

Heritage statement for Warwickspace



Description of the asset and its significance

The community building is not listed but forms part of the main street scene in Coten End/Emscote road segment of Warwick Conservation Area. Formerly the tramway route between Warwick and Leamington, this is still heavily used by pedestrians and vehicles, and includes a bus stop adjacent to the centre's frontage, where there is some limited parking. The garden railings to this frontage having been lost, as have many of the street trees. The proposed works are intended to support its' continued use as a local asset.

It was built in 1913 as a drill hall and HQ for the Territorials - G company, 9th battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, with a sixty by thirty foot hall in pitch pine blocks, an adjoining miniature rifle range of twenty five yards and an armoury. Off from the entrance lobby was an officers room, the armoury and a clothing room, whilst upstairs was a recreation room, bar and officers room. It was built in brick with large windows, some barred internally, and a slate roof to both the two storey front and the hall and range to the rear. The original large bore single pipe heating remains, although the electric lighting has been updated. The energy embodied in this traditionally constructed building highlights the continuing value of heritage buildings, however the climate change agenda requires the fabric to be sensitively adapted to mitigate heat loss and heat gain, improve ventilation and inclusive use if they are to remain sustainable and affordable in the future.

After the second world war, the War ministry passed ownership to Warwickshire County Council, where it was to become a community centre, with weight lifting, cooking, first aid, exercise and dancing classes, as well as the preschool group established in 1964, that continues today as a charity. Two of the current Warwickspace volunteer directors were on the management committee in the 1990's and the key consultation results at that stage from an attempt to secure improvements, were lack of storage for the various user groups and of modern services.

WCC changes included an upstairs kitchen for an internet café run by MIND, additional fire doors and screens, a lift funded by King Henry viii charity, disabled toilets on both levels and false ceilings to the upper floor rooms. The leaded lights under the canopy to the entrance lobby were replaced by signage, the shooting gallery was subdivided and the roof along this western edge had raised fixed dormer skylights added. The lead flashings from which was stolen and 'mended' with felt, such that needles and debris build up behind causes water ingress here and from the gutters.

Behind the impressive frontage the gallery and hall to the rear are single storey and have minimal presence. The frontage to Coten End is in a confident Edwardian solid brick with sliding sash windows to the two storeys. This returns to the west with a brick gable under stone copings enclosing the slate roof. To the east the centre abuts three storey listed stucco fronted 1840's houses. As a drill hall, the centre was enclosed at the rear along this eastern boundary by a tall brick wall, that was first propped and then taken down by three feet in the 1960's. There is an existing corrugated roofed brick shed alongside this, not visible from outside the premises. An approach that will be continued in the proposal for an extended shelter for storage along the east of the hall and also below the boundary wall height. The rear boundary to the north is fenced onto a private lane accessed off Broad Street and has no impact from the public realm. This is the alternative escape route for the centre.



The low external gallery wall to the west abuts a vehicle storage area for the pub and their parking spaces. The rear garden setting to the former Millwright pub (now Black Pug) is now tented. There were previously buildings along the joint boundary, at a time when there was a bowling green at the rear of the pub. The setting from the public realm is now predominately parking and storage, with the more anonymous rear of the centre behind.

The proposed works affect is to support the heritage significance of this community building by securing its continued use, with no adverse impact on architectural and historic merit or setting.

There is extensive glazing to the south facing two storey frontage to Coten End. This reveals the institutional scale of the rooms and they are well lit naturally. The wood sliding sashes have been painted shut with broken sash cords, glazing and beading, and replacement softwood cills. They are in need of further work /eventual replacement by a specialist contractor. This should be in timber to the same pattern but with adjustment to the lead weights to suit double glazing. This will meet the ventilation and heat loss needs in a safe, natural and simple way for users to operate, including restrictors because of the vulnerable users, but allowing cleaning. Internal blinds already go some way to address the glare and mitigate over-heating identified in the energy performance certificate. External shading would have been more effective but also more intrusive, as would external wall insulation to this or to the brick gable end.

The fully inclusive use of the upper floor for wheelchair users is by virtue of a lift introduced in the 1990's. This should not be used in the event of a fire. The single staircase needs to be supplemented with a refuge from smoke. This is proposed to be provided by discretely lowering a rear first floor opening down to first floor level, replacing with a door onto a level roof that replaces the current leaking gallery roof with its lumpy dormer skylights.



Slates taken from this will dress the additional walling at the eaves, whilst the deck will not be visible externally. This will retain the historic materials whilst hiding the new escape along the edge of the hall roof. The addition of flat roof to toilets at the rear previously has not materially impacted on the listed buildings adjacent.

Insulation of the main hall and classroom roofs above the sarking boards is because the construction had no rafters. Slates here are at a suitable pitch. There is no visual impact other than replacement of the patent glazing installed twenty years ago, with opening timber rooflights to provide controlled ventilation not just leakage. The design is necessarily sympathetic to the character and construction of the early twentieth century building whilst introducing safety and environmental measures that will sustain the building as a local asset run by the local community volunteers for years to come. a direct benefit of the local commitment to save this building in 2011, as a result of cuts to the WCC, from the proposed disposal for the site value.

