



Historic England

Mr Mark Simmons
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Our ref: L01586612

9 January 2025

Dear Mr Simmons

Arrangements for Handling Heritage Applications Direction 2021

**THE CLOISTERS, BARRINGTON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY,
HERTFORDSHIRE, SG6 3TH
Application No. 24/02114/LBC**

Thank you for your letter of 20 December 2024 regarding the above application for listed building consent. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

The grade II* listed Cloisters in a remarkable building designed in a somewhat fantastical arts and crafts style by W H Cowlshaw and built for Miss Annie Lawrence in 1906-07 as a residential School of Psychology before finding life later as a preparatory school, concert hall and masonic lodge.

Historic England have been advising the applicant on repair of the building and this application concerns part of the project under discussion. The chief proposal in the current application is the dismantling and reconstruction of the chimney stack. This is extremely unstable with loose/broken and friable brickwork which are at risk of falling. We have therefore accepted that in order to successfully repair the chimney it will need to be dismantled to a level of sound material as illustrated in the application and reconstructed with appropriate materials and methods.

We would note the application (Impact Assessment, sections 2 and 4 and other documents) repeatedly refers to the "tower" being dismantled, even though this appears in captions for the chimney stack. This appears to be a discrepancy as the chimney stack, not the overall "tower" is affected. However, we understand a more extensive repair project is being developed for the tower as a whole. As far as we



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are aware there is no need to dismantle the tower in its entirety. Should this in fact be proposed as part of this application we would recommend it is not determined at this time, further justification sought for this more extensive demolition and Historic England reconsulted. However, on the basis that only the chimney is affected we would not oppose the application in principle although conditions should be placed on any consent issued to establish the full extent of the works, the materials used and methodology.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development and that protection and enhancement of the historic environment is an overarching objective in this (paragraphs 7 and 8). The significance of listed buildings can be harmed or lost by alteration to them or development in their setting. The NPPF states that clear and convincing justification should be made for any such harm and that 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of listed buildings and conservation areas irrespective of the level of harm caused (paragraphs 213 and 215).

We have considered this application in terms of this policy and we would not object to the proposals in principle (providing only demolition and rebuilding of the chimney are concerned) and recommend the Council place conditions on any consent issued to establish the full extent of the works, the materials used and methodology.

Recommendation

Historic England has no objection to the application on heritage grounds in principle but would recommend the Council place conditions on any consent issued to establish the full extent of the works, the materials used and methodology.

If the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice are addressed, we would consider that the application meets the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 7, 8, 212, 213 and 215. In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us. Please advise us of the decision in due course

Yours sincerely

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