

Nicola Gunn

From: Planning
Subject: FW: NC2/3/2020/0763 - Brabins Shop and Gallery, 20-22 Talbot Street, Chipping, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 2QE - SPAB Response

From: Joanne Needham <joanne.needham@spab.org.uk>
Sent: 09 February 2021 20:53
To: Adrian Dowd <Adrian.Dowd@ribblevalley.gov.uk>; Planning <planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: NC2/3/2020/0763 - Brabins Shop and Gallery, 20-22 Talbot Street, Chipping, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 2QE - SPAB Response

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Dear Adrian,

The Society is grateful to you for sharing the response of the agent and for the opportunity to comment further. We also express our thanks to the agent for considering the Society's initial consultation advice and for their reply. We respond as follows -

SPAB Advice

Structural Works

Unfortunately, the Society remains concerned by the proposed structural works and believes that a less invasive and destructive solution may still be possible. In their response, the agent advises that they "have thoroughly explored the possibility of retaining the existing fabric to the first floor. Various means have been considered but the constraints within the building preclude most of these options if the building is to be inhabited and practical as a living space." However, the options reported to have been explored but considered not to be feasible have not been disclosed.

The agent also advises that the distortion and deflection has been ongoing for some time, presumably meaning the problem is not relatively recent, and that main load comes from the wattle and daub partition. However, this does not tie with the conclusions of the structural report. In respect of the first point, that is the history of the problem, the structural report (paragraph 3, section 4.0 Conclusions) advises that it is considered to be relatively recent. On the matter of loadings, the report concludes that it is a combination of the load from the original partition and additional loads which have been subsequently added (paragraph 2, section 4.0 Conclusions), and that the beam is undersized for the loadings applied to.

It appears that the option of repair was also not fully explored because of the perceived disruption to the first-floor arrangement. However, the solution detailed in the application is immensely disruptive and destructive, and it is difficult to envisage that alternative repair options would be greater in this respect than that which is proposed.

Windows

We have no further comments to make and defer to the authority's specialist conservation advisor.

Summary

The Society *objects* to the proposed structural works.

Brabins retains a high survival of important historic fabric which contributes significantly to the building's special interest. We do not believe that the proposed structural works, which would cause considerable harm, have been clearly and convincingly justified. The Society also believes that it may still be possible to retain and repair the existing first floor with an alternative solution. We therefore urge the authority to explore alternative, less invasive and destructive, repair solutions with the applicants and their professional advisors.

We hope that this response is helpful to the authority.

Regards,

Joanne.

Joanne Needham

Casework Officer

07747 734390

(Usual working days: Mon, Tues,
Wed)

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From: Adrian Dowd <Adrian.Dowd@ribblevalley.gov.uk>
Sent: 02 February 2021 14:51
To: Joanne Needham <joanne.needham@spab.org.uk>; Planning <planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: NC2/3/2020/0763 - Brabins Shop and Gallery, 20-22 Talbot Street, Chipping, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 2QE - SPAB Response

Dear Joanne,

Application 3/2020/0763
20 to 22 Talbot Street, Chipping

Thank you for your comments.

I have attached the response of the agent and would be grateful for any further comments within 7 days of the date of this email.

Thank you,
Adrian Dowd BSc (Hons) MA (URP) MA (Arch Cons) MRTPI IHBC
Principal Planning Officer
Ribble Valley BC

The proposed works would be a significant intervention that would, unintentionally, result in considerable harm and loss. The structural failure is clear, and we do not question the need for intervention, we wonder however if a less harmful solution is possible.

We fully appreciate the historical significance of the building and have thoroughly explored the possibility of retaining the existing fabric to the first floor. Various means of repair have been considered but the constraints within the building preclude most of these options if the building is to be inhabited and practical as a living space. The structural report focusses on three options which are viable; other options which are not considered to be feasible are omitted from the report.

The floor to ceiling heights at ground floor are restrictive and additional beams to support the existing floor structure cannot be inserted without compromising the headroom in the living space.

From the information provided, we believe that the option of a bespoke vertical steel splice (installed from the underside) to strengthen and repair the existing beam (and gently raising the beam to straighten it out slightly) may be possible (and may be possible with minimal disruption). A similar repair might also be possible to the dining room beam. We strongly encourage that these options be fully explored.

With regards to the possibility of a steel splice repair, the timber floor beams in the sitting room are considerably undersized for modern floor loadings. The timber beams are very shallow (140mm) and it would be difficult to form a bolted connection of sufficient strength within the depth of the existing timber beam. Structural calculations indicate that new timber beams would need to be approximately 300mm deep which is much larger than the current timber beams and would be impractically low in the sitting room. Even with steel flitch plates, the beams would need to be 275mm deep.

The deflection and distortion has been ongoing for some time as is evidenced by the build-up of the floor in the bathroom. The bathroom floor has been built up to be level. The wattle and daub partition wall is built off the floor joists which sit on the timber beam. The ceiling joists in the bathroom and adjoining bedroom are supported by the partition wall. The beam cannot be re-levelled without disturbing the structure above.

Gently raising the beam up would involve removal of the bottom section of the wattle and daub partition as well as removal of the built up floor and relaying the floor joists.

For the dining room beam the proposed intervention it is intended to leave the timber beam and wedges in place and insert a steel beam underneath the wedges to provide additional support. The timber beam supports the wall above between bedroom 2 and bedroom 3. The ceilings above the bedrooms are supported by the wall. The current arrangement is considered to be precarious and failure of the beam may be catastrophic resulting in damage to the adjoining timber structure.

We also strongly encourage significantly reducing the loadings on the first floor (including the removal of the very heavy water tank). These additional/increased loads appear to have been a factor in the failure of the floor which has survived some considerable time.

The water tank, whilst undoubtedly contributing to the failure of the beam, is a relatively small proportion of the load on the beam. The main load comes from the weight of the wattle and daub partition. The timber beams are inadequate to carry the loads, even without the water tank.

Notwithstanding the above, it is perhaps also worth noting that we also do not support the approach to clad and decorate modern interventions (in this case - the steel beams) to mimic the historic beams.

It is not intended to clad the steel beams to mimic the historic beams. The new steel beams would be hidden within the depth of the new floor structure. The ceiling within the sitting room would be flush. The proposed headroom in the sitting room is relatively low, as the floor joists are positioned to tie in with the current floor level in Bedroom 2. The ceiling in the sitting room currently varies by approximately 300mm with the bottom of the timber beams being approx. 140mm below the general ceiling line. In the sitting room the maximum distance floor to ceiling currently is 2247mm and the average is approximately 2100mm with the timber beams below this. At its lowest, the timber beam is 1805mm above the floor. Ground floor levels vary around the room. Current proposals set a new ceiling at approx. 2050mm above average ground floor level, so any cladding beneath this would result in further reduced headroom.

Window Replacements

The mixture of styles and ages of the joinery to Brabins is part of the building's special interest and we commend the applicant for not seeking to change this to create a uniform appearance which is often desired. We also positively acknowledge the commissioning of the joinery report which also considers the condition of the existing joinery. However, we are not presently convinced of the proposed replacements and the reasons given in justification thereof. We also note that the report advises that specialist window manufacturer would be needed for manufacturing new units and we wonder if appraisal of the existing units, with a view to conservative repair, would also be beneficial?

It would be possible to undertake conservative repairs to the two sets of windows to the rear of the property labelled as W3-W4 on the joinery report. It should be noted however that the windows are so poorly fitting that the rooms are draughty for the occupants and not weathertight, which also allows water ingress into the property. Any conservative repairs would also be so extensive that the frames would likely have a minimal amount of the original fabric left.

The two sash windows labelled as W1-W2 to the front of the property will require replacement regardless of any conservative repairs undertaken as the timber has twisted and therefore any easing of the windows or splice repairs would still not be a sufficient repair and the frames would not be weathertight.

From: Joanne Needham <joanne.needham@spab.org.uk>

Sent: 27 January 2021 11:47

To: Adrian Dowd <Adrian.Dowd@ribblevalley.gov.uk>; Planning <planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk>

Subject: Re: NC2/3/2020/0763 - Brabins Shop and Gallery, 20-22 Talbot Street, Chipping, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 2QE - SPAB Response

Dear Adrian,

Application ref: NC2/3/2020/0763

Address: Brabins Shop and Gallery, 20-22 Talbot Street, Chipping, Preston, Lancashire, PR3 2QE

Proposal: Application for listed building consent to undertake works to the building, insertion of replacement windows (like for like), replacement of roof coverings and the erection of new rainwater goods.

Our ref: SPAB/JN/163087/21

Thank you for consulting the SPAB on the above application and for the extension of time in which to submit our comments. Having reviewed the documents available on your Council's website we now offer the following advice.

SPAB Advice

The application has been considered by the Society's Casework Team and expert member (structural engineer) of the Society's Technical Panel.

The Society warmly welcomes the proposition to undertake works to rectify the structural problems at Brabins and the wider programme of repairs. We also wish to positively acknowledge the comprehensive suite of documentation provided with the application and the clarity with which the proposed works are set out.

On this occasion the Society wishes to concentrate its advice on just two aspects of the current application, namely the structural works and the windows.

Clearly, there is a high survival of historic fabric at Brabins, both internally and externally, and some of which appears to be of high significance. We recognise that the proposals are well intentioned and seek to retain and repair as much fabric as possible; however, we regret to advise that we are not convinced of the present proposals. We set out the reasons for our position below.

Structural works

The proposed works would be a significant intervention that would, unintentionally, result in considerable harm and loss. The structural failure is clear, and we do not question the need for intervention, we wonder however if a less harmful solution is possible.

From the information provided, we believe that the option of a bespoke vertical steel splice (installed from the underside) to strengthen and repair the existing beam (and gently raising the beam to straighten it out slightly) may be possible (and may be possible with minimal disruption). A similar repair might also be possible to the dining room beam. We strongly encourage that these options be fully explored.

We also strongly encourage significantly reducing the loadings on the first floor (including the removal of the very heavy water tank). These additional/increased loads appear to have been a factor in the failure of the floor which has survived some considerable time.

Notwithstanding the above, it is perhaps also worth noting that we also do not support the approach to clad and decorate modern interventions (in this case - the steel beams) to mimic the historic beams.

Window Replacements

The mixture of styles and ages of the joinery to Brabins is part of the building's special interest and we commend the applicant for not seeking to change this to create a uniform appearance which is often desired. We also positively acknowledge the commissioning of the joinery report which also considers the condition of the existing joinery. However, we are not presently convinced of the proposed replacements and the reasons given in justification thereof. We also note that the report advises that specialist window manufacturer would be needed for manufacturing new units and we wonder if appraisal of the existing units, with a view to conservative repair, would also be beneficial?

Summary

We regret not to be able to offer a wholly favourable response to this application at this time, which is clearly very well intentioned.

In light of the harmful impact and loss resulting from the proposed structural works, we urge the authority seek an alternative engineering solution be explored (that repairs and strengthens the existing structure), and that further consideration be given to the possibility of the repairing more of the existing windows.

We hope that this response is helpful to the authority.

Regards,

Joanne.

Joanne Needham

Casework Officer

07747 734390

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