



**The Former Italian Hospital, Queen Square, London, WC1  
Planning Statement - Altar Application**

On behalf of: Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning statement has been produced by Forward Planning and Development Limited (herein referred to as “FWPD”) on behalf of Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity (herein referred to as “GOSH”), as applicant, to support the application for listed building consent for proposed works at The Former Italian Hospital, Queen Square, WC1.
- 1.2 The proposals involve the removal and rehoming of existing altar and steps within the Chapel at third floor level.
- 1.3 Listed building consent is therefore sought for:-  
  
**“Removal of the altar within the existing building”**
- 1.4 This proposal is associated with the ongoing phased development by Great Ormond Street Hospital to provide a world-class paediatric facility.
- 1.5 Planning permission and listed building consent were granted for the wider redevelopment of the Former Italian Hospital on 21 June 2018.

Planning permission was granted for:-

**“change of use to the existing building associated with the Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), currently used as a staff nursery (D1), chapel (D1), offices (B1a) and parents (of patients) accommodation (sui generis) for use as an outpatient hospital (D1) with a resulting floor area of 3,810 sqm. External alterations to the building including basement infill to courtyard, partial infill at ground floor level, infill extensions at first and second floor levels, two roof level plant enclosures and new lift overrun and associated internal alterations to the listed building to convert it into a clinical use. Plant equipment, creation of terraces, installation of PV panels and associated works”.**

Listed Building consent was granted for:-

**“External and internal alterations to the listed building associated with the change of use of the building into an outpatient clinical use. External alterations including**

basement infill to courtyard, partial infill at ground floor level, infill extensions at first and second floor levels, tow roof level plant enclosures, plant equipment, PV panels and new lift overrun. Internal alterations including refurbishment throughout the building, repair and refurbishment of windows and provision of secondary glazing, the provision of two new lifts and upgrading of the existing lift”.

- 1.6 These permissions will enable the Former Italian Hospital to be converted to create a dedicated, self-contained sight and sound out-patients’ facility and work is due to commence shortly.
- 1.7 The current proposal to rehome the altar is associated with the wider proposals approved under the June 2018 permissions.
- 1.8 Extensive pre-application discussions (Ref: 2017/2091/PRE) were held with the London Borough of Camden in 2017 in respect of the wider scheme proposals. These discussions covered the removal of the altar and details of this are set out in section 3 of this report.
- 1.9 The applicants have instructed Sonnemann Toon Architects who specialise in developing high quality, heritage led architectural solutions within the historic built environment with a particular specialism in working with medical buildings. The Heritage Practice are instructed to provide specialist advice in respect of the external and internal elements of this building which contribute to its significance and FWPD are instructed to provide planning consultancy advice relating to the proposals.
- 1.10 The sections of this pre-application planning statement are set out to provide:-
  - **Section 2 - Site and Surroundings** - A description of the site and surrounding context;
  - **Section 3 - Planning History** - Details of the planning history of the building and a summary of the pre-application discussions that have been held with the Council;
  - **Section 4 - Development Proposals** - Details of the development proposals;
  - **Section 5 - Planning Policy** - A summary of the relevant planning policy framework;

- **Section 6 - Planning Considerations** - An assessment of the key issues associated with the application proposals;
- **Section 7 - Summary and Conclusions.**

1.11 This application for listed building consent includes the following documents:-

- **Design and Access Statement prepared by Sonnemann Toon Architects**
- **Existing, alteration and proposed drawings**
- **Photographic Study prepared by Sonnemann Toon Architects**
- **Schedule of Enquires for relocation/rehoming of the alter**
- **Altar particulars prepared by GOSH**
- **Tender Return from Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Church, Matlock**
- **Tender Return from St Mary's, Shaftsbury**
- **Heritage Appraisal prepared by The Heritage Practice**
- **Planning Statement prepared by FWPD**

## 2 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The Former Italian Hospital, is a Grade II listed building located on the south-east corner of Queen Square at the junction with Boswell Street.
- 2.2 The building extends along Boswell Street and is bounded by Gage Street to the rear.



Image: Queen Square Elevation

- 2.3 The building occupies a prominent position and its front elevation is handsomely detailed.



**Image: Location of The Former Italian Hospital**

- 2.4 The property was listed Grade II in 1992. The listing description is set out in full in the Heritage Appraisal on page 3 at paragraph 1.6.
- 2.5 The existing use of the building is considered to be a mix of uses including, staff nursery (D1), chapel (D1), offices (B1a) and parents' (of patients) accommodation (sui generis). The 2018 permissions have granted a change of use of the existing building to outpatient hospital (D1). This is due to be implemented imminently.
- 2.6 The altar is located on the top (third) floor of the building within the chapel. It is described in detail in the Altar Particulars document prepared by GOSH.



**Image of the altar**

2.7 The building is also located within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.



### 3 Planning History

- 3.1 The online statutory register held by the London Borough of Camden has been inspected. This has revealed the following entries which are set out in chronological order.

#### 1948 Application

- 3.2 In 1948 planning permission was granted for **“the carrying out of additions at ground floor level and to alterations and the construction of a new roof over a portion of the Nurses' Home, at The Italian Hospital, Queen Square, Holborn”**. Drawings and a decision notice are available for this application.

#### 1956 Application

- 3.3 In December 1956, planning permission was granted for **“Erection of a toilet addition at ground floor level at rear and of an external flue pipe in an enclosed area at the Italian Hospital, Queen Square, Holborn”**. Drawings and the decision notice is available for this application.

#### 1960s Applications

- 3.4 In August 1961 planning permission was granted for **“The carrying out of alterations to the Operating Theatre at the Italian Hospital, Queen Square, W.C.1”**
- 3.5 In August 1962 planning permission was granted for **“The construction of two waiting rooms on existing first floor balconies on the Boswell Street frontage of the Italian Hospital, Queen Square, W.C.1.”** The decision notice is available for this application.
- 3.6 In July 1967 planning permission was granted for **“The formation of a new waiting room on the 2nd floor fronting Boswell Street, and two new sun-terraces on the first floor at the rear of the Italian Hospital, Queen Square, Camden”**. Drawings and the decision notice is available for this application.

#### 1980s Applications

- 3.7 Planning permission was granted in May 1980 for the **“construction of a body scanning suite and an extension to the physiotherapy room in the rear lightwells at ground floor level, the extension of the theatre suite at second floor level and the erection of a new mansarded area at third floor Level to provide living accommodation for staff”**. No documents are available online for this.
- 3.8 Planning permission was granted in September 1980 for the **“erection of additional single ward and staff accommodation on the third floor and the extension of the new lift to serve basement, ground and first floors”**. There are no documents available for this application online.
- 3.9 Conditional planning permission was granted in December 1980 for the **“erection of a dormer extension and conversion of the roof space to form a flat for staff accommodation”**. Again, there are no documents available for this application. but the third floor extension along Boswell Street is evident on site.
- 3.10 Conditional planning permission was granted in 1984 for **“the erection of a single storey basement extension to the Queen Square elevation (as shown on drawing no. 1141/17A)”**. The decision notice for this application is available online but no plans or other supporting documents are available.

#### **1990s applications**

- 3.11 Conditional planning permission was granted in October 1991 for **“Refurbishment of the building including the demolition of a link building its replacement by a staircase and the provision of an access ramp as shown on drawing numbers 51/01 51/02 51/20 51/21 51/22 51/23 51/24 51/25 51/67 51/69 51/70 51/110 51/111 51/112 51/113 51/114 51/115 51/116 51/117 51/420 51/421 and 51/422 revised by letter dated 12 August 1991”**. None of the drawings are available online.
- 3.12 Conservation area consent was granted in October 1991 for **“The demolition of 4-storey extensions 2-storey infill buildings and part of mansard roof as shown on drawing numbers 51/01 51/20 51/21 51/22 51/23 51/24 and 51/25”**. Only the decision notice is available online.

- 3.13 Conservation area consent was granted in January 1992 for **“Partial demolition involving rear extensions and infills the front entrance steps and part of the mansard roof; internal alterations; the formation of a ground floor play area front entrance ramp and infill structures as shown on drawing numbers 51/01 (location plan) 02A (site plan) 20-25 67 69 70A 110-117 200E 201D 202B-208B 209C 210B 211C 212A 213A 220A-228A 229 230 420A 421A & 422A”**. Full documentation is available for this application including drawings.

#### **2009 Application**

- 3.14 In February 2009, planning permission and listed building consent were granted for **“Installation of steel safety railings on top of existing railings surrounding the balconies on the rear elevation at fourth and fifth floor level”**.

#### **2017 Applications**

- 1.12 Planning permission and listed building consent were granted for the wider redevelopment of the Former Italian Hospital on 21 June 2018.

Planning permission was granted for:-

**“change of use to the existing building associated with the Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), currently used as a staff nursery (D1), chapel (D1), offices (B1a) and parents (of patients) accommodation (sui generis) for use as an outpatient hospital (D1) with a resulting floor area of 3,810 sqm. External alterations to the building including basement infill to courtyard, partial infill at ground floor level, infill extensions at first and second floor levels, two roof level plant enclosures and new lift overrun and associated internal alterations to the listed building to convert it into a clinical use. Plant equipment, creation of terraces, installation of PV panels and associated works”**.

Listed Building consent was granted for:-

**“External and internal alterations to the listed building associated with the change of use of the building into an outpatient clinical use. External alterations including basement infill to courtyard, partial infill at ground floor level, infill extensions at first and second floor levels, tow roof level plant enclosures, plant equipment, PV panels**

**and new lift overrun. Internal alterations including refurbishment throughout the building, repair and refurbishment of windows and provision of secondary glazing, the provision of two new lifts and upgrading of the existing lift”.**

- 1.13 Following the grant of planning permission and listed building consent for the redevelopment of the property, a number of associated applications have been submitted as follows:-

2018/2883/P – Variation of Approved Plans for alterations to the approved scheme.

2018/3097/L – Variation of Approved Plans for alterations to the approved scheme

2018/1921/P – Discharge of Condition 11a relating to ground investigation

2018/3182/P – Removal of Condition 5 (insulated internal wall lining)

These application have yet to be determined.

### **Summary of planning history**

- 3.15 Substantial background research has been undertaken into the planning history of the building to enable the consultant team to fully understand the alterations and extensions that have taken place and the historic uses of the building. This has enabled the team to assess the significance of the interiors and exterior of the building which has in turn informed the design proposals.
- 3.16 The planning history reveals that the building has been substantially altered since the 1950s with programmes of works taking place in the 1960s and then in the 1980s. More substantial works of alteration were undertaken in the early 1990s.

### **Pre-application enquiry (Ref: 2017/2091/PRE)**

- 3.17 An initial pre-application package was submitted to London Borough of Camden in April 2017.
- 3.18 A meeting was held on site on 10 May 2017 and a follow up meeting was held on 8 June 2017.

3.19 Following the site visit on 10 May 2017, officers provided their initial comments in relation to the scheme proposals. The comments relating to the altar are summarised as follows:-

- Removal of altar from the third floor Chapel would cause harm to the listed building and we object in principle. The altar is one of the few original features of the building and ties back to its original use.

3.20 A further pre-application meeting was held on 8 June 2017.

3.21 In relation to the altar, it was agreed at this meeting that a detailed document should be produced for presentation internally. Officers made clear that finding an alternative location for the altar is extremely important.

3.22 Following the meeting, a further document was produced by the applicant team dated 13 June 2017 which set out further detail in respect of the infill against the Mary Ward Centre and the removal of the altar.

3.23 An initial pre-application response from the Council's conservation officer on 19 June 2017 states that:-

*"further justification has been provided within the document received on 13 June regarding the proposed altar removal, which considers alternative configurations of the space that would allow for its retention or on-site storage, as well as options for the relocation of the altar to an alternative place of worship within the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Westminster and Southwark. It is argued that the latter is preferable as it would allow for the long term conservation of the altar to be secured by its reuse elsewhere and it would also allow for the use of the Chapel as a sub-wait area and therefore relieve space pressures elsewhere. While my previous concerns remain to a certain extent, I am encouraged by the apparent progress made on finding the altar a new home and would recommend that this is progressed into a firm proposal (with a letter of confirmation from the intended recipients) for relocation to support the forthcoming planning and listed building consent applications".*

- 3.24 However, once the proposal was presented at Camden's Major Case Conference, this concluded that based upon the evidence provided to date, the removal of the altar was not considered acceptable.

## 4 Proposed Development

- 4.1 It is proposed to removal the altar from the chapel at 3<sup>rd</sup> floor level. This is linked to the previously approved full refurbishment this Grade II listed building to accommodate a new self-contained Sight and Sound Outpatients facility.
- 4.2 As shown in the Design and Access Statement, it is proposed to remove the altar and the two steps it sits on.
- 4.3 The altar will be removed by a specialist stone mason and the area behind where the altar was previously located will be made good.
- 4.4 It is proposed to rehome the alter and steps to Our Lady & St Joseph Catholic Church, Matlock, Derbyshire where it would be returned to liturgical use for permanent worship purposes and securing its long term conservation.
- 4.5 The following drawings are submitted to describe the application proposals:-  
  
5520 - 03026 Rev A1 – Existing – Altar removal  
  
5521 – 03026 Rev A1 – Proposed Works of Alteration  
  
5522 – 03026 Rev A1 – Proposed plan and elevations
- 4.6 This report assesses the planning considerations associated with the proposed removal and relocation of the altar and steps to a Catholic church where it will be brought back to liturgical use at Section 6 of this report.

## **5 Planning Policy Framework**

- 5.1 National Policy Guidance is produced by Central Government in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework, adopted in March 2012. This is a material consideration when determining planning applications.
- 5.2 The Statutory Development Plan comprises of regional policies with Further Alterations to the Mayor's London Plan (herein referred to as "LP"), adopted in March 2015 and at a local level the London Borough of Camden Local Plan 2017.
- 5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance known as Camden Planning Guidance is also a material consideration along with the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy (April 2011).
- 5.4 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **National Planning Policy Guidance**

#### **The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)**

- 5.5 The NPPF document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It summarises in a single document, previous national planning policy statements. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.6 The NPPF introduces the presumption in favour of sustainable development although it makes plain that the development plan is still the starting point for decision making.
- 5.7 One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is that planning should not simply be about scrutiny but instead be "a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives".
- 5.8 Chapter 12 of the NPPF sets out the Government's policies relating to the historic environment.



- 5.9 Paragraph 128 states that in determining applications, **“LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affect, including any contribution made by their setting”**.
- 5.10 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environmental record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary
- 5.11 Paragraph 132 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation. It also states that **“significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, part or garden should be exceptional”**.
- 5.12 Paragraph 133 relates to proposed development that will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset and states that consent should be refused unless that harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that loss.
- 5.13 Paragraph 134 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 5.14 Paragraph 137 states that local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

## **Regional Planning Policy - The London Plan**

### **Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, March 2015**

- 5.15 The LP sets out the relevant London-wide planning policy guidance, the relevant regional planning policy guidance for the Royal Borough and forms a component part of the statutory development plan.
- 5.16 It aims to set out a framework to co-ordinate and integrate economic, environmental, transport and social considerations over the next 20-25 years. The LP is the London-wide policy context within which the boroughs set their local planning agendas.
- 5.17 The proposal has taken into account the most relevant LP policies and guidance affecting the proposals for the building. The relevant LP policies are referred to, where relevant, in Section 6 (Planning Considerations) of this Statement.
- 5.18 In addition to the LP, the Mayor has produced more detailed strategic guidance of issues, which cannot be addressed in sufficient detail in the Plan, through SPG documents. This does not set out any new policies but provides guidance of policies established by the LP.
- 5.19 The following policies from the LP are considered relevant to this planning application:-

Policy 7.6 - Architecture

Policy 7.8 - Heritage Assets and Archaeology

## **Camden Local Plan 2017**

- 5.20 The following Local Plan policies are relevant to the consideration of this application:-
- D1 - Design
- D2 - Heritage
- 5.21 The policies and documents set out above are considered and addressed in detail in the following section of this Statement.

## 6 Principal Planning Considerations

6.1 The key planning issue for consideration is as follows:-

- Whether the removal of the altar piece would harm the significance of the listed building

6.2 The following section considers the effects of the proposals, namely the removal and rehoming of the altar against relevant planning policies. It covers:-

- History of the chapel use within the Italian Hospital
- Proposed use of the Italian under the 2018 permissions and the effect of this
- The impact of the 2018 permissions on the use of the altar
- Altars and other religious fixtures and fittings
- Proposed relocation of the altar
- Planning Policy and summary assessment

### History of the chapel use within the building

6.3 The Chapel was constructed in 1898 as part of the original Italian Hospital.

6.4 Historically, the building has been in hospital use since it opened in 1900. It was built as a **“small but complete general hospital”**. Further detail of the building’s history is provided within the Heritage Appraisal.

6.5 As set out within the Heritage Appraisal, the chapel formed part of the accommodation occupied by the serving nuns and was originally intended for their private worship. The nuns’ accommodation was provided on the third floor of the building with patients occupying the lower floors of the building. It is evident that originally, the main use of the chapel was for the religious order that ran the hospital and its original connection was therefore to the Sisters of the Charity of St Vincent de Paul.

6.6 Images of the chapel from 1903 (included within the Heritage Appraisal) show how the Chapel had a number of fittings and fixtures associated with its role in active worship, that have since been removed.

- 6.7 From the 1950s the Sisters of Verona took over the care of the Hospital until its closure in 1990. Since the early 1990s when GOSH owned the building, the chapel has not been in use for formal worship and whilst it has, in the past, been made available to staff and resident parents, it has been largely redundant given the extensive worship facilities that are available on the GOSH main site.
- 6.8 It is therefore evident that the role and importance of the Chapel within the Italian hospital has diminished over time and whilst it was a key part of the planning of the original building and was extensively used by the Sisters of the Charity of St Vincent de Paul and subsequently by the Sisters of Verona, since 1990, the use of the Chapel has reduced significantly, with the altar itself having not performed a liturgical purpose for nearly thirty years.

The proposed use of the building under the 2018 permissions

- 6.9 The grant of planning permission and listed building consent in 2018 changed the use of the building from a mix of uses including nursery (D1), chapel (D1), parent accommodation (sui generis) and offices (B1) to Class D1 use as an outpatient hospital.
- 6.10 Associated with this change of use it was proposed to change the use of the chapel space to staff facilities associated with the clinical use. In converting the chapel to an alternative use, it was considered necessary to screen the altar, given its overtly Catholic symbolism.
- 6.11 It is evident from the Committee Report for the applications approved in 2018, that the chapel was previously considered to be a **“standalone use in its own right rather than being ancillary”**.
- 6.12 Justification for the loss of the chapel use was provided as part of the previous application documentation and the proposed use of the building was considered to be acceptable. The return of the building to its original, clinical use was a significant benefit to secure the future of the building. Alongside this, the Council accepted that the existing chapel was no longer required due to the facilities provided on the main GOSH site.
- 6.13 The effect of this is that upon implementation of the 2018 scheme, the building will no longer have a chapel use and to reintroduce the use of the chapel (and bring the altar

back into liturgical use) would require a further change of use for which planning permission would be required.

- 6.14 Given that the refurbishment works to introduce a world class sight and sound facility within this building represents a significant investment by GOSH for the long term, the prospect of the chapel (and therefore the altar) being used for the purpose that it was originally designed is remote.

#### The impact of the 2018 permissions on the use of the altar

- 6.15 As set out above, the scheme approved in 2018 proposed to screen the altar as its overtly Christian symbolism restricts the potential to use the chapel space for any alternative use whether that is for staff only or patients. As a result, the altar has to be screened to enable the chapel itself to form a meaningful part of the future use of the building.
- 6.16 Screening the altar, whilst keeping it in its original location and thus theoretically avoiding any perceived harm to the significance of the listed building, means that there is no prospect of the altar being used for its original intended purposes as a religious object.
- 6.17 As set out in the Heritage Appraisal, at paragraph 3.15, the GOSH Chaplaincy Service still feels strongly that the altar should be in regular, active use in a place of worship as was originally intended.
- 6.18 The Heritage Appraisal states that **“to not allow its use in this way is neglectful of its religious meaning and purposes and harmful to its significance as a historic and artistic object”**.
- 6.19 Permanent screening has the effect of retaining the altar in its original location, but effectively prevents its long-term use for liturgy and worship, i.e. the use for which it was originally intended. The significance of the altar itself, as an important piece of religious furniture, can be said to be harmed and certainly lost through being hidden from view. This approach also fails to secure the long term conservation of the altar.

### Altars and other religious fixtures and fittings

- 6.20 The removal and relocation of religious fixtures and fittings between places of worship is commonplace.
- 6.21 It is also usual for religious fixtures and fittings to be removed in churches and chapels prior to changes of use to non-religious purposes.
- 6.22 However, these removals rarely come through the planning process because of ecclesiastical exemption and as a result are dealt with through the faculty process, the first stage of which consists of seeking advice from the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and the second involves obtaining a 'faculty' from the Chancellor of the diocesan court (the Consistory Court).
- 6.23 However, it is worth noting that St Joseph's College in Mill Hill (Grade II listed) was recently granted listed building consent for the removal and relocation of four altars. Which demonstrates that this is not an unusual occurrence.
- 6.24 The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) England Order 2010 makes it clear that the expression extends to church buildings, their contents and anything fixed thereto as well as to anything situated within the curtilage of a church building.
- 6.25 Where the exemption applies the practical effect is that listed building consent is not required for the alteration or extension of a listed ecclesiastical building of any denomination provided that the building is used for ecclesiastical purposes both before and after the works.
- 6.26 As a result, whilst this building does not benefit from ecclesiastical exemption and therefore listed building consent for the removal and relocation of the altar is required, this proposal in itself should not be considered as unusual. The commonplace nature of these removals indicates that the proposed removal of the altar should not be considered to significantly harm the building from which it is being removed.

### Proposed relocation of the altar

- 6.27 Relocating the altar as opposed to the approved position of retaining and screening it is the preferred option as this will ensure it is used and fulfils the purpose for which it was originally designed. This will also secure its long-term preservation, conservation and active use.
- 6.28 GOSH have undertaken a detailed and comprehensive tender process to try to secure an alternative location for the altar.
- 6.29 The application documentation includes a set of particulars prepared by GOSH setting out details of the altar. The tender process to identify a new location for the altar involved a sequential process starting with GOSH's own estate, then the Italian Church in Clerkenwell and others within the Diocese. As these searches did not identify an appropriate recipient, a wider search commenced which received around 11 enquires.
- 6.30 The application documentation includes a schedule of enquiries and responses.
- 6.31 Two prospective tender returns were received as follows:-
- St Mary's School, Shaftsbury, Dorset
- Church of Our Lady and St Joseph, Matlock, Derbyshire
- Both of these tender return documents are included within the application documentation pack.
- 6.32 The Church of Our Lady and St Joseph was chosen as the altar and steps would fit well within their Lady Chapel and importantly the church serves an active parish. As is evident from the response letter from the Church, the altar would be publicly accessible and used regularly.
- 6.33 A display will be provided in both the chapel in the Italian Hospital and in the Parish Church of Our Lady and St Joseph in Matlock to ensure the origins and provenance of the altar is well documented and can be understood by users of both buildings.

- 6.34 The significance of the altar would therefore be considerably enhanced when compared to the current proposal to screen it from view and exclude it from active use and worship.

#### Planning Policy and Assessment

- 6.35 Given that the building is Grade II listed, any extensions and alterations proposed must ensure that the statutory duties imposed by the 1990 Act are upheld. Namely that there is a desirability for proposals to preserve of any features of special architectural or historic interest.
- 6.36 It is also important to ensure that the policy tests within the NPPF are addressed and that (less than substantial) harm to the significance of a Designated Heritage Asset is considered against the benefits of the proposal including securing its optimum viable use in accordance with paragraph 134.
- 6.37 An assessment against the relevant heritage policies is contained within the Heritage Assessment at Section 4 and we do not seek to duplicate this assessment within this report. However, a summary of the key considerations is provided below.
- 6.38 It is recognised that the altar is an element of original historic fabric within this listed building.
- 6.39 It has not, however, been used for the purposes of active worship for over 30 years. The altar as historic and religious feature has therefore not been used for its original intended purpose for a considerable time.
- 6.40 The 2018 permissions changed the use of the whole building to Class D1 (hospital) use thus removing the potential to use this space for religious purposes without the benefit of further planning permission to re-establish a religious use within the building.
- 6.41 Given GOSH's long term proposals for the building and the significant investment required to create a dedicated sight and sound hospital within this building, the prospect of the chapel and altar being used at some point in the future for their original purposes is remote.



- 6.42 The approved scheme sought to conceal the altar whilst retaining it in its original location, thereby obscuring it from view and preventing any use of the feature for the long term, potentially affecting its long term conservation.
- 6.43 It is considered that the significance of the altar as a piece of religious furniture is greatly reduced by its concealment.
- 6.44 Whilst the approved scheme may enable the perceived harm to the significance of the listed building to be reduced (by retaining the altar in situ), it cannot be said that there is no harm to the significance of the altar itself through implementing the approved approach to conceal the object.
- 6.45 It is recognised that the 1990 Act suggests that features of special architectural or historic interest should be preserved and that the altar is a feature of historic interest. It is also recognised that the removal of the altar could be considered to harm the significance of the listed building to a degree but in our view, any harm must be less than substantial when considered against the significance of the building as a whole.
- 6.46 As a result, the public benefit of the proposal must be assessed.
- 6.47 The proposed relocation of the altar will enable it to be put to active use within a church building which has regular public access and will ensure it is used for the purposes for which it was originally intended. This can certainly be considered to be a public benefit in accordance with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF.
- 6.48 The detailed recording of the altar and its original and future home will be well documented. It will also ensure that the chapel itself will not lose any reference to its previous use as a place of worship. This can be conditioned through the planning process.
- 6.49 As set out above, removal and relocation of religious fixtures and fittings such as altars is very common between churches and from churches when they are converted to alternative uses. As a result, the potential for harm to be caused should be considered limited given the prevalence for similar proposals.

- 6.50 The altar will be removed and relocated by specialist stone masons and its method can be carefully conditioned (unlike the usual process of removing such features under ecclesiastical exemption). A detailed method statement will be submitted to support the application in due course.
- 6.51 In summary, whilst there may be some harm caused by the removal of the altar from the Italian Hospital, this is less than substantial and there are significant enhancements and public benefits that will accrue from its active use within a church.
- 6.52 It is also considered that there is harm to the significance of the altar as a result of the approved arrangements to screen and conceal the object for the long term thereby ensuring it cannot be used for the purpose for which it was originally intended.
- 6.53 In summary, the altar is an element of historic fabric and it is recognised that a degree of harm would be caused by its removal. However, there would be no harm to the significance of the altar itself by its relocation. Overall, it is considered that the harm that would be caused by its removal would be less than substantial. Placing the altar in an active place of worship and the associated genuine public benefit of the proposals as a whole, in our view provides clear and convincing justification for the proposed relocation of the altar.
- 6.54 On that basis and on balance, it is considered that the removal of the altar is acceptable in this instance given the public benefit.

## **7 Summary and Conclusions**

- 7.1 It is proposed to remove the existing altar and steps from within the chapel at The Italian Hospital and relocate it to the parish Church of Our Lady and St Joseph in Matlock.
- 7.2 The proposal will ensure that the altar can remain in active religious use within a Catholic Church. This is the use for which it was originally intended and designed.
- 7.3 The scheme approved in 2018 changed the use of the chapel to hospital use and sought to retain the altar within the chapel but hidden from view behind a screen.
- 7.4 Screening the altar is not considered to be the most appropriate approach for this piece of religious furniture and is considered to result in a degree of harm to the significance of the altar itself.
- 7.5 It is accepted that the altar is a feature of historic interest and that 1990 Act states that there is a desirability to preserve features of historic interest. In addition, it is recognised that some harm will result from its removal from the Italian Hospital. However, this harm must be considered as less than substantial and enabling the altar to be used for active religious purposes is certainly a public benefit.
- 7.6 There does not appear to be any public benefit from screening the altar for the long term and preventing it from being used for its originally intended purpose.
- 7.7 Overall, it is considered that there is less harm caused to the altar and the building as a whole, through the relocation of the altar than the retention and concealment of this piece for the long term.
- 7.8 Given that religious features are commonly removed and relocated between churches, this proposal should not be considered to be unduly harmful or unusual. Although the consideration and assessment of such a proposal through the planning process is a relatively unusual situation.

- 7.9 In conclusion and given the considerations and assessment set out above, the proposal complies with the statutory duties and national and local heritage policies and listed building consent should therefore be granted.