

Our Ref: 22274/MM/TH
Your Ref: PP-13252414
Email: thumphries@firstplan.co.uk

Broadwall House 020 3096 7000
21 Broadwall info@firstplan.co.uk
London SE1 9PL firstplan.co.uk

23 July 2024

Planning Department
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham, Berkshire
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir/Madam,

WAITROSE, RECTORY ROAD, WOKINGHAM RG40 1BB – LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION FOR WORKS TO CAR PARK BOUNDARY WALL

We have been instructed by our client, Waitrose & Partners ("Waitrose"), to submit the enclosed Planning and Listed Building Consent applications in respect of the above address. The application has been submitted online via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-13252414).

The submission follows a recent consent for various works to the listed walls surrounding the car park approved under Listed Building ('LB') ref: 222748. It is made to secure consent for a revised package of works to Wall H1 required to make the wall safe following a further assessment of the condition of the wall by Hurst Peirce + Malcolm LLP ("HPM"), the structural engineers for the project.

An alternative package of works to Wall H1 were applied for together with a revised scheme for Wall H2 under Listed Building ref: 233120. This was, however, refused on 06 March 2024, with the sole reason being that there would be an unacceptable impact on the significance of the heritage asset. It is our understanding from subsequent discussions with Council Officers that the concerns raised principally related to the proposed works to Wall H1. The proposed works to Wall H2 have been submitted separately accordingly (ref: 241565), with this application seeking sole consent for a new package of works to Wall H1 to address the comments raised regarding the scheme submitted under app ref: 233120.

The works to the remaining walls consented under LB ref: 222748 will be undertaken as approved.

The revised works to Wall H1 will involve the installation of 3no. buttresses and 1no. full height brick wall along the south-eastern side of the wall designed to support the leaning side of the structure. This option has not been suggested to date as it requires the erection of buttresses on land outside of our client's control. However, a legal agreement is being secured with the neighbouring landowner to ensure that it can be delivered following confirmation from the Council that such a solution could be acceptable.

This application follows a meeting held on-site on 24 May 2024 with Officers of the Council, to include [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] from the Heritage Department. The proposed works reflect that discussed during these meetings. Waitrose are aware of the Council's desire to avoid as much rebuilding of the walls as possible and will therefore do everything they can to minimise the extent of works carried out onsite.

In accordance with national and local validation requirements, the submission is supported by the following documents:

- Completed planning and listed building consent application forms, including Certificate B;
- Completed CIL form 1;
- Planning and heritage statement (contained within this cover letter)
- Note on structural matters, prepared by the Morton Partnership (dated May 2024)
- Conditions summary for Wall H1, prepared by HPM (dated July 2024)
- Level 3 Listed building recording, prepared by Border Archaeology
- Site location plan (ref: DR-A-13200)
- Existing elevations & sections (ref: 25317-03); and
- Proposed elevations & sections (ref: 25317-01 P5)

The requisite application fee of £293 has been paid via the Planning Portal, together with the £70 admin fee.

Site Description

The application site relates to the car park associated with the purpose-built Waitrose supermarket located behind the main retail frontages along Rose Street and Broad Street within Wokingham Town Centre. The store and its associated car park were developed pursuant to permission in 1995 and have been present ever since. The car park is directly accessible from Rectory Road to the north.

As well as being located within the Wokingham Town Centre, the store is located within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area. It also borders a number of listed buildings which face onto Broad Street to the west.

The Waitrose store was originally built pursuant to consent in 1995 (ref: 42176). This allowed for the erection of a supermarket with car park, along with the change of use of 16/18 Rose Street to a restaurant with flats and rear extensions to Montague House. Since this consent there have been various consents for alterations to the site.

Listed Building Consent was granted in 2023 (ref: 222748) for a series of works to walls surrounding the Waitrose Car Park, including Wall H1, following extensive discussions with the heritage officer. The following conditions were attached to this relating to Wall H1:

- **C3:** prior to the demolition or dismantling of Wall H1, a Level 3 recording of the listed building needs to be prepared and submitted for approval
- **C4:** prior to the rebuilding of Walls H1 and H2, details and samples of brick additional to those salvaged from the dismantling need to be submitted for approval
- **C5:** the historic bricked-in archway within Wall H1 needs to remain in-situ unless otherwise agreed in writing with the LPA.

The approved works associated with the remaining walls other than Walls H1 and H2 will be carried out in accordance with the details approved under this consent.

A subsequent Listed Building application was submitted in 2023 (ref: 233120) to reflect revisions to the proposed works to Walls H1 and H2 following a further detailed assessment of the condition of the walls by HPM in Autumn 2023. This was refused on 06 March 2024 for the following reason:

The proposed reconstruction and restoration work to the car park boundary walls would cause harm to the designated heritage asset due to the loss of historic fabric, for which no clear and convincing justification has been provided. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3, Managing Development Delivery Document Policies

TB24 and TB26, Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and Section 2 of the Borough Design Guide SPD (2010).

From review of the associated response from the Heritage Officer, it is our understanding that the main reason for this position was due to the proposed rebuilding of a 14m length of Wall H1, with little reference made to the proposed works to Wall H2. This was reflected in discussions onsite on 24 May 2024 and in subsequent email correspondence. A new application solely for the works to Wall H2 is now under consideration under application ref: 233120.

Application proposals

The proposed works seek the necessary structural supports to avoid the collapse of Wall H1. This strategy has been devised to carry out the minimum works necessary to make the wall safe in the short term without the need for reconstruction works.

The works have been designed to reflect recommendations from the Morton Partnership in their note on structural matters dated May 2024 with the aim to minimise the amount of works to the existing heritage asset as directed by the Council's Heritage Department. Accordingly, they consist of the following:

- Installation of 3no. buttresses measuring 440mm wide by 675mm deep by 2,000mm high built into the south-eastern elevation of wall and on concrete foundations.
- Installation of 1no. brick wall measuring 325mm wide by 1950mm deep by 2,200mm high along the south-eastern elevation of the wall at the store end. To replace existing fenceline and be set in from the existing end of Wall H1 by 100mm.
- Rebuilding of top 6-8 courses of brick along the length of the wall
- Repointing of lower area of wall along both sides as required.

No further works to the wall will be required along the Waitrose car park side. Furthermore, the existing trees will now be retained.

Whilst the works will not resolve the lean of the wall, they will make it safe from collapse. This will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure no further movement occurs. In the event that further works are required this will be subject to a separate application as necessary.

Statutory Duty and Policy Guidance

Heritage policies

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines listed buildings as a building included in a list authorised by the Secretary of State together with any object or structure fixed to the building and/or in the curtilage of the building which forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948.

In respect of works to listed buildings, **Section 16** states that local planning authorities shall: *"have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses"*.

It has been accepted that a lack of harm to a heritage asset can be said to 'preserve' it, which is supported by relevant caselaw. Similarly, the term 'preserve' can also be interpreted to mean 'no more harmful' or 'as good as' the existing situation.

In determining applications affecting heritage assets, **Paragraph 194** of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that Local Planning Authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's

importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact on their significance. **Paragraph 195** also sets out that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. The NPPG also sets out that protecting and enhancing the historic environment is an important part of the NPPF's drive to achieve sustainable development.

At a local level **Policy CP3** requires that development does not have a detrimental impact on heritage assets with **Policy TB24** reaffirming that the council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets and their settings. To do this it will seek to require works to demonstrate that the proposals will at least conserve the significance of the asset and support works to any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.

Other planning policies of note

In terms of economic development, **Paragraph 85** of the NPPF sets out that:

"Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential" (our underlining)

At a local level **Policies CP1** and **CC04** requires that proposals seek to deliver a high-quality sustainable design. **Policy CP3** expands on this to require at Part (a) that development is of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life. Part (b) confirms it also needs to be safe and secure and Part (c) requires that it has no detrimental impact on the historic environment.

In terms of parking, **Local Policy CC07** sets out that development needs to demonstrate that appropriate provision is provided. The recommended parking standards are identified at Appendix 2.

Heritage assessment

The following is the designated listed building of relevance to the proposed works:

- Montague House and attached garden walls: Grade II* listed (ref: 1319160). Whilst the site does back onto the Waitrose car park, a historic image of the conservation area from the area study (see Figure 1 below) indicates that Wall H1 did form part of the boundary of the property in the past, with reference made to the building having original garden walls surrounding the former C18 terraced garden to the rear.

The listing description for this property is provided at [Appendix 1](#).

The listing description for Montague House refers to the garden walls surrounding the original C18 rear garden. This is understood from historic images to have included Wall H1. Whilst this is the case, since the listing was last updated in 1993 the site area has been altered significantly to accommodate the car park for the Waitrose store. Despite this, the conservation officer has confirmed in their comments on LB ref: 222748 that they should be regarded as having the same listed status as the building itself.

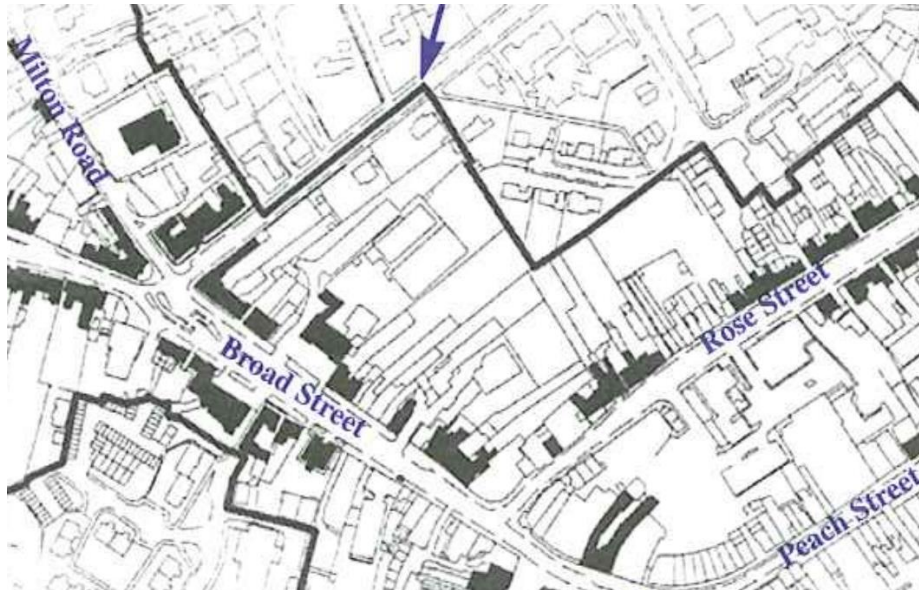


Figure 1. Extract from Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area Study

Impact on the listed wall (Heritage Statement)

Images of the existing condition of Wall H1 are provided at Figures 2 and 3 below. As shown, it currently has a severe lean towards the south-eastern side, with the upper courses of bricks in need of restoration.

The works approved under LB ref: 222748 included the rebuilding of 7m of Wall H1 up to the existing archway. However, upon further inspection, in order to address the existing issue a further 7m (total 14m), including the archway, would need to be rebuilt in order to address the leaning of the wall, which is identified to be out of plumb by 260mm (ie an aspect of 1:10). Due to the ground conditions a new pier and 10no. buttresses at 2m / 2.5m intervals would also be required in order to stabilise the wall at its existing height. This extent of works was considered unacceptable to officer of the Council's Heritage Department.

The revised scheme will be designed to support the existing wall in order to prevent a collapse from happening. This will be achieved through the installation of supports on the side of the wall that is leaning. As a result, no rebuilding works will be required other than to restore the upper 6-8 courses of bricks which have become weathered and fallen down.

Furthermore, the new brick wall will be set in from the existing end of the wall by 100mm, ensuring that the structure reads as having a historic continuation. This reflects comments received by the Heritage Officer with regards to the proposed design.

The proposed works will therefore have a significantly smaller impact on the significance of the wall than that previously consented under app ref: 222748. They should therefore be considered entirely acceptable in the context of the identified significance of the heritage asset. Indeed, support for such a solution was given by Wokingham's Heritage Officer during discussions prior to the submission of this application.

The proposed works will reuse the existing brickwork wherever possible. Where this is not possible, like for like bricks will be used. This will be bound using lime mortar as detailed on Plan ref: 25317-01 P4.



Figure 2. View of Wall H1 (eastern end)



Figure 3. View of Wall H1 (south-eastern elevation)

Remaining planning considerations

More generally there is a requirement at all levels of planning policy for development to be of a high-quality sustainable design. This is reflected through Local Policies CP1 and CC04, with Policy CP3 detailing that this would need to include with regards to massing, height, materials and safety.

The proposed works are the minimum required to make the existing wall safe and ensure it does not collapse. It therefore has clear heritage and safety benefits. The works are also designed to ensure that the character of the surrounding area is fully protected, with the buttresses and new wall constructed of brick to reflect the existing structure. The proposals will be entirely in accordance with the requirements of the aforementioned policies accordingly.

With regards to parking, Local Policy CC07 requires that development ensures an adequate level is provided. As detailed, no change will be made to the number of parking spaces as a result of the works. They should be considered entirely appropriate in this regard accordingly.

New brickwork

Where the existing bricks cannot be reused, they will be replaced with matching bricks of the same size and colour. These will be sourced from a reclamation yard, with an example of the type of brick obtained from here provided at Figure 4 below. A sample of this brick was shown to the conservation officer during a site visit on 12 December 2023.



Figure 4. Photograph of type of replacement brick sourced from the reclamation yard.

Design and Access

Use

There is no change of use proposed as part of this application.

Scale and amount

This proposal does not affect the scale or quantum of development onsite. The proposal merely relates to the restoration of the existing boundary wall and provision of the required supports necessary to ensure the continued safety for users of the car park.

Appearance

The works will be undertaken to retain the materials and features as existing where possible. Where required, materials will be sourced like-for-like.

Access

Existing access arrangements to and from the site will remain unchanged by the application proposals.

Conclusion

The application proposals seek to carry out the necessary works to Wall H1 to improve the visual amenity and safety of the area for visitors. The wall is currently in a state of disrepair and at high risk of collapse. There is therefore urgent need to carry out works to make it safe. The proposed works are therefore designed to carry out these improvements whilst avoiding the need for reconstruction.

The wall in question represents a boundary wall associated with a Grade II* listed property. The schedule of works has been carefully designed with this in mind and will ensure the future retention of this asset. This application seeks to establish a revised extent of works to Wall H1 to that previously approved under LB ref: 222748 following further investigations by our client's structural engineer to determine the level of works needed to address the degradation to the wall. The design solution takes full account of the significance of the designated asset and should therefore be considered acceptable in this regard.

The proposed works were discussed with Officers from the Council's Conservation Department during a site visit on 24 May 2024. This application seeks to formalise the works to Wall H1 only following this meeting. An application for works to Wall H2 has been submitted separately.

I trust that you have sufficient information to validate and approve the application. However, should you have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



TIM HUMPHRIES
Associate