

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0624
Valid 06/10/2021

BIDDULPH GRANGE
NATIONAL TRUST GRANGE
ROAD
BIDDULPH

**THE REINSTATEMENT OF SIX
CASTS OF SCULPTURAL
FRAGMENTS HELD BY THE
NATIONAL TRUST IN THE WALL
TO THE LEFT-HAND SIDE OF
THE ENTRANCE DOOR TO THE
GEOLOGICAL GALLERY. AS
WELL THE FURTHER
REINSTATEMENT OF A ONE
TERRACOTTA ROUNDEL AGAIN
HELD BY THE NATIONAL TRUST
AT HIGH LEVEL ON THE RIGHT-
HAND SIDE WALL TO THE
ENTRANCE DOOR.**

**(LISTED BUILDING CONSENT -
ALTERATION)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact upon the Listed Building/structure.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The application site is Biddulph Grange, Grange Road, Biddulph. The Grange is a II* Listed Building managed by the National Trust and sits within a registered park and garden. The building and gardens all have a Conservation Area designation and form part of the Green Belt, although it is acknowledged that Green Belt status has no bearing upon the determination of a Listed Building application. The application relates specifically to the entrance portico to the Geological Gallery which is situated to the northern side of the Biddulph Grange building.

PROPOSAL

Listed building consent is sought for the reinstatement of six sculptural fragments and a terracotta roundel within the entrance portico to the Geological Gallery. The application is supported by plans and a Heritage Statement which gives details about the sculptural fragments and roundel including their historic/heritage importance.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

SS1 Development Principles
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

1. Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Supplementary Planning Document

1. Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide

National Planning Policy Framework

Including sections:

- 12: Achieving well-designed places
- 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- 01/01139/FUL Eight dwellings and restoration of Geological Gallery. Approved.
- 02/00151/LBC Restoration of Geological gallery. Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice. Expired.
Neighbour consultation period. Expired.
Press Advert: Biddulph Chronical. Expired.

Public Comments: No representations received during the statutory consultation period.

Biddulph Town Council: No representations received during the statutory consultation period.

Severn Trent Water: No representations received during the statutory consultation period.

Historic England: On the basis of the information available to date, we do not wish to offer any comments. We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation adviser.

National Amenity Societies: No representations received during the statutory consultation period.

Consultant Conservation Officer: Confirms that plans and supporting statement have been assessed and that a site visit with the applicant and the NT curator has taken place. Photographs of the application site have been submitted. Application is acceptable and proposed fixings as detailed in the Heritage report are acceptable. Request an informative note to confirm that this application does not convey any approval for any lighting,

interpretation panels or an access viewing platform which would require a separate Listed Building Consent application.

The application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement which sets out the relationship between the Geological Gallery and this former entrance and the purpose of the gallery and the context of Creation, the Christian story.

The proposal affects the former staircase entrance lobby, which is open to the air, located within a loggia, and was part of the historic visitors approach to the Gallery. The historic visitors' approach part is in separate ownership and use, although the loggia itself is part of the National Trust demise.

A series of plaques, which were authentic artefacts from the classical world were mounted into the wall of the entrance lobby, where presumably people would be able to linger before being allowed into the Gallery. It is very clear where these were located, as the masonry was tooled to create shaped pockets for each artefact. The plaster or mortar remains where each artefact was embedded is plain to see. The artefacts were removed for safe keeping in recent times. The proposal involves reinstating casts of each artefact, as they are too valuable (not necessarily in monetary terms, although the application identifies values, but also in terms of rarity) and vulnerable to be left, although there is always the possibility that these could be mistaken for the genuine articles, so they are still vulnerable. Arguably, LBC should have been obtained for their removal as they are fixtures and fittings embedded within the structure (and I don't know whether LBC was obtained). Even if these plaques were a later addition, the lobby had a display function as there are paired corbelled stands for busts or lamps. In any event, the principle of reinstating copies is acceptable and goes some way to regularising this loss.

The main issues for me are:

1. Replicas need to be very good copies to reflect what has been removed. The originals are being curated and conserved.

2. The replicas are also vulnerable to being removed. The fixings are therefore critical, to avoid damage to the masonry, if someone attempts to remove them. They will need to be suitably fixed so that they sit properly within each panel, but also so that if they are attempted to be removed, the surrounding masonry will not be damaged. I note that the proposal is for fixing using dowelled rods and the method of fixing is exemplary but it is designed to be permanent. Can I ask that some consideration is given to this and the risk of damage from attempted theft. Interpretation would go some way to making it clear that they are not the genuine artefacts. There is no interpretation proposed as part of this phase of work.

3. The National Trust is planning to incorporate these panels within the interpretation of the Gallery. However, the door cannot be left ajar, as we witnessed on site it creates a very draughty environment, so it will need to be opened occasionally and under controlled or supervised access. I am also informed that the plans, which are not included in this application, are ultimately for a platform to be created at the top of the steps, which will obscure the steps. I understand that this is not included in the application because it is not part of the funding application. However, the application stands on its own and is not reliant on a platform. As that is not in the application we cannot second guess what that might look like and what impact it may have. It needs careful consideration and I also recommend that some consideration is given to lighting, as the stair lobby is quite dark. The merits of that will have to be considered separately and this application cannot be taken to assume that the platform is acceptable. It would have to be lightweight, temporary and reversible. None of those things can be conditioned.

My recommendations are, therefore, that we have a note on the LBC (an informative), that this application does not relate to the provision of interpretation panels or a platform within the staircase lobby / loggia, which may need a separate application for LBC.

OFFICER COMMENTS

This is a Listed Building Consent application for the reinstatement of six sculptural fragments and a terracotta roundel within the entrance portico to the Geological Gallery at Biddulph Grange Gardens.

Policy consideration includes that of DC2 of the adopted Local Plan which specifically relates to the historic environment. DC2 expects that the council will 'conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework specifies 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; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'

And 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.'

The consultant Conservation officer has assessed the application and raises no objections to it. The application is considered important to support given the significant historic value behind the sculptures and roundel. Subject to conditions and informative notes, it is recommended that the application is approved.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

That for the reasons outlined within the report, the application is approved subject to conditions and informative note(s). Due to the discussions which have taken place between the applicants and the Council's Consultant Conservation Officer, approval of the scheme will not result in any historical harm. There will be economic and heritage benefits by preservation of an historic gardens feature.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Conditional approval.

Case Officer: Lisa Jackson

Recommendation Date: 11/03/2022.

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council