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PLANNING DEPARTMENT
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22 Sally Port
St Mary's
Isles of Scilly
January 2015

RE: Letter of Significance for non material amendment to planning application and change to original plans for the Listed Building consent P/12/054 & P/12/055 Buzza Tower, Buzza Hill, St Marys Isles of Scilly.

Introduction

As this project is without precedent it did throw up a couple of minor design changes and considerations that could not have been anticipated. Equally once open a couple of modifications have become apparent to ensure safer operation of the Obscura on a day to day basis. As a result there have been a number of very minor modifications to the project originally submitted. The notes below and associated application seek to clarify and regularise the situation.

Re opening of blocked in window on the ground floor:

In order to provide greater levels of natural daylight on the ground floor to aid access and egress to the building it is proposed to re establish the ground floor window added to the building at the time the tower was converted from a windmill to a viewing platform in 1912 (As the tower fell into decline the window was removed to prevent unauthorised access to the building).

The window does not overlook any neighbouring properties and by virtue of the opening being under the circular 'porch' surrounding the building is only visible when close to the tower.

The window will be a timber fixed glazed unit in the same style of the window above. The frame can be made and available for viewing at a site visit.

Temporary wire safety rail to protect parapet edge:

On the roof the parapet height is approximately 500mm. The recommended height for a barrier to protect against a significant drop is 1100mm. Although the roof is strictly out

of bounds for the purposes of public access we do have to go on to the roof twice daily to raise and lower the Obscura mechanism. The low parapet height is clearly a concern; especially as we have to handle large hatch covers which have significant windage. In order to provide a degree of protection whilst maintaining the minimum of visual impact upon the building we are proposing to add a demountable two wire safety rail in the same style as those used on yachts. The top wire will be 510mm above the parapet, the second wire 250mm above the parapet. The wire itself will be 6mm in diameter and the uprights will be 20mm in diameter - so fine as to become indiscernible at any distance from the tower (NOTE: On the drawings the thinnest line that can be drawn is 18mm wide so the actual wires will be much thinner than those shown on the drawing). The uprights will slot into sockets fixed to the parapet. It is proposed that the safety rail be erected for the duration of the opening season and removed in the closed / winter months.

The wire, uprights and brackets can be made available for viewing at a site visit.

Minor change in appearance of Camera Obscura mechanism and waterproof housing:

As the mechanism is probably the only one of its type in the world there was no precedent / tested design to work to. Due to the weight of the mechanism and significant wind loadings experienced on the top of the tower the initial idea for a telescoping mechanism proved impossible to achieve - the combination of weight and wind loading lead to jamming during raising and lowering. This necessitated / led to a hinged design which provided rigidity and didn't jam. Clearly the move from telescoping to a hinged mechanism required a redesign of the base of the mechanism from round to square to allow it to fold.

This re design allowed **significant reduction in the dimensions of the upper sections of the mechanism. It also gave a reduction in the profile / height above the parapet when the mechanism is folded away.**

The colour remains the same as the original application.

Some key dimensions:

Mechanism Raised	Drawing	Actual	Difference
Height above parapet	2500mm	2400mm	100mm shorter than drawing
Rotating head	900mm	570mm dia	330mm narrower than drawing
Round section below	650mm	530mm dia	120mm narrower than drawing
Square base section	650mm wide	820mm wide	170mm wider than drawing

Mechanism lowered, including weatherproof box [*]	Drawing	Actual	Difference
Height above parapet	542mm	450mm	90mm lower than drawing
*Dimensions of watertight housing 2.49m by 1.38. Max height above parapet lids in place - 470mm (70mm lower than on the drawings). Outer portion of the housing 170mm lower than on the drawings.			

Reasons for watertight housing

The Planning Inspector saw no reason for removal of the retracted mechanism out of season and that he saw the lowered mechanism appearing above the parapet as not materially affecting the overall appearance of the building. To this end we have provided an all year / weather covering for the mechanism when retracted.

With the mechanism folded into the watertight housing and the hatch covers in place the **maximum height above the parapet is 70mm lower than shown on the drawings.**

This covering is constructed of 9mm marine ply and does not form a structural element of the roof. It could therefore be easily removed if the obscura ever ceased to function.

The applicant is more than happy for the removal of the watertight housing if the obscura ever ceased to function to be conditioned through the planning process.

Conclusion

I do hope that the Planning Committee can support these very minor modifications to the original application. In its first half year of opening the tower has proved popular with visitors and the local community and it looks to have provided a viable future for an important part of the island's built heritage. These minor modifications will ensure the continued success of this venture.

Kindest regards



Andrew and Be Combes