



# **Walsall Council**

## **PLANNING COMMITTEE: 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

### **REPORT OF HEAD OF PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL**

#### **Additions to the List of Buildings of Local Architectural and Historic Interest – Walsall Local History Centre, Essex Street, Walsall, WS2 7AU**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

To request that Committee agree to the permanent inclusion of Walsall Local History Centre, Essex Street, Walsall on the List of Buildings of Local Architectural and Historic Interest. The site is presently Council owned. The Listing is sought in order to protect it from future development that may result in the loss of the Heritage Asset entirely or loss of historic fabric of the building.

##### **2. Recommendation**

That Committee agrees to the permanent inclusion of Walsall Local History Centre, Essex Street, Walsall on the List of Buildings of Local Architectural and Historic Interest

##### **3. Resource and Legal Considerations:**

The Council's current criteria, as outlined in the adopted UDP, for a building to be included on the Local List are:-

- i. Possessing special architectural or historic interest but not currently enjoying statutory Listed Building status.
- ii. Definite and recognisable architectural interest (including originality of design or rarity as a type specimen).
- iii. Relating to traditional or historic industrial processes surviving in a reasonably intact condition.
- iv. Intact industrial history structures such as bridges.
- v. Buildings of character acting as landmarks in the townscape.
- vi. Associated with unusual or significant historic events or containing features of definite antiquity (ie. pre-1800).
- vii. Good quality modern architecture.

Subject to approval, property owners will be advised of the local listing of properties.

There is no right to appeal for Local Listing so the Council will not be open to legal challenge as the result of adding a building to the list.

There are no resource implications.

**4. Citizen Impact:**

The preservation and conservation of historic buildings creates assets available for residents of the Borough to enjoy. Historic buildings provide links from the present to the past and contribute to residents feeling proud of Walsall's culture.

**5. Community Safety:**

The protection of local list buildings, in conjunction with the Council's wider heritage-led regeneration work will assist in the improvement of community safety.

**6. Environmental Impact:**

Continued use of historic buildings is environmentally sustainable and visually contributes to the enhancement of the built environment of the Borough. Such buildings contribute significantly to the environmental quality of Walsall.

**7. Performance and Risk Management Issues:**

Designating a building on the Local List will contribute to the Council's wider heritage led regeneration initiatives. There is a financial risk that it will reduce any potential capital receipt for the Council as it will reduce the development potential of the site due to the presumption against demolition outlined in saved UDP policy ENV28. However, as the Council are committed to preserving the Borough's built heritage this should not constitute a significant risk.

**8. Equality Implications:**

Buildings of local architectural or historic interest are considered an amenity benefit for all citizens. Buildings are proposed for the local list based on their historical and architectural merit only regardless of their use or ownership.

**9. Consultation:**

Asset Management have been advised in writing of the intention to include the Former Walsall Local History Centre on the Local List, appendix A. They have been provided with information on the proposed addition and what this would mean for them as owners.

Asset Management have advised the local listing of the building would have a capital receipt implication, as offers received have indicated this would be subject to the demolition and redevelopment of the site.

**10. Ward(s) Affected:**

Blakenall

**11. Background Papers:**

Attached.

**12. Contact Officer**

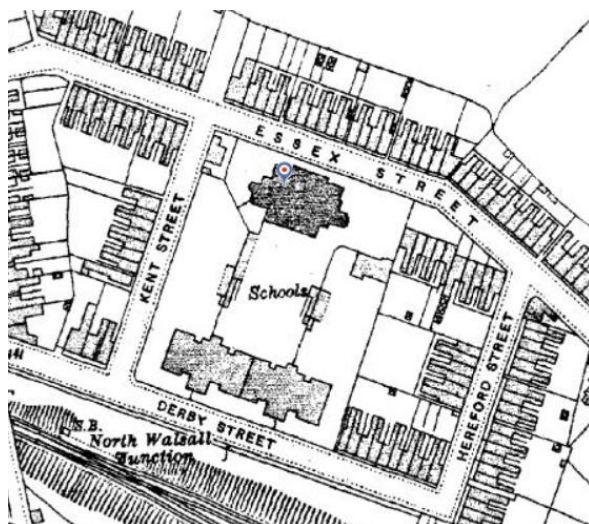
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**Head of Planning and Building Control**

**Additions to the List of Buildings of Local Architectural and Historic Interest –  
Walsall Local History Centre, Essex Street, Walsall, WS2 7AU**

**13.0 The Site**



13.1 The Former Walsall Local History Centre, opened in 1904, as the North Walsall Junior and Infants School. It is part of a complex of school buildings constructed in the early 20th century on the site between Derby Street and Essex Street.

Image Left: Walsall Council Historic Mapping

13.2 The site has been split with the Abu Bakr School occupying the buildings to the south of the site, fronting Derby Street, and the Former Walsall Local

History Centre to the north of the site, fronting Essex Street. Adjacent the Former Local History Centre is the former Headmaster's House.

13.3 The most recent use of the former school building, as an archive has allowed for the internal floor plan and original internal features to be retained in a largely original condition.

13.4 This building/group of existing buildings are a prominent focal feature within the street scene and makes a positive contribution to the character of the area, the street scene and local historic environment.

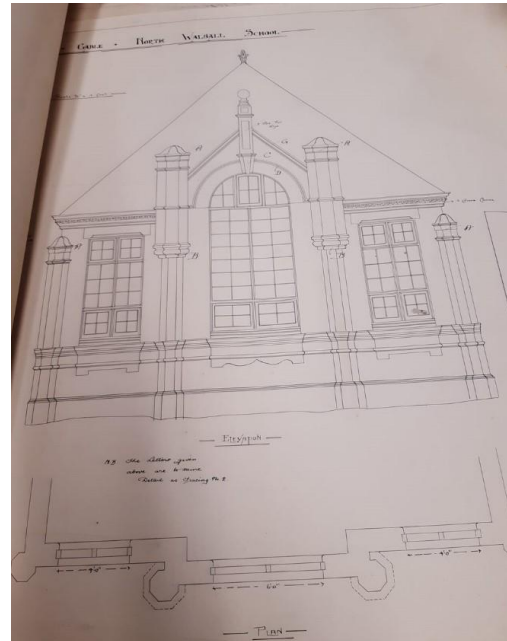
**14.0 Historical Interest**

14.1 Local Architect and Surveyor H.E. Lavender (b.1856 – d.1935), who certainly worked for the Walsall School Board in the first years of the 20th century, is the likely designer of the building. He had a long career, with his son Ernest Charles Lavender (b.1890 - d.1942) carrying on the family practice; the firm of Lavender and Twentyman being noted especially for their modernist churches in the West Midlands, such as the Grade II Listed Church of St. Gabriel on Walstead Street, Walsall.

14.2 Lavender Senior's most famous building is the 'New Workhouse Infirmary' on Pleck Road, now known as the Former Board of Guardians Offices, South of Manor Hospital, which is Grade II listed. He also designed temporary school accommodation for the School Boards (Walsall at the time had a severe shortage of school places).

14.3 H. E. Lavender also designed at least the Elmore Green Schools in Bloxwich and the archive (at Walsall Local History Centre) contains a bundle of 25 drawings entitled 'North Walsall Schools' which includes a detailed drawing for the main window for 'Infants School in North Walsall'. Each of the drawings at the Walsall Archives is signed at H.E. Lavender, including the main window detail. The building now known as 'Walsall Local History Centre' is the work of a regionally prominent architect.

Image right: Walsall Archives, 2021



14.4 The History of the County of Stafford: Volume 17, originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1976, describes the History of Education in Walsall:

*'A survey of elementary education in the town in 1870 showed that there were 5,755 children at day schools, 462 at night schools, and 14 'half timers'. It was considered that over 2,000 extra school places were needed. A school board was formed in 1871, it was then discovered that in fact 4,000 extra places were required. A by-law making school attendance compulsory was passed in 1872, but for many years Walsall had the worst attendance record of the Black Country boroughs. It was not until c.1900, after the formation of a school attendance committee, that the position improved'.*

14.5 Walsall School Board ceased to function in 1903, the County Borough took responsibility for all stages of public education. The opening of the North Walsall Junior and Infants School in 1904, marks the transition from the era of the Board School to the era of education under local authority control.

14.6 The History of the County of Stafford: Volume 17, originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1976, describes North Walsall Junior and Infants' Schools:

*'Originated as a council school with senior mixed, junior mixed, and infants' departments, opened in 1904, on a site bounded by Derby, Kent, Essex and Hereford Streets. The senior school was recognised as a higher elementary school in 1906, becoming a senior school for boys in 1929 and after a secondary modern school for boys in the reorganisation after 1944. It was closed in 1965'.*

14.7 The current Abu Bakr School facing Derby Street is also part of the 1904 complex of school buildings.

## 15.0 Architectural Interest

15.1 The existing building fronting Essex Street is a traditional red brick Victorian building with engaged octagonal piers with freestanding expressed pepper pot

turrets in between the gables. The gables have corbeled gable finials. The windows on the front elevation facing Essex Street are tripartite windows with central arched feature based on a Venetian window. The windows have a brick soldier course lintel with a pronounced keystone. Below the windows are pronounced brick work. The buildings to the side are octagonal in shape with a reflective gable roof and are of the same design and character. The buildings have chimneys. The roofs of all the buildings on site are steep and have central louvered ventilators which add to the Victorian design and character of this existing building. The front and side boundary walls and railings add to the Victorian character and design of the whole setting of the site.

## **16.0 Local List**

16.1 There are two types of heritage assets, designated heritage assets and non designated heritage assets. Designated heritage assets are designated nationally under relevant legislation and conservation areas which are designated locally under relevant legislation.

16.2 Planning Practice Guidance states *‘Non-designated heritage assets are locally-identified ‘buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets’.*

16.3 The National Planning Policy Framework defines a heritage asset as: *‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest’.*

16.4 Historic England Guidance Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage states *‘non designated heritage assets can be identified in a number of ways’.* It also states the defined heritage interests: archaeological, architectural, artist and historical provide a sound basis for a local heritage list criteria.

16.5 The Local List is a list of buildings within the Borough, considered to have historic and architectural value, that are not Statutory Listed.

16.6 Local Listing is part of a raft of measures used to preserve and enhance the character of the Borough’s historic built environment. The Council’s adopted Unitary Development Plan states that;

*“The Council recognises that some buildings and areas are of local architectural and historic interest but do not benefit from protection under statutory controls. To this end, the Council will continue to compile, publish and update and List of Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest.”*

16.7 The inclusion of a building on the local list is purely a local designation and wholly separate from the inclusion of a building on the statutory list which can only be done by the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Local listing does not change existing permitted development rights for a property but

it is considered as a “material planning consideration” that can be considered as part of any planning application affecting the property through UDP policy ENV28. The objective of putting a building on the Local List is not to preserve it at any cost. However, when a planning application for works to a Local List building is submitted, more care and sensitivity to the building, its fabric and its location will be expected.

16.8 Whilst the site is not in a conservation area and the buildings are not nationally or locally listed, these buildings are classed as non- designated heritage assets. Under the revised NPPF, the LPA has a duty to place great weight to the conservation and retention of non-designated heritage assets, such as this site and all the buildings on the site including the front boundary wall and railings.

## **17.0 Local Listing Review**

17.1 In 2021, the four Black Country Authorities (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton –) were awarded £70k by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government) as part of their £1.5m Local Heritage List fund.

17.2 The project aim is to update and enhance the local heritage lists for each of the authorities, to help protect and promote the historic buildings, structures and other heritage assets that do not fulfil the criteria for inclusion on the National Heritage List for England, but nonetheless play a significant role in the local character and distinctiveness of our areas.

17.3 The four Black Country Authorities have commissioned local consultants, TDR Heritage, to carry out the work. So far they have been reviewing our current local list to check these locally listed sites have not been demolished or significantly altered. In the meantime, revised selection criteria for the whole of the Black Country has been agreed (in draft) between the four authorities, with input from local societies and amenity groups.

17.4 A local heritage list contains historic buildings, structures, parks and gardens, archaeological and geological sites and other heritage assets and plays an important part in the planning system, ensuring the heritage value of a site is considered when making planning decisions.

17.5 The project is currently at the public engagement phase and are encouraging local groups, societies and individuals to get involved, to help identify buildings and other heritage assets that should be included on the local heritage lists. From 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022, nominations will be open for members of the public, groups, and local societies to put forward buildings, structures, parks, archaeological and geological sites and public artwork that they feel have heritage value. Nominations can be submitted online via the project website, or by downloading the nomination form and returning it by email or post.

17.6 Once the nominations are in, TDR Heritage will undertake additional research and assess the sites against the selection criteria. They will then make recommendations as to whether a nomination should be locally listed, potentially

fulfils criteria for National Listing, or should be added to the councils' Historic Environment Records.

17.7 Following receipt of the recommendations there will be a public consultation on the new additions in 2022, and then adoption and publication of the updated local heritage lists for each authority.

17.8 The extension of the local list can form part of the Council's wider heritage led regeneration proposals, which aim to capitalise on the Borough's built quality and historic distinctiveness to create the conditions to support its wider economic regeneration.