

**19/01091/LB**

**The Old Malthouse, St Johns Road, Banbury**

**Installation of insulation, ventilation slates and flat roof vents to existing roof**

### **Understanding the heritage assets affected**

The Old Malthouse is a grade II listed building which lies within Banbury Conservation Area.

The building has had a number of uses including maltings, hosiery manufactory, engineering works, special libraries book service and latterly offices. The building is currently standing empty. The building has been altered for the varying uses.

### **Significance**

The core significance of the building lies in its roof structure and the 'surprisingly grand design' of the façade of the building. The design is unusual for a maltings in having just 2 floors, a large number of windows and an elaborate façade. There is minimal surviving visible evidence of the functional operation of the building.

A Heritage Statement which accompanied an earlier application on the site states 'As a result of the several phases of quite radical internal changes to the building, its key elements in heritage terms of the building are the external shell – particularly the façade to St John's Road – and the broad roof structure with its very unusual and ambitious trusses. The rest of the interior is not considered to be of any great heritage value'. This assessment is considered to be broadly correct.

### **Proposals**

To provide insulation for the building to enable its retention in office use

### **Appraisal of issues**

The proposal for insulating the building formed part of a pre-application submission (along with other proposed alterations to the building). The conclusions of which were that although some less than substantial harm is caused to the core significance of the building (the roof) that this was outweighed by the public benefits of finding a sustainable use for this historic building, subject to additional detail and justification. The pre-app report stated *Overall we are supportive of bringing back the building into an office use (B1a). Based on the limited information provided we are likely to be supportive of insulating the building subject to detailed design*.

### **Insulation**

The proposal is to retain the building as a large, open plan office. The building has recently been stripped out and there is very little insulation and there are significant concerns with the thermal efficiency of the building. The proposal as submitted as part of this application is to provide insulation to the roof to increase the thermal performance for the building.

- The previous approach to roof insulation was to provide polystyrene and plasterboard between the purlins and suspended ceilings throughout the building which reduced the space requiring heat, but obscured one of the key elements of significance within the building – the unusual roof structure. The proposed new owners wish to leave the roof structure exposed, but to provide insulation under the rafters of the roof.
- The core concern for the applicant is with the cost of the insulation
- The proposal is to use Kingspan Kooltherm insulation. The Design and Access Statement claims *'The overall depth of Kingspan Kooltherm required to achieve the desired energy efficiency is approximately 200mm installed in two layers. 120mm K107 would be fitted*

*between the purlins and 82.5mm K118 insulated plasterboard would be fixed under (covering the purlins to limit thermal bridging). Although more expensive than thicker alternatives, the cost of this insulation is not considered prohibitive' This form of insulation will obscure the existing rafters and some of the purlins, but these will be retained in-situ and the insulation could be reversed in the future. The Design and Access Statement claims 'The works can be carried out without harming historic fabric'.*

- A cost comparison is provided with two alternative forms of insulation. The Design and access Statement claims *'The building is only viable for occupation if the roof is insulated. This is a substantial task due to the grand scale of the roof, resulting in considerable expense. The applicant has carried out research, compared alternatives and established that the proposed method of insulation is the most cost effective and the most suitable, providing the best balance of thinness, cost and energy performance..... Alternative solutions which would require a lesser depth of simulation are extremely expensive in comparison with the preferred specification'.* On the basis of the figures given It is accepted that the cost differential would prove unviable due to the large expanse of the roof.
- Full detailed plans have been provided with the application to outline how the insulation will interact with the building and how a ventilated air gap will be provided.
- The roofline grilles, over fascia vents and flat roof breather void are considered discrete additions to the exterior of the building to allow a flow of air into the roofspace.
- The proposed form of insulation causes (reversible) visual harm to the building as opposed to harm to the ongoing maintenance of the historic fabric. It is therefore considered proportionate in this instance to balance the harm against the benefit of finding a viable, sustainable new use for the building.
- It is considered that sufficient information and justification has been provided for the form of insulation required and there are no objections to granting of consent for this application.

#### **Level of harm**

Less than Substantial outweighed by public benefits.

#### **Recommendation**

No objection

#### **Conditions**

The drawings state *'propriety flush slate grilles providing passive ventilation (Corovent Roofline or similar) in colour to match existing or 'discrete hidden over-fascia vents if considered feasible following further investigation on site'* The final solution needs to be agreed following further investigation and prior to commencement of works.

**Jenny Ballinger 29th July 2019**