

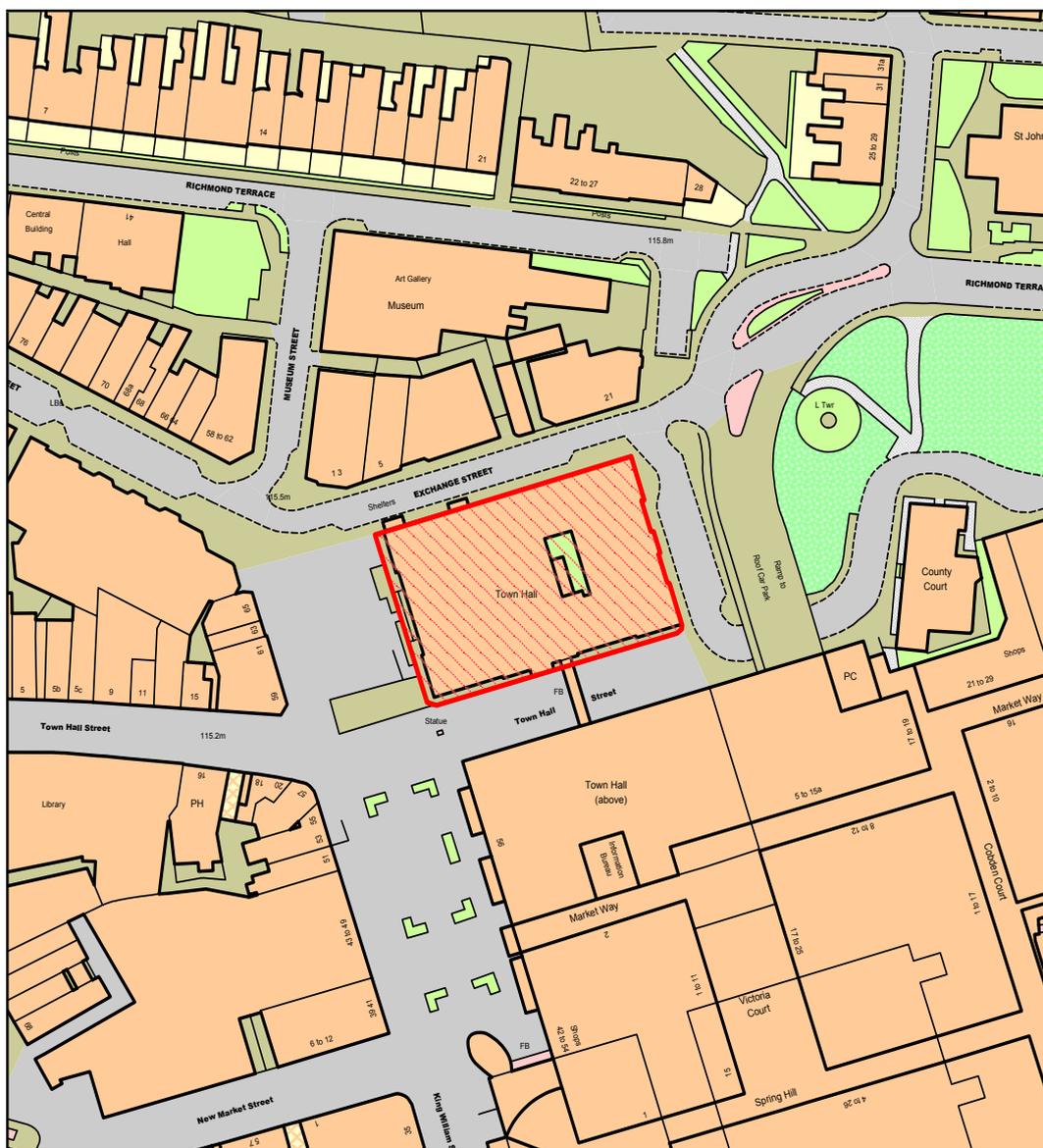
Proposed development: Listed Building Application (Regulation 3) for Internal alterations, refurbishment and restoration of existing office spaces to the third and fourth floors

**Site address:
Town Hall
King William Street
Blackburn
BB1 7DY**

Applicant: Blackburn With Darwen Borough Council

Ward: Blackburn Central

**Councillor Saima Afzal
Councillor Mahfooz Hussain
Councillor Zamir Khan**



1.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

1.1 APPROVE – Subject to recommended conditions (see paragraph 4.0).

2.0 KEY ISSUES/SUMMARY OF PLANNING BALANCE

2.1 The proposal will allow internal alterations, refurbishment and restoration of existing office spaces to the third and fourth floors of the Town Hall, whilst ensuring the historic and special architectural importance of the listed building is preserved. It supports the Borough's planning strategy when dealing with designated heritage assets as it's considered to sustain and enhance the building. The proposal is also satisfactory from a technical point of view, with all issues having been addressed through the application, or capable of being controlled or mitigated through planning conditions.

2.2 The application is before the committee as it is a Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council site and the application has been submitted by the Council's Property Team.

3.0 RATIONALE

3.1 Site and Surroundings

3.1.1 The application site is a Grade II listed building which was built in 1852 by James Patterson. It is a large rectangular stone building with a rusticated ground floor, modillioned eaves cornice over the first floor, and a pierced balustrade above the attic storey. The building has stone quoins, round-arched Italianate windows, and Corinthian columns to the front at first floor. The building is used as the Town Hall, containing reception areas, council chambers, and offices.

3.2 Proposed Development

3.2.1 The proposed scheme involves the restoration and modernisation of some of the empty utilitarian spaces of the top two floors of the Municipal Offices at the rear of the Town Hall proper. The third and fourth floors occupy the top and attic storeys on the external classical façade. The scheme will restore a large room on the fourth floor with a barrel vault ceiling. A large glazed light pipe structure which carries light from the roof to floors below will also be restored. A number of functional offices on the fourth floor will be sensitively opened out in a manner which preserves enough of the walls to illustrate the original room layouts. Opening the rooms out in this way will allow the offices to become practical spaces for present day circumstances, thereby bringing the Municipal Offices back into use. Finally, both the third and fourth floors will be sensitively redecorated and fitted out as a modern workplace.

3.3 Development Plan

3.3.1 The Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy and adopted Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations and Development Management Policies. In

determining the current proposal, the following are considered to be the most relevant policies:

3.3.2 Core Strategy

- CS16 – Form and Design of New Development

3.3.3 Local Plan Part 2

- Policy 8 – Development and People
- Policy 11 – Design
- Policy 39 – Heritage

3.4 **Other Material Planning Considerations**

3.4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Framework sets out the government's aims and objectives against which planning policy and decision making should be considered. At its heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should proceed without delay, unless impacts which significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of a proposal are identified. The following sections of the Framework are considered relevant to assessment of the proposal:

- Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 7: Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

3.5 **Assessment**

3.5.1 In assessing this application the key material consideration that needs to be taken into account is as follows:

- Impact on a designated heritage asset

3.5.2 Impact on a designated heritage asset

3.5.3 Core Strategy Policy CS17: Built and Cultural Heritage, Maximising the Asset, states that proposals for new development should identify and take advantage of opportunities to integrate with and promote the Borough's cultural assets. Local Plan Part 2 - Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, Policy 39 states that development affecting a heritage asset will be required to sustain or enhance its significance, taking into account the retention/restoration of historic features and building details and, the detailed design of the work, including scale and proportions, materials and construction details.

3.5.4 This underpins the main principles of sustainable development contained in the NPPF alongside the requirement to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

3.5.5 A detailed Heritage Statement has been provided which sets out the key requirements of NPPF 2019 paragraph 189 which states “*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected... The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance*”, reflecting the policy requirements include:

- Purpose of the Heritage Statement
- Development Proposal
- Planning Status of Heritage Asset
- Planning Policy
- Context
- Description
- Significance and Heritage Value
- List Description

3.5.6 The scheme involves the restoration and modernisation of some of the empty utilitarian spaces of the top two floors of the Municipal Offices at the rear of the Town Hall proper. The third and fourth floors occupy the top and attic storeys on the external classical façade. The scheme will restore a large room on the fourth floor with a barrel vault ceiling, the original function of which is not currently known. A large glazed light pipe structure which carries light from the roof to floors below will also be restored. A number of functional offices on the fourth floor will be sensitively opened out in a manner which preserves enough of the walls to illustrate the original room layouts. Opening the rooms out in this way will allow the offices to become practical spaces for present day circumstances, thereby bringing the Municipal Offices back into use. Finally, both the third and fourth floors will be sensitively redecorated and fitted out as a modern workplace.

3.5.7 Heritage & Conservation Colleagues have appraised the submission noting ‘the scheme complies with Development Plan policies taking into consideration the constraints of present day office requirements and a finite budget. It is acceptable in policy terms and a desirable enhancement of the Municipal Offices element of the Town Hall which also brings the 3rd and 4th floors back into use. The overall impact of the scheme will be positive with appropriate mitigation for those details where there is some minor harm to the character of the building.

3.5.8 Heritage & Conservation Colleagues have advised that given the age of the building and the potential to uncover unexpected works, a condition should be attached to allow for minor changes which might occur during the restoration process. This will ensure the scheme is developed in accordance with Local Plan Part 2 Policy 39 and in the interests of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. An additional condition is also recommend to require the accompanying heritage information to be submitted to Lancashire Historic Environment Record and the Community History Service, Blackburn Central Library

3.5.8 The comprehensive details submitted illustrate that the scheme will ensure the long-term viability of the heritage asset whilst ensuring the building is sustained and where possible enhanced. As such the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of the relevant policies of the development plan.

3.5.9 Summary:

3.5.10 This report assesses the Listed Building application for internal alterations, refurbishment and restoration of existing office spaces to the third and fourth floors at the Town Hall Blackburn. In considering the proposal a wide range of material considerations have been taken in to account during the assessment of the planning application.

3.5.11 The assessment of the proposal clearly shows that the decision must be made in terms of assessing the merits of the case against any potential harm that may result from its implementation. This report concludes the proposal will ensure the heritage asset is sustained meeting the policy requirements of the Blackburn with Darwen Core Strategy, Local Plan Part 2, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject conditions set out below which relate to the following matters:

- Commence within 3 years
- Approved details/drawings
- Amendments to design, works or materials
- Detailed Photographic Record and Heritage Statement

5.0 CONSULTATIONS

5.1.1 Historic England

Thank you for your letter of 24 May 2019 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we do not wish to offer any comments. We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation adviser.

It is not necessary for us to be consulted on this application again, unless there are material changes to the proposals. However, if you would like detailed advice from us, please contact us to explain your request.

5.1.2 Heritage and Conservation

The Town Hall is a grade II listed building which is not greatly understood. However, the Heritage Statement provides insights relating to the history of the building and the 3rd and 4th floors of the Municipal Offices part. My summary of the scheme is contained in the Heritage Statement page 18, Conserving their Significance and Heritage Values

Apart from the basements and similar spaces, the third and fourth floors are the least elaborate of the rooms and offices of the Town Hall/Municipal Offices. The character of the offices has not been well conserved in the past. Nevertheless, they are part of a grade II listed heritage asset and part of the overall significance of the listed building. The aesthetic values of the interior have been considerably degraded over time and the scheme seeks to restore some historical dignity to the aesthetics through an individual response to each room and a sensitive colour scheme.

In order to preserve the historical layout, and thus its evidential value, modern lightweight subdivisions will be removed and the opening out of original walls will be kept to a minimum. Where this occurs the ends and upper parts of the walls will be retained as evidence of its earlier existence.

The communal value of the offices is strongly connected to the generations of Council staff who have worked there. The continued use of the rooms for Council offices will thus preserve this. This and the historical value of the Municipal offices will be assisted by this limited study which has rediscovered the largely forgotten creation of the Municipal offices during the dark days of the First World War. A further and more detailed study of the Town Hall and Municipal Offices is highly desirable. Individual historical features have been recorded and will be preserved in situ or relocated where this is not possible. The features of greatest individual significance are the barrel vaulted ceiling and Victorian light pipe, both of which will be restored.

Policy and Impact of the Scheme

Core Strategy Policy CS17: Built and Cultural Heritage, Maximising the Asset, states that proposals for new development should identify and take advantage of opportunities to integrate with and promote the Borough's cultural assets. Local Plan Part 2 - Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, Policy 39 states that development affecting a heritage asset will be required to sustain or enhance its significance, taking into account the retention/restoration of historic features and building details and, the detailed design of the work, including scale and proportions, materials and construction details. The scheme meets these policies within the constraints of present day office requirements and a finite budget. It is acceptable in policy terms and a desirable enhancement of the Municipal Offices element of the Town Hall which also brings the 3rd and 4th floors back into use. The overall impact of the scheme will be positive with appropriate mitigation for those details where there is some minor harm to the character of the building.

Recommended conditions:

As this is a scheme where conservation standards are paramount, occasionally there is a need to respond appropriately to unexpected circumstances when works are on site. A condition which allows this and ensures that any changes are agreed with the LPA/conservation officer is very helpful in such circumstances. I suggest something along the following lines...

Any detailed amendments to the design, works or materials shall be:

- a) first approved in writing by the local planning authority;
- b) implemented in accordance with that approval; and,
- c) retained for the duration of the development.

Reason: To allow for minor changes which might occur during the restoration process, in accordance with Local Plan Part 2 Policy 39 and in the interests of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The building is of acknowledged historic and architectural interest and a detailed photographic record and heritage statement have been submitted. I would suggest the following condition.

Prior to the start of building works the Heritage Statement for Third and Fourth Floors of the Municipal Offices Blackburn Town Hall, the Heritage Photographic Schedule 3rd Floor and the Heritage Photographic Schedule 4th Floor shall be deposited with the Lancashire Historic Environment Record and the Community History Service, Blackburn Central Library.

Reason: To ensure that an appropriate record of the historic building fabric is properly preserved.

5.1.3 Public consultation

Public consultation has been undertaken, with 2 site notices affixed. No letters of representation have been received.

6.0 CONTACT OFFICER: Alec Hickey, Senior Planner - Development Management.

7.0 DATE PREPARED: 26th June 2019