



Committee Report

Planning Committee North - 9 November 2021

Application no DC/21/4220/LBC

Location

Former Post Office
51 London Road North
Lowestoft
Suffolk
NR32 1BJ

Expiry date 7 November 2021
Application type Listed Building Consent
Applicant East Suffolk Council

Parish Lowestoft

Proposal Listed Building Consent - Repair & refurbishment of timber sash windows, stone repair & infill at ground floor, new windows & doors at ground floor, new rainwater goods to replace existing, replacement of roof tiles, flat roof covering in lead, stone cleaning on front facade. Minor internal strip out to facilitate repairs & refurbishment and repair & replacement of roof access lantern.

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The application seeks listed building consent for works to the Grade II Listed Lowestoft Post Office. The application is made by East Suffolk Council, on council-owned land, therefore the application has been brought direct to Planning Committee (North) for determination.
- 1.2 The proposed works will enhance the special interest of the Grade II Listed Building, with the restoration and renovation works better revealing its significance as a designated heritage asset in the Conservation Area. The proposal therefore accords with the Development Plan and the application is recommended for approval.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The Old Post Office is a Grade II Listed Building dating from the 19th century. The building is three storeys high with a cornice above ground floor level. The first floor has moulded architraves around sash windows with horns and pediments above while the second floor has the same sash windows but with aprons and eared architraves. The ground floor aluminium framed windows are set below a heavy moulded cornice and within deep reveals. The building is constructed of buff brick with stone facing which lends the building a grander appearance than the Grade II Natwest Bank adjacent to it, which is constructed of buff brick with stone window architraves and partly rusticated ground floor.
- 2.2 The Old Post Office sits within the South Lowestoft Conservation Area which is formed by the core of the 19th century expansion of the town once the railway arrived and a new harbour was constructed. Although not a formal planning designation, the site falls within the South Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) which is a heritage-led regeneration project led by Historic England in partnership with ESC.
- 2.3 The building has been vacant for approximately four years. There is a side access to the Old Post Office site, from Surrey Street. At the point of access from Surrey Street, this transitions from a highway to pedestrianised street where it then joins London Road North.
- 2.4 To the rear of the main (front) Post Office building are a number of ancillary structures and buildings that are within the same ownership, but not subject of this application.
- 2.5 The Lowestoft Post Office site benefits from the following extant planning permission and listed building consent:

- DC/20/1783/LBC

Listed Building Consent - Repair & adaptation to the ground floor of the Post Office building including a new extension to the west, new roof to ground floor extension and re-fenestration at ground floor level.

- DC/20/0653/FUL

Demolition of existing shed buildings and 3/4 storey brick building to rear of Post Office, including adjoining structures to rear of Post Office. Repair & adaptation to the ground floor of the Post Office building including a new extension to the west and re-fenestration at ground floor level. Erection of flats and houses comprising 9 dwellings, with associated landscaping works.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The application seeks listed building consent for works to the Grade II Listed Old Post Office building.
- 3.2 The works are primarily repair and refurbishment, with some minor elements of change, as follows:
 - Adjustment of the existing external access ramp.
 - Reinstatement of the central door and flanking sash windows as per the original design.

- Full re-roofing of the main and north range.
- Full repair and refurbishment of all windows.

- 3.3 The intention is to leave the building with a weathertight envelope in readiness for possible future redevelopment as part of a second phase of work.
- 3.4 This application is in tandem with application ref. DC/21/4119/FUL which seeks planning permission for the works.
- 3.5 The applications do not include any change of use of the building. The applications relate only to conservation repairs and refurbishment, to draw on grant funding profiled in the Heritage Action Zone programme to be spent on the Lowestoft Post Office site, and that funding has to be spent this year. It is for this reason that the scheme has come forward solely for external works/conservation repairs at this stage. Any change of use/conversion scheme would be subject to further applications that may come forward in 2022.

4. Consultations/comments

- 4.1 No third-party comments received.

5. Consultees

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Lowestoft Town Council	16 September 2021	6 October 2021
Summary of comments: <i>The Town Council's Planning Committee considered this application at a meeting on 5 October 2021. It was agreed to recommend approval of the application.</i>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
National Amenity Societies	16 September 2021	7 October 2021
Summary of comments: The Council for British Archaeology <i>The CBA would like to offer our full support for this application. We believe the proposals are based on an understanding of the significance of this building, its fabric and its contribution to the street scene. We welcome the proposed renovation of the historically significant windows. We also appreciate the informed approach to the removal of unsympathetic later additions, like the current access ramp, and the replacement of those components that detract from the building's aesthetic values with high quality building materials.</i>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
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Historic England	16 September 2021	12 October 2021
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p><i>Historic England consider that this proposal has the potential to enhance the significance of the Grade II Listed Old Post Office through the restoration of historic features. Although the details of this restoration are lacking within this application, they can be considered through conditions relating to the items listed above and therefore we consider that the scheme is in accordance with paragraphs 199 and 200 of the NPPF.</i></p> <p><i>This scheme will represent change to the historic fabric of the Old Post Office but, subject to conditions concerning the details of the changes listed above, they will not amount to harm and therefore we consider that paragraph 202 of the NPPF does not apply in this instance.</i></p> <p><i>Recommendation</i></p> <p><i>Historic England has no objection to the applications on heritage grounds.</i></p> <p><i>We consider that the applications meet the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 199 and 200.</i></p> <p><i>In determining these applications you should bear in mind the statutory duty of sections 16(2) and 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 and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.</i></p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk Preservation Society	16 September 2021	No response
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>No comments received.</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Design And Conservation	16 September 2021	30 September 2021
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p><i>The proposals in this application will result in a positive outcome for the Listed building in both restoring its frontage, by improvement to its fenestration, materials and detailing, which will better reveal its significance by improving its external appearance as well as works to the external envelope which will ensure the structure will be in a weathertight condition going into the future.</i></p>		

6. Publicity

The application has been the subject of the following press advertisement:

Category	Published	Expiry	Publication
Conservation Area	24 September 2021	15 October 2021	Beccles and Bungay Journal

Category	Published	Expiry	Publication
Conservation Area	24 September 2021	15 October 2021	Lowestoft Journal

7. Site notices

General Site Notice	Reason for site notice: Conservation Area Listed Building Date posted: 23 September 2021 Expiry date: 14 October 2021
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8. Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)

WLP8.29 - Design (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan, Adopted March 2019)

WLP8.37 - Historic Environment (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan, Adopted March 2019)

WLP8.39 - Conservation Areas (East Suffolk Council - Waveney Local Plan, Adopted March 2019)

9. Planning considerations

Policy and Legislative Background

- 9.1 The Grade II Listed Post Office building is a designated heritage asset. The starting point for heritage considerations is the statutory duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("The Act").
- 9.2 For listed buildings, s.66 of The Act imposes a duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. The duty is engaged when the local planning authority is considering whether to approve development which affects a listed building or its setting.
- 9.3 The NPPF identifies conservation and enhancement of the historic environment as an important element of sustainable development. Paragraph 184 of the NPPF makes clear that heritage assets are *"an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations."*
- 9.4 Paragraph 194 says that when determining planning applications, *"local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance."*

- 9.5 NPPF paragraph 197 sets out that, *"in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
 - b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
 - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness."*
- 9.6 The NPPF at paragraphs 199 and 200 requires planning authorities to place 'great weight' on the conservation of designated heritage assets, and states that the more important the asset the greater the weight should be. It also recognises that significance can be harmed by development within the setting of an asset. It is also clear that *"any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification."*
- 9.7 The statutory duties of The Act, and heritage objectives of the NPPF, are also reflected in the Historic Environment section of the Local Plan - policies WLP8.37 (Historic Environment); and WLP8.39 (Conservation Areas).

Consideration of the Detailed Works

East Elevation Ground Floor

- 9.8 The removal of the existing entrance doors to the left and right of the building and the reinstatement of the main doors centrally in the facade is a positive proposal, together with the new timber windows.

Replacement Windows

- 9.9 Four new timber sash windows are proposed, two to go in the location of former doors and replace the existing metal windows. This is acceptable subject to large scale joinery details being secured either by condition or prior to decision issue.

Treatment to the Far-Right Opening

- 9.10 The doorway here is shown on the plans in 1907 and officers have no objections to this being reversed; however, the stonework below should reflect the history of the building's changes over time, perhaps by having the infill stonework retain a vertical joint to the old opening rather than a toothed in reinstatement. This can be secured either by condition or prior to decision issue.

Treatment of the Left-Hand Opening

- 9.11 This opening was created later than the one created at the other end. Removal of the existing doors and frame is acceptable as these are later 20Cth insertions. The former opening is to be blocked up at lower level in matching stone to the existing with a new

window above. This is all acceptable. Details of window and the replacement stonework is required and can be secured either by condition or prior to decision issue.

Central Opening

- 9.12 The removal of the safes/letter boxes and the window above and the reinstatement of central doors is acceptable and welcomed.

Treatment to Far Left Passageway Opening

- 9.13 The removal of the existing door and screen to this passage is not resisted. It is not of historic fabric or significance. The proposal is for a boarded door and a multi paned window screen above to secure the once open passageway. The boarded door is acceptable subject to large scale joinery details being secured either by condition or prior to decision issue.
- 9.14 Officers provided some feedback on the treatment of the opening above, and that element of the scheme has been amended to a simpler/more discrete treatment of the fenestration for this opening which is now acceptable.

Blocking up of Doorway Accessing Cupboard, off the Side Passageway

- 9.15 The opening has been formed using a concrete lintel post 1907 and the existing door is a multipaned pattern not of high historic significance. This proposal is therefore considered acceptable.

South Elevation Second Floor Window

- 9.16 A new window is proposed to be restored to the top left previously blocked up window opening. This is acceptable subject to joinery details being secured either by condition or prior to decision issue.

Reroofing

- 9.17 The replacement of the artificial slates with natural slates is welcomed. It is presumed that the detailing to eaves will remain the same. The renewal of existing lead flat roofs/the covering over of concrete flat roofs with lead is acceptable and supported.

Replacement Rainwater Goods – Generally

- 9.18 The removal of plastic rainwater goods and the replacement with cast iron versions is welcomed.

Replacement Rooflights

- 9.19 In the roof over the passageway two metal rooflights are proposed to replace the existing ones. This is acceptable subject to size and detailing/manufacturers details being secured either by condition or prior to decision issue.

Replacement of Access to Roof

- 9.20 This relates to the replacement of the access ladder to ensure safe access, and the platform below would be unaltered. This is acceptable.

Access Ramp/Steps

- 9.21 Removal of the existing pedestrian ramp/steps which are located on the pavement to London Road North, is not resisted. This is a relatively modern addition designed to allow level access into the building.
- 9.22 The proposal is to install a new ramp and steps to serve the newly restored central access doors, this is of a much less heavy design and is welcomed, subject to detail which can be secured either by condition or prior to decision issue.

Timber and Glass Draft Lobby

- 9.23 The removal of the inner lobby to the side doorway is acceptable, providing the fabric is retained on site until the internal finish of the main hall is completed as it could be useful in restoring parts of the remaining historic timber panelling to the main hall. An advisory note should be added to any grant of LBC to retain this fabric on site until the internal finish of the main hall is completed ready for new use.

Masonry Enclosure Adjacent to Lobby

- 9.24 Removal of the blockwork and brickwork, adjacent to the passageway and the internal lobby is acceptable. It is not completely clear as to how this doorway was used and why the cupboard was created. The back wall appears to be of an earlier construction, being plastered, than that of the relatively modern exposed blockwork wall to the side of the Lobby, it may be that this was an access at one time.

Panelling/Doors to Letterboxes

- 9.25 The removal of the existing post boxes installed at low level to the central opening, to reinstate the double doors will also require the removal of the internal panelling and low-level access doors. This arrangement obviously only dates from the reconfiguration of the door to the left-hand side of the building, but the fabric used may have been repurposed. These are contaminated with asbestos, so their safe removal/disposal is welcomed.

The removal of the Modern Suspended Ceiling and Room Divisions

- 9.26 Removal of the modern additions to main hall area, including the rooms/enclosures to the side of the hall and the suspended ceiling is acceptable. This work is not deemed to affect the special architectural of historic interest of the Listed Building.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The proposed works will be a positive outcome for the Listed Building, restoring its frontage and the improvements to its fenestration, materials and detailing will all improve its

external appearance. The works will also preserve the building because it will ensure the structure is in a weathertight condition going into the future. These are all positive heritage outcomes that accord with the Historic Environment objectives of the Local Plan, NPPF and The Act. There would be no harm arising from the scheme, and there are only benefits resulting from the works.

10.2 The application has been reviewed by Historic England and the Council's own Senior Design and Conservation Officer. These consultees support the application noting the positive heritage outcome from the scheme but request further details by planning condition to ensure the final detailing/finishing is appropriate for the Listed Building, as referenced in the detailed assessment in section nine of this report. Below is a list of those details that officers would be seeking, either by planning condition or prior to decision issue:

- Large scale joinery details showing vertical and horizontal sections through all new windows, including, frame, head and cill, sashes, glazing, sash boxes, material, finish, colour and ironmongery.
- Large scale joinery details of the new central double door set, including frame, doors and fan light, with both horizontal and vertical sections and details of the material, finish, colour and ironmongery.
- Details of the reinstatement of the stonework plinth to the blocked-up door openings including specification and stone bond/joint pattern be supplied and agreed in writing.
- Large scale joinery details of the boarded door, frame and glazed screen above including vertical and horizontal sections through all elements, including, material, finish colour and ironmongery.
- Manufacturers details of the metal rooflights to passageway including size, sections, detailing and colour.
- All new external and internal works and works of making good to the retained fabric, shall match the existing original work adjacent in respect of methods, detailed execution and finished appearance unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- Large scale constructional details, with sections and heights of the pedestrian access ramp and steps, including walls, upstand, capping, surfacing, balustrade/posts, handrails, materials and finish.

10.3 Where those suggested conditions would be requiring information be submitted to and approved by the Council prior to commencement of development (through a discharge of condition application) the applicant is seeking to provide those details prior to the grant of any Listed Building Consent, so that once Consent is granted, work can commence immediately in accordance with the approved details. Officers are therefore seeking authority to determine the application, to enable these details to be considered by the Senior Design and Conservation Officer, or for appropriate conditions be applied to a grant of Listed Building Consent to ensure those details are secured.

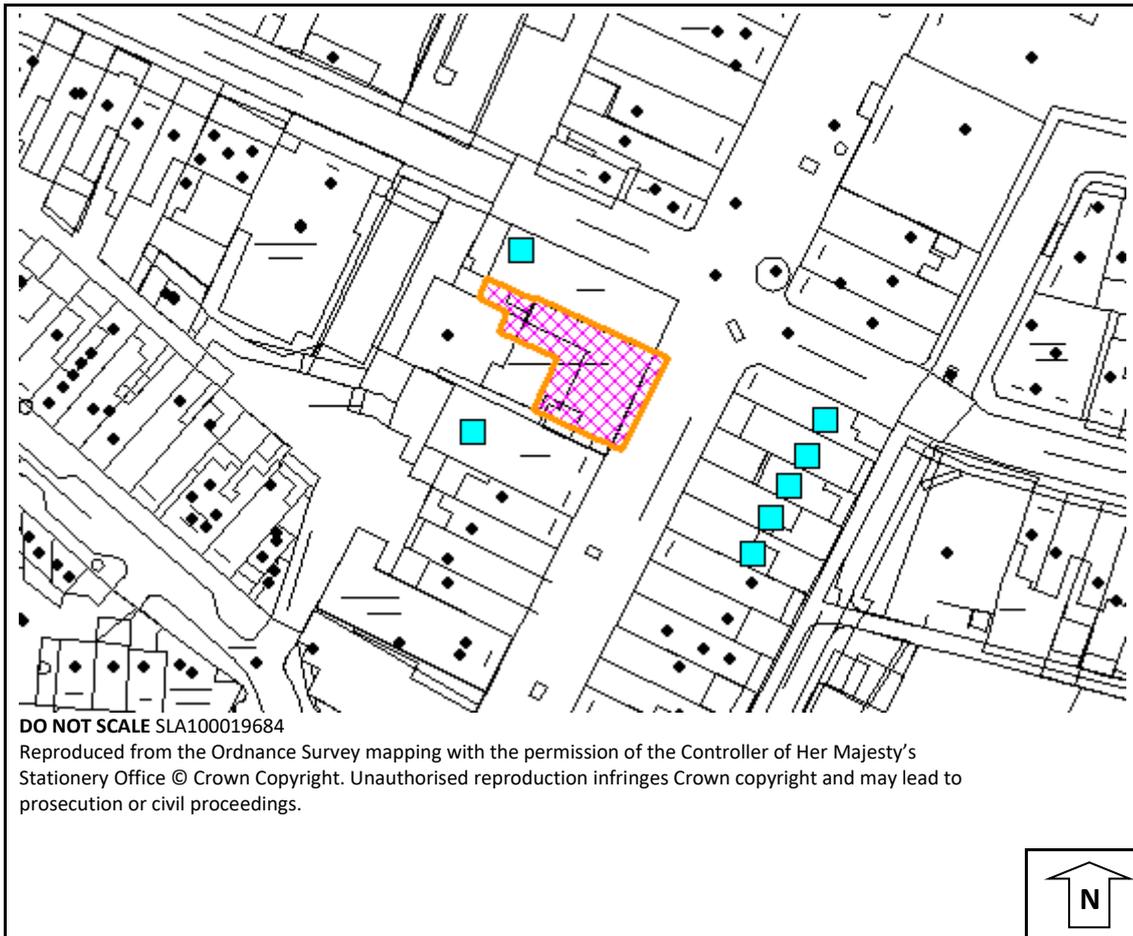
11. Recommendation

11.1 Authority to Delegate Determination to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management to approve with conditions.

Background Papers

See application reference DC/21/4220/LBC on [Public Access](#)

Map



Key



Notified, no comments received



Objection



Representation



Support