

**MC/23/1833**

**Date Received:** 14 August 2023  
**Location:** Former Police Section House, East Road, Historic Dockyard Chatham  
**Proposal:** Listed building consent application for the retention and alteration to brick pier and associated works.  
**Applicant Agent:** University Of Kent  
Savills  
Mr Ben Tattersall  
33 St Margarets Street  
London  
W1G 0JD  
**Ward:** Chatham Central & Brompton  
**Case Officer:** Nick Roberts  
**Contact Number:** 01634 331700

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**Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 20th December 2023.**

**Recommendation - Approval with Conditions**

- 1 The development and works to which this consent relates shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

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CD-FCB-ZZ-XX-D-A-1006 REV P01 - Site Location Plan as proposed  
CD-FCB-ZZ-XX-D-A-1011 REV P01 - Block Plan as proposed  
CD-GRA-XX-00-D-L-1100 REV 01 - General Arrangement Plan (as indicative)  
CD-GRA-XX-00-D-L-1302 REV 02 - Section DD (as indicative)  
CD-FCB-ZZ-00-D-A-0250 REV P01 - Ground Floor Plan (as indicative)  
CD--FCB-ZZ-XX-D-A-0850 REV P01 - Proposed North and South Elevations (as indicative)

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 No development shall take place until a condition survey and corresponding repair schedule for the brick pier has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved repair schedule.

Reason: To ensure that the historic feature can be conserved and protected in accordance with paragraph 197 and 199 of the NPPF.

- 4 No development shall take place until a method statement outlining how the brick pier will be protected during construction works on the wider site has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved protection measures shall remain in place for the duration of the associated construction works.

Reason: To ensure that the historic feature is conserved and protected in accordance with paragraph 199 of the NPPF.

- 5 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a written scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance details which have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined in accordance with Policy BNE21 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

**For the reasons for this recommendation for approval, please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.**

## **Proposal**

This is an application for Listed Building Consent for the retention and repair of a brick pier to the rear of the Police Section House, a site which is also subject to proposals for redevelopment under MC/23/1834. Proposals to the pier itself are specifically concerned with the removal of existing vegetation growing around and over the structure, consolidation and repointing with the purpose of stabilising and safeguarding its historic fabric.

## **Relevant Site History**

MC/23/1834

Part demolition and conversion of the former police section house for exhibition space, cafe, meeting space, post-production studios, office and co-working space (mixed-use). The development of a digital production studio (Sui Generis) and the installation of rooftop PV panels. A single storey link extension,

construction of vehicular access, substation, hard and soft landscaping and associated works.  
Decision: Pending application

## **Representations**

The application has been advertised on site, in the press and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties. Historic England, The Chatham Maritime Trust, KCC Archaeology, KCC Biodiversity, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, Natural England, Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent Police, Royal Society for Protection of Birds, The Georgian Group, The Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, The Twentieth Century Society, The Victorian Society, Ancient Monuments Society Council for British Archaeology and the Council for British Archaeology were also consulted.

**No letters** of representation have been received.

**Historic England** have confirmed that they support the application on heritage grounds and consider that the proposal would sustain and enhance the significance of an important component of the former overhead travelling crane.

**The Historic Dockyard Chatham** have confirmed that they support the proposed changes to the brick pier remnant of the Brunel Sawmill overhead railway.

**KCC Archaeology** have confirmed that they support the advice provided by Historic England and have offered comments in respect to the wording of a condition requiring a programme of historic building recording.

**KCC Biodiversity** have advised that sufficient ecological information has been provided. Although they have provided advice with regards to suggested conditions these would apply to full application (MC/23/1834) and not this application for listed building consent.

## **Development Plan**

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) and are considered to conform. The Chatham Interface Land Development Brief SPD (June 2018) is also applicable.

## **Planning Appraisal**

### *Background*

The brick railway pier is a single upstanding masonry fragment positioned to the rear of the Police Section House close to the southern boundary of the application site. It is approx. 25 brick courses in height and 1.7m in width at its widest known point. There is a projecting nib around 1-2 courses deep to the north face of the pier. Much of the remainder of the pier is covered in vegetation. The brick pier forms part of the listing of the Grade I Brunel Sawmill, with the overhead rail system to which the pier relates being noted in its listing description.

The pier was constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a foundation for an overhead travelling crane which was used to move timber in a timber stacking yard associated with the Brunel Sawmill. The former timber stacking yard extended from the north side of the Brunel Sawmill on a narrow parcel of land including land directly to the rear of the Police Section House. The upper parts of the overhead crane are now lost and at some point, possibly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the land levels were reduced to the rear of the Police Section House exposing some of the crane foundations.

Of the piers that were exposed by lowering the ground level, only the pier on the site's southern boundary appears to have survived. It is therefore of significance as a rare surviving element of the overhead crane and a component of the timber processing which was focussed at the northern end of the dockyard from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. It has both aesthetic value as a highly distinctive feature (it is slightly tapered as one might expect on a foundation) and historic value as an element of the former overhead crane.

### *Impact on Heritage Asset*

It is specifically set out in section 16 and section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that the Council must have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Policy BNE17 of the Local Plan states that alterations, extensions, conversions or changes of use affecting a Listed Building will not be permitted if they are detrimental to the architectural or historic character of the building, unsympathetic in design, scale, appearance and use or do not retain original features and materials. In addition, Policy BNE18 of the Local Plan affirms that development which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building should be refused.

Paragraphs 195, 200 to 202 of the NPPF sets out the importance of identifying and assessing the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, and where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, weighing up this harm against the public

benefits. Paragraph 197 (a) and (b) of the NPPF is also relevant. This paragraph states 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.

In this case the application is for the retention and repair of a brick pier to the rear of the Police Section House. Although this would not be classified as a building, the brick pier is still of significance as a rare surviving element of the overhead crane of the timber processing as outlined in the 'background' section of this report. The proposed works would involve the removal of existing vegetation growing around and over the structure, consolidation and repointing. This in turn would sustain and enhance the significance of the heritage asset and would involve the positive conservation of a heritage asset as part of a proposal to bring the long vacant Police Section House back into use in accordance with the advice set out in paragraph 197 of the NPPF.

However, and due to the significant vegetation growing around the structure, and it's siting partially located within an earth bank it is particularly challenging to interpret what remains of the pier structure. Therefore, further investigation is required to fully understand its significance and to prepare a strategy for its repair and interpretation including;

- A programme of building recording in accordance with a written specification to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority;
- A method statement outlining how the brick pier would be protected during construction works on the wider site, including where necessary, input from a structural engineer to demonstrate that the construction of an extension to the Police Section House, would not undermine the structural integrity of the pier;
- A condition survey and corresponding schedule of repair to be submitted and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the repair.

This additional information will be secured by condition, and therefore, and subject to these conditions the application would be acceptable. No objection would therefore be raised in regard to Policies BNE17 and BNE18 of the Medway Local Plan and paragraphs 195, 197 and 200 to 202 of the NPPF.

## **Conclusions and Reason for Approval**

The proposal would sustain and enhance the significance of the heritage asset and would involve the positive conservation of a heritage asset as part of a proposal to bring the long vacant Police Section House back into use. Subject to appropriate conditions as outlined within the report the proposal would be in accordance with Policies BNE17 and BNE18 of the Medway Local Plan and paragraphs 195, 197 and 200 to 202 of the NPPF.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Committee for decision due to its association with the preceding item on this agenda.

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### **Background Papers**

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>