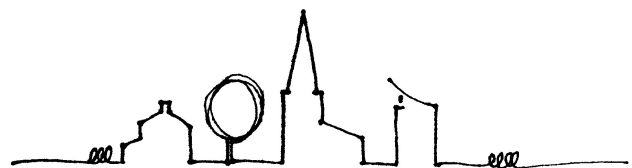
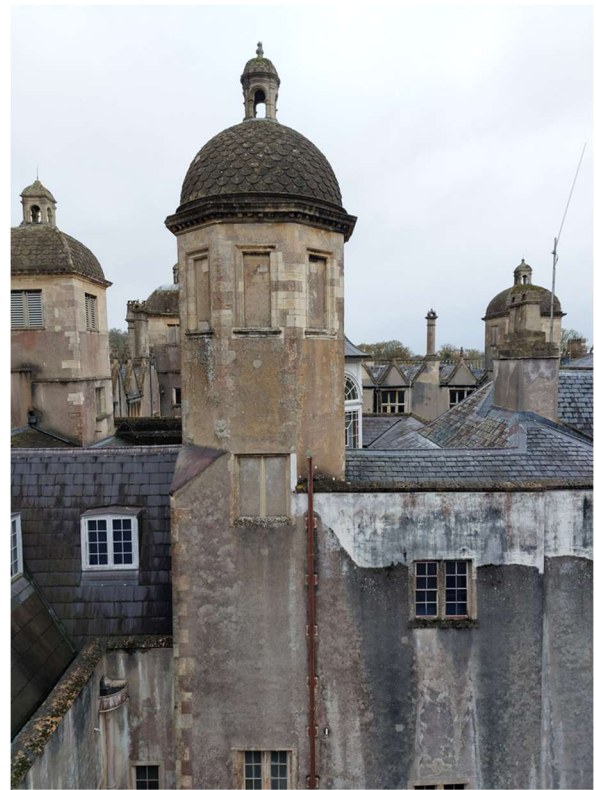


LONGLEAT HOUSE Roof Slip D

Proposed repairs & internal access floors

Heritage, Design and Access Statement

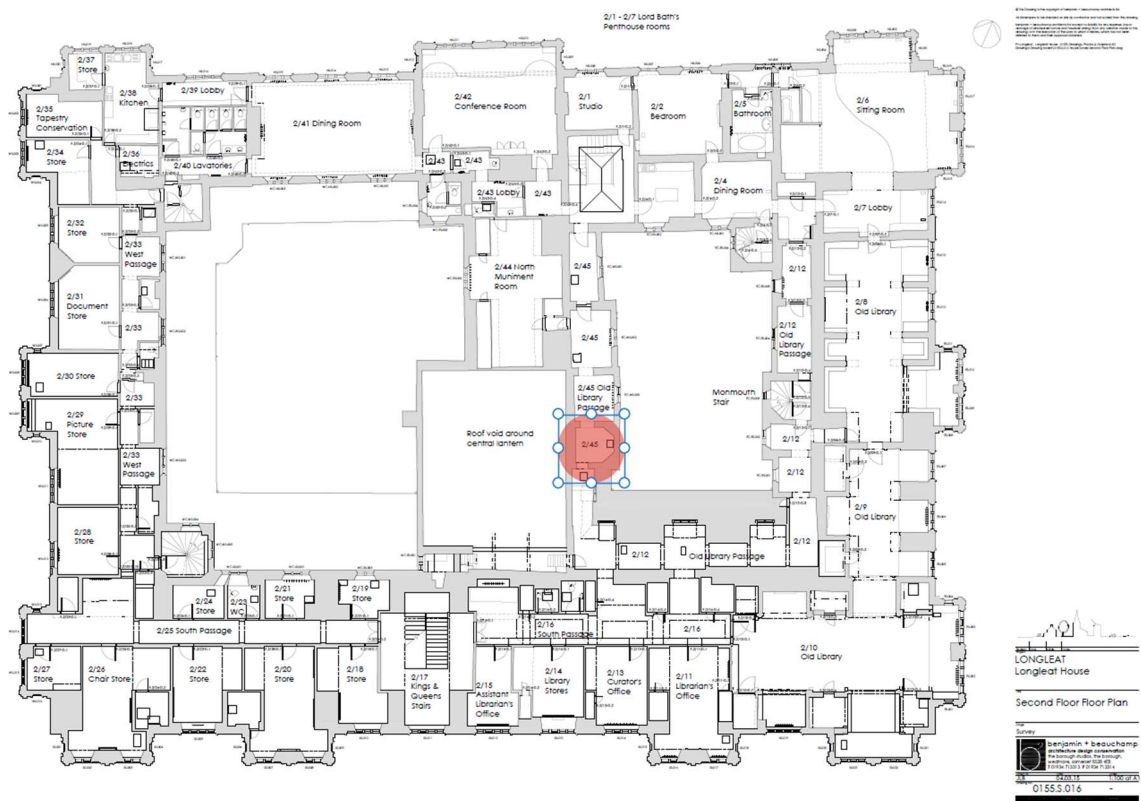


1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This application seeks Listed Building Consent approval for repairs and alterations to the turret structure known as Roof Slip D at Longleat House.
- 1.2. Roof Slip D has suffered from long-term water ingress through its exposed domed masonry roof and upper blind windows. Combined with a lack of ventilation, this has resulted in damage to internal finishes and decay to the ceiling and floor structure below.
- 1.3. The proposals seek to undertake essential structural repairs and address this water ingress, to create a dry and ventilated turret space, while also improving access for ongoing and future maintenance. These works are intended to ensure that the turret structure and the rooms beneath are better protected from further deterioration and potential harm.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1. The proposed site is the octagonal shaped, former lantern and stair turret, located on the west wall of the east courtyard of Longleat House. It is only clearly visible externally from the House roof and partial views from the Horningsham entrance drive to the south and the parkland to the east.
- 2.2. Location of Roof Slip D on the main house.



2.3. Listing Description

The following extract has been obtained from Historic England listings:

LONGLEAT HOUSE (including Cellar Café)

HORNINGSHAM LONGLEAT PARK (north side)
ST 84 SW 2/137
Longleat House
11.9.68
GV I

Country house. 1568, facades of 1572 by Sir John Thynne with Robert Smythson and Alan Maynard, north wing and internal alterations 1801-11 by Jeffry Wyatville for 2nd Marquess of Bath, interior redecorated 1870s by J.D. Crace for 4th Marquess of Bath. Bath stone, Welsh slate hipped roof, lead flats, ashlar Tuscan column stacks. Large rectangular block with two courtyards, the east an amalgamation of two smaller courtyards by Wyatville. Three storey and basement, 2:1:2:5:2:1:2 bays to front; 2 windows to each of the four projecting bays. Central C18 Doric portico with broken pediment with Thynne arms, double 8-panelled doors up ten stone steps with curved balustrade, basement has 3-light and 4-light recessed chamfered mullioned casements. Three storeys with Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders flanking the projecting bays and linked by continuous entablatures, bays have 3-light mullioned and transomed casements with circular niches to sill zones, windows between are 4-light, with shaped aprons, balustraded parapet with scroll and strapwork decorations to bays, C17 and C18 statues. East front has three projecting bays with three 4-light mullioned and transomed casements between, raised terrace with balustraded parapet and steps to centre 7 bays. West front has similar rhythm of bays as the east. Rear, north side including central bay was completed by Wyatville, only the two flanking bays are C16. Roof retains gables of 1568 build, with four square 'banqueting houses' around the west courtyard, each with 2-light mullioned shuttered windows, domed fishscale stone roof with classical cupola, three octagonal stair turrets around the east courtyard have similar detail, probably by Smythson. Chimney stacks with unusual decorated friezes and domed cappings, single or grouped. Interior: Four-bay 2-storey hall with screen's passage, in original position to right of entrance; retains original C16 fittings and decoration, the remainder of the house refitted by Wyatville and Crace. Hall has hammer-beam roof, screen's passage with Ionic order and strapwork, by Andrew Gaunt c1578, carved fireplace of 1560s with Ionic columns and overmantel with terms to entablature is only fireplace by Alan Maynard in original position, others by him now in west range and servants' hall, other ornament includes niches with shell hoods flanking bay windows, carved balcony at east end of c1682. Imperial stairs with carved turned balusters with decorated Soane-style vault and glazed octagonal dome by Wyatville, original stairs were at dais end of hall. Wyatville also improved internal arrangements by making corridors around the courtyards, external walls of courts retain cross windows of 1568 build. All state rooms refitted and decorated late C19 in Italian style, with fine gilded plaster ceilings, white marble fireplaces, including some early C19, and imported wall coverings such as Spanish leather in the state dining room. Bedrooms with earlier C18 or C19 fittings including Regency fireplaces and Chinese painted wallpaper. Bishop Ken's Library over the Hall with pilastered walls and segmental arches made c1585. Attached to rear by ashlar walls is former larder, now shop, by Wyatville in same style and retaining original fittings. House set in very fine parkland, landscaped by Capability Brown 1757-60 and again 1800-10 by Humphry Repton whose Red Book for Longleat is at the house.

Listing NGR: ST8092242975

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Roof Slip D is one of three octagonal lantern and stair turrets within the east courtyard of Longleat House, believed to have been designed by Robert Smythson, and is therefore of high significance to the house. Although its original function is now obsolete, the date at which the staircase was removed is unknown.
- 3.2. Externally, the turret is formed of a domed fishscale Bath stone roof with infilled blind windows. The thin masonry construction and through joints leave the structure vulnerable to water penetration and weathering.
- 3.3. Internally, access is currently gained only via a small loft hatch in the Library Passage ceiling using a stepladder. The lath and plaster ceiling below extends across approximately 6sqm.
- 3.4. A quinquennial inspection undertaken in 2022 by benjamin+beauchamp architects identified the need for ceiling replacement together with masonry repairs and improved ventilation to the turret. Further internal inspections by the project team and Jocelyn Sage, Senior Conservation Officer (South and West), Wiltshire Council in November 2025 informed the proposals within this application.
- 3.5. The ceiling structure has since been propped and the Library Passage temporarily closed for health and safety reasons. Investigations identified extensive decay, beetle infestation, and significant loss of structural integrity to the timber joists and primary beam, caused by prolonged moisture ingress and poor ventilation.
- 3.6. Evidence of the former staircase and intermediate landings survives within the masonry above the ceiling, including scarring and joist pockets, although the date of their removal is unknown. Areas of unsupported masonry and masonry supported on corroding metal bars were also identified and require further investigation and structural repair.
- 3.7. The eastern ceiling joists are in an advanced state of decay and affected by deathwatch beetle activity, with substantial loss of timber section rendering them unsafe. Joists within the north-west corner have also deteriorated significantly.
- 3.8. The existing plaster and lath ceiling is not considered original historic fabric, although it has been in place for a considerable period. The principal beam has deteriorated where it bears into the north wall masonry and requires further structural investigation.
- 3.9. Drawing 0155.S.093 Ceiling Condition Survey illustrates the structure in more detail. There are mixture of joist sizes indicating a pattern of replacement on the east side.

4. PROPOSALS and HERITAGE STATEMENT

- 4.1. The proposals include essential and sensitive repairs to the external masonry and ceiling structure, which are considered uncontroversial and beneficial in conserving the historic fabric. While not all repair works are likely to require Listed Building Consent, they are included within this application for completeness and proper scrutiny.
- 4.2. In order to prevent further water ingress and deathwatch beetle activity, the environmental conditions within Roof Slip D must be improved through the creation of a dry and ventilated turret space. Although the proposals are reversible and considered to have an overall positive impact, they do involve the introduction of new internal floor structures and some limited loss of historic fabric.

4.3. Preventing External Rain Penetration

Description – The domed 'fish scale' roof, upper external walls and blind windows are built of a single skin of thin, solid stone. These are prone to water ingress and have failing or missing mortar pointing and damaged stucco in places. Cornice appears damaged or missing in places.

Statement of Significance – High significance, the turret and roof is possibly contemporary with the original house or introduced shortly after. Blind windows likely infilled at a later date, but demonstrate past function and features.

Proposed Works – The stone domed roof will be repointed where the existing mortar has failed. Repointing to be carried out using a lime putty mortar, with exact mix to be agreed following sampling of existing mortar.

Repointing and repairs to the blind windows and stucco render will be carried out at the same time, again with matching lime mortar to match the comparative hydraulicity of the existing mortars.

Missing or damaged sections of cornice to be assessed for sectional replacement, indent or mortar repair. To be in Bath stone and matching profile to existing.

External works will be undertaken by a suitably qualified rope access mason. Non-permanent anchoring methods, such as deadweight anchors, soft slings and wraps, will be explored in the first instance. Should a qualified rope access specialist determine that eyebolts or permanent anchors are necessary, their type and location will be agreed in writing with the local planning authority prior to installation. Any permanent fixings will be positioned within mortar joints to minimise impact on the historic fabric.

Justification – No loss of historic fabric. Essential like-for-like repairs to make good to failing pointing, stucco or masonry.

4.4. Improving Ventilation

Description – The turret currently has no ventilation. Below ceiling level, the Library Passage is heated, while above the ceiling the single-skin masonry structure is unheated and uninsulated, making it susceptible to condensation and moisture build-up.

Statement of Significance – The turret and roof are of high significance and are considered either contemporary with the original house or an early addition.

Proposed Works – A small creasing tile vent (maximum 200 x 200mm) will be introduced on the north elevation to provide ventilation above ceiling level. High-level drainage outlets will also assist ventilation by creating a stack effect. The works will require limited removal of historic masonry fabric.

Justification – The proposals involve a minor loss of historic fabric but look to significantly improve ventilation and reduce the risk of future condensation, moisture ingress, and mechanisms for decay and beetle attack. The use of creasing tiles to form the vent are a means to clearly differentiate new intervention from existing stone fabric.

4.5. Ceiling & New Lower Floor

Description – The existing ceiling structure has suffered significant decay and loss of structural integrity, particularly to the eastern joists. The primary beam is showing significant decay at its bearing ends, and joist pockets evidence an earlier floor structure above to the

east side of the turret. The lath and plaster ceiling remains in situ but requires additional support to ensure its long-term stability and safe retention.

Statement of Significance – The ceiling structure retains evidential and historic value, although the lath and plaster ceiling is not considered original fabric. Existing joist pockets and evidence of earlier floor and stair arrangements contribute to the understanding of the turret's historic development.

Proposed Works – Existing primary beam is to have splice repairs, in air-dried oak, to each bearing end, with the intent to retain as much of the ceiling and joist pockets as possible. Existing ceiling joists that have lost their structural integrity will be paired with new air-dried oak joists. Stainless steel screw fixings with washers will be installed through the plaster into the new joists to support the existing lath and plaster ceiling. Washer heads will be lightly recessed and made good with a skim coat of proprietary interior filler gauged with whiting. Existing joist pockets will be reused to form a lightweight landing above ceiling level, ensuring loads are not imposed directly onto the ceiling structure.

Justification – The proposals provide essential structural stabilisation while retaining most of the existing ceiling and structure. The use of traditional materials, reuse of existing joist pockets, and discreet repair methods reduce visual impact and support the long-term conservation and safe maintenance of the turret.

4.6. New Upper Floor & Internal Weathering

Description – The joints of the domed roof are inherently prone to gradual failure, and external access for ongoing maintenance and repair is highly restricted. Without intervention, this increases the risk of continued water ingress into the turret. Similarly, condensation is likely to continue to form on the underside of the domed roof.

Statement of Significance – The turret and roof are of high significance and are considered either contemporary with the original house or an early addition.

Proposed Works – A secondary internal protective structure is proposed to manage water ingress and improve durability. This will comprise a timber access floor at high level, designed to divert water to a perimeter gutter discharging externally above cornice level. The floor will incorporate a central vent and access hatch and will be covered with a breathable roofing membrane. This approach differs from tented systems used in some of the other turrets, allowing a longer-term solution, without the need to remove the tent and providing a safe platform for future inspection and maintenance of the roof structure.

Justification – The intervention provides a practical mitigation against inevitable long-term deterioration of the roof mortar joints, where external repair is difficult. It reduces the risk of water damage to the lower ceiling level and maintains high-level access for inspection of the roof structure.

Although it requires localised fixings into masonry and limited removal of fabric to form small drainage outlet openings, the proposal is ultimately reversible and carefully controlled. The drainage openings and fixing points could be infilled with lime mortar in the future, and the joists, boarding, and gutter channels can be fully removed. The visual impact of the drainage outlets above cornice level is minimal, being visible only from roof level or at a distance where they are unlikely to be perceptible.

5. PHOTOGRAPHS

- 5.1. Roof structure cleaned of debris to allow better assessment of the ceiling condition. The notches in the central primary beam indicate that a landing would have been located on the east side of the tower.



- 5.2. The plaster is well adhered to the lath, the edge is only visible in a few locations but appears to have a uniform, cut edge rather than being split lath.



- 5.3. North wall junction, showing beetle attack and deterioration of the principal support. The section size is large but the ceiling joist are only minimally supported by it.



- 5.4. South wall junction, appears to be in better condition. Joist deterioration due to water penetration is circled but this particular joist appears more modern than the joist in the foreground.



- 5.5. Domed roof and masonry walls. The dome is single skinned which allows water to penetrate through failed mortar joints. The scar of a former landing is also evident. A line of water penetration can be seen on the right-hand side of the photo coming from above the upper window facing north.



- 5.6. There is no end bearing on the joist in the foreground. Beetle attack is causing decay to the surrounding joists.



- 5.7. Photo of the East elevation from roof level. Ventilation to be introduced on the north side above the neighbouring roof. Creased tiles to be used to form hit-&-miss vent. This elevation is not visible from the park and there is some access via the adjacent parapet.



- 5.8. Render and cornice damage to be repaired. Open joints to be repointed with lime putty mortar. Proposed, small drainage outlets to above the cornice would be discrete and of limited visual impact.



6. ACCESS & OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1. Access: The proposals do not change or impact the wider site or building access. Access to the turret is maintained as existing, with an internal loft hatch within the Library Passage ceiling via step ladder. The proposals allow for improved internal access for ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the turret.
- 6.2. Use: The proposals do not change the use of the building or space.
- 6.3. Layout: The layout of the building is not affected by this proposal.
- 6.4. Scale: The proposals do not alter the scale of the historic building.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. The proposed repair works and alterations are considered proportionate to minimise the risk of future water ingress, improve ventilation to help mitigate moisture levels, and provide safe access for ongoing inspection and maintenance.
- 7.2. The proposed repairs are on a like-for-like basis and look to retain as much existing fabric as possible.
- 7.3. The proposed alterations are ultimately reversible and do not unduly prevent understanding of the scale, layout and fabric of the existing turret or wider house.
- 7.4. They have been carefully considered and designed to minimise adverse impact on the Listed Building and its significance.