

Planning Committee: 13 August 2019

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Case Officer: Robert Dawson

Robert.dawson@warwickdc.gov.uk

The Master's House, Saltisford Road, Warwick

**REQUEST TO ISSUE SECTION 54 AND SECTION 55 NOTICES: URGENT WORKS
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF A LISTED BUILDING**

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee are recommended to authorise the issue of a Notice under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 on the relevant parties in respect of The Master's House, Saltisford Road, Warwick, aka the Leper Hospital, and authorise the Head of Development Services to take all necessary steps to implement the works which appear to be urgently necessary for the preservation of the building.

Planning Committee are also recommended to authorise the issue of a Notice directed at the recovery of the expenses of the above works from the relevant parties under Section 55 of the same Act and authorise the Head of Development Services to take all necessary steps to recover those costs should it become necessary to do so.

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

The Leper Hospital site contains the remains of St Michael's Church (106 & 108 Saltisford (Listed building entry 1035366)) and a 15th Century two-story timber framed building known as a Master's House (4, 5 and 6 St Michael's Court, Saltisford, Warwick (Listed building entry 1364850)), which is the subject of this report. The buildings are Grade II* listed and are situated on a Scheduled Monument (List entry 1011035). It is one of only three known examples of leper hospitals in the county.

This Scheduled Ancient Monument includes the below ground remains of a leper hospital, chapel, and cemetery, located outside the medieval settlement of Warwick. The present focus of the hospital complex is formed by the upstanding chapel, a single cell stone building of 15th century date, and a late 15th or early 16th century timber-framed building, known as the Master's House, situated to the north of the chapel. Although partially rebuilt, the buildings are contemporary with the later medieval development of the site. The standing buildings are considered to overlie the remains of earlier medieval hospital buildings which extend across the whole of the site. These include an earlier chapel, the infirmary and the cemetery which coexisted on the site.

The chapel and the Master's House are both listed Grade II* and are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath both of them, which is

believed to contain evidence of structures relating to the earlier development of the hospital, is included.

PLANNING HISTORY

In February 2007 planning permission in respect of application W/04/2128 was granted for the conversion of the former chapel and Master's House to offices along with the construction of an office building to the rear of the site and associated car parking to all buildings. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted in 2009. Despite these planning consents and the owner having undertaken remedial repair works to the Chapel the site remains undeveloped, with the Master's House exposed to the elements. The buildings therefore remain on the Heritage at Risk Register with the Master's House condition described as being "very bad", the most serious of categories.

BACKGROUND

As recently as 2001 the land formed part of a larger parcel of land owned by Warwick District Council. The Council had produced a development brief which resulted in the regeneration of the area with all the land redeveloped except for the Leper Hospital. This land was purchased by a private company and the ownership remains with this company.

This Council has sought a solution for the site over many years. The site contains designated heritage assets of the highest significance yet its current state can reasonably be described as an embarrassment to the town and it has caused great concern to local Councillors and residents.

In 2012, this Council's Executive approved a Warwick Heritage Improvement Programme of projects and feasibility studies to see redundant buildings in Warwick brought back in to use. This programme has been successful with the *old Gasworks* and *Printworks* being redeveloped for affordable housing. The outstanding project is the Leper Hospital site.

Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 enables local authorities to execute any works which appear to them to be urgently necessary for the preservation of a listed building in their area should the owner of the land not undertake the repairs.

The works which may be executed under this section may consist of or include works for affording temporary support or shelter for the building.

The Act also includes a provision whereby the local authority can seek to recoup the cost of those works by way of service of a Notice under Section 55 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

In this particular case, a report is being considered by Executive on 21 August concerning the funding of the urgent works whilst this report is seeking authority for the issue of the Notices and the undertaking of the works should that become necessary.

PROPOSAL

A structural survey and assessment of the building has been compiled by specialist surveyors following an inspection on 9th May 2019 commissioned by the Council. This concluded that the building is in poor condition and in urgent need of works to stabilise and protect it from the elements to avoid further deterioration and loss of an important heritage asset within the district. The report identifies lateral movement of the building in Bay 1 and the lack of a stable structure at foundation level because of the condition of timbers at low level and the condition of the stone/brick plinth.

Several previous attempts have been made to stabilise the building however these did not follow a particular strategy and were largely reactive measures. The building had until recently been cocooned in a tarpaulin which has been blown off by the wind.

The survey recommends that internal scaffolding be erected that supports the roof structure, relieving the load at lower levels and stabilising the building laterally. It is not necessary to dismantle existing scaffolding as this could disturb the various props supporting the structure. It is also recommended that a protective tarpaulin or other suitable protection be reinstated as soon as possible in order to limit any further damage to the historic fabric from the elements.

In order to proceed with the preservation of this designated heritage asset, it is now considered appropriate to ask the Planning Committee to authorise the Head of Development Services to issue a Section 54 Notice which will allow the Council to carry out the works after a period of 7 days has elapsed from the date that the Notice is served to the owner.

In the event that the Council carries out these works, it is also appropriate to ask Committee to authorise the issue of a Section 55 notice directed at the reimbursement of the costs of undertaking the works should it become necessary to do so.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that Planning Committee authorises the issue of the Notices in order for the Council to take the steps to implement works which are considered urgently necessary for the preservation of the building and to enable any expenses incurred by the council to be recovered from the owner.