

Lymington Community centre proposed new centre Café

Heritage impact assessment

This impact assessment has been produced in connection with the proposals to replace the existing Centre Café (dating from the 1940s) with a New Café Building.

Background

The Lymington Community Centre is located close to the heart of Lymington, and the site sits immediately north of Cannon Street. It lies on the northern edge of the Lymington Conservation Area, and straddles zone E (New Street and church Lane) and Zone H(the Northern Edge), as identified within the Lymington Conservation Area Appraisal.

The historic part of the centre is the Malt Hall, individually Listed grade II, which fronts onto New Street and lies within zone E.

New Street (formerly New Lane) is noted as having been likely to have been laid out as part of the extension of the original borough in 1271 (Extensive Urban Survey - Hampshire and the Isle of Wight 2004). Land to the west of New Street is noted as being of Limited Archaeological Importance and The Lymington Community Centre as a whole lies well north of the Area of High Archaeological Importance encompassing the burgess plots along the North Side of the High Street.

The Conservation area Appraisal makes no note of any survival of buildings earlier than 18th Century along New Street.

The Listed Building

The historic part of the centre comprises the Malt Hall and two wings which form a U-shaped block set around a courtyard fronting onto New Street.

The Grade II Listing from 1974 runs

C18 building, comprises that part of the Community Centre which was formerly The Old Malt House. Grouped round 3 sides of a courtyard. Red brick with some blue/grey headers. Tiled roof with base of former cowl. 1½ storeys. East range, 4 windows, north and south ranges of 3 bays each. Windows mainly casements and end bay on brackets to western facade of northern wing. Windows probably mainly reproduction. Hipped dormer on roof. The Lymington Community Centre forms a group with Hawthorn and Eagle House and Eagle House garden wall (of local interest) on New Street.

The concrete building adjoining the eighteenth Century structure was erected at the time of the centre's foundation in 1948, but is not mentioned within the listing.

The OS 1867 map shows the original buildings in an open setting, with Hawthorn and Eagle House adjacent. By 1896 there has been considerable development of the area west of New Street (New Lane) and South of Cannon Lane but the Lymington Community Centre site remains undeveloped.



1867 OS map published 1871



1896 OS map published 1898

The Listed building has historically been used as a Malt House. In the early Napoleonic wars it was occupied, along with adjacent stabling and the row of buildings opposite (on the west side of New Street), by a band of 400 French Royalist émigré soldiers who took part in the ill fated Quiberon Bay expedition in 1795, an attempt to regain a foothold in France.

Over the 19th and early 20th Centuries It saw a variety of uses but became increasingly delapidated. As can be seen from the photograph below its New Street frontage had a quite different character with a timber boarded wall and staggered roofline in place of the current brick gable to the South wing. These changes were made in 1948 before opening as the Lymington Community Centre.



The Malt Hall and adjacent buildings from New Street-date unknown but believed to be 1948



The Same view Today (google streetview 2018) showing new window openings to Cannon Street and new Street elevations.

The Current configuration of the Listed Building comprises a high single storey Hall with ridge running North South to the east side, with two 2 storey wings on the west side. Window openings throughout have been altered with a single ½ brick soldier course over, and windows throughout date from the 1948 conversion or later.

The single storey Hall, on which the proposed works will impact, was comprehensively altered in the 1948 conversion, and further altered in 2014 to provide the current raked seating. As listed it comprises a 5 bay main hall with a 2 storey lobby and stairs section at the north end, and a stage at the south end. Of the original roof trusses some remain in situ although there has been much modern repair work done



Its Eastern wall has 3 openings which were adapted or new in the 1948 conversion, with modern single glazed French doors and a ½ brick soldier course over. Within the Hall itself an alcove remains in the northern bay on the east side which it is surmised marks an original opening blocked by the erection of the 1940s building.



The converted Hall is now used as a successful cinema and also rented out for special events.

The setting of the Malt Hall listed building comprises both the street scenes of Cannon Street and New Street, and the courtyard to the East between the Malt Hall and the rest of the Centre. This courtyard is bounded on its Northern side by the concrete sectional building, and along its East side by the eastern side of the Wellington Room, a collection of tiled hung and tiled roof extensions. Formerly used as a play area by the Playgroup, the courtyard is dominated by a sail structure and is largely paved. It is screened from the street by a brick wall approximately 2000mm high. The setting of the Listed building within the public realm is therefore constrained to the views in from the gateways onto Cannon Street. One of these is blocked by the stage storage building (see photo bottom rt) The view from the other is a long view in as one proceeds west along Cannon Street and therefore of most significance.

The existing centre Café

As noted above the concrete building adjoining the Eighteenth Century structure was erected at the time of the centre's foundation in 1948, but is not mentioned within the listing.

'Twas ever Thus' is a history of the early years of the Lymington Community Association written in 1986. An extract is attached as appendix 1.

The Lymington Community association website notes

The Lymington Community Association was founded by a local group of residents encouraged by Mr Robert Herrington Hole who gathered together a few local individuals from local business and private individuals, called a meeting at his own home at which it was agreed that there should be an Association formed for the residents of Lymington and Pennington.

According to its Constitution, its key objective is to benefit the residents in and around Lymington and Pennington "without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or political, religious or other opinions"

The meeting also agreed that the priority was to find a building in which both cultural and other activities could be housed in one centre – at this time many activities were already being run in halls and rooms around the town – a committee was formed and the Association was officially formed on May 1946 with an annual subscription of 2/6 (2 shillings and 6 pence) and a target of £5,000 to be raised by March 1947 – The Old Malt House and the three-quarter acre site were purchased at a price of £1,500, with the help of the Ministry of Education providing a grant of £1,000.

The new sectional building now the centre café was constructed with the Ministry of Education grant and the Centre, including the new building, was finally opened in November 1948.

The concrete sectional building to be demolished as part of these proposals was of a construction and form typical of the sectional buildings developed in the second world war and widely used for military and hospital construction at that time. It has broad similarities to the Ministry of Works Standard Hut although that the spacing of the trusses is considerably more (10 ft as opposed to 6 ft) and the roof pitch is steeper than the Standard Hut. A standard work on the subject is 'Wartime huts: the development, typology and identification of temporary military buildings in Britain 1914-45'. It lists 24 different types of Second World War hut and the existing building does not correspond to any of these. It is therefore surmised that the existing building is a postwar design. It has been adapted to provide a fireplace (unlikely to be part of the original concept) and later alterations to provide French windows.



view from Cannon St in 2014 looking east



view from Cannon St looking west.

POLICY & GUIDANCE BACKGROUND

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach to the management of historic buildings and areas and requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses under Section 66 – a matter the Courts have held should be afforded considerable importance and weight.

The statutory approach is reflected in Policy DM1 ‘Heritage and Conservation’ of the NFDC Local Plan Part 2, adopted April 2014.

Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) says when considering the impact of development on the significance of a listed building, great weight should be given to its conservation whilst para. 195 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Historic England’s *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2* (March 2015) states that understanding the nature of significance is important for understanding the need for and best means of conservation. Understanding the extent of that significance leads to a better understanding of how adaptable a heritage asset may be and provides the essential guide as to how policies should be applied. The following descriptive appraisal will evaluate the building against Historic England’s criteria for heritage values set out in *Statements of Heritage Significance Assessing Significance in Heritage Assets* (Historic England Advice Note 12, 2019):

Archaeological interest

There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Architectural and artistic interest

These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can rise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and the creation of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

Historic interest

An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

The selection of buildings for addition to the statutory *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* is informed by a set of criteria set out in the revised *Principles of Selection for Listing Buildings*, (DCMS, 2018). These criteria have also been considered in this assessment.

The National Planning Policy Framework (Annexe 2 Glossary) defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

The Historic England Guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition, December 2017) states that:

'Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate that significance' (p.4)

The HE guidance sets out a staged approach to the assessment of understanding the significance of setting:

- 1 Identification of heritage assets and the extent of their settings
- 2 Assess whether, how and what degree the settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage assets
- 3 Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful on the significance
- 4 Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm
- 5 Record the process

The guidance also states that views which particularly contribute to the significance of heritage assets include those where the relationship between the asset and other historic assets or places or designed views.

Analysis and assessment of significance

The impact of the proposed development on the listed building will involve

- The removal of the existing concrete sectional building, dating from 1948 so arguably part of the listing. However at the time of listing no mention was made of this building. It does not appear to have any historic significance either on its own account or as an example of a second world war sectional building.
It is proposed that any architectural merit that it may have can be discounted. Of a prefabricated panelled concrete construction with single glazed windows and an asbestos sheeted roof, it possesses effectively no insulation value. It is not feasible to retrofit insulation to such a building and its plan arrangement does not make it suitable for re-use as part of the Centre's plans to create a café that links to the Malt Hall.

- Exposure of some of the east Wall of the Malt Hall, currently concealed by the concrete sectional building, and restoration of the original eaves line currently disrupted by the sectional building. The east wall of the Malt Hall currently concealed by the concrete sectional building has been rendered over. It is proposed to remove this render and to repoint and restore the original eighteenth century brickwork. The new zinc roof would be joined to the existing wall with an upstand soaker and stepped flashing.
- The small triangular area of plain clay tile roof removed in order to construct the sectional building would be re-instated with tiles to match existing.
- The re-opening of the original opening on the east side of the Malt Hall, currently marked by an alcove. The finish within the Malt Hall is currently plaster, it is intended that the re-formed opening shall be finished in plaster with a soundproof solid core door and frame fitted.
- A change to the courtyard that provides the setting for the Listed Building on its Eastern side

Assessment of significance

Archaeological Interest

The Archaeology of the Listed building will not be disturbed by the proposed works. Whilst the site lies outside any areas designated of archaeological significance, an archaeological desktop survey is being commissioned to establish whether there is any likelihood of archaeology beneath the courtyard or the existing concrete building.

Architectural and Artistic Interest

The listed Building is an example of an industrial vernacular eighteenth century building with typical straightforward form and detailing, although it has been much altered by its conversion to community centre use, with few internal features remaining and most external openings altered with modern joinery.

The proposed building will provide a better relationship with the east wall of the listed building than the current structure. The junction of the new and old buildings will be at the same place in plan as existing, whilst the lower roof pitch will mean that more of the wall of the Listed building will be seen and the long unbroken eaves line will be restored.

The existing 1940s concrete sectional building is, as noted above, of little architectural merit and does not make a positive contribution to the setting of the Listed Building.

The impact on the setting of the Listed Building as viewed from Cannon St is shown by the two views below.



View in from Cannon Street as existing



View in from Cannon Street as proposed

From which it can be seen that the impact on the setting will be minimal to positive.

Historic interest

The Malt Hall is of considerable historic significance both as a surviving example of Lymington's commercial past and for its connection to the Napoleonic wars. However it is considered that this Historic interest will be unaffected by the proposed works. Rather it will be enhanced by it by the improvement in the setting of the Listed Building.

Conclusion

The Listed Building forming the original part of the Lymington Community centre is of significance as part of Lymington's commercial heritage although the building itself was radically altered by the conversion in 1948 prior to its listing in 1974.

The existing 1948 sectional concrete Building is of little architectural merit and does not form part of the listing. As such it does not make a positive contribution to the setting of the listed building.

Its replacement by a modern, well insulated structure better placed to serve the Malt Hall, will itself ensure the continual economic wellbeing of the Centre and protect the future of the Listed Building.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed new building will not cause harm to the significance or 'special architectural or historic interest' of the designated heritage asset.

Accordingly, we can find no conflict in the proposed development with the statutory duty in Section 66 of the Act, National Policy in the NPPF or Policy DM1 'Heritage and Conservation' of the NFDC Local Plan Part 2 and conclude that the application should be allowed.