CASE OFFICER'S REPORT

Application Reference:	PL/2023/10738
Application Type:	Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)
Site Inspection:	
Consultation ends:	02 February 2024
Case officer:	Helen Garside

Site Address:	Town Hall, Market Street, Trowbridge, Wilts, BA14 8EQ
Proposal:	Alteration to approved restoration works to the roof to introduce alternative proposal for slate tile usage
Recommendation:	Approve with Conditions

POLICIES
Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment (Section 16). English Heritage's "Conservation Principles" provides policy and guidance for the "sustainable management of the historic environment".

Core strategy Policy CP58, whilst primarily relevant to planning applications, gives an indication of the Council's aspirations for the historic environment. The policy requires that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved.

ISSUES
Impact upon the preservation of the listed building, its setting and features of special architectural and/or historic interest. Impact on the conservation area – the revised works subject of this application are in areas which are not prominent from the ground and will have no impact on the wider conservation area and this issue is therefore not considered further.

REPRESENTATIONS
Trowbridge Town Council – no objection.
Historic England – no comment, suggest advice taken from the Council's own conservation specialists.

SITE
The site is an impressive three and half storey civic building constructed for Queen Victoria's golden jubilee with the aim of uniting the community and hosting court sessions and public meetings. Listed at Grade II, it stands as a significant landmark towards the centre of the town and conservation area.

PROPOSAL

The current application comprises a minor amendment to a wider scheme granted consent in 2023. The overall proposals are grant funded and seek to renovate the town hall via reversing poor quality alterations carried out in the 1970s, undertaking necessary repairs including re-roofing, and upgrading fabric to improve the accessibility and sustainability of the building with a view to limiting future upkeep and maintenance costs. The project will create a new venue for live music, culture and community activities and will include restoring the Great Hall (which was subdivided and ceiled in the 1970s) as a large event space, provision of a café, recording studios, retail and artists' studios.

The current proposals slightly extend the scope of the refurbishment to the roof, such that re-roofing and upgrading with insulation will now encompass all slate-clad pitched roofs. The design for the areas previously granted consent, above the Great Hall, remains unaltered, while the refurbishment of other sections (highlighted in green) omit the rigid boards required to meet noise insulation requirements in the Hall in view of its proposed use. The works will see the careful removal of the roof covering, with slates retained where possible, the safe removal of asbestos tiles, and the reinstatement including insulation between and above the rafter, resulting in a slight elevation of the roof line. New slates will be supplied as needed.

In addition, due to a shortfall (in availability from the supplying quarry) of the larger format tiles which were originally used on the building, slightly smaller slates will be used on the most discreet roof slopes to allow the use of matching slates from the same source throughout.

A rainwater downpipe will be reinstated in a previous location to the rear of the building to allow for increased capacity for the disposal of rainwater.

A short length of the modern brick wall to the side of the building in a service area will be replaced with railings to allow for increased airflow to the air source heat pump which has approval for installation.

ASSESSMENT

Paragraph 200 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, the applications are accompanied by a "Design and Access Statement" which is proportionate to the impact of the revised works. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place. In this case the significance of the building lies largely with its historic fabric and architecture - its form, layout and architectural expression/detailing and use of high-quality design materials which have significant aesthetic and architectural interest and which contribute to the character of the conservation area. The building

also holds considerable community value having been at the heart of the civic life in the town for over a century.

The overall scheme has been designed to a high standard with the building's conservation as a core aspiration. The works to reverse the 1970s alterations, which have disfigured some of the key spaces, are welcomed and the practical requirements of upgrading the fabric and enhancing the accessibility of the building have been handled with sensitivity to minimise and/or mitigate their impact so far as possible. The proposal to extend the proposed re-roofing are welcomed as they will bring the whole of the pitched roof up to a good standard of repair. There will be no loss of historic fabric involved, the minor amended details are appropriately specified and in very discreet areas and there will be no visual impact on the building overall.

The scheme will create a valuable community asset which will secure the future of the building in good repair and place it in a good position for the future.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

In this case the impact of the proposals on heritage assets will be positive overall, facilitating the significant benefits which result from reversing the worst of the 1970s interventions (which included the subdivision and ceiling in of the Great Hall) and by providing a long-term use in good repair which will secure the future of the building. Taken in isolation, the amended details subject of the current application will have a largely neutral impact on the special interest of the building but will improve its state of repair and reduce the need for maintenance in the medium term. The requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance are considered to be met and the application is proposed for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:
Approve.

Conditions: (3)

1 The works for which Listed Building Consent is hereby granted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following

approved plans and documents:
Purcell LBC Application Statement - December 2023
1:1250 Site Location Plan
Planning - proposed roof - LBC Amendment ref. 241552-PUR-01-RF-DR-A-0204a
Roof above central stair details ref. 241552-PUR-XX-XX-DR-A-5008

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3 The new rainwater downpipe shall match adjacent existing historic examples in its design, materials and means of fixing to the building.

REASON: In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the listed building and its setting.