

1 July 2019

**Delivered by email**

Rebecca Whitney  
Planning Services  
South Cambridgeshire District Council

Dear Rebecca

**TOTAL DEMOLITION OF THE BUILDING KNOWN AS THE 'GREAT EASTERN DRYING SHED'  
PLANNING REFERENCE: S/1483/19/LB**

Following the end of the consultation period on 19 June 2019, we thought that it would be helpful to pick up on those comments that have been made to date, both from residents, interested parties and consultees. We set out our responses in turn below for your consideration:

**SCDC Health & Environmental Services**

We accept the conditions proposed.

**Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team, Archaeology**

We accept the condition proposed.

**Cambridgeshire County Council Highways**

We accept the condition proposed.

**SCDC Sustainable Drainage, Ecology & Arboriculture Officers**

We welcome their confirmation that the application is acceptable. Regarding Ecology, we accept the informative condition concerning bats.

**Environment Agency**

We clarify that the building will be demolished to slab level and no ground works will be undertaken. The existing hard standing will be utilised for storage of equipment associated with the tanning industry. We therefore consider that the suggested conditions are not required.

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## **SCDC Historic Buildings Officer**

We welcome that the Historic Buildings Officer does not object to this wholly exceptional case and we accept the conditions proposed. We welcome the agreement that the retention of the brick base is not a reasonable alternative to the proposed demolition.

## **Historic England**

We acknowledge Historic England's view that the loss of the Great Eastern Drying Shed would be deeply regrettable. We welcome that Historic England consider that the very high test for demolition set out in the Framework have been met. With regards to the comments regarding the brick base, we note that SCDC are happy that its retention has been adequately investigated by the Applicant and it has been demonstrated that its retention is not a reasonable alternative to the proposed demolition.

## **Sawston Parish Council**

We welcome that the Parish Council supports the application for demolition.

## **Victorian Society**

We thank the Victorian Society for continuing to engage with us regarding the case of the Drying Shed. We note that they do not object to the application, acknowledging the exceptional nature of the application and that in principle demolition might have to be accepted. They further recommend a building recording condition with sound fabric to be salvaged and retained on site.

## **Association for Industrial Archaeology**

We thank the Association for Industrial Archaeology for their response and acknowledging that the existing working site presents retention difficulties. The Applicant has had informal discussions with [REDACTED] of the Weald and Downland Museum previously regarding moving the building to their site, however given the size and condition of the building it was not considered possible. It is proposed to carefully dismantle the building with usable material salvaged for repair works to the other drying sheds on the tannery site. As noted under the Archaeology response, we accept the recording condition as proposed by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team.

## **[REDACTED] on behalf of the Heritage Network & Industrial Buildings Preservation Trust**

We note the objection raised and respond accordingly:

The Planning Statement submitted set out the background and history of this application before considering the very high tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Whilst there have been applications made for demolition in the past, Sections 2 and 4 of the Planning Statement provide information regarding the attempts made by the Applicant to find a suitable use for the Drying Shed, including the preparation of feasibility studies and structural reports. Only when these have been unsuccessful has the applicant submitted applications for demolition (which as a result were submitted many years apart). It is simply not true to say that the applicant has deliberately neglected this building as for 40 years they have worked constructively with SCDC and Historic England in an attempt to find suitable use.

The Applicant is willing to part with the building for a nominal sum (£1) however the conservation deficit to restore the building and provide a new use has been a very significant detractor, as acknowledged by [REDACTED] both in 2003 and again in her objection. The current figures suggest a cost of £1.2million (up to Q1 2019) to repair the building, without finding a new use for it or allowing for its adaptation other than the installation of a steel frame to provide support. This has risen significantly from the figures provided in the 2002 Feasibility Study commissioned by the Industrial Buildings Preservation Trust.



The independent reports commissioned by Historic England in 2017 concluded that the extent of repair required would lead to a loss of significance akin to reconstruction and still without a viable use being identified. This called into question the heritage significance of the restored building and it is on this basis that this application for demolition is made. As part of this application, these reports were updated to provide up to date figures and an assessment of the extent of repair. It is considered by Freeland Rees Roberts' conservation architects that 30% of the fabric could be salvaged, whilst The Morton Partnership suggested a figure of 50%. However, with greater reuse of materials there is greater cost owing to the craftsmanship required. [REDACTED] provides no evidence regarding her claim that a greater amount of fabric can be retained, and nothing about the extent and nature of repairs or the associated costs in her objection. However she does appear to acknowledge that the restoration of the Drying Shed is, in any case, economically unviable.

We acknowledged that the demolition of the Grade II\* listed building is wholly exceptional, as great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, in line with the statutory duty set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 9 of the Planning Statement addresses the high tests set out in the Framework. We note that Historic England support us in their consideration that the very high tests for demolition have been met and that the SCDC Historic Buildings Officer similarly does not object to the application for demolition.

We note [REDACTED] assertion that the whole of the site should be considered in a scheme to restore the Drying Shed. Proposals to this extent were prepared in the 1995 Feasibility Study and the 2002 Feasibility Study. The development of the 2002 study did progress further than 'draft' partly because little consideration was given to the working practices of the tannery, particularly regarding vehicular movements and deliveries to the site. This was in addition to the extent of the conservation deficit which became clear during the study.

This remains the case today, with the extent of fabric renewal being 50-70% and the costs for the Drying Shed alone now increasing to £1.2million (up to Q1 2019) (without providing a new use, the adaptation costs or the installation of services) The conversion of the Drying Shed remains economically unviable regardless of the wider site, as was found in 2002.

Furthermore, the Tannery is to remain on site as a going concern. The retention of the business is important in social and economic terms for Sawston and for the preservation of the remaining historic buildings and the character of the Sawston Conservation Area which is at risk. The character of the Sawston Conservation Area is inherently linked with its tannery industry, both historically and today. Therefore the loss of the business would adversely affect the contribution it makes, as agreed by the SCDC Historic Buildings Officer.

We note that [REDACTED] has subsequently contacted Historic England regarding the upgrading of the building to Grade II\*. Whilst we do not challenge its upgrading in our supporting statements, we note that it is generally acknowledged that the building was upgraded to attract grant funding. [REDACTED] suggests that the Applicant did not challenge its upgrading because they "could find nothing to deny the recommendation". This is incorrect. The Applicant supported the upgrading of the building in the hope that funding would be forthcoming and solution to the Drying Shed be found. Sadly, this did not provide the hoped for catalyst.

### **Members of the Public**

We note that two letters from members of the public have been received. These are summarised as follows:

One member of the public objects to the application and makes reference to a different case. We note that each case should be considered on its own merits and it is demonstrated in the submitted Planning Statement how the high tests set out in the Framework have been met, to which Historic England agree.

We welcome the support of the other member of the public who acknowledges the case made in the submitted Planning Statement and on balance supports this application.

The consultation period has now expired. We will continue to monitor the responses received, responding only where new issues are raised that have not been covered in this letter.

We hope that the contents of this letter are of assistance in your consideration of the application. If you have any other questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

