

Application Number

P/2010/1142

Site AddressTorre Abbey
The Kings Drive
Torquay
Devon
TQ2 5JE**Case Officer**

Mr Robert Pierce

Ward

Tormohun

Description

Alterations, repairs and conversion works (Torre Abbey Phase 2)

Executive Summary/Key Outcomes

This is the associated application for Listed Building consent for Phase 2 of the 2009 Heritage Lottery Bid for further improvements to Torre Abbey. The works will achieve important results for Torre Abbey including new elements compatible with its historic fabric and the continued improvement of the architectural expression of the building to make it more relevant and legible to visitors.

Recommendation

Approval.

Site Details

The Abbey itself is a grade 1 listed Premonstratensian Abbey, founded in 1196 and converted to a house in 1598. The Abbey has been progressively remodelled in the late C17, C18 and early C20. More recent developments at Torre Abbey include the repair of the Porch Tower in 1996 and HLF funded Phase 1 works to repair and reorganise the building to improve visitor access and clarify historically significant elements.

Detailed Proposals

The principal components of phase II of the HLF-funded project include major internal and external works: the stabilisation and repair of the South Range, the repair of the vaults of the south undercroft, the repair of the south-east wing and the creation below the Ballroom of a new multi-purpose education suite with external provision extending northwards into the former brewery courtyard. The other external components of the scheme include the replacement of the gravel surfaces of the north and east cloister walks with a hard surface suitable for DDA into the south undercroft. The east range: chancel, south transepts, sacristy, and chapter house walls will be fully conserved and wall tops capped. The blocked medieval entrance to the south undercrofts at the southeast corner will be re-

opened.

South Range

The cementitious render across the whole of the south front and all elevations of the south east wing will be removed; the 20 windows of the three storeys and the seven balconettes of the first floor will be renewed, or replaced, in their entirety; the south porch will be dismantled, its foundations underpinned, and rebuilt. The terrace surface will have all tree root growth and concrete removed and be re-flagged. A new roof structure will replace that existing with the historic lead re-used; improvements to the ceiling of the top floor gallery and air handling will result. All windows will be provided with working internal shutters. Internally the new fire escape staircase leading from the top floor east side to the first floor will have its enclosure re-fashioned, consent for this will in part be retrospective.

Southeast Wing and new Education Suite

A new education suite will be created beneath the ballroom by demolishing the existing disused toilets and internal partition walls, lowering the floor as required. The late 18th century door will be re-instated in the middle of the front and will match that created in 2008 in the middle of the café front in the southwest wing. The external courtyard behind the wing will be reduced with foundations inserted for an external canopy, allowing the space to be an extension of the education suite. Access to the medieval calefactorium will be sealed off. In the Ballroom the 1930s inserted RSJs will be removed from the decorated ceiling and a completely new roof constructed to replace the existing failing one. A platform lift will be provided to allow DDA access from the south range.

South Undercroft and East Range

The south undercroft vaults with the failing masonry will be repaired. New access will be provided to the south range and the calefactorium by unblocking the medieval door at the eastern end of the south cloister walk. The west wall of the east range will be re-pointed as required and the Victorian pillar removed from the Sacristy entrance, which will be strengthened by an arch, allowing the display of the tiled entrance beneath. The east range beyond including the transept chapels and the chancel will be re-pointed as required and coped to prevent plant growth.

The north and east cloister walks will be resurfaced in a hard material; the east cloister walk will be lowered at its southern end to allow DDA access into the courtyard behind the new education suite, with varying levels to allow access to the sacristy and chapterhouse, and the newly re-opened entrance to the south undercroft.

Summary Of Consultation Responses

English Heritage: Supports the proposal and content for Torbay Council to determine the application.

Summary Of Representations

None.

Relevant Planning History

P/2008/0694 Reinstatement of Gate Piers with increased width to main gates Approved 17.07.2008
P/2010/1141 Alterations, repairs and Conversion Works Concurrent

Key Issues/Material Considerations

The main issue with the proposed works is whether they will preserve the character and appearance of the Listed Torre Abbey and its setting. In this respect it is considered that the proposed works will enhance Torre Abbey and as confirmed in the submitted Design and Access Statement there will be very positive benefits including:

- 1) Effective and appropriate repair and conservation.
- 2) Increased knowledge and understanding of the history, detail and development of the remaining elements of the abbey.
- 3) The design of the new elements is compatible with the historic fabric and its development through eight centuries.
- 4) There will be a clearer interpretation and understanding of the building's archaeology, architecture and history.
- 5) The new facilities can be installed without detriment to the ancient fabric and spaces.
- 6) The proposal will improve the architectural expression of the building to make it more relevant, legible and interesting to users and visitors alike.

Principle and Planning Policy -

The proposal complies with Tourism Policies as it will result in sensitive development of Torbay's heritage and enhances a tourism asset. It will preserve and enhance an important Listed Building and its setting.

Economy -

This is a significant investment which will improve an important tourist facility.

Closing the gap -

Important benefit to the Community.

Climate change -

No adverse impact.

Environmental Enhancement -

Will improve the existing historic building and gardens.

Accessibility -

Centrally located and the proposal includes a platform lift to the ballroom and level access throughout the cloister and education room.

Vibrant Town Centres -

The proposal will have a positive impact on the town centre.

S106/CIL -

Not applicable

Conclusions

The proposal will result in effective and appropriate repair and conservation of Torre Abbey. The works will introduce new elements compatible with its historic fabric and its development through eight centuries. Overall this HLF funded project will improve the architectural expression of the building to make it more relevant and interesting to visitors. The proposal will complete the coherent presentation of the south range, south east wing, cloister and ruins and their surrounding environment together with improving the museum design to fulfil the latest aspirations of a museum and art gallery.

Condition(s)/Reason(s)

01. No demolition or development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work including a Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. The scheme shall include: a programme and methodology for site investigation and recording; post - investigation assessment and analysis; publication; and archive deposition.

Reason: In order to ensure that the archaeological potential of the site is properly investigated and any archaeological remains are properly recorded in accordance with Policy BE9 of the Saved Adopted Torbay Local Plan (1995 to 2011)

02. Detailed Proposals for the following works shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval by English Heritage prior to the commencement of those works on site :

- 1) The levels of surface treatment and materials to be used on the new cloister walk pavements.
- 2) The treatment of wall tops and high level repairs to the east cloister ruins.
- 3) A treatment and repair schedule for the collapsed central tower of the abbey.
- 4) The conversion of window WB3 to door DB35A in the southeast wing is to match the existing southwest wing door DB64 (formerly window WB28), otherwise a detailed design for both doors shall be submitted.
- 5) The siting, form and insertion of the Platform Lift in G2/G2A

Reason: In the interests of preserving historic character and setting of the Listed Building and to meet the criteria of Policy BE6 of the Saved Adopted Torbay Local Plan 1995 to 2011.

Informative(s)

01. The proposed works have been assessed against the criteria of Policies TUS, BES, BE1 and BE6 of the Saved Adopted Torbay Local Plan and it is considered to be acceptable as it will make a posit

Relevant Policies

- TUS Tourism strategy
- BES Built environment strategy
- BE5 Policy in conservation areas
- BE6 Development affecting listed buildings
- BE9 Archaeological assessment of development