

APPLICATION REPORT – 20/00811/LBC

Validation Date: 30 July 2020

Ward: Chorley North West

Type of Application: Listed Building

Proposal: Application for listed building consent for repairs and alterations to the south range of Astley Hall to include: (1) the removal of failing C19th concrete render to the exterior. (2) repair of the exposed C17th brick and stone façade. (3) repointing of brickwork and masonry. (4) stitching of movement cracks with stainless steel helical bar. (5) new leadwork cappings. (6) redecoration of the facade with limewash or breathable paint (if required). (7) rebuilding of the second-floor leaded light windows, retaining glazing. (8) replacement of the failing ground and first floor timber windows. (9) new chimney and buttress stone capping. (10) internal lime plaster repairs. (11) repair to internal window boards. (12) minor oak panelling repair and re-fixing. (13) provision of new access ramp to the west door.

Location: Astley Hall Astley Park Park Road Chorley PR7 1NP

Case Officer: Amy Aspinall

Applicant: Chorley Borough Council

Agent: Mr Geoff Maybank, Maybank Buildings Conservation

Consultation expiry: 27 August 2020

Decision due by: 24 September 2020

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that listed building consent is granted, subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. The application relates to the south range and principal elevation of Astley Hall which is a grade 1 listed building. It is a former manor house of fine example dating from the C16 and C17 with early C19 addition; and was repaired and restored from 1949. The Hall is situated within the grade II registered Historic Park and Garden which is of special historic interest and a number of buildings within the curtilage are grade II listed in their own right. The official listing description is available to view online.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3. The application seeks listed building consent for a number of works to Astley Hall focusing mainly on the removal of the existing render to the south range, with repair works such as repointing and limewash (if necessary); the replacement and repair of windows; the provision of an access ramp to the west side of the building; stone cappings to the chimney and buttress; and other repair works.

REPRESENTATIONS

4. No representations have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

5. Historic England: Have no objection to the application. They state that they believe that the works have the potential to better reveal the special architectural and historic interest of the grade I listed building. Full comments are available to view on the Council's website.
6. The Gardens Trust: State that they have considered the information provided in support of the application and on the basis of this confirm that they do not wish to comment on the proposals at this stage. They do, however, also state that this does not in any way signify either their approval or disapproval of the proposals.
7. Lancashire County Council Archaeology Service: State that they have no objection, subject to a condition requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological works and a watching brief.
8. Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB): At the time of report preparation, comments from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) have not been received and are still awaited.
9. Twentieth Century Society: No comments have been received.
10. Ancient Monuments Society: No comments have been received.
11. The Council for British Archaeology: No comments have been received.
12. Friends of Astley Park: No comments have been received.
13. Friends of Astley Hall: No comments have been received.
14. Chorley Civic Society: No comments have been received.
15. The Georgian Group: No comments have been received.
16. The Victorian Society: No comments have been received.
17. CIL Officers: Advise that the development is not CIL Liable

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

18. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act) sets out the principle duty that a 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 which it possesses. Great weight and importance is attached to this duty.
19. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) at Chapter 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The following paragraphs contained therein are considered to be pertinent in this case:
 20. The Framework at paragraph 184 recognises 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.
 21. At paragraph 190 The Framework states that Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, 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.
 22. Paragraph 192 provides that 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.

23. When considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, The Framework is clear at paragraph 193 that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be applied. This is irrespective of whether any harm is identified as being substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

24. Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

25. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, paragraph 194 advises that Local Planning Authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use

26. Paragraph 196 identifies that where a proposal would 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

27. The adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy (2012) policy 16 (Heritage Assets) states: *Protect and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings by:*

- a) *Safeguarding heritage assets from inappropriate development that would cause harm to their significances.*
- b) *Supporting development or other initiatives where they protect and enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that will improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition, or at risk.*
- c) *Identifying and adopting a local list of heritage assets for each Authority.*

28. Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026 policy BNE8 (Protection and Enhancement of Heritage Assets) states that:

- a) *Applications affecting a Heritage Asset or its setting will be granted where it:*
 - i. *Is in accordance with the Framework and relevant Historic England guidance;*
 - ii. *Where appropriate, takes full account of the findings and recommendations in the Council's Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Proposals;*
 - iii. *Is accompanied by a satisfactory Heritage Statement (as defined by Chorley Council's advice on Heritage Statements) and;*

- b) *Applications will be granted where they sustain, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance, appearance, character and setting of the heritage asset itself and the surrounding historic environment and where they show consideration for the following:*
- i. *The conservation of features and elements that contribute to the heritage asset's significance and character. This may include: chimneys, windows and doors, boundary treatments, original roof coverings, earthworks or buried remains, shop fronts or elements of shop fronts in conservation areas, as well as internal features such as fireplaces, plaster cornices, doors, architraves, panelling and any walls in listed buildings;*
 - ii. *The reinstatement of features and elements that contribute to the heritage asset's significance which have been lost or damaged;*
 - iii. *The conservation and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the setting of heritage assets;* iv. *The removal of additions or modifications that are considered harmful to the significance of any heritage asset. This may include the removal of pebbledash, paint from brickwork, non-original style windows, doors, satellite dishes or other equipment;*
 - iv. *The use of the Heritage Asset should be compatible with the conservation of its significance. Whilst the original use of a building is usually the most appropriate one it is recognised that continuance of this use is not always possible. Sensitive and creative adaptation to enable an alternative use can be achieved and innovative design solutions will be positively encouraged;* vi. *Historical information discovered during the application process shall be submitted to the Lancashire Historic Environment Record.*

29. The policy also states that development involving the demolition or removal of significant heritage assets or parts thereof will be granted only in exceptional circumstances which have been clearly and convincingly demonstrated to be in accordance with the requirements of the Framework

30. The application seeks listed building consent for a number of repairs and alterations to the south range of Astley Hall, as set out in the proposed works schedule. Astley Hall is a grade I listed building, which is also situated within the designated grade II Astley Hall Historic Park and Garden which is of special historic interest. With the exception of the external access ramp, the works are, in essence, to facilitate essential works and maintenance to the Hall where existing elements/ materials are failing and causing damage to the heritage asset.

Removal of C19th concrete render to the exterior

31. The application seeks consent to remove the existing concrete render to the south range of the building in those areas as shown on the submitted plan and to expose the original brickwork and detailing underneath. The information submitted with the application demonstrates that the render is not an original feature, and chemical analysis of the render shows it to be of very modern composition, suggesting a date towards the end of the C19th or early C20th. Nonetheless, the render is historic, has been in place for some time, and was in place at the time of listing.

32. The application seeks to justify the removal of the render as it is in poor condition, is failing, sections have become loose, and the render is saturated in parts and is holding damp against the historic fabric of the building. The failing render is preventing the historic fabric from managing moisture, resulting in deterioration and damage. Large areas are cracked and have been 'netted' at high level as pieces have started to fall away and, in time, this will freely allow water to seep behind the remaining render, and will put the historic fabric and interiors at much greater risk of damage. If no action is taken in relation to the render, the damp problem will worsen and the significance of the building harmed. Notwithstanding this, the loose render is also a health and safety hazard for this publicly accessible building. A test section of the render has previously been removed and this has allowed that section of the wall to dry out, which evidences that the removal of the current failing render is necessary.

33. The application is accompanied by a heritage statement which assesses the render as having no evidential value, although it recognises that it does hold medium historical value. The render is also recognised as an intrusive feature which negatively affects the south range elevation of the Hall and is also affecting the conditions of the underlying brick work. The removal of the render is recognised as having a moderate to large impact on the building.

34. The Local Planning Authority recognises that the removal of the render, which has been in place for a considerable amount of time on this principal elevation, would alter the visual character and appearance of the building and how it is currently viewed within its wider parkland setting. The render is, however, a more modern alteration, albeit in the last 100 years or so, and has harmed the architectural character of the building, by obscuring original decorative detailing. The later addition of the render has created a flat and dull character to the facade, as recognised by Historic England.

35. The removal and replacement of the render is not a feasible option as the non-permeable nature of cementitious render would have an ongoing negative impact on the historic fabric and is likely to fail over time, whereas other options such as a lime render would have a greater thickness and would further obscure architectural detailing of the building and would fundamentally alter its special architectural character. The application discounts both options and the Local Planning Authority concurs that neither are viable options at this present time as replacement render may further harm the significance of the building. Its removal has the potential to better reveal the special architectural and historic interest of the grade I listed building, which was not originally intended to be rendered.

36. The removal of the render is, however, a major alteration and whilst test patches of removal have been carried out which show that the render is poorly adhered to the building and can be removed with minimal damage, there is still the risk of damaging the face of the brickwork beneath with larger expanse of removal.

37. Test areas show that the brickwork was limewashed / painted and that this has largely prevented the render from adhering to the brick and stonework, however it has adhered to the mortar joints. The current unknowns associated with the render removal are set out below:

- The present condition of brick faces and the amount of repair and replacement of bricks in the elevations.
- The present condition of the stone quoins, although the application sets out that those which have already been exposed appear fair.
- The extent of structural tying of cracks in the masonry where differential settlement has occurred.
- The width of mortar joints to brickwork and the extent that careful repointing will be able to limit the artificial widening of these joints.

38. The application sets out different scenarios following removal of the render, ranging from minimal brick face loss, to the need for a higher percentage of replacement bricks, or limewashing of bricks where they can be retained but are in poor condition. The application has demonstrated that limewash has been used on the south range of the building, and is, therefore, based firmly based on historical evidence. If, however, the bricks were to be found in very poor condition, the application of 'keim' paint would be explored.

39. Due to the current unknowns following the removal of the render, a repair methodology could be secured by way of condition and would cover the final specification of the repairs to the brickwork and any other options if it found that the brickwork is unsuitable to be left uncovered.

Replacement windows / restoration

40. The existing windows identified for replacement are not original and date from 1963. They are failing, are heavily overpainted and many are rotted, both to the frames and glazing bars, and are allowing cold air and moisture into the building. These windows make a minimal contribution to the significance of the listed building and detract from it.

41. Initially the application proposed replacement windows of either Crittall or mild steel metal framed windows with leaded lights, or cast-iron frames and glazing bars, which was based on an interpretation of limited information available. During the course of the application, however, documentation has been discovered which provides evidence of original windows in the morning room, which were timber and not leaded. Further investigation was made into the windows and numerous surviving historic timber windows were identified, although these were mostly at

higher level and obscured beneath heavy overpainting. The design and profile of these timber existing windows match those shown in the recently discovered photograph of 1920(s). The application now seeks consent to replace the windows (identified as W1-18, W35, W42, W43, W76 and W77 on the submitted elevation drawings) with new oak windows to match the design and dimensions of the historic examples and as set out on drawing number 3148-104.

42. The application provides sufficient evidence for the authenticity of the proposed replacement windows of which the existing have negligible heritage value and the impact of the change is considered slight.

43. Window W76 as shown on the submitted plan, is of nineteenth century installation, and represents part of an earlier phase of alteration where a stone mullion was removed. This has caused structural damage to the stone lintel above and its replacement with an oak casement to visually mirror the existing sash and would provide greater structural support to the lintel. Whilst this window is of medium significance, the impact of its replacement is assessed as being slight. The benefits of rectifying the structural damage are considered to outweigh the slight harm caused, and the replication would be sympathetic.

44. Refurbishment of existing leaded light windows would affect features which are of very high significance, however, the works are necessary and justified and would help with the proper functioning of the Long Gallery space.

Provision of new access ramp to the west door

45. This wider area currently benefits from a network of paths set within landscaping and low-profile timber barriers and a sunken path. The proposal would realign the access path forming a continuation of a path which extends from the north. The access would be ramped, set at a fall of 1:12 and newly formed steps would connect to the existing pathway. Kerbs would be defined by brickwork, with a new dwarf wall and handrail, as shown on the submitted plan. Whilst the works here would change the way in which the building is viewed from the western side with a moderate to large impact of change, with the use of suitable materials, the access would have a sympathetic appearance and additionally, it would not affect the fabric of the building itself. The proposal would enhance access and user experience of the heritage asset, whilst complying with the Equality Act. The works would be of demonstrable public benefit and it is not considered that they would substantially affect the special interest of the Hall or the registered park and garden. Details of materials and soft landscaping could be secured by way of condition.

New chimney and buttress slope capping

46. A stone capping is proposed to the buttress which is formed from the remains of the rear wall of the former stair tower of likely C17th date. The buttress is rendered but presently has no capping and the wall is very damp, therefore the provision of a capping stone would help to keep the wall drier. The same principle applies to the capping of the stepped chimneys as the render has failed. These are used elsewhere on the building and would be an appropriate solution in keeping with the character and age of the building.

Other works

47. These are considered to be appropriate minor repairs to the heritage asset, with sympathetic materials being identified.

CONCLUSION

48. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act) imposes a principle duty that a 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 which it possesses. Great weight and importance is attached to the duty to preserve, regardless of the level of harm.

49. Whilst it is recognised that the proposals would involve a profound visual change to the building as it currently exists, in this instance it is not considered that the proposed works translate into harm to the significance of the building. The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposals set out in this application would better reveal the special architectural and historic interest of the grade I listed Astley Hall, thereby enhancing the heritage asset, rather than causing harm; and that the works are robustly justified and evidenced. The proposals would maintain the long-term viable use of the heritage asset as a public building being appropriately conserved for existing and future generations.

50. The application is considered to meet the principle duty of the Act, the objectives of Chapter 16 of The National Planning Policy Framework and heritage policy 16 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and policy BNE8 Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026. It is recommended to Members that the proposals contained within this listed building consent application are acceptable and should be granted, subject to conditions.

51. **RELEVANT POLICIES:** In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan (the Central Lancashire Core Strategy, the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposal has had regard to guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan. The specific policies/guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

Suggested conditions

52. To follow.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Ref: 90/00253/COU **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 3 July 1990
Description: Change of use of agricultural dwelling to office accommodation

Ref: 07/00243/LBC **Decision:** PERLBC **Decision Date:** 19 November 2007
Description: Construction of 2.7m to 2.1m high brick wall between lean to of boiler house and corner of the rear of Astley Hall

Ref: 08/00060/LBC **Decision:** WDN **Decision Date:** 14 August 2008
Description: Listed Building Consent for the installation of six CCTV cameras on Astley Hall and The Coach House

Ref: 08/00884/CB3 **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 4 February 2009
Description: Installation of a CCTV system including six cameras (located on Astley Hall, The Coach House, wall mounted and on poles in the grounds) and eight loudspeaker horns on the roof of Astley Hall and The Coach House

Ref: 08/00885/LBC **Decision:** PERLBC **Decision Date:** 4 February 2009
Description: Listed Building Consent for the installation of a CCTV system including six cameras (located on Astley Hall, The Coach House and wall mounted in the grounds) and eight loudspeaker horns on the roof of Astley Hall and The Coach House

Ref: 12/00750/LBC **Decision:** PERLBC **Decision Date:** 13 November 2012
Description: Repairs to stone archway, gates, side pillars and adjacent landscaping including: re pointing ashlar stonework; stone repairs with lime repair mortar; stone piecing-in repairs; renovation of gates; replacing corroding iron cramps; lifting and re bedding coping stonework; fitting of new metal capping to head of archway; making good adjacent landscaping.

Ref: 18/00178/CB3 **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 25 April 2018
Description: Creation of covered event and performance space within the Walled Garden adjacent to Astley Hall

Ref: 18/00179/LBC **Decision:** PERLBC **Decision Date:** 25 April 2018
Description: Listed Building Consent for: Alterations to structure within the Walled Garden adjacent to Astley Hall to create a covered events and performance space

Ref: 18/00608/DIS **Decision:** PEDISZ **Decision Date:** 3 July 2018
Description: Application to discharge condition no.4 (sample materials) to permission granted under 18/00178/CB3: Creation of covered event and performance space within the Walled Garden adjacent to Astley Hall