

CYFARTHFA CASTLE, MERTHYR TYDFIL, CF47 8RE

APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR OPENING UP WORKS

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Background

Cyfarthfa Castle is a Grade I listed building. Therefore any changes to the Castle's historic fabric that impact on its character will require Listed Building Consent (LBC).

Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust operate Cyfarthfa Park and the museum and art gallery, which occupies the ground floor and basement of the mansion. The school which formerly occupied the west end of the Castle and upper floors of the mansion closed in 2013. Consequently these areas are vacant.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, as owner of Cyfarthfa Castle, have commissioned Purcell Architecture Limited to undertake a detailed condition survey of the Castle, which is currently in a poor state of repair. The survey began in January 2022 and is being carried out by a multi-disciplinary team led by Purcell.

Site Investigations

The Council's brief for the condition survey requires physical investigations and opening-up works to establish the structural condition of the buildings and its elements. Purcell and their structural engineering sub-consultants, Mann Williams, inspected the building in January 2022 to identify where the surveys will benefit most from opening-up works. An illustrated schedule of the proposed opening up works has been produced and is submitted with this application for Listed Building Consent.

Purpose of the works

The opening up works have been designed to clarify the following defects:

Water ingress. The building is suffering from widespread water ingress and decay of the built fabric. As well as failing roofs and rainwater goods, large areas on the external facades appear to be saturated with rainwater. Part of this problem can be attributed to the construction of the small crenellated towers on the perimeter of the building. It appears that these have been rebuilt in such a way that rainwater is collecting within them and travelling into the structure below. Furthermore, a strong correlation has been observed between the areas of saturated masonry and parts of the façade which lack any projecting stone moulding or cornice to shed water.

Structural defects. Inspection by a structural engineer has highlighted several cracks and areas of suspected weakness which merit opening up and examination.

Timber decay. Some areas of potential timber decay have been identified, either as a result of dry rot or through prolonged saturation of embedded timbers. Inspection by a specialist timber consultant is due to take place in early March.

Pre-application advice

The draft schedule of opening up works was sent to Cadw's Inspector, Jonathan Green, and to the Council's Conservation Officer, Huw Roberts, on 7th February. Informal telephone advice has subsequently been received in a phone call from Jonathan Green to Will Holborow on 20th February. This advice focused on the need for a method statement and additional detail regarding the affected areas.

Methodology

The works are to be carried out by a local contractor, P J Saunders Limited

All areas are to be photographed before works commence

Dismantling of targeted areas of the parapets and towers is to be undertaken carefully with hand tools to avoid damaging the stonework

All stones from the parapets and towers are to be numbered, batched and set aside in a secure area on site so they can be reassembled in the same order

The opening up works contract is to be administered by Purcell on behalf of MTCBC

Purcell's surveyor and engineering sub-consultant are to inspect the affected areas in the course of opening up works

Cadw's inspector is to be given reasonable notice of when the works are due to commence.

On completion of the works, Purcell will prepare an illustrated report on the condition of the exposed areas to be submitted to Cadw, with an analysis of the defects uncovered.

Reinstatement strategy

An outline reinstatement strategy has been suggested against each item in the schedule of opening up works. As these works are designed to expose defects in the structure, it will not necessarily be appropriate to immediately reinstate the exposed areas to their 'as found' condition. For example, where areas of decayed timber are exposed, these may need to be left to dry out over an extended period. Where structural weaknesses or defects in detailing are exposed, it may be necessary to leave them exposed pending the design of measures to rectify these faults. Therefore the details of the reinstatement are best left to reserved matters i.e as conditions attached to the LBC.

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Purcell Architecture Limited

1st March 2022