

Application No: 23/2368N

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

Proposal: Listed building consent for 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

SUMMARY

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

The application seeks listed building consent for 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

Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

GEN1 – Design Principles

HER1 – Heritage Assets

HER4 – Listed Buildings

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)

Historic England: Suggest that the Council seeks advice from its own specialist conservation advisor.

Council for British Archaeology: No comments received.

Twentieth Century Society: No comments received.

The Victorian Society: No comments received.

The Georgian Group: No comments received.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings: No comments received.

Historic Buildings and Places: No comments received.

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. This application is to consider the impact of the works upon the Grade II Listed Building.

Design and Impact upon the Grade II Listed Building

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.

The proposed scheme is for 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 windows 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.

The proposed scheme includes works for the repair, replacement and redecoration of features already present throughout the building's façade. As part of this, there are to be insignificant changes to the design. Instead, the focus is on its restoration and reinstating of the original appearance of the fenestration. Aspects such as lead and iron work are to be repaired or replaced, with ironwork coated to the original finish. All frames, architraves, and cills shall be stripped and repainted in RAL 9003 Signal White.

A similar process 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 shall be stripped back with the original darker tonality reinstated to match with the ironworks of the windows and doors (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 glass panels setup with glazing bars. Whilst the ventilation fans will remain, these new versions shall be dark grey in colour to reflect the ironworks and shall be set more subtly within muffle glass panes.

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

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 the proposal, the works include for repairs, replacement, and redecoration of the building's existing frontage. 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.

In consultation with a Conservation Officer within Cheshire East Council, the proposals are welcomed, and the principle of development accepted for this Grade II listed building. Whilst there were concerns raised to the initial proposal of accoya which is an engineered wood that is unsuitable for this heritage asset, the scheme has since been updated with the more traditional Oak material being proposed for the frames.

Although updates to the window frames will have a neutral impact in terms of design, the repair works and reinstating of traditional details will visually benefit the frontage. Therefore, it is determined the proposed works will enhance the character and visual quality of the heritage asset, would be in keeping with the setting and beneficial to its continued longevity. As such, 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.

In conclusion, it is considered the works would have a positive impact on this heritage asset. The proposal would not harm its significance and shall have no detrimental impact on its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in heritage and design terms.

The proposed development would comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, relevant policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan and the NPPF.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

The proposal is considered acceptable in this instance in relation to its impact on the designated heritage asset, therefore the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

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.

