

Aigburth People's Hall:

Heritage Statement:

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1.0 Introduction:

The following document has been prepared in support of an application to erect a temporary Marquee structure and form a new pedestrian entrance at Aigburth People's Hall, Aigburth Vale, Liverpool.

The proposals are designed to support and enhance the offer provided to the community by Aigburth People's Hall, reducing any adverse impact on neighbouring properties, improving pedestrian access and provide much needed disabled access to the Hall and its grounds.

The Hall is undesignated but is sited within the Sefton Park Conservation Area, and is visible from the Grade I Listed Sefton Park. This report will identify the significance of the heritage value of the Park and Conservation area and evaluate any impact the proposals may have on the heritage assets.

1.1 Aigburth People's Hall:

Aigburth People's Hall has a history which dates back to the late 19th Century and the Temperance Movement, who opened the "Aigburth Cocoa Rooms" in 1876 providing facilities for indoor games, reading and serving non-alcoholic drinks. As the use outgrew the building, John Temple, a local businessman, funded the construction of the current building, officially opening on the 21st of June 1901, to be run by local residents.

The Hall itself is a three storey building (2, plus rooms within the roof space), of brick construction, built in a neo-Elizabethan style, incorporating large stone mullioned and transom windows and Art Nouveau decorative panels. The main entrance on the Aigburth Vale (east) side of the building, is a prominent architectural feature, approached up stone steps and incorporates Doric pilasters, an arched opening and decorative panels.

The Hall and grounds are sited on the south-eastern edge of Sefton Park, and are bounded by a continuous sandstone wall and mature Beech hedge along the Aigburth Vale, Elmswood Road and Mossley Hill Drive boundaries (Figs 1 & 2). The north-western most part of the boundary treatment is of a more modern construction and has limited planting. The planting generally screens the grounds and much of the building from the road - as one moves into Sefton Park, the upper levels of the Hall come into view (Fig 3).



Fig 1 - View from Elmswood Road



Fig 1 - View from Mossley Hill Drive



Fig 3 - View from Sefton Park

2.0 Sefton Park:

Sefton Park was designed by French Landscape Architect Edouard André and Liverpool Architect Lewis Hornblower following an international design competition in 1866. The park was built on agricultural land purchased from the Earl of Sefton, and was to form Liverpool's largest public Park, which was officially opened by Prince Arthur in 1872. The large Villas which surround the Park to this day were built to help fund the construction of the park by selling off surrounding plots.

2.1 Character and Local Context:

Sefton Park is set within a predominately residential area, approximately three miles south-east of the centre of Liverpool, with entrances from Ullet Road and Aigburth Drive. The boundary of the park is defined by a series of wide, curved roads which are fronted by original Victorian Villas; forming a key backdrop to the park, and an important element of the overall character and setting.

The Park itself is characterised by large open areas linked and bounded by circular and elliptical paths and screened by tree planting creating distinct zones within the overall site. The park also contains within it a number of structures of significance (see further detail below) and a number of wooded areas around lakes and other water features.

Sefton Park is designated as Grade I listed and as mentioned above, contains within it a number of listed buildings and features. The most significant of these is the Grade II* listed Palm House, with the remainder, including the entrance Lodges at Ullet Road and Aigburth Drive, the drinking fountains and Eros Statue, are Grade II listed.

The Sefton Park Conservation Area includes the Park along with the roads and Villa's on its periphery. The Conservation Area boundary is shown as area 26 on the map below (fig 4).

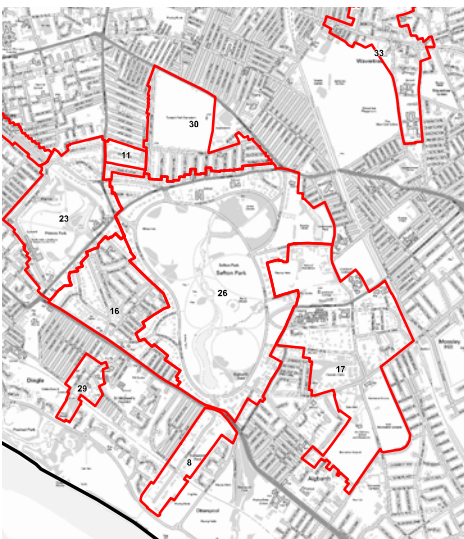


Fig 4 - Extract from Liverpool City Council Conservation Area Map.

2.2 Contribution of Aigburth People's Hall:

The design and setting of Aigburth People's Hall makes a positive contribution to the setting of Sefton Park as well as the character of the Conservation Area more widely in terms of its style and scale alongside the peripheral Villa's around the park. The most significant views of the Hall are of the main entrance on Aigburth Vale, while views from the Park are more scant, given the screening provided by the sandstone wall and tree/hedge planting, which blocks the view of the lower level of the Hall and the grounds. However certain areas of the Park open up along Mossley Hill drive, providing glimpses of the Hall beyond the boundary, forming a grand and attractive part of the suburban backdrop.

3.0 Planning Policy Context:

In order to comply with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the proposals will be considered in the context of relevant National and Local policies relating to the historic environment. The following policies have particular relevance:

3.1 Nation Planning Policy (NPPF) Context:

NPPF - Section 12 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment)

Paragraph 129 states that:

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 131 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

Paragraph 132 states that 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset, and the more important the asset, the greater that weight should be; that significance can be lost through development within its setting; and that as heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 133 states that where a proposal will lead to substantial harm to, or total loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- *The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- *No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- *Conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- *The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the site back into use.*

Paragraph 134 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Concerning setting, paragraph 137 states:

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Area and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

3.2 Local Planning Policy Context:

Locally, the relevant saved heritage policies of the 2002 Liverpool Unitary Development Plan are:

- Policy GEN3 (Heritage and Design in the Built Environment), which states that the UDP aims to protect and enhance the built environment of the City by encouraging a high standard of design and landscaping in developments and creating an attractive environment which is safe and secure both day and night.
- Policy HD5, which seeks to protect the setting of listed buildings
- Policy HD7 (Conservation Areas), which states that Conservation Areas provide attractive places to live and work, and contribute to the quality of life for local people. These areas will be given special consideration, and the character and appearance of these areas will be enhanced and preserved.
- Policy HD8 (Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas), which states the City Council will take positive action to secure the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas and will:
 - i. Seek support and funding from all available sources for the repair of buildings and environmental improvements;
 - ii. Prepare action plans for priority areas;
 - iii. Use its available powers to secure the removal of features which significantly detract from the character of the area; and
 - iv. Provide planning guidance and advice to owners and developers.
- Policy HD11 (New Development in Conservation Areas), which states that planning permission will not be granted for development in a conservation area which fails to preserve or enhance its character. The policy further states that proposals for new development will be permitted having regard to the following criteria:

- the development is of a high standard of design and materials, appropriate to their setting and context, which respect the character and appearance of the conservation area
- the development pays special attention to conserving the essential elements which combine to give the area its special character and does not introduce changes which would detract from the character or appearance of the area
- the proposal protects important views and vistas within, into and out of the conservation area
- the proposal does not lead to the loss of open space or landscape features (trees and hedges) important to the character or appearance of the area
- the development does not generate levels of traffic, parking, noise or environmental problems which would be detrimental to the character or appearance of the area
- the proposal has a satisfactory means of access and provides for car parking in a way which is sympathetic to the appearance of the conservation area.

4.0 Assessment of Significance:

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 129, the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, should be identified and assessed, in order to mitigate any conflict between the asset's conservation and any proposals (In this case the marquee and new entrance). The NPPF defines 'setting' as:

"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."

Therefore the significance of Sefton Park and the contribution made by Aigburth People's Hall must first be established in order to properly evaluate any possible impact of the proposals.

4.1 Significance of Sefton Park:

Sefton Park can be considered to be of outstanding national importance due to its designation as a Grade I listed Park. Its significance can be summarised by the reasons given for its designation, as stated in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, namely:

- *Date: the park is an early example of a municipal park*
- *Design: although enhanced, the park's design is essentially unchanged from its original layout of 1867*
- *Designer: the park was designed by Edouard André who had worked on Paris's parks, and was the first to introduce French park design to England*
- *Historic interest: the park was and is an important element of one of the England's great industrial cities, one of the parks designed to form a green belt around Liverpool*
- *Structures: the park retains various 19th century and later memorials and structures including the Grade II* Palm House of 1896*
- *Planting: the structural planting is retained and is an important feature of the park*

The Park is also of great local significance, as it is the epicentre of the Sefton Park Conservation Area, including the roads and villas on its perimeter.

4.2 Significance of Aigburth Peoples Hall:

Although undesignated, Aigburth Peoples Hall is a building of local architectural and historic interest. In visual terms, the building makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Grade I listed Sefton Park and to the character and appearance of the Sefton Park Conservation Area, given its style, scale and detailing. Notable features of the site are the sandstone boundary wall and trees, which also serve to enclose the grounds to the rear and south of the Hall, virtually concealing it from public view. However, a small section of the wall and screen planting is of lower quality and does not positively contribute to the setting of Sefton Park (fig 5).



Fig 5 - Section of boundary wall at north-west of site.

5.0 Assessment of Impact of Proposals:

The provision of a temporary Marquee structure offers users a different style of venue to the spaces within the hall - it is used as an alternative function space, however does not increase the overall capacity of the Hall; and the location of the Marquee, to the rear of the Hall, mitigates any impact on local residents.

The proposed pedestrian/disabled access to the Sefton Park carriageway would be extremely beneficial to the community using the building and its grounds; it would greatly enhance the much needed use of the building by the community at large; make the grounds fully accessible for disabled users; make use of the newly installed parking bays formed by the council on Mossley Hill Drive and surrounding areas, and abate high noise levels near local residences' on Aigburth Vale by providing visitors with an alternative entrance / exit via Sefton Park.

In terms of NPPF Paragraph 131 The Hall makes a positive contribution to the economic vitality and sustainability of the community, and the use of a temporary marquee further enhances this contribution, in terms of the facilities on offer to the community, the success of local business and local employment.

In the context of relevant planning policies, the impact of the proposed development will be considered in terms of:

- *The effect of the temporary structure on the listed park and conservation area*
- *The effect of introducing a new opening within the boundary wall*

5.1 Impact of the alterations to the Boundary Treatment:

This report has demonstrated that the stone boundary wall and screen planting plays an important role in contributing to the visual setting of both the Hall and the Grade I Listed Sefton Park. It also shows that a section of the boundary in the north-west corner of the site is of poor quality and is detrimental to the setting of the Park. Firstly in relation to the proposed new access, this has been designed to be sympathetic in style and using matching materials to the existing wall. With regard to the north-west section of boundary, the proposals seek to replace this with matching stone and re-introduce matching planting to provide additional screening as well as harmonising the overall street elevation. Therefore, the proposals will make a positive impact on the overall setting on the edge of Sefton Park, preserving and enhancing the setting of the Conservation Area.

5.2 Impact of the proposed Temporary Marquee:

The proposed temporary Marquee structure will be sited at the north-western corner of the rear grounds of Aigburth People's Hall. The Hall is surrounded by a continuous sandstone wall and Beech hedge, reaching a combined height of approx. 3.5m - 4m, on the eastern, southern and western boundaries; the Marquee would not be visible from the three boundaries detailed, preserving the character of the main entrance elevation of the Hall (Fig 6).

From Mossley Hill Drive and the south-eastern fringes of Sefton Park, there will be only limited views of the uppermost section of the Marquee (Fig 7). The replacement of the boundary wall and reinstatement of the Beech hedge (as described above) will further screen the Marquee, and as this matures, will render it invisible from Sefton Park, thus having a negligible impact on the character and setting of the Grade I Listed asset. In addition, the temporary nature of the structure means that, during the winter months when the Beech hedge loses its foliage, the structure can be dismantled and thus have no impact on the setting of the Park.



Fig 6 - Marquee not visible from South



Fig 7 - Marquee visible from North

6.0 Conclusion:

The proposal will enhance the use and help sustain the longevity of the Aigburth People's Hall which is an important asset on the Park, both in terms of its architectural character and its value to the local economy. The proposal will preserve and enhance the setting of the Grade I listed Sefton Park and the character and appearance of the Sefton Park Conservation Area. The development is therefore in accordance with NPPF 129, 131 and 132 and Liverpool UDP policies HD5, HD7, HD8 and HD11. It is therefore considered that consent for the development should be granted.