

DATE OF COMMITTEE  
12<sup>th</sup> September 2013

THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMY AND EDUCATION/

CONSERVATION GRANT – THE MOAT HOUSE, LICHFIELD STREET, TAMWORTH

**EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None

**PURPOSE**

For Members to consider and approve an application for a conservation grant for the repair of the first floor ceiling of The Moat House.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that the following grant offer be made subject to the normal grant conditions:**

- 1. A grant of £9,169.00 be made in respect of The Moat House, Lichfield Street from the 2013-2014 conservation budget**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

An application has been received for grant aid towards restoration of the first floor ceiling of The Moat House.

The Moat House is a grade 2\* listed building and the “listing” includes reference to the first floor ceiling as follows:

“1<sup>st</sup> floor has long room with C16 plaster ceiling with square and oval panels with armorial bearings or birds with grapes and Tudor-arched fireplace with fluted frieze and cornice”

During 2012 concerns were raised about the condition of the ceiling with the fear that it may collapse.

A visit was undertaken by your officers, English Heritage and the Conservation Officer from Lichfield District Council and it was considered that a more detailed inspection was required. This was carried out by Fairhurst Ward Abbots in November 2013.

The initial observations from their visit were

“The Jacobean ceiling exhibits a pattern of plaster “strap work” and is decorated with the family tree heraldry of the Comberford family. The approximate size is 5.5m x 16m. the condition is varied, with signs of water ingress and cracks have been reported as having become enlarged, the ceiling where we applied gentle pressure

was satisfactory despite the contortion and sagging”.

A further in depth survey commenced on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and lasted for 2 days. The cost of the survey was £1985 plus VAT. The survey identified a number of problems including

- Slumping of plasterwork
- A series of cracks
- Failure of paints
- Water ingress
- Poor repairs in the past which are unsuitable and could lead to further problems
- Movement early in the life of the ceiling arising the use of green oak joists
- Use of gypsum plaster to create crisp new mouldings
- Loss of paint, particularly to the heraldic shields

The consultants have recommended 16 actions aimed at restoring the ceiling. They include

- Filling larger cracks with appropriate material
- Selective paint removal with paint softeners and small steam tools
- Careful removal of some face plaster, where it is a modern introduction, and make good with riven oak and lime plaster
- Re-secure ribbed strap work
- Repair attic floor to allow access to the ceiling
- Treat timbers with wood preservative
- Secure the plaster ceiling into the timber matrix above (in excess of 300 fixing points) to stabilise ceiling and prevent further slumping.

The works are estimated to cost £16,750 with a further contingency of £3,500.

The adopted Conservation Grant Scheme allows for the payment of a 50% grant towards the restoration of special architectural features and 40% towards professional fees.

If a full grant was to be given, without allowing for contingency, a contribution of £8375 towards the works and £794 towards professional fees could be considered. A total of £9169.

Given the unique nature of the ceiling, and the status of the building, it is considered very important to carry out conservation works without delay and therefore it is recommended that a grant of £9169 be offered.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The offer of a conservation grant incurs limited resource implications arising from the initial inspection of the ceiling with the applicant, English Heritage and Lichfield District Council's Conservation Officer. These costs have been met from current revenue budget. Follow up visits will be required during the works which will also be met from existing revenue budget.

The capital works will be dependent on finance from the Conservation Grant budget. The

total available budget is £68,717 less actuals of £14,945 and commitments of £13,284 leaving a balance of £40,488. Committing a further £9,169 would leave a balance of £31,319 for other projects being considered.

## **LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND**

In accepting a conservation grant the applicant would be bound by the terms and conditions set out in the Conservation Grant Scheme which provides for the repayment of the grant in the event that the property is sold on within 3 years. All works would be inspected prior to payment of the grant to ensure delivery of the works in accordance with the schedule of works and to a good standard of workmanship. Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the Conservation Grant conditions may result in the grant being withheld either in part or total.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The Conservation Grant scheme supports works to historic buildings so that they can be appreciated by future generations. The Moat house is a very important building within the Borough and would greatly benefit from the works proposed. Failure to address the problems currently being experienced may result in the loss of the ceiling.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest

The Moat House, Tamworth – The Long Gallery Ceiling – Survey by Fairhurst Ward Abbotts

## **REPORT AUTHOR**

Mr J Gunn

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **APPENDICES**

None

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