

Agenda Item A17	Committee Date 12 December 2011	Application Number 11/00947/LB
Application Site Williamson Park Wyresdale Road Lancaster Lancashire	Proposal Proposed Remedial Work to External Steps to Ashton Memorial.	
Name of Applicant Lancaster City Council	Name of Agent R G Parkins And Partners	
Decision Target Date 13 December 2011	Reason For Delay N/A	
Case Officer	Mr Andrew Drummond	
Departure	No	
Summary of Recommendation	Approved	

1.0 The Site and its Surroundings

1.1 Ashton Memorial (a Grade I Listed building) is located in Williamson Park (a Grade II Listed Registered Park and Garden) on the east side of Lancaster. It is a prominent landmark building situated on top of a hill affording it views in all directions. It was built between 1905 and 1909 in memory of Lord Ashton's second wife, and was listed in 1953. It is in the ownership of Lancaster City Council.

2.0 The Proposal

2.1 This application seeks Listed Building Consent for remedial works to the external steps to the front of the Ashton Memorial, which form an important part of the Listed structure. The repair to the curved section will be a new profiled structural concrete slab supporting the existing steps and pointing. The steps will also be re-seated where required on other sections.

2.2 Concrete covered timber soffits spanning between reinforced steel joists have failed and water ingress has caused the concrete to fail badly, which in turn has caused corrosion and de-lamination of the steel joists. In other areas fill between the joists have consolidated causing some of the steps to become unlevel and out of line. It is proposed to reset the existing Cornish granite steps in their exact original positions.

3.0 Site History

3.1 There have been a number of applications determined by the Local Planning Authority relating to works to the Ashton Memorial over the decades, but none that specifically relate to the current proposal. The last remedial works to the staircase took place between 1985 and 1987.

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and internal consultees:

Consultee	Response
Environmental Health	No objection.
Conservation	<p>The works are essentially repair works and this will not affect the special character of the staircase. The Senior Conservation Officer has discussed mortar specifications for the repointing and for the repair of cracked damaged Cornish Granite steps. The proposed reconstruction of the supporting structure is acceptable subject to conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A sample of mortar pointing to the steps is to be provided for the approval of the LPA. ▪ A sample of repair work to the granite steps is to be prepared for the approval of the LPA.
English Heritage	This application should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of your expert conservation advice.
Georgian Group	No comments received during the statutory consultation period.
Victorian Society	No comments received during the statutory consultation period.
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	No comments received during the statutory consultation period.
Twentieth Century Society	No comments received during the statutory consultation period.
Ancient Monument Society	No comments received during the statutory consultation period.
Council for British Archaeology	No comments received during the statutory consultation period.
Garden History Society	No comments received during the statutory consultation period.

5.0 Neighbour Representations

5.1 No comments received during the statutory consultation period.

6.0 Principal Development Plan Policies

6.1 Planning Policy Statement

PPS5 (Planning for the Historic Environment) - outlines the Government's overarching aim for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment and its heritage and states that in considering the impact of a proposal on any heritage asset (e.g. Listed building) local planning authorities should take into account the particular nature of the heritage asset.

6.2 Lancaster District Local Plan (saved Policies) - adopted April 2004

Policy **E33** (Alterations or Extensions to Listed buildings) - proposals involving external alterations to Listed buildings will not be permitted if they have an adverse effect on the architectural or historic character or interest of the buildings or their surroundings.

6.3 Lancaster District Core Strategy - adopted July 2008

Policy **E1** (Environmental Capital) - refers to the importance of conserving and enhancing the built heritage and minimising the adverse effects of development on such assets.

7.0 Comment and Analysis

7.1 The Ashton Memorial is a landmark building in the vicinity of Lancaster, visible from passing vehicles

on the M6 as well as from the city of Lancaster and beyond to Morecambe and its bay. From these vantage points its impressive copper covered roof and Portland stone elevations are prominent, but when viewed from within Williamson Park, it is clear that the steps form an important part of this Listed structure.

7.2 The steps have deteriorated over the last century. To rectify this deterioration the works described above in Section 2 are proposed. The proposed works seek to preserve this impressive Grade I Listed structure, which is a key building within the District. Whilst the steps are not the most prominent feature of the Memorial when viewed from a distance, they clearly form an integral and significant part of this heritage asset when seen from within the gardens. The Cornish granite steps are to be retained and reused in their exact original location following extensive works to their foundations. The appearance of the steps following the proposed works will not have altered significantly (though there will be minor benefits resulting from the steps being realigned to their original position) whilst the structure upon which they will sit will have been significantly improved to give them a sound base for the foreseeable future. Care will be required to preserve the Cornish granite during the works as well as the choice of mortar, both in terms of its colour (to preserve the setting of the steps) and how porous the material is (to prevent unnecessary water penetration. These elements should be conditioned.

7.3 The works are proposed to improve the maintenance of this Grade I Listed building. In conclusion, this proposal does not adversely affect the character of the Listed building and will act to preserve one of the City's significant heritage assets. The proposed works are considered sympathetic and complies with the policy principles of PPS5, Policy E1 of the Core Strategy and saved Policy E33 of the Lancaster District Local Plan, which guide development in relation to heritage assets. It is on this basis that Members are advised that this application can be supported.

8.0 Planning Obligations

8.1 There are no planning obligations to consider as part of this application.

9.0 Conclusions

9.1 For the reasons above, it is recommended that consent is granted.

Recommendation

That, subject to referral to the National Planning Casework Unit, Listed Building Consent **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard Listed building consent timescale
2. Sample of repair work to the Cornish granite steps is to be prepared
3. Sample of mortar
4. Reuse of the existing Cornish granite steps, including storage during works
5. Construction compound and traffic

Human Rights Act

This recommendation has been reached after consideration of the provisions of The Human Rights Act. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the issues arising do not appear to be of such magnitude to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

Background Papers

None.