

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL  
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE  
4 October 2021**

**Officer:** Helen Ball – Town Clerk

**QUARRY GREENHOUSE**

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### **Purpose of Report**

To update the Committee on executing the wish of Council to demolish the Greenhouse at the Quarry and build a contemporary garden

### **Quarry Greenhouse**

The Quarry Greenhouse was built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was a functional greenhouse until the late 1990s when it fell into disrepair. The fabric of the greenhouse has become more and more unusable and for a number of years it has been fenced off.

The site has a number of constraints; namely:

- There have been many repairs over a long period of time and there is very little left of the existing Victorian greenhouse
- There is asbestos sheeting on the racks within the greenhouse which would require specialist removal
- Underneath the greenhouse is a large concrete rainwater reservoir

Previously Officers have met with the Head of Planning and a Senior Conversation Officer to determine any approach to removal.

A recent structural survey has identified that it is not viable to repair and should be demolished.

Whilst not within the Curtilage of the Grade Listed Heritage Park it is afforded protection by its principal listing of Quarry Lodge given that the structure was built before 1<sup>st</sup> July 1948.

The facility also sits within the Shrewsbury Conservation Area.

Enquiries have been made with specialist conservation planners to determine a course of action to see its demolition and the site re-use. The findings of those enquiries is appended to this report.

It is evident that the council's wish to demolish and convert into a Contemporary Garden isn't that straight forward and enquiries would need to be made with both the Conservation Team and Shropshire Council and Historic England. There will be a need to have a plan which retains the historic value of the site regardless of its condition.

This also adds to the need to undertake a piece of work to determine a future vision for the park which officers have previously identified as a requirement to enable programmed work to be planned and funded.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (i) That the report be noted;
- (ii) That Officers proceed with the commissioning of a Vision for the Quarry

## Recommendation from the Conservation Planner

Thanks for arranging a site visit for the above project and to meet everyone in the GLORIOUS sunshine!

I've attempted to summarise as succinctly as possible below my thoughts and advice re: demolition of the glasshouse as we covered quite a bit of ground in our discussions on site! Please let me know if you think I've missed anything.

Demolition in policy terms is generally considered almost always to constitute 'substantial harm' to the heritage asset – in this case there are several to choose from e.g. Conservation Area, Registered Park and Garden and Listed Building. So, we have to be robust in evidencing the 'public benefits' that will offset this harm. Although it is clear to see that the building is beyond economic repair and this is a material consideration in the planning process, it is also the duty of the owner to maintain the building and equally the Local Planning Authority have statutory powers to enforce in Conservation Areas and with Listed Buildings. So, I suspect this is not a precedent they would want to set in such a prominent place to demolish a building that is beyond repair without seeing any enhancement to the site.

Developments in relation to heritage assets that seek to 'enhance' the 'significance' will always be treated favourably, so instead of treating the glasshouse in isolation I think we need to sell the scheme by presenting the demolition as part of a larger project. The long-term vision that we discussed is absolutely something that I think the Council would buy into and we would present it so that the demolition of the glasshouse was required to *enable* the new and positive development for town, economy, community *and* heritage assets. I mentioned that generally the Council much prefer to see a full scheme than piecemeal development with large asset-owners/managers such as yourselves as they have a better understanding of 'the plan' which helps you in turn when you come to put forward other schemes for other sites/assets – they can put together the pieces of the jigsaw much more easily and are likely to be more supportive of schemes.

The alternative that we discussed is that we touch base with building control and they can investigate if under the Section 77 of the Building Act 1984 the glasshouse is a 'dangerous building'. They would generally still liaise with Conservation on this, and the relevant statutory consents would be required, but it would be strong evidence and push things along much quicker.

Next steps:

- **Establish the building's formal status**

As you know the [Lodge](#) is the principal listed building however according to the Section 1(5)(b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which states the below.

*"any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948...shall... be treated as part of the building."*  
*We can investigate this further and evidence it's historical relationship to confirm if it is or not 'curtilage listed'.*

If it is not

-planning permission would be required for its demolition as the building is in the Shrewsbury Conservation Area

In both instances Historic England would be consulted due to the nature of the development i.e. demolition which is obviously extreme! As well as being adjacent to a the [Quarry which is Grade II Registered Park and Garden](#) (the Gardens Trust would likely also be consulted).

If it is:

-listed building consent would also be required for its demolition

- **Pre-app with Shropshire Council**

My initial thoughts are that it would be wise to go through a formal pre-app process with both Historic England and Shropshire Council to 'de-risk' the project and establish any concerns/queries from the get-go.

Shropshire do not unfortunately offer any discount for their Town & Parish Councils (a lot of other Authority's do...!) for pre-app so the charge is **£600 inc. VAT for a non-residential site less than 1ha.**

- **Pre-app with Historic England**

Historic England would *not* be consulted automatically as part of the pre-app process with Shropshire Council and have their own separate pre-app service. They have a 15hour cycle of pre-app for free which can include a site visit if necessary.

Before I put together a formal fee proposal it's probably worthwhile digesting the above. We can put in as much or as little for the pre-app (we will at a minimum need a supporting statement and plans of the site), but obviously the more you put in the more you get out. So, we could do massing exercise, suggest some options, include the changes to the toilets, look at some precedents of the 'future vision' to give them *something* to look at rather than just ask for their thoughts on the demolition. Although this would obviously form part of it.

In the interim, if you're happy to agree any further work on an hourly rate £90/hr + VAT + Expenses (terms of business attached for reference) which might be easier whilst you agree how you want to take it forward with Members etc.