



FAO: Planning Department,
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2017/2622/LB
Date: 24/01/2018

HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: St. Ethelreda's Church Hall, Church Street, Hatfield, AL9 5AR

The application is for internal alterations, including the removal of partition walls and ceilings, the addition of a kitchen and bar and a new hydraulic platform lift, as well as external repairs and landscaping, at St. Ethelreda's Church Hall, Hatfield.

St. Ethelreda's Church Hall is a Grade II listed building dating from circa 1840, which was originally built as a school for the 2nd Marchioness of Salisbury. The listed building is constructed of red brick in the Tudor style, and has large stepped buttresses and a Dutch-gabled porch. The listed building is also located within Hatfield Conservation Area.

The alterations to the interior of the listed building involve the removal of the suspended ceiling to the entrance lobby and the removal of the internal partition walls which form the existing kitchen and bar, between the entrance lobby and the main hall. This fabric was added to the building in the late twentieth century and presently blocks views towards the roof trusses and the large window in the west gable, as well as views into the main hall. It is proposed to relocate the existing modern stair, which provides access from the entrance up to the main hall, and insert a new glazed screen between the entrance lobby and the main hall. As such, the removal of this later fabric and insertion of the glazed screen would allow the space to be opened up and provide a better understanding of the volume of the church hall. This element of the proposals is therefore considered to be a heritage benefit that would enhance the appreciation of the significance of the listed building. Details of how this fabric is to be removed should however be required by condition.

A new hydraulic lift is proposed to be inserted within the floorspace adjacent to the entrance lobby, on the south side of the building, which would likely involve the removal of historic fabric. It is considered, however, that this loss would be minimal and that the proposals would not have a significant impact upon the understanding and appreciation of the special interest of the listed building. The insertion of the lift should however be carefully considered to ensure that it is minimally intrusive to any historic fabric.



Within the main hall it is proposed to insert new partition walls to create a kitchen and bar 'pod' at the east end of the building. Although this 'pod' would be a reversible addition, it would block views of the window within the east gable of the listed building and would also truncate the volume of the main hall. It is therefore considered that there would be a degree of harm arising from this element of the proposals.

It is also proposed to reconfigure the WC facilities at the west end of the building, within the flat roofed twentieth century addition. This would involve the removal of existing partition walls and the insertion of new lightweight partitions. This element of the proposals would involve the loss of some historic fabric, however, it is considered that this loss would be minimal and would not have a significant impact on the special interest of the listed building.

Externally, the proposed works comprise repairs to the roof, walls, windows and doors. The repairs are proposed to be like-for-like, with the roof tiles to be re-used and the existing pattern with fish scale tiles retained. Additionally, the existing tarmac to the front of the building will be replaced with new tarmac to match the existing and the gravel to the car park will be overlaid with new to match the existing. Overall, it is considered that these proposals are sympathetic to the listed building and will not cause harm to the significance of the listed building or the conservation area.

In conclusion, it has been identified that the insertion of the kitchen and bar 'pod' within the volume of the main hall would result in a degree of harm to the significance of the listed building. However, when considering the scheme as a whole, it is considered that this harm would be outweighed by the heritage benefit of removing the late twentieth century fabric and opening up the hall, which would allow an understanding and appreciation of the listed building's historic volume and proportions. As such, I would have no objection to the granting of approval of this scheme.

Were permission to be granted, I request that standard conditions relating to materials, details and specifications and a method statement be imposed.

Yours sincerely,

Hannah Rae
Historic Buildings Consultant
Place Services

Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter