

HPK/2023/0087

Drawings Reference:

SK_63-002 Rev. C – Court Room 1

SK_63-003 Rev. A – Court Room 2

SK_63-004 Rev A – Room 3 – Mayor's Chamber

Heritage Statement – an updated statement, dated July 2023.

*Comments from Mel Morris BA Hons, Dip. Arch. Cons, IHBC, MRTPI
4th August 2023*

Summary

The application is for the installation of a ventilation, heating and cooling system within the first-floor town hall spaces of the Grade II Listed Glossop Market Hall. This is mechanical ventilation within the ceiling voids which will inlet and extract air to the habitable spaces below via extract grilles inserted into the new ceilings.

The scheme is well advanced, and alterations have already been undertaken and the scheme designed, which anticipates this application being successful, so any alternative options have not been factored in and would be potentially very disruptive, and could affect the programme.

The application will cause 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of the listed building. This is acknowledged in the Heritage Statement (page 21).

The HS also states that the proposals also satisfy Policy EQ7. However, there are certain aspects of EQ7 that in my view haven't been met. EQ7 states that an application should be 'informed by a level of historical, architectural and archaeological evidence proportionate to their significance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of a proposal.' I don't consider that the full significance of the historic interiors is understood (see my comments on significance below). However, I do consider that the application (and Heritage Statement) has met the second part of the policy and has demonstrated 'how the proposal has taken account of design, form, scale, mass, use of traditional materials and detailing. I am, however, not fully convinced that the proposal has demonstrated that the proposal involves 'the least change to the fabric and interior' of the building because in my view the approach has been to address and factor in the new office use of the building, rather than opt for a more low-key solution, or compromise.

Significance

At a meeting on 4th July, I requested that the Statement of Significance submitted in the Heritage Statement be updated to reflect the discoveries in the Lincoln Conservation report. This has not been done. The report still states "Within the former courtrooms all the former decorative details to ceilings and walls were removed during asbestos removal works undertaken in 2019." This is still highly misleading and simply not the case.

My analysis of the proposed decorative schemes (ref. DOC/2023/0050) sets out the significance of these spaces and I have summarised this here.

The recent Architectural Paint Analysis (APA) by Lincoln Conservation in 2022/23 has set out very clearly the evidence for the different colour schemes and the phasing within both the Town Hall and the Market Hall. The advantage of APA is that many samples are taken to be able to cross-check and build up a picture of the complete decorative schemes. APA has helped us to understand the building archaeology in a way that cannot be understood from 'paint scrapes', documentary records, or by simply looking at the spaces. Whilst some of the historic fabric has been altered, and there has been a loss of evidence from the removal of ceilings inside the Court Rooms, as a result of rot and asbestos removal, we do have a high level of understanding of both the decorative schemes and the date of the different schemes and the building evolution.

As a result of APA, we can establish firmly that Court 1 and Court 2 were both designed at the same time with a high degree of late Georgian details, in a simple, late Georgian style, all evidencing the original architect's schemes of 1838/39. The walls were finished with 'a struck ashlar lime render, with a block size of 13"x39"', which was painted in a warm stone coloured limewash', in the same style as the twin staircases. This still survives to all of the walls to both court rooms (with some localised patch repair).

Glossop Town Hall was originally built in 1838 and designed by the architects Weightman and Hadfield for the Duke of Norfolk. It is one of the most important buildings in Glossop and is significant for its very lengthy period of civic use as well as the retention of its late Georgian character, exemplified by its colonnaded arcades, its symmetry, its elevation to Norfolk Square and its surviving Georgian interiors.

The building was established following the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. This ordered all incorporated boroughs to set up police forces under the control of a watch committee. The function of the building as both court rooms and civic assemblies for concerts, recitals and lectures seems likely given the lack of provision elsewhere. The use of the ground floor as an arcaded open space was still quite old fashioned and based on the town halls of the late 17th and 18th centuries which accommodated a market and covered trading function. The combination of a police function with lock-up cells, was an obvious element following the 1835 Act. The first stone was laid on 28th June 1838, timed to coincide with Queen Victoria's coronation. The court had its first sitting in February 1840 and was set up to accommodate Petty Sessions served by magistrates, although the Sheffield Iris of 4th February 1840 states that 'with a view to extending the public utility of this court, it is expected that the judge will adjourn the court to New Mills....' By 1867 it also accommodated Glossop Town Council.

The submitted Heritage Statement (July 2023) does not provide any analysis of the significance of the spaces affected by these proposals. This is a major omission.

Court 1 has a row of arched windows fronting Norfolk Square. These have margin-light glazing, which were state-of-the-art and the height of fashion in London in the late 1830s.

The two end bays to the staircases probably have replacement windows. Court 2 has replacement sash windows.

The Glossop Heritage Trust has some documentary information on the building, which they shared with the LPA heritage consultant in 2022. Accounts for the Market Hall provided by Glossop Heritage Trust from 1967 and 1969 record a large number of repairs. This included the replacement of the floor structures with concrete encased steel beams, for 'fire resistance requirements' which form the soffit of the arcade on the ground floor. There have also been some modifications to block up at least one door into the Court Room from the former Waiting Room, removal of the two fireplaces on the internal wall between Courts 1 and 2, the creation of a wide opening with a folding screen, and repairs to the 'dome light' in Court Room 2.

The layout, with two sets of entrances and separate staircases is absolutely typical of early 19th century municipal courts, with a separate access for the magistrates from the public and witnesses.

The last set of photographs of the ceiling before it was removed show a suspended soffit, and a lightweight grid which probably supported electrical cabling, with pendant light fittings inserted from plastic ceiling roses. Any other decorative plasterwork or visual evidence was hidden under the suspended part of the ceiling. As set out in the Heritage Statement, the last heating was by a centralised gas supply and a wet system which fed radiators.

The ceiling structure has recently been strengthened with additional repairs to the ceiling joists in order to take the additional weight of the new lathe-and-plaster ceiling and the proposed MVHR system. As the ceiling structure was had already been replaced as a result of rot, the new structure is not of specific intrinsic value. The original trusses and purlins however have been retained in-situ. This strengthening, therefore, probably did not need LBC.

I note that the HS states, "A later meeting was held on site between the applicant and representatives from the Glossop Heritage Trust on 23rd January 2023 at which time the first floor town hall spaces were viewed to try and gain a better understanding of the construction and how the building has been developed over time. The working assumption is that the ceiling of the main courtroom, are most likely to date from 1920-23, as these were substantial changes, over and above what was required to keep the building usable."

I note that the Glossop and District Heritage Trust have responded in favour of this application. However, they have not been party to the Architectural Paint Analysis report by Lincoln Conservation which demonstrates that the interior decorative features, surviving plasterwork and cornices of both Court rooms largely dates from 1838/39. The purpose of getting this report undertaken as a condition of LBC was in part to get to the bottom of the significance of these spaces and how to treat them. The Trust is therefore, in my view, mistaken in their understanding of the spaces and their 'working assumption' that the ceilings dated from 1920-23 is probably incorrect.

The spaces, as established by APA, are almost complete Georgian interiors. The rooms are of far greater significance as Georgian interiors than this assessment in the HS would lead one to believe.

Of the 35 Town Halls and municipal buildings built between 1834 and 1841 in England, Glossop is one of relatively few which still retain their historic interiors and is comparable with Tewkesbury Town Hall (1840 – grade II*) and Mansfield Town Hall (1836 – grade II*), Lutterworth Town Hall (1836) and Shire Hall, Bodmin (1837-38). Mansfield Town Hall has been refurbished successfully in recent years whilst integrating offices into their former main Council Chamber, without altering their decorative ceilings, and has been shortlisted for various awards.

Drawings – Proposed Alterations

The drawings to Court Room 1 show a series of 9 linear slot diffusers, each measuring 825 x 175. The drawings have been updated to show on the reflected ceiling plan the recessed emergency light fittings, six to Court Room 1, two smoke detectors, and no access hatch. The drawings also show, as previously agreed, 6 plaster ceiling roses and accompanying pendant light fittings.

The drawings to Court Room 2 show a series of linear slot diffusers, measuring 1000 x 175. The drawings have been updated to show on the reflected ceiling plan the recessed emergency light fittings, five to Court Room 2, a smoke detector, no access hatch 1400 x 700 into Court Room 2 ceiling, and 4 linear suspended light fittings with simple pendant cable points.

The drawing of the Mayor's Chamber shows two 4-way air conditioning cassettes, with 3 separate air supply/ extract grilles.

Impacts

It is clear that the provision of a mechanical and electrical heating and ventilation system which is located within and above the lathe-and-plaster ceilings of the two principal chambers of the building, the two decorative court rooms, which date from the late Georgian period, will have a significant impact on the appearance of these historic spaces. The ceilings are being restored with lath-and-plaster and decorative elements, including moulded panels and deep coving are being restored. The suite of works being undertaken as part of the refurbishment of the listed building by specialist contractors are extensive and well-informed.

The insertion of 9 slot vents to Court 1 and 6 slot vents to Court 2 into the decorative plaster ceilings will cause harm, despite the size being restricted to the flush designs. In addition, the provision of a powder coated finish is not seamless with a flat painted matte soffit to the plaster ceilings.

This will affect the significance of the building, which, although not grade II*, is still a good example of a civic building of the late Georgian period with historic interiors dating from that period.

It is acknowledged that there have been some changes and internal modifications to these spaces, and that they are not complete or intact in their original form, that the condition of the building and the damage to the ceilings as a result of water ingress and rot caused the loss of considerable areas of the ceiling joists and historic lathe-and-plaster ceilings. This part of the building has been redundant and out of use for some time. However, the restoration work will return the building largely to its original form.

In terms of a balanced judgement about significance, therefore, the interiors are important examples of late Georgian interiors, but there are a few better preserved examples from the same period.

Clarification has, therefore, been requested to understand what options have been discounted and why this application is considered to be the only viable solution. Section 3.3 of the Heritage Statement now sets out a more detailed Options Appraisal.

Options Appraisal – section 3.3 of the Heritage Statement

The HS states ‘Key concerns at this point related to the visual impact ventilation grilles may have on the ceilings and the co-ordination of these grilles with other services such as lighting and ceiling features such as covings, cornices, ceiling roses etc. ‘ This is correct.

The HS goes on to say that options considered comprised the following:

- Natural ventilation of the space;
- Installation of flush square heating and ventilation cassettes;
- Installation of flush linear ventilation grilles;
- Installation of low level ventilation in place of existing cast radiators.

Of this list, the only serious alternative options which have been discussed with the planning authority / heritage consultant are:

- Installation of low level heating and ventilation in place of existing cast radiators,
- natural or passive ventilation through the ceiling, roof and / or windows

Option 1 – this discussion in the HS is about using natural ventilation combined with a wet system of cast-iron radiators (heat emitters). This was discounted because the building does not provide sufficient ventilation based on the expected occupancy, combined with the use of cast-iron radiators which is inefficient and cannot be efficiently zoned. Natural ventilation combined with low-level cast-iron radiators is unlikely to be viable.

The cast iron radiators are of no value and it is accepted that these would need to be replaced with more efficient radiators. Whilst it may be feasible to restore a gas supply, because the supply was separated from the remainder of the building, it would be a challenge. Furthermore, gas is simply not viable long-term so realistically an alternative heating method is more sustainable.

It is stated in the HS that access to maintain windows externally is problematic due to their high-level and highway environment. I do not consider that this is a true impediment and

would in any case affect all other buildings along this street. It is unlikely that the sash windows would be manually opened given their size once the building was operational.

It seems likely that there would have once been a historic plenum system of passive ventilation, but no evidence was recorded when the ceilings were removed. It appears that the building has adopted the current system of ventilation, relying passively on air exchanges, for over 100 years. Being large public spaces, they do not have the same requirements as smaller spaces. This factor has to be a consideration. The option of using a similar form of natural ventilation plenums is considered by the applicant to be impractical to fire stop.

It is less desirable to try to secure a wet system because of the logistics of having to provide (and identify) a large space for a boiler and that has not been factored into the current design and layout of the uses. It is understood that the use of Air Source Heat Pumps was considered early on but was discounted because of the need to have lower flow and return temperatures, which leads to the need for a greater number of radiators and larger fittings to achieve the desired heating capacity. The ability of the spaces to accommodate larger radiators and still provide a working space without occupying all of the walls is questionable and probably impractical. In addition, ASHP would probably require all sash windows to be upgraded with secondary glazing.

It is agreed that Option 1 is impractical.

Option 2 – this discussion is about the use of heating and ventilation cassettes which are semi-recessed in the ceiling, with a projection of 40mm. It may result in uneven air distribution. This is not an option which has been suggested by the heritage consultant and it would be similar to the system proposed but even more visually intrusive.

It is agreed that Option 2 is too harmful.

Option 3 – this is the current option put forward under the scheme. It is accepted that this is the most flexible option, and that it is technically relatively easily reversed, but that it is visually 'not in keeping'. Access is required to both loft spaces to Court 1 and 2 for maintenance.

I do not agree with the statement in the HS and assertion that the ventilation units would 'merge with the ceiling background'. They are modern powder-coated fittings which will be prominent as one looks up at the ceiling and it is a space which demands that one looks up. They will be particularly prominent in Court 2, being much closer to the viewer. In my view, they would add to the clutter and detract from the historic smooth and clear plastered soffits and Georgian character.

Option 4 was explored briefly by the heritage consultant and the engineer and surveyor. The ventilation units would be located at low level around the perimeter of the room and would need to be boxed in. Refrigerant pipework would need to be routed from the rooftop plant to the low level ventilation positions. Therefore, there would likely be a requirement for a few areas where pipework drops from high to low and then around the

perimeter (or under floors) to the ventilation plant. The ventilation plant would be the same size as those specified in option 1 which are 900mm (L) x 730mm (W) x 350mm (D), plus boxing in and associated ducting. Service routes in places would still be visible and difficult to modify in the future.

This would not be a straightforward task and it would potentially involve the addition of ducting to the soffit of the arcades in the common areas. There would be some localised damage by chasing into plaster, and by-passing mouldings, so this would need to be considered against the harm caused to the soffits of the ceilings in Option 3. In terms of use, the HS points out that there would be greater noise impact on occupants from low-level installation and furniture location would be restricted. The HS states that low-level units would be contemporary and 'not in keeping', but I don't accept that is the same impact as on the ceiling, as the focus of Court 1 is the ceiling, not the lower walls.

To summarise, HS does not appear to consider that Option 3 causes much harm, if any. I disagree. In my view, it is appropriate to consider Option 3 against Option 4. Both have advantages and disadvantages, in terms of physical and visual impacts. Option 3 is more practical for the use of the building. Option 4 has not been fully designed, but would have some practical constraints, in terms of the use of the building and providing a less flexible option. The HS suggests that this constraint could put the use of the building to a commercial operator at risk.

Cumulative Impacts

A request has also been made that the application consider the cumulative impact of the different services and fittings in association with this change-of-use, as there is a high degree of clutter on the ceilings. This has now been shown on the plans.

It was agreed as part of the original application that because of the missing evidence of the plaster soffit and the presence of a former suspended ceiling, that the new pendant lights would be fitted in conjunction with new plaster ceiling roses, which reflected its late Georgian character. 6 round plaster ceiling roses are proposed and approved. The proposed new vents will be slotted in and around these ceiling roses in a grid pattern.

The heating and vent units are a series of independent electrical fittings, and not just a ducted system. I requested clarification how they will be maintained if they fail or need any maintenance. I understand that access hatches were reportedly previously provided in the ceilings for courtroom 1 to provide access to the clock tower. Walkways exist from either side of the court room through the roof void. It is proposed that a retractable loft access hatch is located on the west side in the second floor facilities managers space, which will maintain access to the courtroom ceiling space and maintain access to the clock tower.

An access hatch was reportedly provided in courtroom 2 to provide access to the laylight and a roof access hatch in the roof surface. It is proposed to replicate this and this is now shown on the reflected ceiling plan. It is intended that this will have a frameless access hatch flush with the surrounding ceiling surface to mitigate the visual impact. From below there should just be a narrow margin around the hatch. It is nevertheless, a large hatch but would be needed in any event to provide access to maintain the laylight.

As well as the electrical fittings, and all of the supplementary emergency lighting on the ceilings, there are PIR sensors for presence detection which will control the light fittings. They are approximately 65mm diameter and will be recessed with a white housing. The reflective ceiling plan shows them to true scale.

Hard wired smoke detectors are also positioned on the reflective ceiling plan and will be positioned sympathetically with other surrounding fittings. The electrical drawings show two smoke detectors side-by-side but one is proposed to be on the ceiling surface and the other is proposed to be in the loft space as 'void protection'. These are required for fire regulation compliance.

Conclusions

The Heritage Statement provides a relatively detailed assessment of options although it fails to recognise the significance of the historic interiors.

In any assessment, therefore, a balanced judgement will need to consider the relative significance of the interiors (which is high, not very high) against the proposed MVHR system, which will cause a moderate degree of harm, in my view.

Paragraph 202 of the NPPF requires where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

It is also embedded into the guidance that the significance is factored into the evaluation. Paragraph 199 states, "When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)."

Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states. "Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."

Paragraph 197 also states:

"In determining 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."

The applicant has put forward the argument that this alteration will secure the Optimum Viable Use of the building (under paragraph 202). MVHR was not part of the original planning application for the change-of-use of these spaces. I don't accept, therefore, that the proposal is effectively an either / or case of either do nothing or install Option 3. Realistically, it seems that there are two options and that both have impacts. The proposed scheme is more flexible and is easier to install and remove. I don't accept that this application falls into the OVU bracket of 'securing' its use. In my view, the optimum viable use of the building has already been considered as part of the original application for the change of use. It is not the case that the one single aspect of the scheme in providing MVHR for the court rooms is going to affect the whole viability of the whole scheme.

Any Option that causes no harm would not provide ventilation that is any better than the current and historic arrangement. It is reasonable, therefore, to factor in the need to provide ventilation as part of the potential benefit of the change-of-use.

I am assured by the applicant that passive ventilation cannot be adopted because of the need to provide fire separation between the main rooms and the roof space, and that there is a conflict here which cannot be overcome. Whilst there are exemptions for listed buildings under the Building Regulations, fire separation and fire protection is not one which we would compromise on, whereas providing ventilation to meet the building regulations is an area which we do regularly have to compromise on with listed buildings. If we agreed to no additional provision for ventilation, then it would be sub-standard, relying on air exchanges with doors opening and closing.

It is fair to consider the public benefits of the proposed scheme if the building will accommodate public use. At present it is not the intention to incorporate public use into these first floor spaces, although that has not been discounted in the future. In my view, the public benefits are over-stated in the HS. The diagrams, however, refer to 'Event Space'. It would be worthwhile getting some confirmation about the public use of Court 1, because that is not expressly stated in the Heritage Statement and justification.

The HS states that "This scheme is vital in supporting Glossop's long-term economic growth and supporting local jobs whilst providing high quality facilities to meet the current and future needs of local residents as well as attracting more investment into the area." This is really over-stretching the public benefits of an MVHR system, as we are not comparing the impact of a MVHR system with no heating or ventilation. I do, however, agree with the statement 'Town centre spaces should be flexible as (post pandemic) high streets move away from primarily retail to more activity and social uses.' I also agree that it is relevant that 'the capacity/ occupancy numbers of the Town Hall first floor has been a key factor and that the proposed mechanical installations provides a space with the appropriate environmental conditions that will allow for the increased capacity/ economic benefit to be realised by ensuring the optimum flexible/ viable use is achieved for the building to support its long term economic/ social use. The economic/ social use of the spaces will benefit the future conservation of the building.' Whether the compromise position would put the use of the building to a commercial operator at risk has not been demonstrated.

The HS also states 'The design process has sought to emphasise and demonstrate the importance of meeting the needs of people with a wide range of abilities, by providing access for a wide range of people with disabilities wherever possible (and reasonable) by direct physical means.' Again, this is not relevant to the application under consideration.

The HS refers to 'compensation' and states 'Requirements to undertake compensation in relation to Listed Buildings, where the proposals of the Scheme would result in physical impacts to them are yet to be agreed with the Conservation Officer. These compensation measures would be secured as conditions of the Listed Building Consent and aim to offset some of the harm which may occur to the assets' significance as a result of the Scheme.'

However, harm cannot technically be offset and as there are no proposals in the scheme to be considered where they might be part of the balanced assessment of impacts, we cannot consider any potential and unknown 'compensation', so that is not relevant in my view.

I consider it would be fair to say that Options 3 and 4 both carry impacts but that Option 3 is more flexible for the proposed use. In my view, the public benefits are finely balanced against the heritage harm.

If Option 3 is approved, then no conditions are suggested.