

Application No: 23/2367N

Location: MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, EARLE STREET, CREWE, CW1 2BJ

Proposal: Proposals for repair of Crewe Municipal Buildings main facade windows, doors and wrought iron railing and gates including replacement of two existing flag poles and associated temporary works

Applicant: Mr Richard Jones, Cheshire East Council

Expiry Date: 29-Aug-2023

The proposed development is recommended to be acceptable in this instance and complies with the Development Plan and the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to conditions

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is the Municipal Buildings on Earle Street which are located within the settlement boundary for Crewe as defined by the Local Plan Policies Map. The property is a Grade II Listed Building consisting of three-storeys (plus basement) with its upper floor within the roof level. The property was constructed in the early 20th Century to contain the civic offices and features a later 3-storey rear extension. The applicant site occupies a prominent position as part of an important gateway into the town. Its frontage faces Memorial Square featuring the War Memorial and is adjacent to the Market Hall (both Grade II). The site is located in the principal town centre boundary / primary shopping area and is sited approximately 1km to the north of Crewe Railway Station.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application proposes repairs to the main façade windows, entrance doors and wrought iron railing and gates of the Municipal Buildings. This includes a replacement of existing flag poles and associated temporary works.

RELEVANT HISTORY

23/4000N – The proposal is to convert the Municipal Building Annex into flexible workspaces. Works will include the demolition and remodelling of internal walls, reconfiguration of toilet facilities and replacement of ceilings. Externally, 5 windows and 2 doors will be removed to make way for a curtain wall and new frontage to the Annex via the courtyard. The works will

also involve remodelling the existing and under-utilised service yard into an outdoor courtyard (Approved 10-Jan-2024)

23/3998N – The proposal is to convert the Municipal Building Annex into flexible workspaces. Works will include the demolition and remodelling of internal walls, reconfiguration of toilet facilities and replacement of ceilings. Externally, 5 windows and 2 doors will be removed to make way for a curtain wall and new frontage to the Annex via the courtyard. The works will also involve remodelling the existing and under-utilised service yard into an outdoor courtyard (Approved 10-Jan-2024)

12/1730N – Proposals to provide access to the principal elevation of the Municipal Building (Approved 16-Jul-2012)

11/1024N – LBC to provide access to the principal elevation of the Municipal Building (Approved 24-Aug-2011)

11/1023N – Proposal to provide access to the principal elevation of the municipal building (Approved 05-Sep-2011)

10/0511N – Recovering of the front section of the roof to the original building (Approved 04-Aug-2010)

7/18455 – Three storey office extension to rear and associated car parking (Approved 22-May-1990)

7/18449 – LBC for demolition of corn exchange, three storey office extension to rear and internal alterations to municipal buildings (Approved 22-May-1990)

P06/0105 – Listed building consent for new lighting scheme for the facades of Municipal Buildings and Market Hall (Approved 07-Jun-2006)

P06/0069 – Listed building consent for alterations to front and rear entrances and internal alterations (Approved 03-Apr-2006)

P98/0179 – LBC for attaching notice board to front elevation (Approved 27-Apr-1998)

P98/0080 – Removal of condition 6 on advertisement consent for sign boards and addition of extra sign (Approved 05-Mar-1998)

P96/0020 – LBC for handrail to front entrance steps (Approved 29-Feb-1996)

P94/0366 – LBC brass lettering (Approved 23-Aug-1994)

P94/0335 – LBC substation (Approved 30-Jun-1994)

P94/0334 – Substation (Approved 30-Jun-1994)

POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

MP1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SD1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD2 - Sustainable Development Principles
SE1 - Design
SE7 – The Historic Environment
SE8 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
EG1 – Economic Prosperity
EG4 – Existing and Allocated Employment Sites
EG5 – Promoting a Town Centre First Approach to Retail and Commerce
LPS1 – Central Crewe

Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

PG9 – Settlement Boundaries
GEN1 – Design Principles
HER1 – Heritage Assets
HER4 – Listed Buildings
HOU12 – Amenity
RET10 – Crewe Town Centre
INF3 – Highways Safety and Access
INF9 – Utilities

Neighbourhood Plan

There is no Neighbourhood Plan in Crewe.

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance
Cheshire East Design Guide SPD

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Environmental Health: No objection.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL

Crewe Town Council: No objection.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

No representations received.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site lies within the Crewe Settlement Boundary and is a Grade II Listed Building. The principle of the proposed works is acceptable subject to the consideration of the impact upon the Grade II Listed Building, the design of the proposed development, the highways impact and the impact upon residential amenity.

Heritage, Design & Character of the Area

The NPPF paragraph 197 identifies that

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

Para 199 states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Para 200 goes on to clarify that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should have clear and convincing justification for the harm.

Policy SE 7 of the CELPS states that 'The character, quality and diversity of the historic environment will be conserved and enhanced. All new development should seek to avoid harm to heritage assets and make a positive contribution to the character of Cheshire East's historic and built environment, including the setting of assets and where appropriate, the wider historic environment'.

Policy HER4 of the SADPD follows the wording of the NPPF and states that when considering development proposals or works affecting a listed building, including alterations, extensions and changes of use, in line with its statutory duty, the council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

Overview

The proposed works are repairs to the principal façade of the Municipal Buildings. This involves repairs to the windows, main entrance doors, wrought iron railings and gates being undertaken, and replacement of the existing flag poles with the scope of works including:

- 1) Clean and repair of glass including repair and replacement of existing lead (where required).

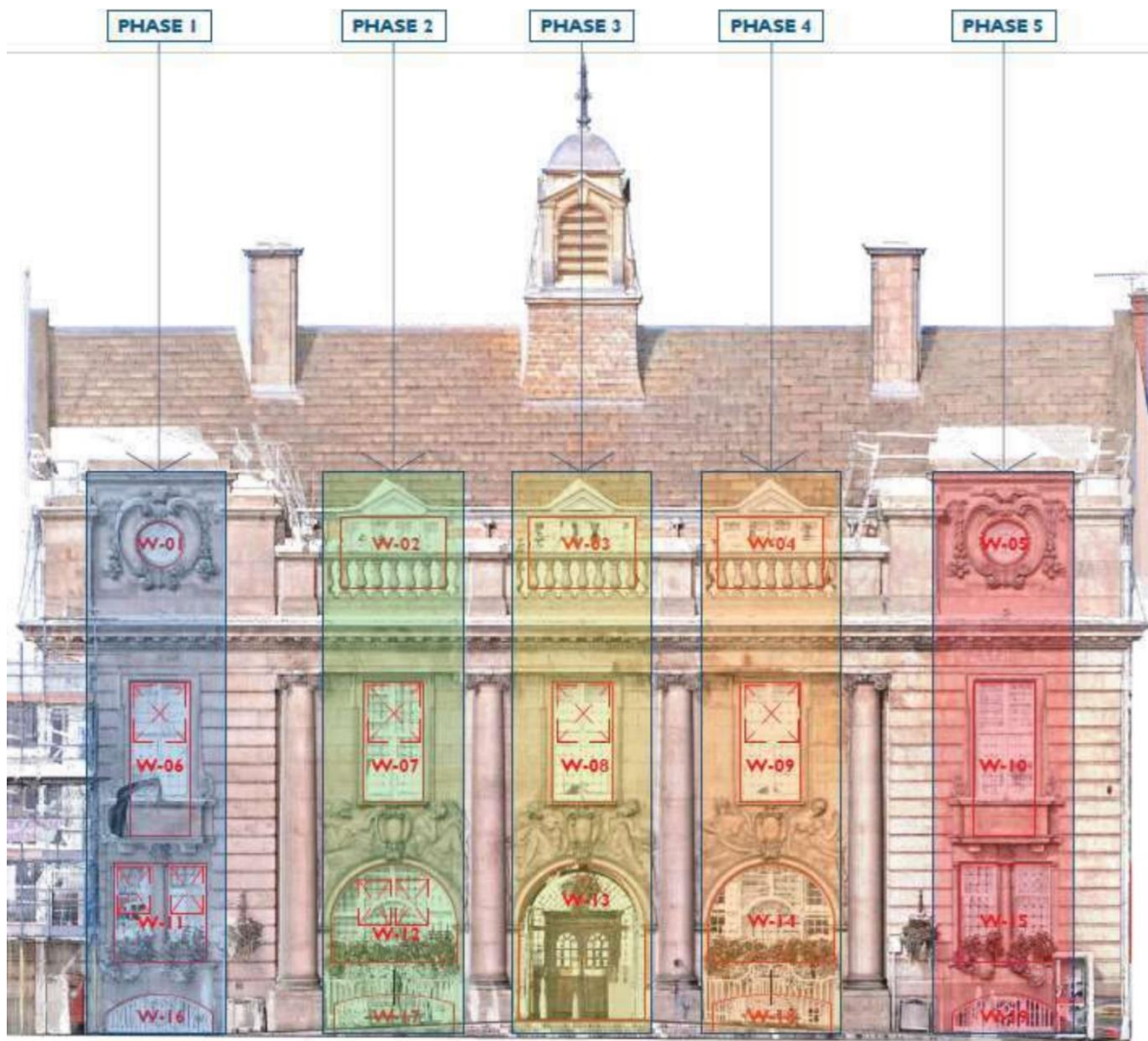
- 2) Repair of the timber frames and replacement (where required, depending on what is revealed upon window removal and stripping out of existing paint layers).
- 3) Full decoration of joinery elements upon completion of paint stripping back to bare timber.
- 4) Repair, including paint stripping and redecoration, of all window metalwork, including window bars and non-ferrous hinges.
- 5) Repair, including paint stripping and redecoration, of all external wrought iron railing panels and gates.
- 6) Make good and decoration of all associated window architraves, cills and other associated joinery which may be temporarily harmed due to windows temporary removal.

Scale

For the scale of impact on the external appearance, the proposed works will be carried out in five phases (see below image). Each phase of scaffolding corresponds to each bay of the front elevation to minimise disruption and to avoid the full coverage of the main façade. For the upper-level windows and doors, these are proposed for removal and repair off site due to the high levels of dust, noise and toxic gases associated with the works and to protect the building users. The basement windows are to be repaired on site.

Each phase is scheduled to be carried out over a period of five weeks. This estimated period will include one week for scaffolding assembling and striking and four weeks for the removal, transport, repairs, and re-installation of the windows in the workshop. However, it has been advised this period may be longer depending on the condition of the timber subframe. This can only be assessed once the windows are dismantled from the associated architraves.

Since there are to be no external structures introduced which shall change the footprint of the building, with proposed alterations to the fenestration layout, it is determined the scale of the proposed development is acceptable.



Design

Based on the plans, the proposed scheme will undertake works that includes for the repair, replacement and redecoration of features already present throughout the building’s façade. As part of this development, there are to be insignificant changes to the design. Instead, the focus of the proposal is more on restoration and reinstating of the original appearance of the fenestration. Aspects such as lead and iron work will be repaired or replaced, then the ironworks coated to the original finish. All of the frames, architraves, and cills are to be stripped and repainted in a matching colour (RAL 9003 Signal White).

Similar processes would be done with the wrought iron railing which have accumulated layers of paint over the years that has begun chipping away or become cracked. These are to be stripped back with the original darker tonality reinstated to match with the window and door ironworks (RAL 9004 Signal Black).

Improvements shall also be made to the basement windows which at present feature unsympathetic extract fans with plywood boards installed to accommodate them. The proposal is to reinstate the original setup of glass panels with glazing bars. Whilst ventilation fans will

remain, these are to be dark grey in colour to match the ironworks and shall be set within muffle glass panes.

At present, the two flag poles displayed in the main façade lay on timber blocks in the copings of each balcony. These are fixed directly to the balcony doors causing either damage to the door leaves or being unable to be opened. Given the poor condition, the proposal will replace these poles with aluminium versions that have a matt finished polyester powder coating. The new poles will be fixed to the balcony floor via counterweight blocks.

Overall, the proposed the plans will be in keeping with the present design with improvements being made to reinstate the original setup. Since the proposed scheme is sympathetic and shall not detract from the visual quality of the heritage asset, there will be a positive impact on the character of the building.

Street Scene

The Municipal Buildings are a Grade II listed building and there is a strong group value in its association with the Market Hall and adjacent War Memorial in Memorial Square. Externally, the façade has been changed little since its construction with only minor alterations such as access improvements to the main entrance. In consideration of its setting, it is important to ensure that for any works to the frontage, there must be no harmful or negative impact on this or the nearby heritage assets as a direct result.

When assessing the proposal, the works include for the repair, replacement, and redecoration of the building's existing features. Whilst there is an overall scale to the thoroughness of works being undertaken, the final result after completion is to be restrained. Its focus is on ensuring the longevity of the building whilst maintaining its present setup. As such, it is viewed the scheme shall be sympathetic to its setting.

Based on consultation with a Conservation Officer within Cheshire East Council, the proposals were welcomed, and the principle of development accepted for this Grade II listed building. However, there was an initial concern in relation to the use of accoya as it is an engineered wood that is deemed unsuitable for this particular heritage asset.

Subsequent to this, the scheme has since been updated in favour of the use of Oak which is a more traditional material. Therefore, it is determined these works to the civic building will enhance the character and appearance of the building and repair the windows. As a result, there have been no objections raised to the proposed scheme.

It is noted that details of the works are yet to be clarified regarding a method statement for how aspects of the works are to be completed (i.e. removal, storage and return of the windows, and the cleaning of each element). As a result, it has been agreed that these details are to be secured by a pre-commencement planning condition.

Overall, the proposed development would have a positive impact on the character of the heritage asset. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in heritage and design terms.

The proposed development would comply with Policy SE1, SE7, SD1 & SD2 of the CELPS and Policy GEN1 & HER4 of the SADPD.

Amenity

Policy HOU 12 of the SADPD states that development proposals must not cause unacceptable harm to the amenities of adjoining or nearby occupiers of residential properties, sensitive uses, or future occupiers of the proposed development due to:

- loss of privacy
- loss of sunlight and daylight
- the overbearing and dominating effect of new buildings

Given the proposed development is to repair the main façade windows, entrance doors and wrought iron railing and gates within the existing settings, there would be no discernible change to the present situation. The proposal would not cause any harm to residential amenity through overlooking, loss of light or outlook, over-dominance or general disturbance.

The development complies with the SPG and SADPD Policy HOU12.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

The proposed development is recommended to be acceptable in this instance and complies with the Development Plan and the NPPF.

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard Time**
- 2. Materials as application**
- 3. Approved Plans**
- 4. Use of oak timber for window frames**
- 5. Method statement for removal, storage, cleaning and return of windows**
- 6. Submission of drawings for complete replacement of any window or door**

In order to give proper effect to the Board`s/Committee`s intent and without changing the substance of its decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning (Regulation) in consultation with the Chair (or in their absence the Vice Chair) to correct any technical slip or omission in the resolution, before issue of the decision notice.

