

Redditch Borough Council

Planning Committee – 11th March 2015

UPDATE REPORT (2)

Agenda Item 9 – Article 4(1) – Removal of Permitted Development Rights to Demolish (Part 31) – Confirmation

Chapel at Junction of Birchfield Road and Chapel Street, Headless Cross, Redditch

The following comments and accompanying photographs were received by Officers from the owners of the property, as described above.

“Dear Sirs

I would like to make the following comments with respect to the report that has been prepared by Redditch Borough Council officers.

Point 3.1 “...although the potential liability is limited ...”

The statement is correct when referencing the timescale but should not be interpreted that either the likely hood or the size of a claim is limited; indeed the cost of a potential claim is substantial.

Point 3.4 “...It should be done in the public interest...”

When making the application to action the prior approval, a site notice was displayed. Our understanding was that there were no representations made to the council. We, as the owners, were approached by several local residents asking about our intentions. All the local residents were glad to see that finally something was being done with the local eyesore.

3.8 Working with the owners.

There was a meeting on the 30th Jan 2015, but we are still awaiting responses to questions that were raised.

Point 3.9 Summary of representation.

The public notice Redditch Borough Council issued, stated comments should be made by the 9th January 2015. There had been two representations submitted by the 9th January 2015, not three which has been indicated by the officers. There had been our justification of why this prior approval should be allowed, along with justification identifying that we had considered all possible alternative uses. The second representation was an objection.

“Potential harm to roosting bats”. There are no bats roosting in the chapel or any history of such. As the proposed demolition is to be a manual hand by hand operation, if any bats were identified, we would have to take the appropriate action to protect the protected species.

“Loss of a church for developer profit”. There is a long history of the chapel failing to work and no demand for the chapel.

“Congestion and noise to existing residents ...” As the proposed demolition is to be a manual hand by hand operation, there should be minimal effect on the local residents.

“Difficulty of parking on future developments.” If the current use of the chapel was fully utilised, the potential of parking issues would be massive, as there is currently no parking. Any future use as residential would be a reduction in potential car movements.

“Threats to board up...” This was not a threat. As owners we are trying to reduce the potential liability as landlords.

“No market demand...” it is not to say that there is no demand, but a local estate agent was concerned with regards to the factors such as, unusual design, poor window areas and lack of outside space, as well as the inability to secure new home warranties. They did not think that we would be able to achieve a viable sale price.

3.10 **Building control advice.**

There has been no mention of the joint meeting held on the 30th Jan 2015, where the Building Control Officer from Redditch was shown internal photographs. He was in agreement that the photographs showed signs of movement around the window and the large roof trusses, in addition to the end gable.

The Building Control Officer went on to comment that the current window would discount conversion to flats and that due to the height from the floor to the windows, would cause compliance issues with building control and fire regulations.

“Development plan. ...” A report is scheduled to be considered at a forthcoming executive committee meeting.

Redditch has a history of allowing building on the local listing to be demolished. Boxwood House, Park House and Headless Cross Methodist Church are all examples of this. The process that the Council has employed for the first time is against the previous policy of the council.

3.11 ...“the response should be proportionate to the significance of the asset...”

The permitted development rights have been allowed on more significant buildings as detailed above. During the consultation period there have been no significant complaints about the loss of the asset. If you look at the objection that came in, the resident was a local person that did not want further building in the area and had issues around parking. They did not talk in terms of saving an asset, concerns they had or the effect on the loss of the asset.

3.14

We believe that the usual Council procedure should have applied and the permitted development rights allowed. This system, that will cost the Council thousands in compensation, has not been published or even considered in public domain by the Council Committee. For the Council to change the historic approach, we believe a policy change should be required. The process should have been established and agreed by committee with a time line for publication and implementation; in order to give fair warning to property owners. The way that the council has blocked our permitted rights is unfair. There have clearly been other assets in the town that are of greater impact, which have not attracted this level of objection by officers. It is unclear why this chapel, one that has not been used for years and is far from unique; has justified the council to deploy such an unfair and costly response. “



Image 1: Shows the window height from the floor.



Image 2: Shows gable end wall cracking.

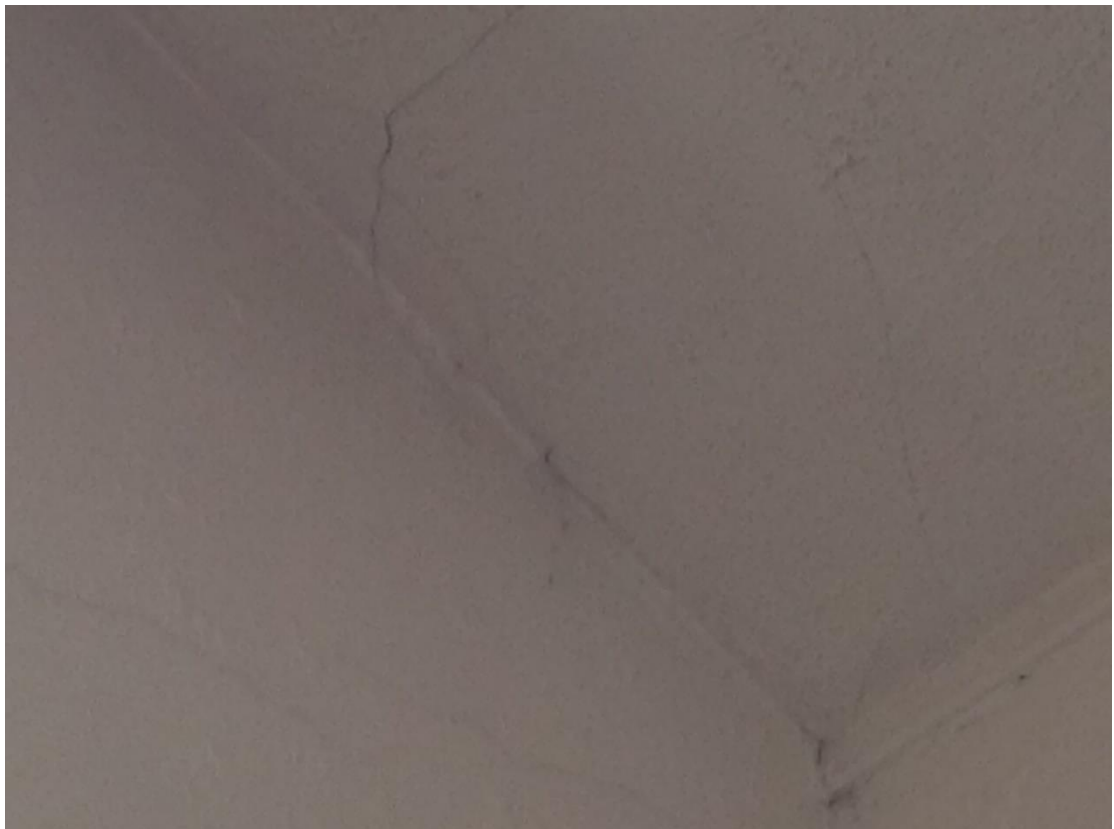


Image 3: Shows cracking on ceiling and wall.



Image 4: Joist showing signs of movement and spread.



Image 5: Shows wall cracking under weight of roof having effect onto windows.



Image 6: Shows cracking in roof joists.



Image 7: Shows roof joist supports cracking.



Image 8: Roof line shows a dip.



Image 9: End gable showing signs of movement.



Image 10: Rear view of chapel.

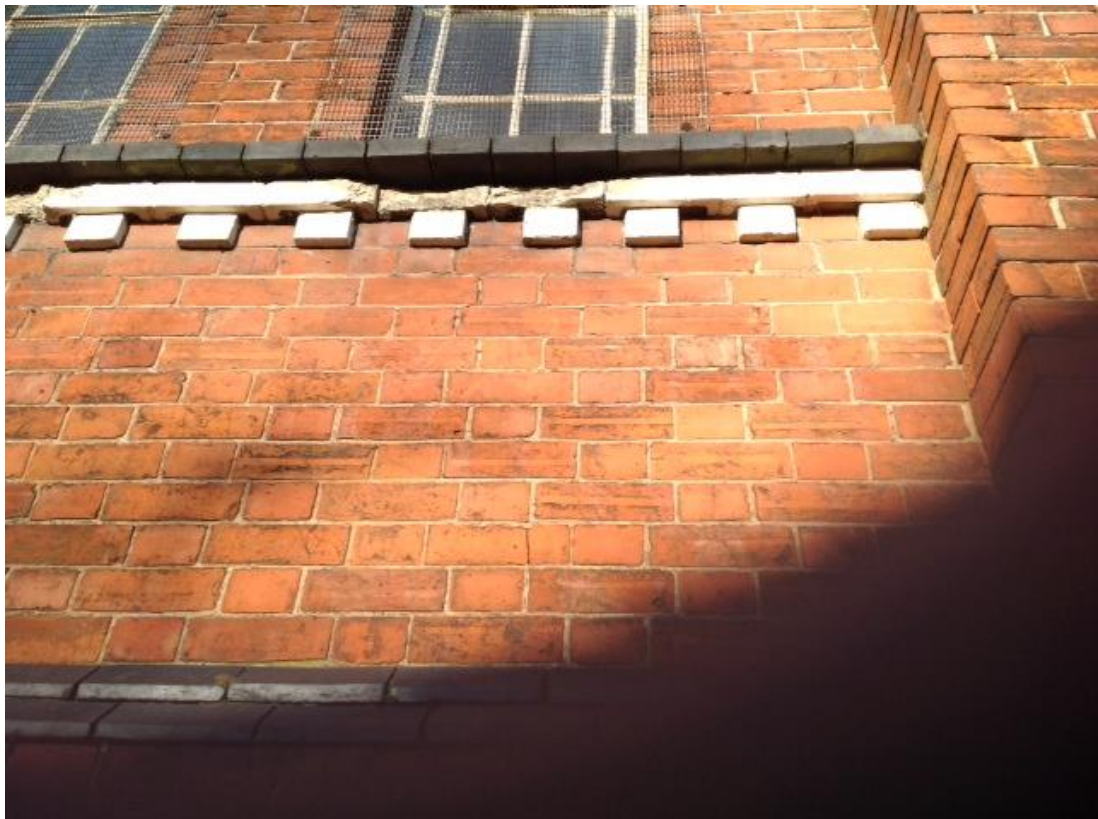


Image 11: Brick work damage.



Image 12: Brick work pillar.



Image 13: Birchfield Road view.



Image 14: Chapel Street view.