Planning Committee: 24 June 2021 **Item Number:** 6

Application No: W 20 / 2135 LB

Registration Date: 22/12/20
Town/Parish Council: Leamington Spa **Expiry Date:** 23/03/21
Case Officer: Andrew Tew
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United Reformed Church, Spencer Street, Leamington Spa, CV31 3NE
Internal and external alterations for creation of new office space. FOR Complex Development Projects

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This application is being presented to Committee because Warwick District Council own the site and due to the number of public objections received.

RECOMMENDATION

Listed building consent is recommended to be GRANTED.

DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks consent for internal and external alterations for creation of new office space. These alterations comprise:

- Open up staircase well to basement, with staircase to serve upper floors
- Reinstate windows
- Reroof and insertion of 4 No. conservation rooflights
- Works to basement to create office space
- Steps and new entrance for rear elevation

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

This application for listed building consent forms part of a wider scheme relating to 3 buildings around Spencer Yard. This area lies within the town centre of Leamington Spa, within the Conservation Area and forms an integral part of "The Creative Quarter". The site is situated within a predominantly commercial part of Leamington Town Centre.

The 3 buildings forming the wider scheme are; the Grade II listed United Reform Church (URC), the former benefits office building (the Old Dole Office), and the Nursery.

The site is adjoined to the east by the Grade II listed buildings comprising Victoria Colonnade and Victoria Terrace. These contain a variety of residential and commercial uses and include a number of windows overlooking the site.

Further Grade II listed buildings adjoin the site to the south in Spencer Street. The Loft Theatre adjoins the site to the north.

Vehicular access to the rear of the site is gained off Spencer Street via Spencer Yard; there is presently no public access into Spencer Yard via Victoria Colonnade.

PLANNING HISTORY

W/06/1718/LB & 1719 - Part demolition, conversion, refurbishment and extension of existing building for use as theatre and associated facilities

W/09/0081 & 0082/LB - Formal approval of amendments to application No. W06/1718LB & W06/1719 Part demolition, conversion, refurbishment, and extension of existing building for use as theatre and associated facilities

RELEVANT POLICIES

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029
- HE1 - Protection of Statutory Heritage Assets
- HE2 - Protection of Conservation Areas
- Royal Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2029
- RLS3 - Conservation Area

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Royal Leamington Spa Town Council: No objection. Note condition attached to previous scheme regarding limit on overall height and wish to see this carried forward.

WDC Conservation: No objection, following amendments, and subject to conditions.

Public Response: 7 letters of objection, 6 support received and 1 neutral;

Objections

- Lack of parking
- Request the installation of a yard gully at the bottom of the driveway prior to the closing of the existing outlet.
- No Air Quality Management Plan
- Insufficient travel plan
- More support for small creative businesses
- Would prefer a cafe
- Would prefer an orchestral hall
- More parking provision
- Too much office space in town
- No risk assessment for emergencies
- Safety issues caused by increased density

- Road safety issues

Support comments

- Bringing listed building back into use
- Community use would be beneficial but cost would be prohibitive
- Request that railings are re-installing at front of URC and disabled parking space retaining
- Good to see development
- Address drainage in Spencer Street
- Minimise disruption to business
- Good to regenerate area
- Transport not an issue as good links available
- Welcomes development, but would like to see a music and film studio with upmarket coffee shop

ASSESSMENT

Impact on the Listed Building

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 explains that in considering whether to grant permission for developments affecting listed buildings or their setting, the local planning authority 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.

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that 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.

Policy HE1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 states that development will not be permitted if it would lead to substantial harm to or total loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, unless it is demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

The URC in its current state has been left empty for many years. It is starting to fall into a state of disrepair. The structural report accompanying the application suggests that water ingress and lack of maintenance is starting to affect the building, including main roof trusses.

The application, as amended, proposes to recover the roof, saving as much of the original tiling as possible. This will include the insertion of 4 no. conservation rooflights. The applicant has demonstrated that the rooflights are essential to provide sufficient light to the proposed redevelopment, as the basement will be opened up as well, and light needs to penetrate to all levels of the building. The rooflights therefore make a critical contribution to bringing the listed building back into use and securing its long term future. Furthermore, the size and profile of the rooflights has been reduced to minimise the impact.

The proposed mezzanine will make use of the existing balcony structure and columns, which are cast iron. New steel supports will be inserted over the top of the existing structure and could be reversed.

Turning to the opening up of the basement, site investigation suggests the basement foundations are shallow and the installation of a new insulated slab would mean no remedial works would be necessary. The area of the ground floor that will be punched through into the basement has previously been infilled. Removing this brickwork will not have a detrimental effect on the masonry of the vaults spanning parallel. Again, it is also important to consider that facilitating the use of the basement is a critical element in securing the viable re-use of the listed building.

WDC Conservation have been consulted throughout the course of the application. They are happy with the principles contained within a submitted window repair document; a full schedule of proposed repairs can be covered via condition. The roof lights now proposed are noticeably smaller and the impact has been appropriately mitigated and, combined with the ventilation strategy, Conservation feel this provides sufficient justification for this element of the scheme. Conservation note that the proposed staircase looks to appear relatively lightweight in appearance and consider this to be acceptable subject to a condition requiring large scale details (including colour finishes).

On this basis, WDC Conservation raise no objection. Therefore it has been concluded that the proposals would preserve the character and appearance of the listed building.

The proposed works would facilitate the reuse of a listed building that has been vacant for a number of years. As such, the proposal accords with the NPPF and Policies HE1 and RLS3.

CONDITIONS

1 The works hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this consent. **Reason:** To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details shown on the site location plan and approved drawing(s) 2362.04.3-P2, 2362.03.6-P3, 2362.03.3-P4 and 2362.03.5-P5, and specification contained therein, submitted on 22nd December 2020 and 2362.03.7 P1, 12000 SK02 A, 2362.01.10 P6, 2362.01.12 P4, 2362.01.13 P4, 2362.01.15 P1, 2362.01.16 P1, 2362.01.4 P7, 2362.01.5 P7 , 2362.01.6 P7, 2362.01.7 P6, 2362.02.4 P4, 2362.02.5 P4, 2362.02.6 P4 and 2362.00.04 P2, and specification contained therein, submitted on 27th May 2021. **Reason:** For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in

accordance with Policies BE1 and BE3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029.

3 No development shall be carried out above slab level unless and until large scale details of doors, windows (including a section showing the window reveal, heads and cill details), eaves, verges, rainwater goods, railings, parapets, cladding and the internal staircase at a scale of 1:5 (including details of materials) have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out otherwise than in strict accordance with such approved details. **Reason:** To ensure a high standard of design and appearance for this Listed Building and the Conservation Area, and to satisfy Policy HE1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029.

4 The roofing material for the pitched roof parts of the development hereby permitted shall be natural slate. **Reason:** To ensure a high standard of design and appearance for this Listed Building and Conservation Area, and to satisfy Policy HE1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029.