



## Report to West Area Planning Committee

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<b>Application Number:</b>	22/08199/R9FUL
<b>Proposal:</b>	Installation of replacement lighting and ancillary works
<b>Site Location:</b>	The Guildhall Cornmarket High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP11 2AY
<b>Applicant:</b>	Mr Charles Brocklehurst
<b>Case Officer:</b>	Chris Lamb
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	Abbey
<b>Parish-Town Council:</b>	High Wycombe Town Unparished
<b>Date valid application received:</b>	5th January 2023
<b>Statutory determination date:</b>	2nd March 2023
<b>Recommendation</b>	Application Permitted

### 1.0 Summary & Recommendation / Reason for Planning Committee Consideration

- 1.1 Planning consent is sought for the installation of replacement lighting and other minor ancillary works to the undercroft of The Guildhall, Cornmarket. A separate application for listed building consent accompanies this application.
- 1.2 The application has been made on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council and has therefore, for reasons of transparency, been called to committee for determination.
- 1.3 Following the submission of further details by the agent, it is considered that the works would not result in harm or damage to the existing historic fabric or building more generally. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in heritage terms and there are no further concerns with the application.
- 1.4 The application is recommended for approval.

### 2.0 Description of Proposed Development

- 2.1 The application relates to The Guildhall, a Grade I Listed Building and iconic structure within the High Wycombe Town Centre Conservation Area. The building is sited within a prominent location which contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the high street.

- 2.2 The ground floor is an openly accessible undercroft, which is used by the market on market days. It is acknowledged that the undercroft is looking tired and in need of a facelift.
- 2.3 The application proposes the installation of miniature LED lights to the ceiling of the undercroft, replacing the 15 existing bulkhead light fittings which are unsympathetic. Additionally, the application proposes the redecoration of the undercroft ceiling, minor pigeon deterrent measures, and the replacement of some of the high level electrical outlets so as to improve the appearance of the undercroft area.
- 2.4 The application is accompanied by:
- a) Design, Access and Heritage Statement

### 3.0 Relevant Planning History

Reference	Development	Decision	Decision Date
96/07198/R9FUL	Construction of two storey rear extension with interior modifications and external works	PER	20 March 1997
97/05179/LBC	Construction of two storey rear extension with interior modifications and external works	PER	23 July 1997
98/05232/R9FUL	Use of land for the siting of 2 market stalls at junction of Paul's Row and Church Street and use of land for the siting of 3 market stalls next to the Guildhall	PER	4 June 1998
22/08200/LBC	Listed building consent for installation of replacement lighting and ancillary works	PCO	

### 4.0 Policy Considerations and Evaluation

#### Principle and Location of Development

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP1 (Sustainable Development), CP3 (Settlement Strategy), DM33 (Managing Carbon Emissions, Transport and Energy Generation)

DSA: DM1 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development), DM6 (Mixed-use development)

- 4.1 Minor external alterations in this location would be considered acceptable in principle subject to complying with all other relevant Development Plan policies.

#### Transport matters and parking

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP7 (Delivering the infrastructure to support growth), DM33 (Managing Carbon Emissions, Transport and Energy Generation)

DSA: DM2 (Transport requirements of development sites)

- 4.2 The replacement lighting would be sited to the ceiling of the undercroft, suspended within the ceiling recesses between the first floor support structure.
- 4.3 Given that the lighting would be suspended within the ceiling recesses, it is proposed that the individual lights would be suspended approximately 25mm higher than the crown of the perimeter arches, thus shielding the lights from passing motorists.
- 4.4 Given the positioning and moderate proposed luminance of the lighting (between 200-400 lux), it is not considered that the lights would have any negative impact on adjacent highway users.

#### **Raising the quality of place making and design**

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP9 (Sense of place), DM34 (Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development), DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality)  
DSA: DM11 (Green networks and infrastructure)

- 4.5 Currently, the undercroft is looking tired and in need of a facelift. The existing bulkhead lighting is not of a sympathetic style whilst it and the surface mounted cables are not of the quality or character appropriate for the building. Their removal is therefore welcomed. The existing finish to the undercroft ceiling comprises a white, glossy paint which is also incongruous.
- 4.6 The proposal aims to enhance the visual appearance of the building, providing more effective and attractive lighting of the undercroft area whilst also improving the building's daytime appeal.
- 4.7 It is considered that the proposed replacement lighting and ancillary works would represent a visual improvement on the existing arrangement, to the benefit of the character and appearance of the building and wider high street area.

#### **Amenity of existing and future residents**

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM35 (Placemaking and Design Quality)

- 4.8 The proposal is not considered to give rise to any negative impacts to adjoining occupiers.

#### **Ecology**

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): DM34 (Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development)

DSA: DM13 (Conservation and enhancement of sites, habitats and species of biodiversity and geodiversity importance), DM14 (Biodiversity in development)

- 4.9 Policy DM34 requires all development to protect and enhance both biodiversity and green infrastructure features and networks both on and off site for the lifetime of the development.
- 4.10 No assessment has been provided with this proposal. In this instance, given the nature of the proposal there would be no impact on site biodiversity, whilst enhancement is not considered proportionate.

#### **Historic environment (or Conservation Area or Listed Building Issues)**

Wycombe District Local Plan (August 2019): CP9 (Sense of place), CP11 (Historic Environment), DM20 (Matters to be determined in accordance with the NPPF), DM31 (Development Affecting the Historic Environment)

- 4.11 The Guildhall is a Grade I Listed Building and as such, the Council's Heritage team have been consulted as part of the application.

- 4.12 As described above, the proposed development is considered in principle to represent a visual enhancement in appearance terms, replacing the existing poor lighting and rejuvenating the appearance of the undercroft thorough redecoration and the installation of more attractive light fittings.
- 4.13 Concerns were however originally raised regarding the method of fixing, which would result in approximately 100 fixing points into areas of the undercroft, potentially into historic fabric, namely timber beams supporting the floor above.
- 4.14 Following the submission of further information by the agent, it should be noted however that The Guildhall underwent significant structural alterations during the 1990s, in which the structure supporting the first floor was reinforced twice. Thus, it has been concluded that the ceiling structure is now most likely made from modern fabric and replacement timbers, whilst the void between the ceiling and floor structure above is large enough that fixings for the proposed lights are very unlikely to come near the historic floor timbers further above.
- 4.15 The additional information submitted by the agent has been reviewed by the Council's Conservation Officer and it has been concluded that there is a very low risk that the light fittings would damage historic timbers/structure. As such, it is not considered that the method of fixing would result in any undue harm to the historical integrity of the building, subject to conditioning the exact number and location of fixings.
- 4.16 All further aspects of the proposal are considered to be acceptable, and overall the propped development is considered to be a welcome addition which would enhance the public experience of The Guildhall and high street more generally.
- 4.17 As per the comments of the Conservation Officer, details of the fixings, blending colour/artwork and paint finish should however be secured by condition so as to achieve a satisfactory external appearance and ensure the proposal appropriately conserves the special interest of the Listed Building.

## **5.0 Weighing and balancing of issues / Overall Assessment**

- 5.1 This section brings together the assessment that has so far been set out in order to weigh and balance relevant planning considerations in order to reach a conclusion on the application.
- 5.2 In determining the planning application, section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In addition, Section 143 of the Localism Act amends Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act relating to the determination of planning applications and states that in dealing with planning applications, the authority shall have regard to:
- a. Provision of the development plan insofar as they are material,
  - b. Any local finance considerations, so far as they are material to the application (such as CIL if applicable), and,
  - c. Any other material considerations
- 5.3 As set out above it is considered that the proposed development would accord with the development plan policies.
- 5.4 Local Planning Authorities, when making decisions of a strategic nature, must have due regard, through the Equalities Act, to reducing the inequalities which may result from

socio-economic disadvantage. In this instance, it is not considered that this proposal would disadvantage any sector of society to a harmful extent.

## **6.0 Working with the applicant / agent**

6.1 In accordance with paragraphs 38 and 39 of the NPPF, Buckinghamshire Council (BC) approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way taking a proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions and work proactively with applicants to secure developments. BC work with the applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by offering a pre-application advice service, and as appropriate updating applications/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application. In this instance the agent was provided with an opportunity to submit further information/clarification in support of the proposal. Sufficient information/clarification was subsequently received such that the application could be recommended for approval.

## **7.0 Recommendation**

### **7.1 Application Permitted**

Subject to the following conditions and reasons: -

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.  
Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (As amended).
- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be built and retained in accordance with the details contained in the planning application hereby approved and plan numbers BC1, BC2 and BC3, unless the Local Planning Authority otherwise first agrees in writing.  
Reason: In the interest of proper planning and to ensure a satisfactory development of the site.
- 3 The materials used for the development shall be of those specified in accordance with the details submitted within the supporting documentation and plans, unless otherwise stated or agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
Reason: To secure a satisfactory external appearance.
- 4 Prior to the installation of the LED lighting, details of the number and precise location of fixings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details only, unless otherwise specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.  
Reason: In order to safeguard the architectural and historic fabric of the Listed Building and conserve its special interest.
- 5 Prior to the redecoration/repainting of the undercroft, details of the 'blended transition' as described in Section 11 of the submitted Design, Access and Heritage Statement, including colour and appearance - and any further artwork beyond the description specified in said section - shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the

development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details only, unless otherwise specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory external appearance and conserve the special interest of the listed building.

- 6 Notwithstanding any indication of finish which may have been given in the application, a matt or eggshell paint finish shall be used for the redecoration, unless the Local Planning Authority otherwise first agrees in writing.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory external appearance and conserve the special interest of the listed building.

## **APPENDIX A: Consultation Responses and Representations**

### **Councillor Comments**

No comments received.

### **Parish/Town Council Comments**

High Wycombe Town Unparished

### **Consultation Responses:**

#### **Conservation and Listed Buildings Officer:**

No Objections, subject to conditions:

Initial Comments:

Recommendation: the application complies with heritage policies and guidance, subject to conditions.

Information Considered:

Heritage, Design and Access Statement

Site plan

Block plan

Proposed ceiling layout plan

The Guildhall is a grade I listed building and an iconic structure within the High Wycombe Town Centre Conservation Area. The ground floor is openly accessible and used by the market on market days.

It is acknowledged that the undercroft is looking tired and in need of a facelift. The bulkhead lighting is not of a sympathetic style for a building of this importance. The proposed works seeks to improve the appearance of this area as follows:

#### **1. Replacement lighting**

As stated, the existing lighting and surface mounted cables are not of the quality or character appropriate for the building and their removal is welcomed. The 15 replacement light frames would be suspended within the existing framework of ceiling downstands. The level of the frames/lights would be a minimum of 25mm above the perimeter arches so that they are not visible from outside the building. Each frame would be fixed by threaded eyebolt to mounting plates: the number of fixings is not identified but presumably as a minimum to each corner and at mid points. The number of fixings is therefore in the region of 100.

The DAS states that the fixings will not affect historic structure as the building underwent major structural repair in the 1990s, including replacement steel supports to the first floor, with EML and modern plaster ceilings. In views of the undercroft the modern fabric is readily apparent although the underlying age and condition of structure is not known. Limited opening up was explored prior to the application but the findings were inconclusive.

The proposed lighting and frames are reversible and acceptable in principle provided that they are attached to modern fabric as proposed, avoiding placing loading on historic fabric. As the underlying structure has not been confirmed, any consent should condition this approach.

## 2. Redecoration

Modern, glossy white paint has been applied to the undercroft which is also incongruous in character. The proposed colour scheme is for a dark blue breathable paint. This should have a matt or eggshell finish. The sides of the undercroft will be painted white and blended so that there is a transition in colour.

## 3. Pigeon deterrents

The internal column capitals are wider than the posts they encase, creating pigeon roosts. Boxing the posts out in 12mm plywood is reversible and will improve the proportions of the columns.

## 4. Replacement services

The removal of obsolete modern fittings and where necessary their replacement with smaller modern fittings is welcome. Fixings should drill into the mortar rather than historic brickwork as it is easier to make good. Cables will be surface mounted on existing routes and should be painted to match the ceiling decoration to minimise visibility.

The works aim to present the building better for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to High Wycombe. Provided the light frame mountings are fixed to modern fabric, the works are all reversible and improve the appearance of the building. Consequently, it is acceptable subject conditions:

In order to conserve the special interest of the listed building the following details should be submitted to the council:

- o Number and location of fixings
- o Confirmation of the underlying structure composition and materials
- o Artwork for the ceiling decoration and blending of the colours
- o Matt or eggshell paint finish is required for the redecoration

Following the comments of the Conservation Officer, further information/details were requested regarding the fixings to seek confirmation that these would not be attached to historic fabric/materials. Following the submission of said details, the final comments of the Conservation Officer were as follows:

I tend to agree with the agent's findings given the appearance and planning history concerning the undercroft of the Guildhall. As such, there is a very low risk that the light fittings would damage historic timbers/structure. The proposal would therefore be capable of being reversed in accordance with conservation principles.

### **Historic England:**

Comment:

Historic England provides advice when our engagement can add most value. In this case we are not offering advice. This should not be interpreted as comment on the merits of the application.



We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers. You may also find it helpful to refer to our published advice at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/>

It is not necessary to consult us on this application again, unless there are material changes to the proposals. However, if you would like advice from us, please contact us to explain your request.

#### Representations

None received.

# APPENDIX B: Site Location Plan

22/08199/R9FUL  
Scale 1/250



Planning Committee  
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Ordnance Survey 100062456