

Application for Financial Assistance (Historic Buildings Grants) from the Conservation and Heritage Fund – 2 Court Walk, Betley, (Ref: 13/14014/HBG)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Working Party indicate its views on proposals going to the Planning Committee that a grant of £2,250 be approved for the repair of part of the former kitchen garden wall at 2 Court Walk, subject to the appropriate standard conditions and a specific condition that the height of the wall should remain the same as existing.

Purpose of report

To inform the Working Party of applications for financial assistance towards the cost of the repair of part of the former kitchen garden wall to Betley Court and give the Working Party an opportunity to express its views on that application.

The grant application is for the partial rebuilding and refurbishment of a section of the kitchen garden wall at Betley Court (Grade II*) a former large house and estate built in the early 18th Century.

A section of this wall fell down overnight in the garden of Roche House in February last year and was awarded a grant from the Council's Conservation and Heritage Fund for rebuilding. It has since been restored. This prompted other householders with a section of this wall in their garden to check the stability and safety of their section of the wall by a structural engineer. The section to the north of 2 Court Walk bordering the garden of Swithland and Summerhouse properties has been improved by buttresses at the owner's expense. The section on the northern boundary of the gardens of Summerhouse and Roche House is in a good state of repair. A section which appears to have structural problems is an archway and section to the south in the garden of Orchard House but the owner is not interested in resolving this issue at present. A plan indicating the various sections of wall referred to above will be displayed at the meeting

The section of wall at 2 Court Walk is over 4 metres high on the external elevation and approximately 2.5 from within the garden. An 11.5 metre long section of the wall needs to be taken down to ground level and rebuilt with piers for support; The height of the wall will remain the same; a middle 10 metre long section will have 3 buttresses added along its external side and the final 10 metre long section will be strengthened with 'helibars' – a proprietary steel reinforcing bar that is placed into cut slots within the masonry. Bricks will be reused and redressed where possible and replaced with new Cheshire matching bricks where not possible. The whole wall is to be repointed with lime mortar. The rebuilding element of the wall requires planning permission and this application (14/00156/FUL) has now been lodged with the Council and was considered by the Working Party at its meeting on the 25th March when no objections were raised.

Walls are part of the character of Betley village and the Betley Court estate buildings and walls dominate the southern part of the village as set out in Betley Conservation Area Appraisal. The structure is an imposing feature, which will still retain its presence as a significant heritage asset within Betley Conservation Area. This heritage asset is one which the council has already supported in giving a grant to Roche House and it wishes to ensure that the whole asset is retained for the future as a reminder of the historical influences and development of the village.

The engineered solution, as proposed in the planning application enables the wall to be retained. It will cost over £20,000 to restore it and make it safe. Two competitive tenders have been obtained as required by the Scheme. 10% of the cost of the works (the sum works to this type of building/structure are eligible for under the grant scheme) equates to £2,250.

The views of the Conservation Advisory Working Party will be reported to the Planning Committee.

Financial Implications

There is sufficient funding to meet this grant application with approximately £30,000 in the Fund, allowing for commitments and the Council's contribution to the fund 2013/14.