EXTENSIONS & ALTERATIONS TO PROVIDE A FIRST FLOOR MEETING ROOM & NEW ROOF

THE MASONIC HALL
ST. MARY'S ROAD
HINCKLEY



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

The Proposal

1. This is a full application for extensions and alterations to the single storey Hinckley Masonic Hall to add a first floor meeting room and to replace the existing flat roof with a new Mansard style roof

The Site & Surrounding Area

2. The Hall fronts St. Mary's Road at its junction with the Argents Mead access to the Borough Council offices. The rectangular 625m^2 site is almost completely occupied by the building.

3. The location is near the middle of the Hinckley town centre, only 100m or so from St Mary's Church. Immediately to the west is the recently built three storey Florence House offices building and across the road to the east is an even more recent office building. The Hall faces the St. Mary's town centre public car park.

Use of the Building

4. The Hall has had a dual use throughout its life. In addition to housing the temple for a number of local Lodges, it has been in regular use as a venue for parties (birthdays, receptions and the like),meetings and other events benefitting from a town centre location. Well documented recent examples are use as the venue for the Blood Donor Service and as the venue for the Hinckley Beer Festivals organised by the local CAMRA organisation.

5. There is no proposal to change these activities. In physical and practical terms, updating the building to provide a new temple area on the first floor simply makes for more efficient use of all available space and facilities.

Planning Policy

6. The obvious location for a Masonic Hall is in the town centre, The existing use, for which no change is proposed with this application, is therefore supported by national planning policy and all relevant saved policies of the local Development Plan.

7. The proposal will significantly improve the appearance of this unique town centre building. It therefore satisfies the requirements of all relevant saved policies of the Local Development Plan.

Design

8. The Hall was built in 1927 as a single storey structure under a flat roof. This date is in the early years of the Art Deco style of architecture and the front façade of the building exhibits various decorative features that are evocative of its use and of that period. The Hall is not a listed building.



9. In truth, the Hall does not present a particularly attractive external appearance or proportion, yet it is probably unique in the town. The challenge with the new design, therefore, is to improve that appearance without detriment to the existing Art Deco features.

10. Careful consideration has been given to the roof configuration, and particularly whether this should be a mansard type or a simple pitch form. There are structural difficulties with the latter, mainly resulting from the 15m width of the building, the need to raise the side walls to accommodate the first floor space, and the requirement for a clear span at that level. In planning terms the resulting ridge height would be in excess of 11m, and this would be disproportionate to the rest of the building. In simple terms, it would not look right.

11. In comparison, the mansard solution, using lightweight dark grey fibre cement slates to give the appearance of natural slate, does look right, behind a front façade that retains the angular character of the existing building. Existing features are retained and repeated, such as the brick and tile window detail, with blue brick soldier courses to separate new brickwork (as close a match as possible) from the existing. There is also a central coloured render panel introduced to add some lightness to the composition. The result retains the Art Deco feel of the Hall as it sits next to its modern neighbours.

12. The new side elevation to the Council Offices access is a significant improvement on the existing arrangement, created by the new roof and the introduction of large new glass doors required to provide access to the outside smokers deck.

13. Rather than using a rather utilitarian steel fire escape at the rear, the proposal is to use a circular staircase instead. This turns a necessary safety requirement into another feature of the improved building.

Protected Species

14. The site is close to St. Mary's Church and the open space around it, an area where there is known to be bat activity. A Bat Survey has therefore been carried out by EMEC Ecology and is attached to this application.

15. The clear conclusion is – "***No evidence of bats and no features suitable for roosting bats were found***". In reality, this conclusion is no surprise in view of the nature and construction of this building.

Access

16. There is no proposed change to the existing access and parking arrangements. The site has never had any on site parking facilities, and it does not need any, with its location in the middle of the town centre immediately opposite a public car park. The principal hours of use of the Hall will continue to be in the evening and night when most other town centre shops and offices are closed.

17. Facilities for disabled access to the building are already in place with the ramp to the front door. There is no proposed change to this arrangement.

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