

Development Management
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Herts
AL8 6AE

Dear Sirs,

**Re: Application for Listed Building Consent – Render
Oshwal House, Oshwal Centre, Coopers Lane Road, Potters Bar**

Further to our submission of an application for Listed Building Consent on the planning portal (Ref: PP 06611914), I confirm that the following documents were submitted on the planning portal. There is no fee payable for this application.

- Applications forms and ownership certificate;
- Drawing Nos. 6842-47-P1, 48-P0, 49-P1;
- Location Plan (6842-46-P1)
- Heritage Statement (November 2017);
- Report of Mike Wye & Associates Ltd (18th May 2017);

Introduction and Background

The Oshwal Centre is located in South Hertfordshire between Potters Bar and Cuffley. The site is currently occupied by the three principal buildings of Oshwal House (Grade II Listed), Oshwal Hall (Community Halls) and the Derasar (Temple), which is the largest of its kind in Europe. This application relates to renovations to Oshwal House, and in particular the replacement of the existing external render.

Vehicle access is located in the western corner of the site and is from Coopers Lane Road. There is an internal one-way circulation route providing servicing to the rear of Oshwal Hall and Oshwal House.

The Oshwal Centre is long established and is of national and international religious importance. It is the most important location in the country for those who practice Jainism and it is recognised as such by all other faiths. The *Derasar* itself is an exceptional building and is vital to the cultural significance of Jainism and the Oshwal Community.

The Oshwal Association of the UK (OAUk) is an entirely voluntary organisation, wholly funded by subscriptions raised from its members. The OAUk is therefore wholly dependent on its Members in terms of funding the maintenance and up-keep of the site.

This application follows a previous application for Listed Building Consent (LPA Ref:



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6/2016/1600/LB) for the external refurbishment of Oshwal House, which was approved on the 5th July 2017. This application, as originally submitted, included the replacement of windows and rendering and clay chimney pots and slate roof tiles. The proposed replacement windows and rendering were removed from the application for expediency and as such the approval only relates to the chimney pots and roof tiles.

During the determination of the previous application the Conservation Officer in post at the time requested an independent survey looking at the condition of the external render. The Applicant, OAUK, instructed consultants Mike Wye & Associates Ltd to assess the condition of the existing render. This report has been submitted with this application.

The Mike Wye report notes that the external elevations are a mixture of older renders which are lime bases, newer lime renders and cement-rich renders, often patched repaired. All renders are decorated with a non-breathable modern acrylic paint.

There is evidence of a number of substantial cracks in the render, with evidence that the render has lost its bond to the substrate in areas. These cracks allow rainwater to ingress into the substrate, which raises moisture levels and is harmful to the building.

The report concludes that the condition of the existing renders and paint are now contributing to the degradation of the building and would justify being completely removed and replaced. This would be beneficial for both the longevity of the building and its overall appearance.

The Application Proposal

In accordance with the recommendations of the submitted report, this application proposes the complete removal and replacement of the existing paint and render.

As discussed in the submitted Heritage Statement, in terms of the proposed works to the external render and paint, it is proposed to comprehensively replace the existing render and paint with a traditional lime render and a breathable and water repellent paint.

As the Mike Wye report explains, it is not good practice to have different types of render and paint on the same elevation as moisture would be trapped behind the junctions and there would be a propensity to cracking there due to differential movement. Also, the piecemeal approach would be detrimental to the appearance of the building as the newly rendered lime plasters and mineral paints would contrast with the existing.

Justification and Planning Balance

There are a number of other material considerations that are relevant to the application proposal and required to be weighed in the balance.

Firstly, the Applicant has commissioned an independent expert report in relation to the condition of the existing render. The expert consultant has advised that the condition of the existing render is contributing to the degradation of the building and the piecemeal approach to repair would be impracticable and detrimental to the aesthetic appearance of the building. The report recommends the comprehensive replacement of the render as this approach would be in the best interests of preserving this historic building and aesthetically would look better. Significant weight should be given to the recommendations of this report and which was prepared by an expert consultant in their field.



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Secondly, the unquestionable importance of the Oshwal Centre as a place of religious as well as cultural and educational significance, not only for Oshwals but to the whole Jain community, is a material consideration of considerable weight to be weighed in the planning balance.

The Oshwal Centre is long established and is a centre of unique and exceptional community purpose, and is of religious importance of national and international value. It is, simply, the most important location in the country of those who practice Jainism. It is considered that the religious importance of the site alone is capable of being a unique and very special consideration of significant weight in the planning balance.

Furthermore, the OAUk, which are a registered charity, are responsible for the maintenance and up-keep of Oshwal House. The cost to the OAUk of continually repairing the external render and paint is a significant cost burden the organisation. This is important as the future of the OAUk and the site is integral to the future use, maintenance and preservation of Oshwal House.

The benefits of the proposal to the users of Oshwal House, the OAUk and the future preservation of the building all weigh in favour of the proposal. The proposed comprehensive replacement of the existing render would be beneficial to appearance and preservation of this listed building.

The importance of preserving and enhancing a listed building is recognised. However, they must be allowed to change over time to remain suitable and appropriate for those who use them. In this case, the site is of national and international religious importance and must remain fit for purpose and suitable for the community that makes use of it.

We look forward to receiving confirmation that the application has been received and fully validated.

If you have any queries or require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Graeme Free MA MRTPI
Associate Planner

Encl: As above.