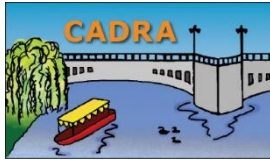


Joint Press Release



**Reading Civic Society &
Caversham and District
Residents Association**



Vital but minimal works commence to protect Chazey Barn

RCS and CADRA commend RBC for finally getting the leaseholder to undertake vital, but minimal, Urgent Works to Chazey Barn

Reading Civic Society and CADRA are delighted to learn that in April 2020 a contractor started to undertake vital, but minimal, Urgent Works to prevent further deterioration to Chazey Barn in the Warren. Chazey Barn dates from before 1611, it is one of only six Grade I listed buildings in Reading and the only one which is not a religious building.

Sadly the work to be undertaken is NOT a restoration. The works are aimed to prevent further deterioration of the structure by ensuring it is wind and weatherproof, safe from collapse, vandalism and theft.

We support Cllr Ballsdon's hope that this might be the start of the building being sympathetically restored. If so it will mark an end to 2 decades of sequential planning applications and inaction on this site, which is owned by the Mapledurham Estate. We suspect it will still be a long journey.

Reading Borough Council (RBC) is to be congratulated for finally implementing an Urgent Works Notice. Reading Civic Society, CADRA, the Warren & District Residents Association and individuals have, since 2013, pressed Historic England and RBC to take action such as this. Whilst it has taken 7 years to reach this point we do understand the difficulties RBC has had in identifying, and engaging with, the current leaseholder after the original applicant went out of business.

As it is now over 10 years since ground works were undertaken we are also pleased to note that RBC is seeking to establish that the planning permission is extant.

We will be interested to hear the plans to properly repair, and bring into practical use, this historic barn which is a unique heritage asset in the town and its future is of interest to many residents.

We ask that the leaseholder / developer and RBC will keep us and local residents informed about plans for the site. We have always had particular concerns about the impact of construction traffic along the long and narrow Warren if, and when development starts. Residents will also need to be assured about traffic management which will be generated by the planned 78 room care facility.

Background.

The building

An archaeological report dates it as no later than 1611, indicating it is very rare for a building like this to have survived with few alterations. It is owned by the Mapledurham Estate. One of the substantial walls has been supported by scaffolding for too many years to remember, with significant large cracks in the walls, other walls need supporting, there are holes in the roof, and no control on access, that it still stands is a tribute to the original builders. It is on SAVE's Heritage at Risk and also on Historic England's Heritage At Risk list. <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/49143> .

The work to be done is NOT a restoration.

The Urgent Works specification includes works to; install temporary props to the open barn doorways, fix doors/ barriers to secure the building, removal of straw & guano, testing of existing rusty scaffolding which supports the east gable, check the solidity of the West end gable and if necessary install scaffolding, prevent water ingress to the roof by replacement of loose tiles, provide temporary covers.

That is it. Vital but minimal.

Planning

Since the early 2000s the Chazey Barn Site has a very chequered planning history, a proposal for a sports injury clinic did not get approval and then followed several proposals for nursing homes, some rejected by RBC and the Planning Inspector.

The extant consent is for a nursing home for 78 residents which was granted at a Planning Appeal in around 2009. Local groups objected to this on many grounds, not the least of which was the dreadful access for emergency vehicles and visitors along the narrow Warren. Eventually planning consent was given after a successful planning appeal. Ground works were undertaken in 2010, but nothing further has happened to this day, the then planned operator having gone bust.

In around 2013 with no action being taken to build the planned nursing home or to safeguard the Barn, Reading Civic Society, [CADRA](#), The Warren and District Residents Association and some individuals pressed Reading Borough Council and Historic England to take action to require the owners / leaseholders of Chazey Barn to take undertake vital repair works to the building. We have maintained a consistent pressure over the years on this. We understood RBCs difficulties in taking this forward in part because of the shifting ownership of the leasehold.

Future use

We understand, though have yet to have it formally confirmed, that a couple of years ago the In Mind Health Care Group <https://www.inmind.co.uk/> emerged as the new leaseholder/ developer, they provide support for males and females over the age of eighteen who have complex mental health, personality disorder and physical health needs and also care for elderly people who may suffer from dementia and who may also require palliative care. We will of course be interested to hear about their plans.

Beyond this of course the questions include; when will a full repair be undertaken, when will work on the wider development start and what will be the future use of the barn?

Further Information:

Cllr Ballsdon has provided more information on her page; <http://www.isobelballsdon.com/.../urgent-works-to-grade-i-lis...>

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