. They would allow the building to be adapted for a use that is likely to secure the long-term use of the building and increase its significance as a heritage asset. There is the added benefit that members of the general public and visitors to the City would have access to parts of the building for the first time in many years. The proposals would accord with Policies HE3, HE4 and GP12 of the Local Plan, and related national guidance.

## COMMITTEE TO VISIT

**6.0 RECOMMENDATION:** Approve

1 TIME2 Development start within three years

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and other submitted details:-

Drawing No. 0907.6 Received 17 May 2010

Drawing No. 0907.7 Received 17 May 2010

Drawing No. 0907.8 Received 17 May 2010

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

3 Prior to the commencement of the works hereby approved, the following details shall be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter the works shall be implemented and retained in accordance with the approved details:

a) Details of the extent of alteration to form the ramped access outside the service door within the rear yard, including typical finishes, further lighting provision, handrails etc.

Reason: To ensure that the details would be acceptable in the interests of the visual amenity and historical and architectural interest of the Listed Building.

## **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 compatibility with surrounding uses, the special interests of the Grade II\* listed building, the character and amenity of the conservation area, and improved access to the building. As such, the proposal complies with Policies HE3, HE4, GP12 of the City of York Development Control Local Plan (2005) and national planning guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 5 " Planning for the Historic Environment.

#### 2. ADVERTISEMENT CONSENT

Please note that advertisement consent/listed building consent may be required for the display of any new signage in association with the use hereby approved. You are therefore advised not to display any advertisements until you have confirmed that express consent of the City of York Council is not required / obtained under the Town and Country Planning ( Control of Advertisements ) Regulations 1992 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

#### **Contact details:**

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