

From: Andrew Robley
Sent: 27 January 2017 18:05
To: Mark Peacock
Subject: FW: Northaw; The Oshwal Centre, Coopers lane Road; 16/1600LB

Mark,

Because this would be disastrous and unnecessary, I have added some further comments

From: Andrew Robley
Sent: 27 January 2017 17:06
To: Mark Peacock <m.peacock@welhat.gov.uk>
Subject: Northaw; The Oshwal Centre, Coopers lane Road; 16/1600LB

Mark,

This application is the same as that upon which I commented back on the 14/11/16 and although this application form refers only to window repairs, the heritage statement also includes stone repairs. I have therefore highlighted the parts that refer to the windows.

The site is the former large Country House known as Hook House, Regency Period, begun in 1839 of white painted stucco and generally with low-pitched slate roofs. However, the North elevation was partly extended in the late C20th with a single storey flat roofed part and a two storey pitched roof element. It is clear, from the architectural quality of the windows and other features, that the house was designed to be seen from all sides, in an open parkland setting.

Some of the rendering is probably modern but it is not certain without proper investigation whether any remains original or whether there is original rendering under a modern cement based skin. The information supplied is deficient in that there is insufficient advice in this regard. What is evident from my site visit is that some of it is cracked and some distorted especially I near ground level and around sills.

Following my site visit however, I can confirm that nearly all the windows are original and historic and contain some original or early cylinder or crown glass. There is some decay in the some of the windows largely in the usual locations of bottom rails and sills. They have not been painted externally for some time and the Heritage Statement refers to this. Many of them still have their original shutters. On my visit it seemed that most rooms were unoccupied.

The proposals are to replace all the windows with hybrid timber and aluminium double glazed units.

To strip and replace all the render with cement based render using (presumably metal) beads and stops at corners.

To replace some of the clay chimney pots where defective and to repoint the chimney stacks with cement mortar prior to re-rendering.

To install external lighting onto the building.

Windows: In a Regency House, the slim recessed Georgian sash windows are a particularly important architectural element. It is the period when glazing bars were at their finest and this is certainly the case here and the glazing bars are particularly fine. To replace these windows would irreversibly denude the building of much of its authenticity. The windows have been left unpainted for too long but all of the original ones are repairable. The Architect has ascertained that the decay is mostly due to dampness getting in through cracks in the render and/or lack of external paint protection and what he calls "humidity".

The report argues that although only some of the windows in their opinion need replacing, therefore all of them should be replaced to give a consistent “new” appearance. Whereas it is normal to expect an historic building to show its age and this can be part of its aesthetic appeal. The proposed window replacements are not even like for like in detail or in material and would not be acceptable in any case. The “glazing bars” are merely stick on applications to mimic the real thing.

The proposition that the existing windows would continue to decay once the dampness has been eradicated is incorrect. The timber used in windows of this period was slow grown Baltic Pine and is very durable as is evident from the number of them that still survive in buildings of early and mid-Georgian period as well as these late Georgian examples. If the dampness is dealt with the agents of decay such as dry or wet rot would not survive and the windows would not decay but if dampness is not dealt with, they will decay but then so would new timber windows –at a faster rate.

There is genuine concern that the windows are not energy efficient. However, there are ways in which this can be addressed to some extent and these are dealt with in the most recent Historic England advice document on the subject “Traditional Windows- their care repair and upgrading”. Some of the interventions can be as simple as closing the shutters when the room is not in use but here may be some cases where secondary glazing could be used..

Rendering: Painted stucco is also an essential component of many Regency Houses. It is important to retain original stucco where possible but it is not certain whether all or any of the current render is original stucco. The Heritage Statement offers no back up information as to the originality or not of the existing stucco but nevertheless, the proposal is to remove the whole lot. This would not be acceptable without evidence that it is all modern render and therefore not worthy of retention. However, it is clear that some of the render is defective and would at least need to be repaired. Nevertheless prior to this, there should be some analysis of the original render so that the repair can be compatible. Even it is established that it is modern cement, if this is then to be removed it would be a missed opportunity to replace it with cement render as specified in the schedule of works, because it tends to crack easily, and to trap moisture in the fabric, leading to further failure, damp penetration and decay of timber, whereas lime render or similar that would have been originally used is more permeable to moisture and allows dampness to evaporate and dry out . The proposed use of metal plaster stops and angles would be too sharp and not in keeping with the originally crafted corners.

Chimney Pots: Where these are defective it is perfectly reasonable to replace them like for like which would require some research to establish if a reasonable match could still be obtained. However, the attendant proposal to re point the chimney stacks with cement mortar would be damaging to the brickwork. Lime render compatible with the original mix should be specified.

Lighting: More information is required on the type and location of external lighting. In principle any lighting should be kept off the building.

Conclusions: The proposed works are seriously misconceived. They would cause SUBSTANTIAL HARM to the significance of the listed building and would not conform to NPPF 2012 , paras 7, 8, 9 , 131, 132, 133, The PPG 2014, Historic England- “Conservation Principles” and “Traditional Windows- their care repair and upgrading”., Local Plan R25, Draft Local Plan SP11 and SADM15; The Planning(listed buildings and conservation areas)Act 1990.

The works should be reconsidered: A survey by a conservation accredited Architect or Surveyor should be a pre-requisite for works of this extent. The aim should be to retain all of the historic windows, repair and upgrade them if necessary in accordance with Historic England advice, using alternative, more conservative strategies for achieving better performance and greater longevity of paint systems. Original render (if any should be conserved) and any replacement render should

be compatible with any surviving original stucco or else good historic rendering practice and cement should not be used either in the render or any repointing . The causes of dampness and decay need to be properly established prior to specifying any work.

Regards,

Andrew