



## PLANNING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

<b>Application No</b>	2025/0995
<b>Proposal</b>	2025 0995 Urgent Stabilisation Works Ceilings of The Long Gallery & Italian Stair Northern College Lowe Lane Stainborough
<b>Address</b>	Northern College Lowe Lane Stainborough
<b>Date of Consultation Reply</b>	121225
<b>Consultee</b>	Tony Wiles Senior Conservation Officer

### Consultation Assessment and Justification

The main consideration is: -

- Whether or not the proposed alterations would harm the special architectural or historic interest or impact on the setting of the listed Building

#### Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 16 (2): The local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest

#### Policy

NPPF 207/208: Identify and assess heritage significance including the setting and the effect of a proposal

NPPF 212: Great weight given to an asset's conservation, irrespective of the degree of harm

NPPF para 213: Any harm to or loss of significance will require clear and convincing justification

Barnsley Local Plan HE1: The Historic Environment

Barnsley Local Plan Policy HE3: Developments affecting Historic Buildings

#### Conservation Comments:

#### Historic Significance

The significance of Wentworth Castle is reflected in its grade I listing which denotes its exceptional special interest and national significance. Similarly, the ceilings in the Queen Anne 3 (QA3), Long Gallery, and Italian Stair rooms are of exceptional significance owing to their evidential, aesthetic and associated historic values. I have no reason to re-iterate this but full details of the heritage significance of the building and the rooms affected are included in the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) provided by Storah Architecture at sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.2 (included with the submission pack).

#### Defects

This application has come about at very short notice following discussion with Northern College and Storah Architecture. Following a survey and recommendations by Hirst Conservation carried out in August 2024, areas of concern were identified within the Long Gallery and other rooms (see *Plaster Ceiling Survey* of 02.08.24 doc in submission pack). Key issues identified included multiple hairline cracks throughout the length of the Long Gallery, Italian Stair, and QA3 rooms. This now raises concerns over the stability of the ceilings. The QA3 defects and repair are covered separately by 2025/0697. For information, the QA3 proposal was discussed at length and consultation was carried out with Historic England. Agreement was reached over a solution to



support the ceiling from below with permanent plaster pads bonded and suspended from ceiling / floor bearers from above. These works were approved on 24.11.25.

Regarding the Long Gallery and Italian Stair, the observations from Hirst were similar to that of the QA3:

- Multiple hairline stress cracks are visible along its length that do not follow the line of the laths or joists
- Widespread evidence of fractures to cornice enrichments at the margins of ceiling
- Evidence of water ingress

Due to its length, inspection of the Long Gallery was subdivided into north, central and southern sections. It was noted that the northern section had already been underdrawn with sections of later plasterboard which is evident when viewed from below. Beyond being less than ideal (aesthetically) concerns were raised as to why this had been necessary. In the central and southern sections, the plasterboard is not present but similar defects including widespread cracking was observed. Hirst recommended a closer in-depth tactile survey to fully understand the level of damage, stability and condition of the ceiling via access the upper side of the ceiling.

Further investigations (with the assistance of Excel Bespoke Plaster) of the upper side of the ceiling indicate that as with the QA3 room, the laths are very closely spaced, nibs are either minimal in number or missing, and bonding of the ceiling appears lacking. This allied to damage from water ingress and beetle infestation risks the ceilings becoming detached and failing either locally or globally. As a result, the rooms (Library, QA3a and Italian Stair have been closed for safety.

### The Proposed Works

These matters were discussed at a meeting with representatives from Northern College, Storah Architecture, Historic England, BMBC, and the Georgian Society on the 19.11.25. Architect Richard Storah (RIBA, AABC, SCA, IHBC) explained the situation and advised on a method of stabilising the ceilings. A site meeting was also convened on 24.11.25 to inspect the ceiling and discuss matters further. This application is the result of those discussions. The Historic Impact Assessment submitted in support of the application explains that:

*'A sequential approach to the repair is proposed. The restraint and plaster repairs will be carried out by Excel Bespoke Plastering (or an equivalent specialist). Joinery and enabling works will be carried out by other heritage experienced contractors. The works will be carried out under the direction of an AABC Accredited conservation Architect:*

The sequence of the works to the Long Gallery is as follows:

1. Make photographic record of ceiling.
2. Stabilise QA3 ceiling below (separate LBC (2025/0697))
3. Check floor for adequacy to support Scaffold.
4. Protect fixtures and fittings within room.
5. Erect mobile scaffold to carry out works in sections.
6. Install battens and fibrous plaster shell to the whole of the underside of the ceiling to prevent collapse. Where plywood has been installed previously an assessment will be made once accessed if this can be safely removed prior to fixing battens or if this should provide the ground for fixing the new plaster shell.
7. Open up the floor in the void over the long gallery in sections to allow access to the rear of the ceiling where required. Boards to be carefully numbered and indexed and removed intact for refixing.
8. Make photographic record of upper face of ceiling.
9. Treat laths with insecticide spray to halt and prevent ongoing woodworm damage.
10. Make further photographic record of upper face of ceiling.
11. Refix the floorboards in the roof void in their original positions. Boards to be screwed into position rather than nailed to reduce vibration risk.
12. Scrim joints and make good decorative finishes to ceiling where fixings have been recessed.
13. Make good decorative finishes to mouldings and decorate ceiling.



## 14. Return the Long Gallery back to us

The works to the ceiling of the Italian Stair are as follows:

1. Make photographic record of ceiling.
2. Check floor and stair for adequacy to support Scaffold.
3. Protect plasterwork, stucco, statuary, fixtures and fittings within room.
4. Erect scaffold to carry out works.
5. Install off white polypropylene protection net to underside of ceiling fixed with stainless steel screws and eyes too walls and restraint ring to centre.
6. Make photographic record of upper face of ceiling.
7. Treat laths with insecticide spray to halt and prevent ongoing woodworm damage.
8. Trim and refix loose and eroded joists to allow support to the laths.
9. Make further photographic record of upper face of ceiling.
10. Return the stair back to use

### The Impact of the works

At the moment the Library and Italian Stair are closed for safety reasons. The detachment and loss of the ceilings would obviously be very harmful; however, such a collapse could cause further damage to decorative features of exceptional significance in the rooms below. Taken together, if the ceiling fails, I feel the potential for substantial harm is high. As such, there seems to me to be a clear need for a solution that mitigates this risk as soon as possible. Whilst I accept there is some minor harm to fabric by drilling and the insertion of fixings into historic plasterwork and ceiling bearers above, I feel this is small scale and reversible. Balanced against the prospect of catastrophic loss I feel this is justified. The new fibrous plaster shell ceiling installed below the original will protect and preserve it in situ, offering the prospect of full restoration by another means in the future. On completion, the ceiling should appear unaltered (from the floor) and will allow the rooms to be returned to use. Similarly, the installation of the net in the Italian Stair safeguards this ceiling with minimal intervention and is reversible, allowing this space to be brought back into use. Overall, I believe the works are necessary and will safeguard the significance of these spaces.

Given the involvement of Historic England, support from them is essential. I understand they are supportive in principle, but I have yet to see their formal comments.

In conclusion, given the pressing need and what I see as relatively minimal harm to the fabric (by the works), I feel the proposal is justified and should be approved.

**NO OBJECTION\***

\*Delete as applicable

### **Consultation Suggested Conditions:**

### **Consultation Informative(s):**

### **Planning Obligations required:**



# **BARNSLEY**

Metropolitan Borough Council