

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

Dear Sirs,

**Re: Application for Listed Building Consent – Replacement Windows  
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 06611784), 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;
- Heritage Statement (November 2017);
- Report of Marvin Architectural Ltd including Appendices;
- Drawings as per stated on Application Form

**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 existing windows.

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: 6/2016/1600/LB) for the external refurbishment of Oshwal House, which was approved on the 5<sup>th</sup>



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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 assessing the condition of the windows. The Applicant, OAUk, instructed Marvin Architectural Ltd to assess the condition of the windows. Their expert report has been submitted with this application.

The Marvin Architectural report notes that the external elevations present a mixture of older timber frames, often patch repaired. Some windows are newer and PVC framed, and all units are single glazed.

The report concludes that the condition of the timber frames is contributing to the degradation of the building. There is strong evidence that the pointing between the frames and the wall openings has become cracked, loose and in some cases is missing. This allows moisture and draughts to penetrate around the sash-boxes and window frames. Given the current poor condition of the windows, there is a strong justification for the comprehensive replacement of all the windows with the proposed double glazed window.

### **The Application Proposal**

In accordance with the recommendations of the submitted report, this application proposes the replacement of all the existing windows with a double glazed unit.

As discussed in the submitted Heritage Statement, the proposed windows would be more energy efficient and would also have lower maintenance costs compared with the existing windows. The cost of repairing and maintaining the existing windows is a significant cost burden to the OAUk and who are a registered Charity. The OAUk are dependent upon membership subscriptions and donations towards its funds for any maintenance works. The reduced maintenance associated with the proposed windows would reduce the cost burden on the OAUk and ensure its continued viability as a charitable organisation.

As there are different types of windows used throughout the building, a piecemeal repair and maintenance approach would not be practical. The Marvin report advises that it is not good practice to have different types of frame and paint on the same elevation because the aesthetic appearance of the building would be impacted. It is therefore recommended that all the windows throughout the building are replaced with the same style of double glazed window. This would ensure consistency in the appearance of Oshwal House.

In addition to the above, the proposed replacement windows would replicate the style and appearance of the existing windows, thus the appearance of Oshwal House would be preserved.

### **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 windows. The consultant has advised that the condition of the windows is contributing



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to the degradation of the building, and recommends the comprehensive replacement of the windows as this approach would be in the best interests of preserving this historic building. Significant weight should be given to the recommendations of this report and which was prepared by an expert consultant in their field.

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 for 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 rotten window frames is significant and threatens the financial viability of 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.

It should also be noted that the use of double glazed windows would significantly improve the energy efficiency of Oshwal House and provide a warmer and better standard of accommodation for the users of the building. There is also a cost benefit to the OAUk in terms of initial installation and also on-going maintenance costs associated with timber frame windows.

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 wholesale replacement of existing windows would ensure consistency in its appearance and be beneficial to the future 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.