OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00210/LBC Listed Building Consent

Proposal: Repair work to western boundary wall of The Rectory

Location: The Rectory Church Street St Neots

Applicant: Mrs Stella Green

Grid Ref: 518528 260144

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application relates to The Rectory, Church Street, St Neots a listed building in St Neots Conservation area.

The Garden Boundary Wall, which is subject to this application, is a Grade II Listed Building - Listed as 'Garden Wall, piers and gate of former Hall Place, fronting the east side of Church Street and now forming part of the curtilage of Numbers 19, The Vicarage, and 29A', list entry number 1127960.

This application seeks permission for repair work to the Listed Wall at The Rectory. The repair works include re-pointing and the replacement of spalled bricks.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (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, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

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

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

PLANNING POLICIES

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

LP2: Strategy for Development

LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):

* Place Making Principles parts 3.7 Building Form

Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document (2022):

Chapter 2 Understanding Character - Heritage Assets

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Given the heritage of the dwelling there is a wide planning history associated with it. The history from November 1974 onwards is available to view on HDC's Public Access Site. The most recent, relevant history is detailed below:

23/00463/LBC - The demolition of the southern garden boundary wall of The Rectory and re-building to match existing including reinstating original coping detail to match adjoining wall - Approved.
22/01197/LBC - The demolition of the southern garden boundary wall and re-building to match existing - Withdrawn.

CONSULTATIONS

St Neots Town Council - Support, minimum impact on neighbours and improves the property.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Conservation Officer - Supports the proposal. The proposed repairs will maintain the existing appearance and character of the Listed Wall and its contribution to the settings of nearby Listed Buildings and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third-party representations were received during the course of the application.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:

- Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

The Local Planning Authority is required to ensure that special regard is given to preserving the listed buildings and their settings and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas in relation to Section 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) also states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset and that any harm to or loss of significance should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 215 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including securing its optimum viable use.

The Garden Boundary Wall, which is subject to this application, is a Grade II Listed Building within the St Neots conservation area.

This application seeks approval for repair works to the Listed western garden boundary wall. The repair works include re-pointing and the replacement of spalled bricks. During the course of the application, additional information in the form of a supporting statement/heritage statement was received following concerns raised by the Council's Conservation Officer.

The lower part of the wall on the street side has areas of damaged or missing pointing and this is proposed to be repaired by the use of hand tools only and using lime mortar in a mixture to match the existing lime render on the wall in all respects. Four areas of damaged bricks on the street side and one on the Rectory side are identified on the submitted drawing. These areas are proposed to be repaired by removal of the broken bricks and their retention and reuse unless unviable, when handmade bricks to match the existing in all respects will be used as replacements.

Overall, the removal of historic bricks from the Listed Wall would be harmful to the significance of the heritage asset. However, the repair of the Listed Wall (by reusing existing damaged bricks wherever possible and replacement with matching bricks when not possible and the repointing with lime mortar of the missing and damaged pointing) is considered to preserve the overall character and significance of the Listed Wall and to be a public benefit which secures the continued viability of the wall and would outweigh the previously identified harm.

The development is therefore considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on the designated heritage assets and would be in accordance with Section 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP2, LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Conclusion

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

* Would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area;
* 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.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388424 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Jennifer Wallis**