
2021/1693

Applicant: Mr Rob McKenzie

Removal of library roof structure, installation of new tiered floors within existing central light well atrium to create new multi-level Learning Resource Centre (LRC), new entrance steps and platform to existing primary west entrance, south entrance steps to be altered and extended to allow level access with handrails and balustrades and associated works

Barnsley College, Church Street, Barnsley, S70 2AX

Site Description

The application site is in relation to a Barnsley College building located on Church Street in Barnsley Town Centre. The site is in very sensitive area in the Town Centre Conservation Zone with the Grade-II listed Town Hall immediately to the South and Grade-II* listed St Marys Church immediately to the North. Additionally, there are other listed assets in the nearby vicinity including 23 Church Street, directly adjacent to the East and grade-II* listed Barnsley War Memorial to the South.

The building itself is a rectangular-shaped building which was completed in 1932, shortly before the completion of the adjacent Town Hall. It is constructed from red brick and stone and was originally designed in a courtyard style with a small courtyard area in the middle of the building which has since been fitted with a glass roof and currently serves as the library for the college. The building was originally used as Barnsley Mining and Technical College and has always been in educational use since, previously serving as the Barnsley Campus for The University of Huddersfield before Barnsley College leased the building in 2019. The frontage of the building is Western facing with the main access into the building from Church Street with sweeping stone steps which gradually becomes wider at the bottom, however there is a secondary access into the South of the building on Sadler Gate. The building is largely symmetrical in appearance with the entrance steps being located to the middle of the elevation, complementing the symmetry. However, Church Street is slightly sloping from North to South with part of the building effectively being below the ground floor of the building with the main access door slightly raised from Church Street itself. There are lower ground level windows on the front and side elevations.

It is situated on the main road – Church Street – in Barnsley Town Centre which provides access from the North of the Town Centre into what could be described as the core of the Borough's Town Centre to the South of the site. Church Street then sweeps around the Town Hall onto Shambles Street and eventually onto Townend Roundabout – or vehicles can turn right onto St Mary's Street towards the rear of the Town Hall.





Planning History

B/98/1036/BA/AD – Display of non-illuminated signs (Historic)

2008/0180 – Display of four illuminated wall mounted signs (Approved with conditions)

2008/1478 – Display of non-illuminated wall-mounted banner and one pole-mounted banner sign (Approved with conditions)

Proposed Development

The applicant is seeking approval for several alterations to the building including the following:

1. Removal of library roof structure and installation of new tiered floors within existing central light atrium to create new multi-level Learning Resource Centre (LRC) across 5 floors.
2. New entrance steps and platform to existing primary West entrance on Church Street constructed from stone. The new entrance will replace the existing steps with a rectangular shaped entrance with steps on both the North and South side and a platform lift leading up to a common raised platform providing access into the building.
3. Alterations to the South entrance steps facing onto Sadler Gate including an extension to allow for a ramp and handrails and a glass balustrade. The ramp will be built on the natural slope of Sadler Gate sloping down from East to West leading to a slightly raised platform with the existing steps which face South modified.

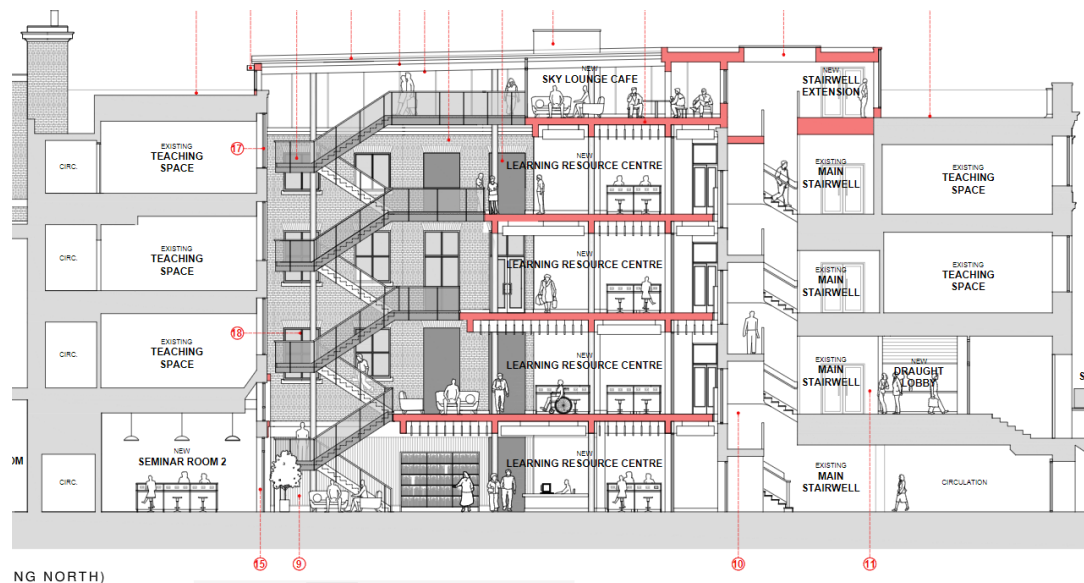
Proposed alterations to main Church Street entrance:



Proposed alterations to Side Sadler Gate entrance:



Proposed internal alterations side cross-section (new LRCs and café):



Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The development plan consists of the Core Strategy, saved Unitary Development Plan policies. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes, which are other material considerations.

Local Plan

The new Local Plan was adopted at the full Council meeting held 3th January 2019 after it was found to be sound by the appointed Planning Inspector following the examination process. This means that it now takes on full weight for decision making process in planning law terms as the development plan for the Borough, superseding the remaining saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (adopted in the year 2000) and the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011).

Relevant Local Plan policies include:

GD1: General Development – Development will be approved if there will be no significant adverse effect on the living conditions and residential amenity of existing and future residents.

D1: High Quality Design and Place Making – Development is expected to be of a high quality design and will be expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and other features of Barnsley.

TC1: Town Centres – Support will be given to maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of the following hierarchy of centres: Town, District and Local. Barnsley Town Centre is the dominant town centre in the Borough. To ensure it continues to fulfil its sub regional role, the majority of new retail and town centre development will be directed to Barnsley Town Centre.

BTC18: Westgate/Churchfields – Within the Westgate/Churchfields District, priority will be given to office development but residential, shops, leisure and entertainment uses will also be acceptable.

HE1: The Historic Environment – we will positively encourage developments which will help in the management, conservation, understanding and enjoyment of Barnsley's Historic environment, especially of those assets which are at risk.

HE2: Heritage Statements and general application procedures – Proposals that are likely to affect known heritage assets or sites where it comes to light there is potential for the discovery of unrecorded heritage assets will be expected to include a description of the site and its setting.

HE3: Developments affecting Historic Buildings – Proposals involving additions or alterations to listed buildings or buildings of evident historic significance such as locally listed buildings (or their setting) should seek to conserve and where appropriate enhance that building's significance.

T3: New Development and Sustainable Travel – New development will be expected to reduce the need to travel, be accessible to public transport and meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

T4: New Development and Transport Safety – New development will be expected to be designed and built to provide all transport users within and surrounding the development with safe, secure and convenient access and movement.

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In respect of this application, the policies above are considered to reflect the 4th Core Principle in the NPPF, which relates to high quality design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. They also reflect the advice in paragraph 124 (general design considerations) and paragraph 130, which state that 'permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions'.

SPDs/SPGs

SPD 'Parking' provides parking requirements for all types of development.

Other material considerations

South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide - 2011

Consultations

Conservation Officer – The building was completed in 1932 (shortly before the Town Hall) and was originally the home of the Barnsley Mining and Technical College. Stylistically, the building is a worthy companion to the adjacent Town Hall (Briggs and Thornley 1933) which is listed at grade II. The college is a brick built rectangular building with neoclassical elements including centrally arranged sections of engaged Corinthian pilasters on three sides of the building in Portland Limestone. Generally speaking, the building has a strong group value with its neighbour (the Town Hall) but also contributes positively to the setting of the conservation area as well as the listed grade II* St Mary's, and the grade II 23 Church Street, 41-43 Church Street, and Cass's Warehouse immediately to the West.

This proposal seeks permission to remove the existing library roof structure on the ground floor and insert a series of new tiered floors moving up the building within the light well. A number of areas are penned for refurbishment, but the main change relates to the insertion of the new floor levels with connective stairwells and lift shaft to create an integrated and multi-level learning centre. The bulk of these works will be invisible from the outside of the building however the top level / floor of the extension will extend slightly above the level of the existing brick parapet that runs around the perimeter of the building. However, due to the substantial setback of the atrium area from the outer walls of the building, it is unlikely the glazed roof top extension will be visible from many locations (see section plans in submission). The submission includes a detailed Planning and HIA and this shows views of the glazed extension from the setting of a number of adjacent assets including long views (page 39 onwards). Whilst I think it may be possible to get glimpsed

long views of the proposed roof extension, I feel these are unlikely to be obvious or harmful to the settings of the adjacent heritage assets.

Externally, changes are proposed to the main eastern entrance to re-configure the steps and include a platform lift to ensure the building is accessible as possible. I accept the need for the loss of the original steps, handrail and change in appearance of this entrance. However, I feel it does represent a minor harm to the significance of the building as this is a handsome and characteristic element of the existing elevation. However, on balance the need to make the building as accessible as possible is a reasonable justification and in terms of the impact on the wider conservation area this is a small change. Unfortunately, I do not feel the large carved Barnsley College Logo and branding here is particularly complimentary and seems a bit clumsy in context with the subtlety of the architecture of the elevation behind it. Given the amount of existing signage on the building and on this elevation, I would suggest this is unnecessary (as well as reducing flexibility of future uses for the building). The final change of note includes a minor alteration to the existing southern entrance to allow inclusive and level access. This is similar in nature to the level access provided at the Town Hall (SW corner) and I feel this is reasonable and not harmful to the appearance of the building.

Overall, I raise no objections to the bulk of the proposal as I feel the works are justified and proportionate and do not represent substantial harm to the significance of the building, or the wider setting. The alteration of the front steps represents a very minor harm, but this is more than justified due to the public benefit and the improvements in accessibility. As noted above the large carved branding and logo don't work from my perspective but this is the only reservation I have with this proposal.

Highways DC – No objection

Drainage – No objection

Historic England – Do not wish to offer any comments, advised that the LPA seeks to views of the council's specialist conservation and archaeological advisers.

The Coal Authority – the application site falls marginally within the defined Development High Risk Area and the records indicate that the potential zone of influence of off-site mine shaft 434006-014 encroaches marginally across the Southern application site boundary. The shaft is recorded to be present in Lancaster Gate, close to its junction with Sadler Gate. The records also indicate that following a collapse in 1998, the feature was filled with limestone and capped with reinforced concrete cap. However, the part of the site where the development is proposed lies outside the defined High Risk Area. Therefore, we do not consider that a Coal Mining risk assessment is necessary to support this proposal and no objection is raised to the planning application. An informative was recommended.

SYMAS – No objections raised to the proposals as the site is not located in a coal authority referral area and in any case is largely exempt from the coal mining risk assessment requirements.

Superfast South Yorkshire – No objection was raised but a condition was requested to be added to any forthcoming decision notice.

Pollution Control – The development is unlikely to have an adverse impact on health and the quality of life of those living and/or working in the locality, so approval is recommended.

Yorkshire Water – No comment

Ward Councillors – No comments

Pollution Control – No objection

Representations

Neighbour notification letters were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice was placed nearby; no comments were received.

Assessment

Principle of development

The site is centrally located within Barnsley Town Centre and falls just outside of the Westgate/Churchfields Town Centre District. As such, Local Plan Policies TC1: Town Centres and BTC18: Westgate/Churchfields are relevant which generally expect development to support and maintain the Town Centre's sub-regional role as the Borough's dominant Centre. Support will be given to retail, but other suitable town Centre uses will be supported with the primary use expected in the Westgate/Churchfields District to be offices. The proposed development is to support a long-standing education facility and none of the proposed alterations will change the character of the building or how it would interact with the surrounding area. The site falls just outside of the Westgate/Churchfields district and given the size of the developments would have very little impact on this district. Generally. The proposed development is to support the existing use of the building as an educational facility, aiding accessibility into the building through the main West-facing entrance facing onto Church Street and the secondary entrance/exit facing South onto Sadler Gate. The internal alterations will increase the floor space on all five floors of the building with 4 x new Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) and a sky lounge café. These support the existing use, improving the student and teacher experience of the building alongside potentially supporting further employment.

That being said, the site is in a very sensitive Town Centre site with various constraints on development. The site is in the Regent Street/Church Street/Market Hill Conservation Area, immediately adjacent to the Grade-II listed Town Hall to the South and Grade-II* listed St Mary's Church to the North, alongside several other less significant listed assets nearby. The impact on this area will place an increased emphasis on a very high level of design and this will be assessed in greater detail in the sections below.

The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle, but given the significant constraints raised above will need to be assessed in detail below against the relevant Local and National Planning Policies.

Visual Amenity and Impact on the Historic Environment

The development site is in a highly sensitive location in the Conservation Area and immediately adjacent to two key listed buildings in the Town Centre. The Council's Conservation Officer has been consulted on this proposal who has not objected in principle to the scheme given that the majority of the works are internal and that the external changes aid accessibility into the building which is a key requirement for modern buildings. A smaller point was raised in reference to the carved lettering/logo on the alterations to the Western-facing main entrance which have since been removed by the developer.

The alterations to the side entrance facing onto Sadler Gate is minimal and largely incorporates the existing design with the steps facing onto Sadler Gate and a ramp which naturally takes advantage of the existing West to East slope. The footprint of the side entrance will remain largely the same even with the ramp introduced and steps leading up to a common raised platform easing accessibility into the entrance. The design of the amended side entrance is similar in appearance to those used directly adjacent to the Town Hall to the South-West. As such, the impact on the character of this side entrance is restrained and the impact on the character of the building as a whole is fairly minimal.

The alterations to the main entrance are more significant as they are bulkier in size and scale than the existing entrance steps and also includes the erection of a stone wall immediately adjacent to the pedestrian footway and road. However, the wall is restrained to a height of 2.5m and is proportionate to the size of the building which is fairly large and the shape of the entrance retains the symmetrical nature of the building when viewed from the front/Church Street. The new entrance is designed in a rectangular shape with steps on either side (North and South), with the wall facing East onto Church Street. The entrance will also incorporate a platform lift to the North of the entrance. Clearly, the addition of a platform lift is a modern addition to what is an historic building in a Conservation Area, however this is largely screened behind the proposed steps and wall. It will be visible to the North but it is not considered to constitute poor design and clearly serves a legitimate purpose in making the main entrance accessible. The steps and the platform lift will reach a common raised platform with a glass balustrade on the borders. The glass balustrade is an uncommon feature in the area as this is primarily a modern feature found on more modern buildings, but this is considered an appropriate feature nonetheless as it is transparent and would have less of a visual impact than other alternatives such as iron wrought fencing for example. Additionally, the adjacent Cooper gallery has large glazing on the front elevation facing onto Church Street and in this context, the glass would not look out of place.

Given the historic nature of the building, the extreme sensitivity of the location and the visibility of the external alterations, careful consideration will need to be given to the choice of the materials. The existing

building is a mixture of red brick and stone with both entrances having significant stone featuring. The external visuals show that the alterations to the entrances will both feature stone, which is similar in appearance to the existing stone, however the agent has not submitted specific detailing on what stone is proposed. Given the age of the building, an exact match for the stone will be difficult to source, but the agent has agreed to have a condition added to any forthcoming decision which requires external material details/samples to be submitted and approved by the LPA prior to development commencing. This is a suitable arrangement as it will allow the LPA and the Conservation Officer to check that the external materials are a good match to the existing building and the Conservation Area as a whole. The Church Street entrance will incorporate a ramp and stone steps leading to a raised platform which is bordered by a glass balustrade.

The initial submission showed a carved logo/lettering on the front of the steps which was deemed to be unnecessary given that the existing building had 3 x signs on the frontage and one on the Northern-facing side elevation. This was removed from the stonework which was considered to have a positive impact on the design of the proposed development.

The internal alterations constitute significant change to the internal character of the building but this is considered to be an improvement. These alterations are not visible from the external elevations of the building or the surrounding area and have no real impact on the character of the building, surrounding area or the setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

All in all, despite the extreme sensitivity of the area, the proposed external alterations to the building are considered a necessary modern addition to what is an historic building, and they are restrained in their scale and massing. The most significant change is to the Western-facing entrance on Church Street which is the principle elevation of the building and requires the most adaptation to enable accessibility suitable for all. There has been a small amendment made to the plans which removes the carved logo/lettering which is considered to be a slight improvement on what otherwise is a sympathetic design. The internal alterations have no impact on the character of the building as it is viewed externally or on the character of the area. The proposed development is in compliance with Local Plan Policies D1, HE1 and HE3 and is considered to be acceptable in terms of visual amenity.

Residential Amenity

The site is in a Town Centre Location and the LPA's mapping system shows that there are some residential uses nearby with flats in the second and third floors of nearby buildings on Church Street. The proposed development is to support the existing use of the building which has been in longstanding educational use. The most significant works to the building will be internal with have no impact on the residential amenity enjoyed by nearby properties.

The proposed alterations to the entrances on Church Street and Sadler Gate are primarily to aid accessibility into the building and also will have very little impact on residential amenity of neighbouring properties. There will be some associated noise and general disturbance in the area from construction works but the noise/disturbance generated from the actual development/use will not be excessive. A condition will be added to any forthcoming approval notice which requires the developer to submit a construction method statement covering aspects of the construction such as working hours, control of noise, dust and debris and the parking of construction vehicles and storage of materials.

Additionally, pollution control officers have been consulted and have raised no objection to the proposal.

The proposed development is in compliance with Local Plan Policy GD1: General Development and is considered to be acceptable in terms of residential amenity.

Highways safety

The proposed alterations are to support the existing use of the building and whilst they increase the internal floorspace, do not change the character of the building or significantly increase the requirement for parking provision. In any case, the site is centrally located with an abundance of car parks nearby and Barnsley interchange (Bus and Rail station) 300m away from the site. Clearly, the site is in a sustainable location and the proposed development is not considered to have any detrimental impact on highways safety.

Coal Mining risk

The site falls marginally within the defined Development Risk Area and the Coal Authority records indicate that the potential zone of influence of off-site mine shaft 434406-014 encroaches marginally across the Southern application site boundary. The shaft is recorded to be resented in Lancaster Gate, close to its junction with Sadler Gate and there is records indicating, that following a collapse in 1998, the feature was filled with limestone and capped with a reinforced concrete cap. However, the part of the site where the development is proposed lies outside of the defined High-Risk Area. Therefore, a coal mining risk assessment is necessary to support this proposal and we do not object to this planning application.

The Coal Authority and SYMAS have been consulted and have not raised any objection to the proposal but have requested that an informative note be added to the proposal.

Flood risk

The site is not in a defined flood risk zone and a flood risk assessment is therefore not required for this development.

Conclusion

The application site is in relation to an education building located in the Northern side of the Town Centre. The site is extremely sensitive being located in the Conservation Area, immediately adjacent to the Grade-II* listed St Mary's church to the North and the Grade-II listed Barnsley Town Hall to the South. There are also other less significant listed assets nearby.

The applicant is seeking approval for the following alterations to the building:

1. Internal alterations for the formation of an atrium, 4 x Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) and a café on the fifth floor,
2. Alterations to the main Church Street entrance to allow for a disabled ramp and new step layout leading to a raised platform with glass balustrade. An amended plan was submitted to remove the carved logo/lettering from the front-facing wall,
3. Alterations to the side Sadler Gate entrance to allow for a disabled ramp.

The main consideration is the impact on visual amenity and on the character of the Conservation area and setting of the aforementioned Listed Buildings. The alterations to the entrances are considered to be restrained in size, scale and massing and are proportionate to the building allowing the original character to be retained. The impact on the Conservation Area is considered to be minimal with no objection received from the Conservation Area subject to the use of high-quality materials which will be covered under a pre-commencement condition. The materials will then be submitted and approved by the LPA prior to development commencing. The internal alterations will not be visible from the external elevations of the building or from the surrounding area and whilst they will change the character of the building internally, this is an arguably an improvement as it makes the building more usable. The internal alterations have very little impact on the character of the building externally or on the surrounding conservation area or setting of the nearby listed buildings.

Other secondary considerations are in relation to the impact on the Town Centre, Highways Safety, Coal Mining Risk and impact on nearby commercial and residential properties. None of these issues were considered to be significantly harmful and where appropriate, measures will be covered under conditions requiring the developer to submit further details prior to commencement or upon commencement.

The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with Local Plan Policy GD1, D1, TC1, BTC18, HE1, HE3, T3 and T4 and is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions