

DEMOLITION OF CASTLE HOTEL OUTBUILDING, REPLACEMENT BOUNDARY TREATMENT TO THE CASTLE HOTEL AND MUSEUM, IMPROVEMENTS TO NORTH ENTRANCE TO MUSEUM AND PROVISION OF NEW LIGHTING AT CASTLE GREEN, TAUNTON (AMENDED PROPOSAL TO 38/09/0166LB) AS AMENDED BY LETTER DATED 14 DECEMBER 2009 AND PLANS 2673/200, 201, 202, 203, 204/1, 204/2, 204/3, 204/4, 204/5, 300, 321/1, 321/2A, 321/3A, 321/4, 360/1, 360/2, 361/2, 362/2A, 401 & 501

322612.124543

Listed Building Consent: Works

PROPOSAL

The proposal proposes a number of changes to listed boundaries and outbuildings to allow for the refurbishment and public realm improvements to the Castle Green. The two main changes are the removal of part of the outbuildings sited in front of the Castel Hotel and changes to the boundary walls to the moat and Hotel car park.

The boundary treatment to the moat area has been amended to open up views of the castle while still providing a modern transparent boundary with steel uprights and a hardwood balustrade. This treatment is proposed to continue from the bridge around the moat to the Castle entrance. The boundary moat wall to the west is to be retained as this is part of a more historic structure than the modern lower wall and the old gateway to the footway is to be blocked. The boundary wall to the Castel Hotel will be replaced by a more contemporary wall in acid etched concrete with an evergreen hedge above it. This specialist quality cast concrete material will also be used for planters and steps around Castle Green to complement the area.

The garage outbuilding in front of the Castle Hotel that is to be demolished dates largely from the early 19th century with later 19th and 20th century additions and alterations. The interior layout does not reflect its original use as coach house and billiard room but instead a 20th century use as garage and food store. It is clear from survey plans that few historic features survive internally and demolition of the building is proposed to enhance the Castle House and Castle Hotel.

New lighting is also proposed as part of the scheme to illuminate the area to the rear of the Municipal Buildings where new cycle racks are to be located and also within the Castle Bow to improve amenity.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The site area around Castle Green currently includes a public car park and access roads servicing the Castle Hotel and rear of Fore Street properties as well as bus and taxi access via Castle Way to Corporation Street. The Castle itself is set behind a low but relatively modern stone wall bounding the moat and there exists a narrow footpath accessed via a doorway in the western end of the moat wall that leads uninvitingly to Goodland Gardens. A similar low wall acts as a boundary to the Castle

Hotel. An initial scheme submission 38/09/166LB was withdrawn following various amendments to address heritage concerns.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

CONSERVATION OFFICERS - Detailed Comments

1. Demolition of outbuildings in curtilage of grade II listed Castle Hotel

The hotel outbuildings make a positive contribution to the setting of this part of Castle Green, which is acknowledged in the statement of significance accompanying this application. Their demolition is, however, an essential element of the scheme and offers improvements to the usability of this space and views of the listed buildings. Whilst the principle of demolition is acceptable, given English Heritage's response (letter dated 4th August 2009), we must verify the extent to which any significant historic fabric survives. The western end of the building (close to the Castle driveway and overgrown with vegetation), retains a blocked Ham stone window that could possibly be part of the early-19th-century fire station. Fire stations of this date are a rare, if not unique, building type in the county and are identified in the South West Archaeological Research Framework Resource Assessment and Research Agenda (2008, p.243) as worthy of recording and study. Prior to demolition, it needs to be established whether evidence of the fire station, or other feature of historic interest, does indeed survive and to ensure this is adequately recorded. This can be achieved through a full historic building survey, which should be undertaken by a specialist acceptable to the local planning authority. The survey should be to Level 3, as specified in English Heritage Guidance *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (2006).

An appropriate condition should be added to ensure this recording is carried out before demolition.

The demolition of these buildings raises a further issue. The north wall of the buildings forms an enclosing wall of a small garden/yard area to Castle House. This space is shown as a 'drying yard' on the 1832 plan (Webster and Lillford 2006), indicating that historically it has been enclosed. I could not find any reference to the reinstatement of this boundary in the application, although I understand that it is intended to use the existing north walls of the outbuildings. An appropriate condition should be included for this.

2. Demolition of boundary walls

The wall fronting the Castle Hotel car park is recent and of limited historic interest. I have reservations concerning the height of the proposed hedge, which at approx 1.3m is unlikely to act as a completely effective screen to the elevated car park and shield the inevitably large cars belonging to the hotel clientele.

The low section of the Castle Moat wall is again of little intrinsic interest but is on the approximate line of an earlier wall and gives a sense of enclosure to the castle without obscuring it. The proposed replacement boundary treatment uses materials repeated in other elements of the scheme and is taller but 'visually permeable' in

design. While I do not consider that the proposed boundary treatment offers any advantages over the existing wall, I would not object to this in the context of the rest of the scheme.

I understand that English Heritage and Somerset County Council Heritage Service are to comment on the detail design of the proposed gate pier.

Part of the higher western end of this wall (close to where the proposed bridge would start) is earlier than the lower section and is of historic interest. I could not see any specific mention of this in the application, although it was agreed to retain this at a pre-application meeting. Also required is the specification for infilling the archway in the wall leading to the current path to Castle Gardens. A Perspex screen has been proposed but I would favour this opening being blocked with matching stone set in lime mortar, recessed back from the existing face. A condition for details and a sample panel should be included in any approval.

3. New wall mounted light fittings

None of the existing lighting proposed for removal is of historic significance. I do however, have reservations regarding the number of lights to be attached to listed buildings, as these generally serve to increase clutter and are to be discouraged (PPG 15 Annexe C.68). More specifically:

Municipal offices:

This is a grade II* listed building, the rear of which is part of Castle Green. The two wall mounted lights are to illuminate the cycle rack. Given the amount of lighting proposed for the Green and that this building will be wash-lit, I would question whether two additional lights need to be attached to this building (there are none here at present). That said, they are mounted low on the building, so their impact would not be too great.

Additional information is, however, required. In particular, existing and proposed drawings of the north elevation showing the position of the lights at an appropriate scale (1:50 or 1:100). Further details are also required as to how these will be fixed and the cable runs, to establish the extent of potentially damaging or obtrusive interventions into the historic fabric.

Castle Bow:

This building is listed at grade I. It is proposed to replace the existing lighting with 6 downlights affixed to the castle archway and 4 uplights recessed in the ground. The number of downlights proposed appears excessive for this fairly short run.

I am also concerned as to how these ceiling mounted lights relate to the arches, as we need to minimise their impact and they must not be attached directly to, or visually interfere with, an arch. In particular, the L17 units (which are 285mm long) must not hang down below the line of the arches. This cannot be ascertained from the information submitted and suggest that a plan of the ceiling showing the position of the arches and the proposed lights is submitted. Measured drawings of the east and west elevations are also needed to demonstrate the visual impact of the L6 and L17 units. Further details are also required as to how these will be fixed and the cable runs, to establish the extent of potentially damaging or obtrusive interventions into the historic fabric.

I am less concerned about the ground mounted units as I assume these will not

involve any intervention into the building fabric.

4. Moat bridge

While I retain reservations regarding the principle of a bridge crossing the moat here, an improved link from Castle Gardens and Castle Green is an essential part of the scheme and is justified. The proposed position of the bridge is an improvement over the earlier withdrawn application and I consider that the design and materials represent, for a structure of this nature, a light intervention and an appropriate solution here.

5. Salvage

There are two cast iron iron sewer grates, with associated frames and pots, that are of historic interest. These are located at:

1. Castle Green, east of the Winchester Arms PH (NGR 322590 124565) - Cast iron locking gully stamped 'ALLEN & SON TAUNTON'.
2. Castle Approach, (NGR 322616 124584) - Cast iron gully stamped 'TAUNTON TOWN COUNCIL'.

An appropriate condition should be included for the careful lifting, retention and delivery of the gully grates, and their frames and pots, to Somerset County Council Heritage Service.

The County Council Heritage Service have also requested that they retain for re-use the Pennant sandstone setts and channels it laid in 2004 on the approach to the Castle Gatehouse.

6. Summary

This site has exceptional architectural, historic and archaeological value and is of national importance, reflected in its statutory status. The proposed scheme has not wholly embraced or explored the potential of all the heritage assets but does offer improvements to this historic space. I support this application with suitable conditions as outlined above.

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP - No observations.

COMMUNITY ARTS OFFICER - no comments received at time of writing

BRITISH WATERWAYS - no objections

ENGLISH HERITAGE (HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND) - These planning and lbc applications for public realm improvements to Taunton Castle Green are primarily amendments to previous applications. I think English Heritage has been kept abreast of most of these changes and we are generally content with them, particularly the amended details for the footbridge to the south west of the Castle.

There are just two matters that are outstanding and these are described in the next two paragraphs.

Jenny Chesher, Caroline Power and I had a meeting with George Dundon on 21 December 2009. There was one design detail that we raised at that meeting with

which we had some concern. This was the concrete plinth at the base of the railings above the existing moat wall and in front of the castle. George promised to send us enlarged paper drawings of that detail but we have not yet received those.

The other matter that is still outstanding is the archaeological mitigation and recording. However that can be dealt with as part of an application for scheduled monument consent for all the Castle Green improvements. That application has not been submitted yet as certain ground investigations need to be done as a precursor and they only just starting over the next few weeks. We do note that the moat is now being reprofiled which is probably quite positive as that will give it more emphasis but only so long as this work is also covered by the archaeological mitigation and recording. I will discuss those matters with Steven Membery when the details are available.

We would urge you to address the above issues, and recommend that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice. It is not necessary for us to be consulted again. However, if you would like further advice, please contact us to explain your request.

Representations

None received.

PLANNING POLICIES

PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment,
PPG16 - Archaeology and Planning,
S&ENPP9 - S&ENP - The Built Historic Environment,
EN14 - TDBCLP - Conservation Areas,
EN15 - TDBCLP - Demolition Affecting Conservation Areas,
EN22 - TDBCLP Dev Affecting Sites of County Archaeological Importance,
EN21 - TDBCLP - Nationally Important Archaeological Remains,
EN23 - TDBCLP - Areas of High Archaeological Potential,

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed scheme is to improve the public realm area of Castle Green and provide an improved pedestrian link to Goodland Gardens. As part of the scheme works involve a number of separate elements affecting listed structures. The main consideration is to ensure these works enhance the character of the Conservation Area and do not harm the fabric and character of listed structures.

The works involve the demolition of an outbuilding in front of the Castle Hotel that is listed building and a justification has been put forward for this given the age and character of the structure and aim of improving the usability of space and views of the listed buildings. The principle of demolition here is acceptable and is supported by English Heritage and the Conservation Officer subject to the appropriate recording of the building prior to its demolition and a condition is suggested in respect of this issue. A condition to control the boundary treatment to the Castle House north of the site is also considered important and detail of this will need assessing during the demolition works depending on the nature of the state of the existing rear boundary wall.

The wall fronting the Hotel car park is relatively recent and of limited historic interest. Its demolition and replacement is considered acceptable as this will blend in with the other changes taking place around Castle Green. Concern over the ability of the new structure to screen vehicles is noted and a condition to secure the appropriate levels and hedge planting form part of the conditions proposed on the planning application. The low section of Castle Moat wall is also considered of little intrinsic historic interest, although it is on the line of an earlier structure. The proposed replacement boundary treatment of a 'visually permeable' fence with a timber hand rail is considered appropriate in the context of the scheme design.

The provision of the new pedestrian footbridge will supersede the need for the existing footway to Goodland Gardens and the closure of this route past the Wyndham Hall with the blocking of the entrance gate in the wall is proposed and a condition to secure the detail of the stone infill is required.

New wall lights to the Castle Bow and Municipal Buildings are proposed and the precise details of fixings and cable runs are currently lacking and will be required as a condition to ensure details are appropriate to the character of the buildings concerned and do not detract from their character and appearance.

In summary the scheme proposed enhances the character of the area and ensures improvements to the historic space that is in keeping with the historic character of the area. The works are not considered to detrimentally affect the adjacent listed buildings and subject to the conditions proposed the scheme is recommended to be approved subject to the view of the Secretary of State.

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Approval by Secretary of State

Subject to the view of the Secretary of State no objection be raised subject to conditions of time limit, materials, recording of building, archaeological watching brief, boundary wall detail to Castle House, plinth detail, wall infill detail, details of fixing and cable runs for new lights.

The proposal would enhance/maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would not affect the character of Listed Buildings and is therefore considered acceptable and, accordingly, does not conflict with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy EN14 (Conservation Areas) and PPG15 and Policy 9 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and complies with policies S1, S2 and EN15 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan and policy G1 of the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan.

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The works for which consent is hereby granted shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended by

S51(4) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. No walling or fence shall be erected until a sample panel of the proposed fence plinth and concrete wall has been built on the site and have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be completed in accordance with the agreed details and thereafter maintained as such, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of preserving the listed building, its setting and any features of historic or architectural interest that it possesses, in accordance with Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy 9 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review and guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance note 15.

3. The boundary treatment to the rear of the Castle Hotel outbuilding to be demolished shall be agreed in writing prior to complete demolition of the building and the material finish and height of the wall to be retained shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and a plan indicating the position, design, materials and height of boundary treatment shall be submitted. The agreed boundary treatment shall be completed before the use of the new car park area commences and shall thereafter be maintained as such, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the neighbouring residents and the character of the area in accordance with policy S1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

4. The developer shall afford access at all times to any archaeologist nominated by the Local Planning Authority, and shall allow him to observe the excavations and record items of interest and finds during the demolition work.

Reason: To ensure protection of the archaeology of the borough in accordance with Policy 12 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review, Policy EN21 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan and advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance note 16.

5. A full historic building survey and recording of the building prior to demolition shall be carried out by a specialist and schedule to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the appropriate recording of the building to preserve the heritage of the district.

6. Details of any new lighting fixings and cable runs to the rear of the Municipal Buildings and within Castle Bow shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority at an appropriate scale of 1:50 or 1:100 before any installation takes place. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and thereafter maintained as such.

Reason: To minimise the impact of the development in accordance with Policies S1 and S2 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

7. The detail of the doorway infill in stone to the wall west of the new bridge on drawing 2673/362/2A shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall include the provision of a stone sample panel and the colour and type of mortar for pointing used within the panel and shall be carried out as agreed following completion and opening of the new moat bridge.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the area in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S2.

8. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - (A1) DrNo C3037/D01 Rev B Exterior lighting details
 - (A0) Exterior lighting layout
 - (A3) DrNo 158-513 Moat bridge plan details
 - (A3) DrNo 158-512 Moat bridge elevations details
 - (A3) DrNo 158-511 Moat bridge north abutment
 - (A3) DrNo 158-510 South abutment
 - (A3) DrNo 158-411 Moat bridge- narrow cross section
 - (A3) DrNo 158-410 Moat bridge- wide cross section
 - (A3) DrNo 158-310 Moat bridge plan and elevations
 - (A3) DrNo 158-210 Moat bridge plan
 - (A3) DrNo 158-200 Overall plan
 - (A1) DrNo 2673/371 Castle hotel existing outbuildings historical record elevations
 - (A1) DrNo 2673/370 Castle hotel existing outbuildings historical record plan
 - (A1) DrNo 1170-103 Rev C Moat bridge abutment arrangements
 - (A1) DrNo 1170-102 Rev C Moat Bridge general arrangement
 - (A1) DrNo 1170-101 Rev A Site plan
 - (A1) DrNo 2673/321/3 Paving and edges 3 typical details
 - (A1) DrNo 2673/321/2 Paving and edges 2 typical details
 - (A1) DrNo 2643/321/1 Paving and edges 1 typical details
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/360/2 Planters and walls 2 typical details
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/360/1 Planters and walls 1 typical details
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/300 Harworks reference plan
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/204/1 Site sections
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/204/4 Site sections 4
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/204/3 Site sections 3
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/204/2 Site sections s
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/203 General arrangement plan
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/201 Site clearance plan
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/200 Site plan and application boundary
 - (A1) DrNo 21167/007/030 P1 Levels and surface finishes
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/401 Softworks planting plan
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/362/2 Castle moat wall replacement 2 proposed
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/362/1 Castle moat wall replacement 1 existing
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/361/2 Castle hotel wall replacement 2 proposed
 - (A0) DrNo 2673/361/1 Castle hotel wall replacement 1 existing

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Notes for compliance

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.

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