OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/01050/LBC Listed Building Consent

Proposal: Installation of timber framed and plywood clad mezzanine technical booth (Retrospective).

Location: Commemoration Hall 39 High Street Huntingdon

Applicant: Mr Dominic Whitehead

Grid Ref: 523969 271720

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The Commemoration Hall, 39 High Street Huntingdon is a Grade II Listed Building, within the Huntingdon Conservation Area. It provides a significant contribution to both the High Street and the wider Conservation Area. It was formerly the home of the Literary and Scientific Institution, founded in 1840 and opened in 1843. The building is currently in use as a Community Centre and Arts, Entertainment and Events venue.

The proposed works are for the installation of timber framed and plywood clad mezzanine technical booth. It is noted that this is a retrospective application.

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives – economic, social and environmental – of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)

LP12: Design Implementation
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):
* Place Making Principles – Part 3.8 Building Detailing

Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026
* Policy NE3 – Setting of Huntingdon
* Policy BE2 – Local Distinctiveness and Aesthetics
* Policy BE3 – Heritage Assets

Huntingdon Conservation Area Character Assessment (March 2007)

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

PLANNING HISTORY

87/00494/LBC - Construction of access ramp – consent granted 06.05.1987
87/00685/FUL – Access ramp - permission granted 22.05.1987
00/02050/LBC - Re-roof building and internal alterations – consent granted 23.01.2001
0502531LBC - Installation of four uplighters in pavement – consent granted 22.09.2005
0700615LBC - Installation of bird wire – consent granted 18.04.2007
0802528LBC - Display of advertising banners and boards and re-decoration of façade – consent granted 28.10.2008
0802529ADV - Display of advertising banners and boards – consent granted 28.10.2008
23/00585/LBC - Alterations to front room to turn it into a visitor centre, enlarge the door width to make it wheelchair accessible and create a larger hatch – consent granted 13.09.2023
24/00753/LBC - Removal of commemorative plaque on the front of the building and replacement with plaque – consent granted 27.06.2024
24/00812/FUL & 24/00813/LBC - Installation of external air-conditioning units, associated pipework and internal air-conditioning delivery units – consent granted 23.07.2024

CONSULTATIONS

Huntingdon Town Council – Approved on the basis of improving community facilities, and as long as the Conservation Officer at HDC gives consent.

HDC Conservation Team – No objections. It is considered that the proposal will preserve the special interest of the listed building as required by the Planning (LBs and CAs) Act 1990.

REPRESENTATIONS

No objections received at time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
o Impact on Heritage Assets

* Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 state that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

Policy LP34 states that a proposal within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a conservation area should preserve, and wherever possible enhance, features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance and setting as set out in character statements or other applicable documents.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Para. 212 of the NPPF set out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'. Para. 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification…'.

Local Plan policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.

The Council will consider the significance of a designated heritage asset and where there is less than substantial harm, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Where there is deemed to be substantial harm, then the proposal would need to achieve substantial public benefits to outweigh that harm.

Retrospective Listed Building consent is sought for the installation of a timber framed and plywood clad mezzanine technical booth. It is noted that the works have already been completed and that this is a retrospective application. The sound and lighting booth has been constructed in the main hall on the opposite end to the stage. The structure consists of a timber framework covered in plywood panels which forms a mezzanine platform to house sound and lighting equipment. Beneath the mezzanine are two enclosed spaces forming a storeroom and housing a staircase. The 1950s entrance doors to the hall and surrounding glazed panels have been boarded over to control light ingress into the space.

The Conservation Officer has considered the proposals. It is noted that the structure has been constructed with due regard for historic detailing which has been accommodated without alteration. It is fixed to the historic structure with a limited number of anchor bolts and screws which allows the booth to be fully reversible with minimal 'making good'. The sound and lighting booth provides essential functionality to the stage which helps support a wide variety of performances in the Commemoration Hall. This flexibility will make a considerable contribution to the ongoing success of the listed building as a local performance venue.

It is considered that the impact of the sound and lighting booth on the special interest of the listed building is negligible. Under the terms of the NPPF any harm would be less than substantial and justified by keeping the building in a viable use consistent with its long-term preservation.

Officers have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. It is considered that harm will not be caused to either of these designated heritage assets because the works will preserve the character and significance of the Listed Building and its contribution to the character and significance of the Conservation Area.

The proposal, therefore, accords with ss. 16, 66 & 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, paragraphs 202-221 of the NPPF (2024), Policies LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) and Policies NE3, BE2 and BE3 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026 in this regard.

*Conclusion
The proposed works are considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as:

* Would not have a harmful impact upon the designated heritage asset.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that listed building consent be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
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