

**Holburne Museum of Art  
Great Pulteney Street  
Bath  
BA2 4DB**

**Listed Building Grade 1  
Bath Conservation Area  
Registered Historic Park Grade 2  
World Heritage Site**

**EXPIRY DATE: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007  
WARD: Bathwick  
APPLICANT: The Trustees of the Holburne Museum of Art**

**REASON FOR REPORTING APPLICATIONS TO COMMITTEE:**

These linked major applications raise complex issues and are reported to Committee because they have proved to be of considerable public interest, with large numbers of both supporters and objectors. Whatever decisions are made, the outcome is likely to be controversial.

The proposed scheme comprises significant internal alterations, and also a major extension at the rear of this important Grade I Listed Building, in a location which materially affects not only the Listed Building itself, but also its setting within the historic Sydney Gardens.

As will be explained later in the Report, the Applicant is in a situation where crucial grant funding is dependent upon the timing of the LPA's decision on the Planning application, and so this Special meeting of the Committee has had to be convened.

**PROPOSALS:**

**Item 1a:-**

**07/01270/FUL – Full Planning Application  
Refurbishment and alterations to existing building and erection of extension to provide new galleries, display areas and education and visitor facilities including cafe and museum shop.**

**Item 1b:-**

**07/01272/LBA – Listed Building Consent  
Refurbishment, internal and external alterations including demolition of staircase and rebuilding in different location and erection of extension to provide new galleries, display areas and education and visitor facilities including cafe and museum shop.**

*[Members will note that the two descriptions differ in that the refurbishment of the Listed Building and the demolition and re-building of the internal staircase do not appear in the Planning application description, as these repairs and internal works do not constitute "development"]*

## **INTRODUCTION**

These two applications are made under different legislation, but raise virtually the same set of material issues. These relate principally to the impact of the proposals upon the fabric and character of the Grade 1 Listed Museum building and to the visual impact of the extension upon the character and appearance of the Museum's setting within the historic Sydney Gardens, the bath Conservation area and the World Heritage Site. There are no amenity issues other than the visual impact already noted, and no other technical matters such as Traffic or Flood Risk are of significance in this case.

For these reasons, Members are able to consider a single Report, which will deal with both applications. However, it will be necessary for two separate decisions to be made.

In order to assist Members to understand this complex proposal, a Committee Site Visit has been arranged for the afternoon of the Committee Meeting. This will not be an opportunity for lobbying by any interested parties, but will simply be a means of illuminating the debate on the applications which will then take place in the public meeting that evening.

## **HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

Robert Adam produced a master plan of "Bath New Town" for William Pulteney (1777-1782) which included a grand plan for a large hexagonal pleasure garden on the axis with Great Pulteney Street. Thomas Baldwin succeeded Adam and made modifications to the master plan including the design for a Tavern/Hotel (*now the Holburne Museum*) and Sydney Gardens. From the outset the pleasure gardens and the building were considered together.

The construction of Sydney Gardens began in 1792. Charles Harcourt Masters replaced Baldwin and produced his own design on which construction started in 1796. The building had external dining boxes to embrace the gardens allowing diners special vantage points from which to view the pleasure gardens entertainments. On its garden elevation there was a balconied bandstand and covered garden entrance. The balcony sat on Doric columns beneath which visitors could enter the gardens through the space partly enclosed by a translucent screen with a painted image.

Following the decline in popularity of pleasure gardens in England a number of changes in the use and the fabric of the building occurred. In 1908 the Trustees of Sir William Holburn's estate sought to purchase the building, with a view to changing it into a Museum to house the collection of William Holburne which was kept at 10 Cavendish Crescent. It was to be a nucleus for the establishment of a Museum Of Fine Art for the City of Bath. In 1913 the Trust purchased the Sydney Hotel and two acres of garden, and the Corporation of Bath purchased the remaining nine acres of Sydney Gardens.

The conversion of the building to a museum was undertaken by the architect Sir Reginald Blomfield. By the time that Blomfield became involved with the Holburne Gallery Project (1910) he was in his prime and was a well established authority on architecture and was vice President of the RIBA (President 1912-1914). He was one of the leading architects of Edwardian Britain and a garden designer of national significance. Officers can, on request, supply more information regarding Blomfield's importance as an Architect.

Blomfield substantially reconstructed the interior converting four storeys into three. Externally he altered and enriched the façade to give the building a greater presence in the townscape and he rebuilt the side and garden elevations. A rubble stone wall separated the Museum from the Park. Blomfield's scheme also allowed for future extension by adding pavilions at each side of the building. The Museum opened on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1916.

The Holburne Museum remains an independent institution with charitable status, which is administered by the Holburne Museum Trust Company, a company limited by guarantee. The members of the Trust company also act as Trustees and set the policy for the museum. In 1973 a partnership with the University of Bath was created, providing a craft studies centre. The Holburne Museum is the University Museum for the University of Bath, and as such the Holburne receives funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to support the stewardship of the collection. In 2005 a Higher Education Strategy Board was established to set the HE policy for the Museum. The board is chaired by the University of Bath and has representatives from other institutions in the region; Bath Spa University, Bristol University, and the University of the West of England.

## **DESCRIPTION OF SITE**

The Holburne is a Grade 1 listed building, located within Sydney Gardens which is itself a Grade 2 Registered Historic Park and Garden, and which also includes several Grade 2 listed buildings. It is also located within the Bath Conservation Area and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Brunel's GWR railway line from London to Bristol passes through the Gardens and is on the Government's tentative list of additional World Heritage Sites.

The Holburne Museum is set at the south west end of Sydney Gardens and forms focal points for Great Pulteney Street to the front and in the dominant axial view through the gardens from the rear. It also forms a pivotal landmark at the junction between Sydney Place, Great Pulteney Street and Sydney Gardens.

The building is constructed in ashlar limestone with a flat roof (not visible from the ground). The front section of the museum is slightly higher than the garden elevation. It has a forward projecting three arched loggia carrying a Corinthian portico, with a moulded parapet with urns at corners and a ramped centre piece. Flanking the front elevation are stone colonnades which provide

a route around the side of the museum to the gardens and then via a gate in the rear wall onto the main axial path in Sydney Gardens.

The garden elevation is three storeys, with a cellar. It has a dramatic central section with a recessed arch with a three light Serlian or Venetian sash window with a tripartite (three light) sash window below. The central section contrasts with the simpler design of the bays either side which have sash windows that have in some cases projecting stone hoods and moulded architraves. The upper floors also have two oval windows. The central section of the garden elevation also relates internally in part to the location of the internal staircase. The garden elevation, similar to the front, has moulded parapet and a raised centre piece. The front and garden elevation both have the lower ground floor faced in rustication (i.e. the treatment of stonework to give the impression of strength by using distinct recessed joints).

From the main entrance, facing Great Pulteney Street, the museum is entered via a wide hall which provides views forward from the front door, under an archway, to the principle staircase and a window which affords views over into the rear garden. The staircase is wide and formal, with limestone steps and a heavy black decorative cast iron balustrade with embellished brass urns. Views into Sydney Gardens are obtained through large windows on the staircase, which is well lit by natural light.

At the top of the staircase is a landing directly in front of the large Serlian window which provides high level views over the Holburne garden and onto the axial path in Sydney Gardens and the surrounding area.

Internally, Blomfield's top floor picture gallery is of particular interest with its large circular lantern lights and the gallery on the first floor which faces directly onto Great Pulteney Street.

Many of the original features of Sydney Gardens have disappeared but the principal path on the central axis between the Loggia viewing point at the top of the path and the Holburne Museum at the lower end remains. The Park contains other buildings and structures of interest which are listed Grade 2 such as Brunel's impressive railway embankments to the former GWR line and the structures along the canal, including attractive cast iron bridges.

The majority of the listed structures found within the gardens are constructed in natural stone. Immediately to the west and south of the Holburne are the terraces of Sydney Place, listed Grade1, also constructed in natural stone.

The Museum (in side view) is visible from the junction of Sydney Place and Bathwick Street and from the path which continues by the side of the Grade 2 listed Lodge and then into the rear garden of the Holburne. The existing landscaping conceals the rear of the Museum from the south in Sydney Place. In winter months views from all points are more open, and the current limited and tree-screened views can only be regarded as temporary – many of the trees are now in maturity and can be expected to have only a limited future

life, and their future management and replacement can be expected to have a significant impact upon the visual characteristics of the Gardens.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT**

In 1992, the Council appointed consultants to prepare proposals for the restoration of Sydney Gardens. Following research into the history of the gardens and the surviving features a number of opportunities for improvements to Sydney Gardens were agreed (called the Dubois Plan). The fragmentation of the central axial walk by the wall around the museum garden was identified as a key issue and it was recommended that the garden around the museum should be removed and replaced by railings, and that the view line along the axis from the museum to the Loggia be reintroduced.

An opening in the rear wall has since been made and gates have been erected to provide access from the rear gardens of the Holburne. Views, along the main axis to the Loggia have been opened up by cutting back some of the inappropriate planting.

It was originally the Council's intention to make a co-ordinated Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid for Sydney Gardens together with the expansion of the Museum, with the information provided by the Dubois survey. This failed, so the Council took forward and successfully achieved an alternative bid for Royal Victoria Park. The Council's Parks Service is now working on the first stages of a bid for enhancements for Sydney Gardens to be submitted to the HLF this year. This plan will not only consider landscaping proposals but the historic structures in the Park their condition, importance, relationship to the landscape and future uses.

A design contest was held by the Museum in 2001 which led to appointment of Eric Perry Architects. Outline proposals for the Museum refurbishment and extension have been approved for Stage One funding by the HLF. Stage Two applications to the HLF must be submitted no later than July 2007, and must be accompanied by a Planning Permission. Your Officers have discussed the situation with the HLF, and are satisfied that the potential funding is virtually certain not to be available if the Museum misses its imminent deadline.

The Holburne has a rich collection of paintings, silver, sculpture, furniture and porcelain and works by Gainsborough, Guardi, Stubbs and Turner. The Conservation Plan submitted to the HLF by the Trustees notes that they are short of space to show the permanent collection and special exhibitions and that they wished to re order and extend the museums ability to exhibit its collection of artefacts and pictures, to conserve, renovate and bring up to contemporary standards the existing museum and increase the educational facilities.

Consultations have taken place with both English Heritage and LPA Officers during the development of the Conservation Plan and present proposals. In 2002 Council officers wrote to the Director regarding the proposed scheme

noting that proposals may well prove to conflict with a number of Local Plan Policies and also be contentious in term of local third party opinion.

In 2005 officer response to consultation on the Conservation Plan questioned the significance given in to the staircase and the garden elevation and the need to more clearly demonstrate the important relationship between the Holburne Museum and its wider landscape setting.

In 2006 officers wrote to the agents then acting on behalf of The Holburne, identifying a number of concerns with the proposed extension, including the removal of the staircase, the bulk and height of the extension, the architectural treatment, use of materials and the impact on the wider landscape. In concluding the letter officers noted that unfortunately it was felt that the adverse impact of the scheme outweighed any wider benefit. The view of your Officers was supported by English Heritage throughout this period.

## **CURRENT PROPOSALS**

In the current proposals the Museum would be extended to provide additional gallery space at three levels connecting with the existing galleries, together with a cafe at ground floor level in the rear extension. There will be a recessed link between the existing building and the new extension. A remodelled basement will include a new library and study room as well as accessible storage for the collection. The ground floor will be open to visitors free of charge. The extension will also be accessed from the Gardens through the doors on axis from the main Museum. Access to the doors is achieved over a shallow reflective pool by a bonded gravel footpath.

The principal staircase will be demolished and re-erected in a new configuration to allow free circulation from the existing building through to the new extension. The existing galleries will be environmentally upgraded. Full access for disabled will provided throughout using a new lift. A new flexible lecture room will be provided by uniting two existing ground floor rooms in the location of the present shop.

Externally the grounds will be landscaped only immediately around the building, including the provision of a reflecting pool around the base of the proposed extension and hard paving to the forecourt. One mature oak tree will be felled.

The plan is explained by the architect as follows:-

“In order to re-establish the Holburne museum as the gateway to Sydney gardens we considered three key principles that needed to be addressed.

1. Repositioning of the Blomfield stair off the central axis in order to create a clear and direct link to the garden.
2. Creation of a new ground floor opening in the rear wall of the existing museum building.

3. Maintaining a sense of openness at the ground floor level of the new extension (rather than a closed gallery)."

Regarding the interior the principles of further design development are explained as:-

1. Maintaining the existing historic character of the spaces, finishes and detailing.
2. Create flexible spaces within the extension, fit for purpose and detail
3. Contemporary detailing of the display cabinets will be common to new and old.

The architect explains "A tripartite vertical order has emerged as is the best solution to issues of proportion composition and balance. .... In order to mediate the solidity of the top floor with the transparency of the ground the central section has the materials of both engaging in a separation of skins.... The hierarchy .....inverts the rustication of the existing Museum".

"....The proposed façade is composed of ceramic panels and fins which ....peel back at first floor level to form a glazed rain screen. ... The depth of the façade is revealed at first floor with the ceramic panel recessed approximately 800mm back behind the rain screen and fins."

There will be a window on axis on the first floor which will frame the connection and views to Sydney Gardens and Great Pulteney Street.

The advantages of the use of Ceramics are noted by the architect as:-

1. "Ceramic is a material that responds to both the brief and also the collection that the Museum houses.
2. The ceramic façade will reflect the Gardens and its surroundings as well as complimenting the beautiful quality of Bath Stone on the Museum.
3. Ceramic is a natural material that has weathering and crafted qualities that are typical of buildings such as Wrigley Building in Chicago or the Pinet Building in Bond Street, London.
4. Vitriified ceramic as a material is unaffected by aging, weathering radiation or atmospheric pollution. Eric Perry Architects have been working with Shaws of Darwin who have been manufacturing faience for over 130 years "

Access roads and car parking are to remain generally unaltered. The existing tea house, which is currently used as a café, will be retained and used as a staff facility and to accommodate some plant. All mechanical plant will be suitably attenuated and/or enclosed in an acoustic enclosure so as not to create noise pollution tom the surrounding residential area.

A strategy for sustainability is included and it looks at such items as reducing the need for energy and therefore carbon emissions. The scheme incorporates both Passive Design (i.e. high levels of insulation in the new

extension) and Active Design (i.e. the ground floor café is to utilise a natural ventilation system). The strategy notes that materials will be locally sourced or sourced from recycled primary materials wherever possible. The use of daylight will be carefully managed in terms of artificial lighting the building will be lit to modern standard using low energy efficient fitting where ever possible.

The existing building is not fully accessible. The existing lift is inaccessible to every floor level for those in wheel chairs or those who have difficulty with stairs; wheel chair access is very difficult and awkward. The museum has some temporary ramped access at the upper floor levels which makes the staffing of the museum difficult.

The intention of the proposals is to provide a fully accessible building which is future proofed. Access for disable people is achieved with a combination of two elements – the accessibility of the building itself, and management to make the building accessible for people with disabilities.

Members should note that the two applications relate to the same scheme. The Listed Building Consent application includes details of the refurbishment and internal works to the Listed Building, which do not require Planning permission.

## **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

### Statutory Consultees

English Heritage - The scheme was presented to the English Heritage Advisory Committee and their subsequent consultation six-page response letter records that "...differing opinions were expressed on the merits and disbenefits of the scheme. All members were agreed that the relocation of the staircase had been justified and was an inspired solution. As regards the merits of the proposed extension, views were split between members who were wholly supportive of the scheme and those who expressed concerns regarding the impact on the registered garden."

[English Heritage's letter makes it clear that on balance the organisation does not raise an objection to the proposals, but your Officers experienced some difficulty in interpreting their comments, as the wording of their letter implied that their support was conditional upon there being a robust business case for the proposals. Indeed, that interpretation was confirmed as correct by English Heritage's Historic Buildings Inspector, who signed their letter.

Such an approach was considered by your Officers to be *ultra vires*, as any business case could only be material to the principle of an extension rather than to its detailed exterior design. Accordingly, your Officers challenged the approach which English Heritage had adopted, and sought legal advice on the position. However, late on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July, an update response was received from English Heritage, confirming that their earlier letter was not a correct statement of their position, and confirming that "EH's advice is not



conditional.” On this basis, your Officers have dealt with the response from English Heritage as unconditional support for the scheme, although their letter does reveal the conflicting views of the scheme within their Committee.

English Heritage explains its support as follows:-

- “The extension responds to the brief to provide a successful future for the Holburne museum, the building and the collection, by the addition of a 21<sup>st</sup> century extension which with rigour to the brief and to the entire complex values of the historic context in an acceptable manner” and
- “The impacts are acceptable in the light of the wider business case and the restoration of historic communal values.”

In reaching the above conclusions they note that have borne in mind advice given in PPG15 and refer in particular to paragraphs 3.4-3.16, 2.24 and Annex C and Conservation Principles which they are in the process of finalising.

English Heritage also makes the following comments:-

- The changes proposed to the existing building will not affect its appearance in this historic setting. The repair and restoration works will ensure that its contribution to these historic and aesthetic values will be sustained.
- Some historic fabric will be lost; the overall benefits to the aesthetic value of the interior outweigh the loss of evidential value.
- The most significant internal change is the relocation of the staircase however this is a sensible solution that not only retains the evidential value and aesthetic value of the staircase but also allowed the reintroduction of the of the historic and aesthetic value of the public route through the building from Pulteney Street.
- The most contentious element of the proposed changes is the three storey extension at the rear. However, the rear elevation of the existing building has previously been altered and has lost two previously important features – bandstand and supper boxes – which were dominant features of this elevation from 1795.
- The closing of the public route through the building resulted in the garden frontage becoming a more traditional elevation to the building including the installation of down pipes and modified elevation to accommodate the staircase.
- The proposed extension minimises the loss of historic fabric and the rear elevation will be retained and visible from within the building but they acknowledge it will be substantially obscured in external views.
- The rear elevation is of lesser significance and will be replaced with a new frontage designed to relate more meaningful with the garden.
- The height and bulk of the extension is significant to the listed building and taken in isolation, viewing the addition from the rear it will be dominant. The impact is however entirely on that elevation and there is a clear rationale related to the functionality of the building as a museum for the future.

- Some members of the EHAC disagreed with the choice of external materials and felt that only those in harmony with historic buildings should be used others the materials were of a quality appropriate to its setting referring to the 'liquid' quality of the building.
- Any extension to the Holburne should not compromise the formal symmetry of the front elevation and this precludes any extension to the front and sides of the building.
- A rigorous assessment of the business case will be a critical issue for the local authority to determine in the planning application to justify this major extension.
- The historic aesthetic and communal value of the original pleasure grounds has been reduced over time as former attractions have been demolished and planting allowed maturing and expanding beyond the original planned layout. They urge the local authority as owners of the park to explore ways of restoring these values for present and future public benefit.

The Garden History Society – PPG 15 advises that “The Garden History Society.....has more experience of dealing with planning applications affecting parks and gardens than any other body.”

The society has given careful consideration to the proposals brought forward by the Museum and while understanding and accepting the Museums need for additional facilities advise the planning authority that the present scheme is not acceptable and should not be granted consent.

In summary they consider that the present proposals are visually intrusive in relation to the designated historic designed landscape and would therefore have a detrimental impact on their special historic interest, integrity and character.

If implemented the proposals would have a detrimental impact on the Bath World Heritage Site the listed building and the Conservation Area within which the Museum and registered landscape are situated.

They conclude that the proposals conflicts with national Government Planning Policy Guidance PPG 15 and local planning policies on the protection of the historic environment.

The Trust appreciates the case made for alterations and extensions of the existing building but considers that the resulting proposals adversely affect the setting of the listed building and EH Registered Sydney Gardens.

The extension fails:-

1. To address the ill advised division between the museum garden and Sydney Gardens (wall and shrubbery) introduced by Blomfield in the early twentieth century.
2. Through the proposed architectural treatment of the extension to provide a viable focal point within the deigned landscape at the western end of the axial vista.

In so far as the society is critical of the architectural design of the proposed extension they emphasise that they are not opposed to a modern design for this site, and indeed consider that an appropriate modern design could work very well and address their concerns in relation to the relationship of the extension to the historic gardens. Notwithstanding Blomfield's alterations to the garden façade it still provides a focus within the landscape.

The Victorian Society – On the 7<sup>th</sup> June the Victorian Society noted that they were satisfied that they did not want to comment. On the 19<sup>th</sup> June a letter clarified that they had been involved with pre-application discussion with the applicants which helped them to resolve a number of concerns they had with the proposed extension.

They accept the need for a clear axis through the existing building and then into the new extension and therefore the relocation of the staircase.

They hoped to have seen the mullions of the Venetian window on the top floor retained and extended down to floor level, but we understand that this would not provide sufficient access to the extension at this level.

On the above basis they do object to the application.

The Georgian Group – The Georgian group refers to a letter sent to Cllr David Dixon then Chairman of the Planning, Transportation, Economy and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel in February 2007 following a site visit to the Holburne and asks this is taken as a reply to the planning application.

They remain of the view that rethinking of the accommodation in the Holburne should be undertaken as part of a thorough and holistic review of how the entire site, including Sydney Gardens, is presented and restored. They accept the argument that the extension will act as a catalyst for a reappraisal of the surrounding landscape but it was really in their minds only half the answer. Building and landscape should properly be seen as indivisible and the project should address both, to do otherwise would miss a unique opportunity to remedy the current disjunction between the two.

Despite the above they have a more positive view of the extension and it has the potential to be a successful addition to the Holburne.

They welcome proposals at that time for a marginal reduction in the height's that the parapet and cornice of the main building remain readable. The design of the upper levels of the link corridor is not fully resolved and would benefit from being less top heavy. The moat seems to be an overformal element in what is essentially a picturesque landscape dropping it would promote more of a seemingly less relationship between building and garden, more in keeping with the original spirit.

The existing curved garden wall is an alien feature which we assume will disappear in the future restoration of Sydney Gardens.

They emphasise need to consider the rear elevation from the furthest viewpoint in Sydney Gardens. At the moment the view is partly obscured by gates and inappropriate planting, but we assume the view will be clearer once the landscape has been restored. The main building and the extension will read together from this elevated vantage point and the relationship would in our view work better if the garden façade of the extension was articulated in imitation of the main building, that is divided with a dominant central section and divided laterally .

The very strong horizontal divisions in the extension are rather at odds with the strong vertical divisions in the host building. The tension may be deliberate but whether it will carry conviction in longer views where both the original and the new facades are visible is debatable.

These design caveats are less fundamental than our reservations about the divorce between this project and the wider landscape restoration we hope the parties can get together as soon as possible to address this latter deficiency but in the meantime congratulate the Museum on investigating in a high quality solution to be present accommodation needs.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society – The Society has deferred to the knowledge of the Victorian Society and therefore does not wish to comment.

#### Internal Consultees

World Heritage Coordinator – The Council's World Heritage Coordinator comments as follows:-

#### "World Heritage significance of Holburne Museum & Sydney Gardens

Sydney Gardens, incorporating the Holburne Museum, is a key element of the City of Bath World Heritage Site. In World Heritage terms, it is one of the Site's most important public parks. Its greatest significance lies in its social history; its function as Georgian Pleasure Park and place of fun social interaction in a landscape setting. The Holburne Museum building is an integral element (both physically, visually and functionally) of Sydney Gardens as well as being an integral element of the great urban set piece that is Great Pulteney Street. Unusually for a Bath building, the Holburne Museum has two elevations which each have an important visual role to play, rather than just the one frontal façade: Great Pulteney Street to the front and the axial view from the Loggia through Sydney Gardens to the rear.

In terms of authenticity and integrity, while there has undoubtedly been much change to the layout and physical fabric of both the gardens and the Museum building, significant elements of the original design survive. This includes the lozenge shape of the gardens, the central axial vista and walkway, the visual connection between the gardens and the Museum building and the function of

the place as a public park. Retaining and enhancing the surviving integrity of this composition, which includes the relationship between the Holburne museum building and the surrounding pleasure grounds, should be a central aim of any development on the site.

#### The UNESCO World Heritage Convention

The Georgian city, particularly the architecture, public realm and landscape, is one of the key Outstanding Universal Values of Bath (the term used to describe the reasons why a place is inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites). The purpose of the 1972 UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, and of its accompanying document the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2005) is to protect and conserve places considered, like Bath, to be of significance to present and future generations of people all around the world. World Heritage Sites must also meet the conditions of authenticity and integrity. Authenticity is concerned with whether the values ascribed to a site are truthful (which can be assessed through factors such as materials and design, use and function, or spirit and feeling). Integrity is a new and developing aspect of the World Heritage *Operational Guidelines* and is concerned with the wholeness and intactness of the heritage, and can include issues such as the condition of the fabric of the site or whether relationships between heritage elements are intact.

#### The Holburne Museum proposed development

The relationship between Museum building and gardens is functional, visual and physical. In terms of function, the proposed development would greatly improve the relationship of both the museum building to the gardens, and the route from the city centre along Great Pulteney Street to the gardens. The improved access through the museum to the gardens, the siting of the free interpretation space, café and shop on the ground floor with access directly through the façade of the extension are all very welcome improvements.

The physical relationship is largely to do with the siting of the building, which is not being altered, and the visual connection between the museum building and Sydney Gardens. The gardens and museum building are Georgian in origin and design and while both have been remodelled over the years, the key visual connection survives. Therefore, the key question in terms of acceptability of the proposal is whether it is appropriate to alter the visual link between the Georgian gardens and the Georgian building, and whether the design of the new elevation plays due regard to its context.

The principle of a contemporary extension and elevation facing the Gardens is not a problem for the World Heritage Site and, indeed, offers an exciting opportunity to begin the reinterpretation of the Sydney Gardens complex for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Similarly the principle of introducing contemporary styles and design ideas that, to a degree, contrast with the key Bath characteristics is acceptable.

It would, however, be detrimental to the integrity of the Gardens' World Heritage values to completely lose the visual link from the Gardens to the

existing museum building. The extension should be subordinate to the main building so that more of the existing building can be viewed. In particular this means a reduction in height of the extension, so that it can be understood from Sydney Gardens as an extension.

While the rear elevation was remodelled by Bloomfield, and the physical access through the Museum to the Gardens lost, the elevation was redesigned with attention to the role of the Museum building as viewpoint from the axial vista in the Gardens from the upper floors. The proposed extension would provide a new elevation but in design terms, it is not as successful as Blomfield's in relating to its context or role as a conclusion to the axial view through Sydney Gardens. In addition to this, the applicants identify the inverted nature of the floor emphasis (i.e. greater emphasis on the top floor) as a deliberate foil to the existing building. This results in a top-heavy design that is uncomfortable rather than interesting in its individuality. A reappraisal of the treatment of the floors to reduce the current top-heavy design is needed.

I find much to welcome in this proposal, not least the introduction of contemporary design and the functional reintegration of the building and gardens. In reference to Brunel's GWR railway that runs through Sydney Gardens, and is on the Government's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites, I do not consider that this proposed scheme would impact on the values of the railway, or prevent appropriate future enhancement schemes in the setting of the railway. In terms of the impact of the proposed scheme on the City of Bath World Heritage Site values and integrity, I have to recommend refusal of the application on the grounds that the scheme would be detrimental to the values of this part of the World Heritage Site and would harm its integrity:

- The height of the extension should be reduced so that it is subordinate to the main building behind it, and can be understood from Sydney Gardens to be an extension.
- The treatment of the floors should be reappraised to reduce the current top-heavy design."

Landscape Officer – Is supportive in principle of the idea to extend the Holburne both to improve the exhibition space and storage facilities of the museum and to create more of a destination both for visitors and for residents.

Concerns are expressed about the scale of the proposed extension and the potential high negative visual impact on the listed Grade1 Holburne Museum, on Sydney Gardens and on the strong interrelationship between the two and that landscape structure and management of the grounds and the aspirations for the progression of Sydney gardens have not been addressed.

Proposals would not be in accordance with PPG15 and PPS1 or with Local Plan policies D4, NE1, BH1, BH2, BH6 and BH 9 in relation to the impact on views and the setting of the listed building.

Main concerns are noted as follows:-

- The height of the extension in materials which have no relationship to the existing building
- The impact on views from Sydney Gardens particularly the block-like character of the extension which would conceal the existing building.
- The lack of landscape proposals or management proposals for the Holburne Grounds.

The Holburne Museum was designed as an integral part of the gardens which together with the Loggia and Sydney House form the focal points at each end of the central axis path. The pleasure grounds in the late C18 and early C19 were marked by what appears to be colourful exciting and ambitious events and attractions. These were held in the context of buildings and structures in the park which were carefully designed and balanced taking account of views and character of the gardens.

The proposed block-like glass and ceramic extension would have a negative impact on important views which are integral to the enduring designs of the garden.

The “substantial beneficial impact” seen from the key axial view to the north east of the façade as assessed in view 5 of the Richmond Coleman report is questioned. The assessment seems to ignore the importance of the context of the proposed building.

The original design included a sizable area of open space to the rear of The Holburne where activities could take place. The current building has a sizeable area of lawn to the rear. The extension would result in loss of the lawn leaving an area which would appear quite tight in the context in the context of the proposed 15m high extension.

The proposals to provide a direct route through the building linking to the Gardens is welcome as far as it goes in addressing connectivity but the visual connectivity and in particular existing views to this Bath stone classical building are also important to the sense of place and integrity.

It would have been preferable to have considered the Holburne Museum proposals in conjunction with the proposals for improvements to Sydney Gardens however the programme for each did not appear to allow for this.

Plans for Sydney Gardens are likely to include improving the visual link along the main axis between the museum and loggia/rotunda; this may require thinning and /or crowning lifting of tress which could considerably open up views to the extension.

The monolithic character of the proposed extension would therefore become more evident possibly leading to consideration of more screening .softening by trees and shrubs than would otherwise be necessary.

It is an important aspiration for improvements to unite the Holburne Museum grounds with the larger part of Sydney Gardens .The submitted application does not include any proposals to connect the building back visually and physically with Sydney Gardens.

It is understood that landscape plans have not been drawn up in order not to prejudice proposals for Sydney Gardens however it is essential for an application of this significance and scale to include commitments to carry out landscape proposals which would accord with developing aspirations for Sydney Gardens, and a commitment to managing trees, and other planting within the museum grounds to ensure the extension fits into Sydney Gardens and the wider setting.

Archaeological Officer – The archaeological evaluation of the proposed extension to the Holburne Museum (Wessex Archaeology, 2005) revealed no evidence of any pre-18<sup>th</sup> century archaeology on the site. However, a number of Roman burials have been found in other parts of the park.

There is no principle objection on archaeological grounds to a below ground basement for the extension. Any necessary archaeological or watching brief could be dealt with by way of appropriate planning conditions i.e. excavation condition.

The following conditions are advised to any approval:-

No development shall take place within the site until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The programme of archaeological should provide a controlled watching brief during the ground works on the site, with provision for excavation of any significant deposits or features encountered.

Reason: The site is within an area of significant archaeological interest and the Council will wish to examine and record items of interest discovered.

No development or demolition shall take place within the site until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The programme of archaeological work should provide a record of those parts of the building, which are to be demolished, disturbed or concealed by the proposed development.

Reason: The building is of significant archaeological interest and the council will wish to examine and record features of architectural interest.

Building Control – Have had pre-application discussions with the architects and found no overriding problems with the scheme.



As it is an entirely new stair the hand rail height should meet the requirements of Part M i.e. 900-1000high and be suitably detailed. Bearing in mind the listed status of the building we would be open to negotiation to achieve details acceptable to all concerned.

Arboricultural Officer – Does not consider the submitted Arboricultural report meets the requirements of BS5837:05. Tree categorisation as set out on Table 1 has not taken place and the Arboriculture implication has not assessed the impact of the new plant room behind the existing Teahouse, the installation of the new intake and exhaust vent (front lawn) within the root protection area of Tree 1 (the large Beech tree).

There does not appear to be any plan showing the accurate position of trees on the site or how trees can be protected during the construction process and there is limited information on access into the rear garden during construction works.

Given the high landscape value of the site I do not consider it appropriate to deal with these matters by condition. Arboriculture Implication Assessment, Arboriculture Method Statement and Tree Protection plan, long terms Tree Management and planting plan, also a plan and cross section for the “low invasive vehicular access” as discussed in section 3.5 of Arboriculture report.

No objection to the removal of the Lucombe Oak (T4) and consider the proposed reduction recommended within the Arboriculture report would leave a tree of very little landscape value. Plans are required showing replacement planting both of T4 and other trees that are recommended for removal and required.

Highway Development Officer – The Transportation Assessment has identified the level of increased use and based on current travel patterns, the likely increase in travel.

The availability of alternative travel in the area is good with continuous pedestrian and cycling facilities and access to public transport with good infrastructure available.

The most appropriate bus and tour-bus stop to the site is in Pulteney Street and this is where visitors would wait for a return service to the City centre. At present this does not benefit from a bus shelter which would be considered beneficial to the scheme.

The reduction in on-site parking is acceptable ,and has shown to be possible but the area will need to be patrolled and managed for example” Car park full” signs will need to be deployed as necessary.

Some form of covering should be provided for the cycle parking.

Clarification is required in respect of vehicle access.

The draft Travel Plan is welcomed and its content generally acceptable. The inclusion of information needs to be supplied to visitors for example in leaflets, web site, etc to discourage car users.

Ecological Officer – The development does not fall within any areas designated for nature conservation and there are no protected species in the immediate area.

There is however with the tree works and works on the existing building the possibility of impact on Bats.

An advice note appended to the decision highlighting the legal protection of bats and implications for works were they found is recommended.

The issue of light pollution raised by an objector is not considered to be of significance unless a bat maternity roost was discovered and then mitigation proposals would be required of the Natural England Licence.

Standard advice notes concerning the possible impacts of tree works on nesting birds and bats, and building works any badger sets found in the vicinity would also apply.

#### Other Internal Representations

The Council's Heritage Parks Manager – Comments that he does not wish his views to be interpreted as either support or objections. He recognises the “necessity for an extension”, but records his disappointment that the scheme “does not reflect the historic lines of the Sydney Hotel supper boxes or wooden orchestra”, and that the scheme has been progressed without the close involvement of his Service.

The Council's Arts Development Officer – makes extensive comments in support, as follows:

“As the Council's Arts Manager, my interest is (1) the benefit that increasing the museum's size will bring, (2) the aesthetic qualities of the design

In respect of (1), my job as Arts Manager requires me to take an overview of venues and facilities for the arts; to understand the market in which different arts providers operate; and to provide professional opinion and advice to arts providers in order to assist them in planning their services.

In respect of (2), my job as Arts Manager requires me to monitor and evaluate the artistic quality of arts provision; and to provide professional opinion and advice to arts providers on improving and maintaining quality.

I therefore believe that it is reasonably within the scope of my job to comment on the aesthetic and craft qualities of architectural design where (as in this case):

- (a) the applicant is an arts provider,
- (b) the purpose of the building is to accommodate arts activity, and
- (c) the design of the building will have a major visual impact.

I have stated under (2) below that I have relevant knowledge and experience which inform my views. I am expressing my own view and not speaking on behalf of other colleagues in the Arts team (who might have different opinions); but I do feel that it is the appropriate role of the Council's Arts manager to contribute a comment on a planning application where (a) (b) and (c) above are all relevant.

(1) The benefit that increasing the museum's size will bring

I agree with the applicant's argument that it is necessary and beneficial to increase the size of the museum so that a greater range and quality of services and activities can be offered to customers, and so that the quality of the visitor experience is improved. There are few large exhibition spaces in Bath, and increasing the floor area and hanging length available to display the museum's collection will greatly add to the overall range of gallery facilities that we have.

In turn this will attract more visitors, and other galleries, museums and cultural attractions are likely to indirectly benefit from this. I would argue that an improved offer at the Holburne will reflect well on Bath as a whole in terms of cultural tourism (in the same way as other major attractions which bring visitors to Bath, such as the Roman Baths or the Christmas Market, also benefit a whole range of other attractions, shops, restaurants etc)

(2) The aesthetic qualities of the design

I have worked in the arts sector for 25 years and am qualified to postgraduate level in History of Art & Design. The following comments express my professional view, based on my knowledge and experience.

In my judgement the architectural quality of the proposed extension is very high. It is, fundamentally, a very beautiful piece of design, with a use of glass and ceramic that, because of the reflective surfaces of these materials, create a light and airy effect. If an extension of this size used more traditional materials, it would look heavy, monumental and monotone; but the applicant's design appears to work very well with the surrounding park because it will reflect the grass and trees, creating an animated and changing surface (the Kroller Mueller Museum in Holland works in a very similar way).

It is always very difficult to realise contemporary architecture schemes in a city such as Bath, when the Georgian architecture is so exceptionally fine and must not be compromised. But we already have an example of a very successful contemporary building - Thermae Bath Spa - and I believe that the proposed Holburne extension is on a par with the quality of that building. The proposed Holburne extension in my opinion creates an exciting dialogue with the C18th structure, and is of such quality that the architecture

itself will become an attraction, quite apart from the wealth of the collections contained within. I am reminded of how residents were aghast when the railway line was built through Sydney Gardens, and how Brunel successfully argued that this new modern technology was in itself an attraction - of drama, sound and movement - that would form part of the enjoyment of a stroll through the gardens.

Architecture of this quality is stimulating, it makes you stop and stare, it makes you wonder and gaze - and this is a unique opportunity for Bath to add something really unusual to its architectural landscape. I think we should take the risk of doing something different, saying 'yes' to something contemporary.”

### External Representations – Societies and Groups

Bath Preservation Trust – Comments that the proposals have aroused strong and disparate views on the impact such a modern design would have on a listed building. Some Trustees considered that the extension should reflect the architecture of the surrounding buildings and be built in Bath stone, the dominant materials of the area. Its impact on Bath’s World Heritage status was also of concern, however, others considered that the extension reflected modern design and materials, was of exceptional quality, and indicated that Bath was not continuing to live in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Trustees recognised that an extension to the Holburne Museum would enhance the present facilities and provide it with capacity and flexibility it required for modern extensions.

Some felt the extension would appear obtrusive and incongruous from Sydney Gardens and the use of ceramic on the external elevation inappropriate with worries over colour proposed and their long term viability, others the extension would greatly improve access from the museum into the gardens and the choice of ceramic materials were inspired.

The Bath Preservation Trust concluded that due to the disparity of views expressed it was not possible for it to support or object to the planning application.

Bath Society – The reason for the expanded exhibition space is apparent and would clearly be an asset both to the Museum and the City of Bath. However, the Society objects because of the placing and form of the building, the external materials used and the interference with the elevation of a Grade 1 listed building.

They note that an extension should be strongly identified with the building to be extended; however, the application shows a completely new building standing in nearby grounds joined to the extension with a see through link which is as tenuous as possible.

The separateness is emphasized by its top heavy form and choice of ceramic for external cladding. The ceramic materials is completely at odds with the palette of surrounding materials-Bath Stone and Welsh slate- further disengaging the new building form the existing.

The application model is misleading as everything is in white. The colour representation of the scheme in the documents gives a limited visual representation of the effect of the juxtaposition of the new building to the existing.

The new building visually blocks out most of the rear elevation of the museum. In any other situation listed building consent would not be expected to be approved.

There seem no reasons why an extension adapted from the general lines of the 1805 drawing could not be built in stone.

Avon Gardens Trust – The Avon Gardens Trust aims “to preserve, enhance, and recreate, for the education and enjoyment of the public, parks and gardens and designed landscapes in the local authority areas of South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol and North Somerset.”

In support of this aim it is active in conservation work to preserve designed landscapes from unsympathetic or inappropriate development.

The Trust published a booklet on Bath Historic Parks in 1997 which described Sydney Gardens in some detail.

The Trust notes that the relationship to its context of a landmark building like the Holburne is equally as important as the detailed architectural design of the building. The existing Museum is widely held to be a successful element in Baths townscape but the proposed extension does not appear to or similarly respond to or have regard to Sydney Gardens.

The Trust notes that Bath and North East Somerset is to restart preparatory work on HLF funded restoration of Sydney Gardens but this is likely to be some three years behind the proposed Museum programme. It is the concern of the Trust that the restoration and large scale extension of the Museum and the restoration of Sydney Gardens is not being planned and consulted on at the same time.

The Trust is concerned about the bulk of the extension, which behind the intricate elevational treatment is large box-like form raising as high as the roof of the existing museum and extending out on the axis of the building to occupy a large part of the walled garden.

The Trust proposes that a less intrusive and more open form of extension would be more appropriate. Reducing the bulk of the extension, perhaps by division into lower wing pavilions the existing central café element providing the link to the garden and beyond.

The application says that the proposed extension “recreates the relationship...with the park beyond.” This is not easily seen : the surrounding moat feature suggests exclusion ,the small entrance lobby provided on the park side is minimal and the apparent neglect of possibilities for extending activities out into the walled garden, outdoor café space, space for merely sitting or museum displays space seem missing from what appears an over formal setting.

The very detailed presentation of the elevation treatment set out in the application proposals has certainly led to considerable debate on style and materials. This may have diverted attention away from what are to the Trust more important tissues.

The Trust appreciates the case made for alterations and extensions of the existing building but considers that the resulting proposals adversely affect the setting of the listed building and EH Registered Sydney Gardens.

It wishes to emphasise the case for the further consideration of the relationship of the Museum extension proposals and the context of Sydney Gardens and of the importance of developing the restoration proposals of Sydney Gardens in parallel.

Urban Regeneration Panel – The Urban Regeneration Panel (URP) was appointed corporately by the Council (through the Major Projects Department) to initially provide a desk top view of some of the elements, principally design, on Bath Western Riverside and is made up of leading figures working with urban generation. The Panel is comprised of individuals with acknowledged skills in a broad range of disciplines, including the Historic Environment and Architecture.

They provide independent expert advice to the Council, but Members of the Committee should note that the URP is not a statutory consultee on Planning or Listed Building applications.

The URP considers that a convincing case has been made for additional accommodation at the Museum to support modern standards for the conservation and display of artefacts, to meet educational, research and visitor requirements and to maintain the economic viability of the Museum. The case is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund in the form of approved stage one development funding.

The thoughtful planning of the layout of the building justifies the proposed internal changes including the relocation of the staircase off the central axis of the building and the partial loss of Blomfield’s garden elevation. The URP supports the assertion that Blomfield’s adaptations harmed the relationship of the building with Sydney Gardens and therefore they support proposals to re establish and the contrasting architectural forms of the link and the new building.

The external appearance of the extension is well considered and gives the building a lightness of appearance and the ceramic fins will help reflect the light and break down the bulk of the building.

The URP concludes that the architect has produced an outstanding solution that deserves support.

The Design and Industries Association Western Region – The sensitive handling of the architect of the Trusts challenging brief is to be applauded and the Association expresses its strong support for the proposed refurbishment and extension of The Holburne which will contribute to and reinforce the “outstanding universal values” of the City’s World Heritage Site UNESCO inscription.

They refer in particular to the benefits of the museum to the wider community and sub region, the architects decision to clad the exterior in glazing and cobalt olive blue panels and the magic of moving through the ground floor from the grander neo-Palladian entrance facing Great Pulteney Street to the beckoning openness of Sydney Gardens.

Business Initiative Bath And North East Somerset – Proposals to repair and refurbish the existing building, to provide new spaces and an extension and to open access to the rear of the building onto Sydney Gardens appears to provide an exciting opportunity for the City.

Bath and North East Somerset Cultural Partnership – The partnership was unanimous in its wish to support and encourage the development of what is considers to be an essential element in Bath and North East Somerset museum portfolio.

They expressed the view that the quality of contemporary architecture of the sort designed by Eric Parry is exactly the sort of work that Bath and North East Planning Services should be supporting. The Parry scheme is exciting, thoughtful and sensitive of its surroundings. It should be considered as an example of good practice for the future.

Commission for Architecture And The Built Environment (CABE) – Indicated that unfortunately, due to limited resources, they were unable to comment on proposals and referred to the South West Regional Design Panel.

#### External Representations – Individual

In view of the considerable interest generated by both applications a brief summary has been noted below of the responses made by other interested parties including local residents. A more detailed summary is available on request, together with a break down of the comments received. The numbers and issues will be updated at the meeting if additional responses are received.

Letters and Emails in Support – 187 individuals have supported the scheme, and their representations cover such issues as:-

- The experience and skills of the architect Mr Eric Parry.
- The support obtained from third parties such as a number of prominent, national gallery and museum directors.
- The high quality of the extension and the alterations proposed and how it would enhance the character of the existing listed building, the Conservation Area, and World Heritage Site. The building would become once again a Gateway to Sydney Gardens.
- The need for the extension and alterations to the museum.
- If the works are not undertaken the Holburne will have to close and its unique, nationally prestigious collection dispersed.
- A bold modern building is appropriate for this location.
- The over whelming need for the extension outweighs whatever objections might be held against it.
- The wider community benefits of the project.

Letters and Emails Raising Objections – 130 individuals have raised objections. These cover such issues as:-

- The significance and sensitivity of the site and how proposals contravene all official guidance and policies ,national and local for the protection of listed buildings, Conservation Areas and the World Heritage Site.
- Proposals have not given sufficient weight to the importance of Blomfield as an architect or his alterations to the building when converted into a museum. In particular reference is made to the removal of the staircase, the alterations and extension to the garden elevation and the design. Materials and scale of the extension.
- The new extension is in total contrast to the existing building and its setting. It lacks the distinctiveness of Bath
- The justifications put forward by the architect and other supporters are questioned.
- Alternative options for development.
- The need for a holistic view of the development and the proposals for Sydney Gardens.
- If approved the decision will not be compatible with how the local authority has treated other residents when alterations have been proposed to their listed buildings.
- If granted the approval will create an undesirable precedent for future modern architecture in the City and concerns are expressed about the loss of World Heritage Status.
- The assessment undertaken by English Heritage does not give due consideration to the appropriate policies and guidance, and the Committee was split.

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

PLANNING HISTORY – This is a standalone project, in the consideration of which the recent Planning history of the site is not relevant.



## POLICY CONTEXT

The applications have been assessed in relation to Central Government Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements, Local Plan and other appropriate guidance.

The lists below summarise the documents and policies taken into account. Where appropriate, the Officer assessment which follows makes specific references to the content of policies etc., and Officers will be pleased to answer questions relating to the policy framework.

### NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development.

PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment. This is particularly relevant to the present applications as it gives guidance on development affecting listed buildings and conservation areas.

PPG16: Archaeology and Planning.

### LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Bath Local Plan. 1997

Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan Approved for Development Control purposes on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan 2003-2009.

Bath City-Wide Character Appraisal 2005

### OTHER GUIDANCE

Department of Culture Media and Sport White Paper Heritage Protection for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Management of the Historic Environment. Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment. Good Practice Guide on Tourism.

## **ASSESSMENT BY HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT OFFICERS**

### The Future of the Museum

From a listed building viewpoint the best use for a building is that which it was originally used for, as stated in Para 3.10 of PPG15. Although the building was originally a hotel, it has housed the Holburne collection for some time the building in its present form is largely the result of its latest substantial alteration to create the museum. Ideally the building should continue in this use.

Thanks to Holburne's bequest, the Museum is well known for its 18<sup>th</sup> century British portraits and the collection has works connected with Bath in its Georgian heyday, which includes items produced by artists of the period who lived in Bath such as Gainsborough. It is appropriate that facilities exist for these to be displayed, with other loaned items representative of this important part of the history of Bath. Its continued use as a museum with increased accommodation for display of the collection and education purposes would

also ensure that the public can retain access to the building and gardens of the Holburne. Access for the disabled and the general public will also be significantly improved. It is intended that the ground floor will be open to visitors free of charge and will include an interpretation centre.

The extension will increase the area of display by about 50% allowing for more of the collection to be displayed imaginatively. The building is in need of repair and updating including improving environmental conditions within the building for the items displayed and people using the museum.

The new café will also be an important benefit to users of the museum and the Gardens.

The creation of a new ground floor opening on the rear elevation and demolition / moving of the staircase provides the opportunity to restore the former axial route from the main entrance into the rear gardens.

The continued use of the building as a museum with associated educational facilities has community and cultural benefits, and it may also be argued to help to attract tourists to Bath and visitors to Sydney Gardens itself. The Trustees has expressed their desire to work with the Council in future plans for the gardens.

Restoration of the interiors such as the Ballroom Gallery, the Picture Gallery, is proposed and these are particularly welcomed.

### Design Principles.

#### The location, size and height of the rear extension.

Many of the supporters of the scheme refer to the unattractive existing character of the garden elevation which was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield. The Heritage and Visual Assessment Report notes the contribution to the setting of the gardens has been reduced by the rear elevation and that it turns away from the gardens.

Officers have, in past discussions with the architect and English Heritage questioned the value given to the garden elevation. The garden elevation is significant as it faces the key feature of Sydney Gardens – the axial view along the central path.

The rear elevation has characteristic features of Sir Reginald Bloomfield's work such as the raised central section of the rear elevation, the Serlian or Venetian window and the prominent parapet urns. These features are repeated in his later work at the Ushers Art Gallery in Lincoln.

The garden elevation does not have a ground floor entrance but Blomfield appears to have tried to compensate for this by the use of colonnaded approaches to the gardens from the front of the Holburne around each side.

The imposing rustic plinth to the garden elevation is a characteristic feature of classical architecture and can be found in many Georgian buildings in Bath, and it helps visually plant the building firmly on the ground.

The raised upper central section with urns forms a focus for the axial views from the main path which leads from the back of the Holburne and then on rising ground to the Loggia, the viewing point at the higher end of the Gardens. It also creates an attractive silhouette, breaking up the roof line of the garden elevation in the landscape. The central section in turn relates to the location of the staircase directly behind it.

The Architectural statement indeed acknowledges the importance of this garden elevation: "The subtle massing, split cornicing and parapet with urns of Blomfield's design combines to create an impressive skyline silhouette to the rear elevation. The Serlian window and rusticated base provide dramatic elements of the façade."

Although it is acknowledged that there were, at one time structures at the rear of the building, they were light weight and low in scale and therefore visually subordinate to the main building. The new extension is clearly more substantial in height and scale and visually competes with the main building.

The extension will substantially obscure views of the existing garden elevation, when seen from the main axial path. Photographic studies prepared by the Architect demonstrate that it will be difficult to see any of the existing garden elevation from this angle. They also show that the existing rear silhouette will be dominated by the bulk and height of the proposed extension.

Views from the side elevation, particularly at the junction of Sydney Place and Bathwick Street, and the walk past the Lodge into the Museum garden, will also be affected by the scale and height of the proposed extension, which will tend to overwhelm the existing building.

It is acknowledged that the building could be extended at a lower level without significantly harming the important upper profile of the rear elevation as it faces the Garden.

The applicants argue that an extension of this size and height and in this location is essential. Other options have been explored, such as building in a pavilion style to the side, and extending under the garden, but have been rejected by the applicants as being impractical, too costly and failing to achieve the maximum benefit for the display of the collection and access for the disabled. It is asserted that the full height extension gives curatorial clarity by extending the collection at each level. It also improves efficiency in the security strategy.

The extension would have a significant impact on the views down the central axis of the Gardens in that it would effectively obscure the ornamental facade of the existing building in the landscape setting. Despite architectural

changes to the rear elevation over time, the visual interplay of the building in the landscape is as it would have been originally intended.

It is suggested by the applicants that the proposed extension, with its ceramic cladding, “will exhibit lightness, openness and a sense of joy in celebration of its relationship with the garden”. However, it is considered that the proposed extension would introduce a large solid, bulky and essentially blank facade into a landscape setting which contrived to show the delicate interplay between classical buildings.

Sydney Gardens is one of the twelve key elements identified in the “Inventory of Selected Key Elements of the World Heritage Site” in the City of Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan.

The axial view between the Loggia and the Museum is a significant surviving element of the original design. Retaining and enhancing this composition should be a central aim for any development of the site.

PPG 15 (2.22 and 2.23) requires that the inclusion of a site in the World Heritage List highlights the outstanding international importance of the site as a key material consideration to be taken into account by local planning authorities in determining planning and listed building applications. Policy C1 of the Bath Local Plan 1997 and Policy BH1 of the Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan 2003 have similar aims.

PPG 15 (2.24) requires that local planning authorities should protect registered parks and gardens in determining planning applications. Policy L17 of the Bath Local Plan and Policy BH9 have similar objectives.

PPG 15 ((4.14) requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Policy C4 of the Bath Local Plan and Policy BH6 of the Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan have similar aims.

Paragraph 2.16 and 2.17 of PPG15 deals with changes and impact on the setting of a listed building. It states”...This provision should not be interpreted to narrowly the setting may often be limited to obviously ancillary land, but may often include land some distance from it. The setting of an individual listed building often owes its character to the harmony produced by a particular grouping of buildings (not necessarily of great individual merit) and to the quality of spaces between them....”

PPG 15 (C7) clearly states “modern extensions should not dominate the existing building in scale, material, or situation.” Policies C2, C11, C12, and C13, of the Bath Local Plan and Policy D4, and BH2 of the Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan seek to ensure that development affecting a listed building respects the character of the building in terms of scale, style, design and materials.

It is considered that the height and scale of the extension together would significantly detract from the significance of the World Heritage site, the special interest of the Registered Park, and the special architectural and historic interest of the existing listed building. It would also fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bath Conservation Area and would significantly detract from the setting of listed buildings in the Registered Historic Park and Garden

The applicants argue in their design statement that to ensure that the Holburne can continue as a viable museum in this location the improvements are required to the fabric, the servicing and the access and in the provision of spaces to reflect modern museum uses.

Alternative approaches have been discussed with the applicants and the underground option is included in the Design Statement. No comparative costs have been submitted for other options. Although other options might not deliver the maximum curatorial benefits suggested by the applicants, your officers consider that it would be possible to achieve a good measure of benefits without taking the extension to the height and scale proposed.

#### Architectural design and use of materials.

The architect proposes a bold “stand alone style” which by its very nature contrasts markedly with the existing building, in particular the use of reflective blue/green ceramic which highlights differences this difference not only with the existing building but other structures in Sydney Gardens and the surrounding area which are constructed in natural stone.

It is suggested that the choice of ceramics tiles reflects in part the fine collection of ceramics in the collection. The occasional discreet use of contrasting materials can lead to successful dialogue between the contemporary and the old and there are many successful examples of this in Bath and elsewhere.

However, officers still remain to be convinced that, in this sensitive location, in a city whose unique character is defined by a limited palette of materials and in particular where it is used in such large quantities on such a large extension, that it is appropriate. The material, which is unlikely to accrue a patina over time like the stone adjacent to it, would stand out as a visually competitive material in this landscape setting.

The Architectural Statement notes that ceramic material has weathering and crafting qualities that are typical of building such as the Wrigley building in Chicago or the Pinet building in London and that it will compliment the beautiful colours of the Bath stone. Officers, once again, still remained to be convinced that a material which has been used in other locations which no doubt have their own characteristics can be transferred to Bath.

Officers have no objections in principle to a contemporary design for an extension to represent that it was constructed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but they remain concerned that the approach adopted conflicts rather than

compliments the existing building, that it is too assertive for the site, and question the analysis which concludes it does fit in within the special context of the site.

At a smaller scale the design of the extension and materials proposed may have proven more successful as they would have not competed so much with the main building and its relationship to Sydney Gardens, the existing building remaining the dominant building in the focus for the gardens.

The architect and supporters note that the building will have exciting reflective qualities mirroring the trees in the surrounding landscape, that it will appear light weight and magical and that the ceramics will also reflect the colours of the sky.

Officers are concerned that despite the photomontages provided in the justification statements it will not appear as visually “light weight, magical and reflective” when eventually constructed in particular because of the height and scale.

The large scale model which has been constructed to represent proposals is all in white, including the surrounding landscape, and does little to help the appreciation of the changes in materials proposed.

Reference is made to elements of classical proportions in the extension such as the three tiered height but the building appears top heavy with the large area of ceramic cladding on both the extension and the glass link back into the Holburne.

This is in marked contrast to the existing building which has a rusticated stone ground floor which helps, as noted previously, to plant the building to the ground. The proportion of the upper floors of the existing building appear add odds with the new extension due to its heavy top.

The Georgian Society also questions the very strong horizontal divisions in the extension which are rather at odds with the strong vertical divisions in the host building.

The design and use of ceramic materials in the extension together with alterations proposed to the garden elevation would significantly detract from the existing listed building and the setting of the registered historic park and gardens.

### Internal Alterations

#### The Staircase

The staircase is to be demolished, relocated in a different location, and its original configuration altered. A glazed screen is proposed across the hallway just inside the main doors. There are a number of other alterations proposed throughout the museums which are set down in the Design Statement. These include a provision of a lift in the extension to all floors.

The Architectural Statement notes that the stairs are built in concrete, not as originally intended, that it is possible to relocate them and that it is essential to do this if the vision of the building becoming a gateway into Sydney Gardens is to be realised. English Heritage supports this unanimously, and refers to this as an “inspired idea.”

In support of the demolition and relocation of the staircase reference is made to the fact that it is constructed in concrete with stone treads and risers and therefore that it not a true cantilever stone stairs as originally planned by Blomfield. However, this does not affect its visual impact as a key feature of the interior and concrete appears to have been used by Blomfield elsewhere in the building when it was converted to a museum.

The staircase is in a prominent location and forms part of the original plan form as converted into a Museum. It also relates to the garden elevation as it follows the raised central section, when viewed from the garden, and is well lit by a number of attractively detailed windows many of which provide views, from the staircase, over the rear gardens and into the historic park and garden. A number of these original windows are to be removed and others blocked up from the inside in proposals.

The staircase forms a focal point for the building from the wide central hallway which also has many features ascribed to Blomfield. It may be argued that the staircase, with the central raised central section on the external elevation, forms the “backbone” of the present building.

An attractive part of the existing character of the building is the walk from the entrance hall, which is not at present divided by an internal lobby and upon to the upper floors via the staircase, which is well lit by the existing numerous attractive staircase windows.

On the top landing a particular fine view can be obtained via the impressive Serlian window, which it is also planned to be removed. In the proposed reordering of the interior, the staircase is relegated to a side location in the building with reduced natural light and with the windows located some distance up the height of the wall. The impressive views it once had over the gardens and the park would be lost.

#### The lobby in the entrance hall

The proposed screen in the entrance hall will compromise the spatial qualities of the hall, effectively dividing it into two parts and at present the frames dividing the glass screen appear too wide and poorly related to the subdivision of the door and fanlight which is seen through the screen. However it is difficult to see how the subdivisions will ever be satisfactorily viewed in particular against the existing panelled door and its fanlight.

PPG 15 paragraphs 3.12 -3.15 deals with alterations and extensions to listed buildings. Para 3.12 notes “In judging the effect of any alterations or extension it is essential to have assessed the elements that make up its

special interest of the building in question. They may comprise not only obvious elements such as a decorative façade or internally staircases....”

Appendix C,C5 “ Subsequent additions to historic buildings.....do not necessarily detract from the quality of a building they are often of interest in their own right as part of the building’s organic history. Generally later features of interest should not be removed merely to restore a building to an earlier form”.

C58 “The plan of a building is one of the most important characteristics. Interior plans individual features of interest should be respected and left unaltered as far as possible. Internal spaces, staircases, panelling.....are part of the special interest of a building and may be its most valuable feature.”

Works to demolish and relocate the stairs, alter and remove windows and subdivide the entrance hall significantly compromise the historic and internal architectural integrity and plan form of the building, its character and special historic interest.

#### Other Works to Ground floor.

It is proposed to unite two principle rooms on the ground floor into one to provide a flexible learning space. This results in the removal of a former chimney breast and an odd juxtaposition of two attractive windows when viewed from inside the room and out onto the front garden of the Holburne and then onto Great Pulteney Street. The removal of the same chimney breast also appears to continue in the basement.

C.61, PPG15 states that, “.....The removal of a chimney breast is almost never acceptable, not least because it may affect the structural stability of the building.”

The works would disrupt the historic plan form and result in a visual incongruous juxtaposition, and include the removal of a surviving historic chimney breast in the room and the basement. They would significantly compromise the historic and internal architectural integrity and plan form of the building, its character and special interest.

#### Other design issues.

A shallow reflective pool is proposed around the base of the extension. This is considered to defeat the purpose of creating a new publicly accessible area linked to the grounds – it would form a barrier. It would also be an over formal element in the natural landscape. It is also considered that it will have a number of practical difficulties.

#### Sustainability.

As already noted in the description of proposals the scheme has considered sustainability and renewable energy issues.



It is recognised, however, that there is a dispute on the merits of the use of ceramic materials as opposed to the use of natural stone by objectors to the scheme.

Objectors refer to the ceramics high carbon count because of the high temperature at which it is fired and because of the need to transport it across Britain .The materials are environmentally costly .

At present sustainability/renewable energy issues are not a material planning consideration and therefore planning permission cannot be refused on the basis of the sustainability of a product used in the construction of a building or renewable energy considerations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The assessment of the applications has been very challenging. In terms of the response from the general public and attention received in the press the development is also one of the most controversial proposals for development this authority has had to consider for some time.

Paragraph 3.5 of PPG15 lists the generally points for consideration when dealing with all listed building consents *[and these are summarised below];-*

- 1) The importance of the building
- 2) The particular features of the building which justifies its inclusion in the list; list descriptions may draw attention to features of particular interest or value, but they are not exhaustive and other the features of importance may come to light after the buildings inclusion on the list.
- 3) The buildings setting and its contribution to the local scene e.g. where it forms an element in a group or park.
- 4) The extent in which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community.

Planning Policy Statement 1 Para 34 states that design which is inappropriate in its context or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions should not be accepted.

The applicants have demonstrated that there will be many benefits for the users of the Museum, which will be fully accessible for the first time in its history. The collections and the visitors will have the benefit of enhanced internal conditions and the scope and extent of the displays will be considerably widened. There will be a benefit to the users of Sydney Gardens, who will be able to wander through the building and the grounds and the cafe. Sydney Gardens and the Museum, which are a key element of the World Heritage Site, will become more attractive to residents and visitors to the City.

It is recognised that the architect is of nationally recognised. However the reputation of the architect is not a material factor which should be taken into account when making a decision on an application for planning permission or

listed building consent. Each case should be considered on its planning merits.

Good contemporary design is welcomed in the historic setting of the City. However it is considered that the design should be more responsive to the special context of the Historic Landscape and to the special architectural qualities of the existing building.

Set against these benefits it is considered that the proposed extension because of its height, scale, design and use of materials will cause significant long term harm to a key element of the World Heritage Site. It would also be harmful to the special landscape quality of Sydney Gardens and to the setting of listed buildings within the Gardens. It would also be significantly harmful to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

It is considered that although these benefits are recognised, they do not amount to substantial benefits as required in the tests set down in PPG 15 Para 3.5 and that the applications should be refused.

**OVERVIEW AND ADVICE TO MEMBERS BY THE SENIOR PROFESSIONAL – MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT**

Members will no doubt have noted that the contents of this justifiably lengthy Report reflect clearly the extent to which this proposal has polarised opinion – within English Heritage; between the statutory and local organisations which have been consulted; amongst the community; and even within the Planning Service. In this context, the negative views expressed by our own Historic Environment Officers (which are reproduced above in full) are particularly significant, because these are the experts to whom this Council turns for advice on the way in which the Planning system interacts with the historic environment, and on whom this Council relies for assessments of the relative merits of Planning and Listed Building Consent applications.

The fact is that the Planning system does not deal well with projects such as this, where opinions and perceptions are polarised. There is no realistic hope that a negotiated compromise will bring parties together, and no foolproof way of refereeing between one group who feel that this project is wonderful, and another who consider that it will seriously undermine the special qualities which bring countless visitors to Bath, and which underpin the city's World Heritage Site status.

It is evident from the analysis conducted by the Historic Environment Officers that, if one follows the “normal” assessment process based upon the policies set out in PPG15 and in our own Development Plan, one would “normally” expect this project to be rejected. But if that is so, then how can one explain,

assess, and take on board the opposite view being expressed by English Heritage and by significant numbers of other organisations and individuals?

The answer lies buried in that word “normally” – the simple (but simultaneously complicated) fact is that this scheme is not “normal”. The proposed extension to the Holburne museum has a quality and a significance which rises above the capacity of standard Development Control processes to operate effectively. It has received compliments and support at the highest possible National level in its successful passage through the scrutiny of the English Heritage Advisory Committee, and its architectural approach has been roundly praised by the recognised experts who form the Council’s own Urban Regeneration Panel.

In addition, whilst the fate of the Museum’s application for HLF funding is not itself a material consideration, the fact that your Officers have been able, in discussions with the HLF officers, to receive confirmation that a failure to secure Planning Permission on 25<sup>th</sup> July will almost inevitably spell the end of the project, most certainly is material. Especially so when one understands the case – eloquently made by the Museum – that the future survival of the Museum is itself now dependent upon rapid progression of this long-gestating expansion opportunity.

The views expressed by the Council’s Arts Development Officer (also set out in full above) demonstrate the significance of the Holburne Museum in the range of cultural attractions within Bath.

The broad justification therefore exists in principle for a re-appraisal of the “normal” approach to a scheme such as this, and it is ultimately for the Members of this Committee to determine how much weight to attach to the unusual considerations in this case. In Listed Building Consent terms, Paragraph 3.5 of PPG15 provides an opportunity for wider community benefits to be taken into account. The Paragraph in full is as follows:

**“3.5 The issues that are generally relevant to the consideration of all listed building consent applications are:**

- i. the importance of the building, its intrinsic architectural and historic interest and rarity, in both national and local terms ('historic interest' is further explained in paragraph 6.11);**
- ii. the particular physical features of the building (which may include its design, plan, materials or location) which justify its inclusion in the list: list descriptions may draw attention to features of particular interest or value, but they are not exhaustive and other features of importance (egg interiors) may come to light after the building's inclusion in the list;**
- iii. the building's setting and its contribution to the local scene, which may be very important, e.g. where it forms an element in a group, park, garden or other townscape or landscape, or where it shares particular architectural forms or details with other buildings nearby;**
- iv. the extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community, in particular by contributing to the economic regeneration of the area or the enhancement of its environment (including other listed buildings).”**

The final sub-paragraph is the relevant reference, and it is notable that the same principle is applied later in PPG15 to the consideration of proposals for the demolition of Listed buildings. In essence, the Policy provides strong support for the protection of Listed buildings and their settings, but makes it possible for the decision maker to conclude in appropriate cases, quite legitimately, that broader benefits to the community can outweigh the harm that might stem from a scheme when assessed in the “normal” way.

In the context of the consideration of a Planning application, the issue is dealt with somewhat differently. Firstly, the over-arching statutory requirement is set out in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which states that **“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”**

It is necessary to consider whether there are material considerations which pull in favour of the scheme which would not be taken into account in a straightforward analysis based upon development plan policies. Clearly there are – the support for the Museum in general terms; the inescapable conclusion that the survival of the Museum is under severe threat if it cannot expand now; the importance of the Museum as a facet of the range of attractions that bring visitors to Bath. But what about the interpretation of the development plan itself? Would support for the scheme actually be contrary to the policies in the development plan, and therefore require such a decision to be publicised as a “Departure”?

The answer to that question is another debate in itself – clearly those who oppose the scheme hold sincere interpretations of the intent of the policies within the development plan. But equally clearly, the support of English Heritage and many others demonstrates that many feel with equal conviction that the spirit of the policies within the current and emerging Local Plan can embrace this extension without prejudicing the operation of the plan-led Planning system.

In this context, Members are advised that the policies in the development plan are specifically devised and worded in order to allow flexibility in their operation. In particular, where the policies require the user to exercise discretion in their application, it will seldom be appropriate to decide that a development is contrary to those policies, and that is undeniably the case here. For example, both National and Local policies are in place which are aimed at preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The extent to which that policy is met by a scheme such as this is entirely a matter for informed subjective assessment, and the answer is almost never a straightforward “yes” or “no”. It is always an “on balance” assessment, and in this case the English Heritage Advisory Committee has concluded that the scheme can be supported – that the benefits outweigh the harm. Furthermore, others have concluded that the architecture of the extension will be a real asset to the Conservation Area and to Bath in general.

Accordingly, Members are advised that a conclusion that this proposal can be supported would not be a Departure from the provisions of the development plan. That said, there will be those who disagree with this conclusion, and they are perfectly entitled so to do. What Members must consider is whether a decision to support falls reasonably within the natural discretion that is provided for within the Planning policy framework. The reverse is, of course, true, and a decision by Members to find a different balance which leads to a rejection of the scheme would also be justifiable given the policies in place and the range of views that have been expressed.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, it is considered that on a close balance, this proposal can be recommended for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent. The scheme has clearly polarised opinions, and in doing so has demonstrated that in such circumstances all views are arguably equally valid. Having regard to the development plan the issues is finely balanced, but it is evident that it is not possible to say with certainty that the development will harm the character or appearance of the Conservation Area – that is ultimately a subjective assessment which must be made by the Members of the Committee. Furthermore, the highest possible level of advice has been received in the course of the assessment of these applications, and notwithstanding the objections raised and set out in this Report, ultimately the support of the English Heritage Advisory Committee is compelling.

There are no other over-riding Planning considerations. The site is not at significant risk from flooding; the development will give rise to additional traffic, but this can be managed effectively through the agreement of a Travel Plan; the development will incorporate mechanical ventilation equipment, but the noise from this can be controlled using appropriate Conditions so as to ensure that there is no harm to amenity; the maintenance and management of trees can likewise be the subject of effective Conditions; and, finally, details of surface and facing materials can also be dealt with after the granting of consent.

In short, this is a proposal which raises astonishingly complex issues in terms of the subjective interpretation of Planning policies which are themselves designed to be flexible. The task facing Members boils down to the making of an assessment of the extent to which the benefits of the proposal are judged to outweigh any perceived harm to the historic environment.

Your Officers will be bringing forward, in time for the meeting, formal recommendations in favour of granting both Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for the scheme. Appropriate Conditions will be recommended in order to secure proper control over the implementation and operation of the expansion programme for the Museum.

In addition, an update report will be prepared which will bring to the attention of Members any additional documents or views that are not to hand at the time of writing.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Formal Recommendations in favour of the scheme will be provided in time for the meeting.