

# **NEWPORT CIVIC CENTRE: PROPOSED ROOF WORKS BELOW TOWER**

## HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Incorporating Design & Access Statement

Newport City Council

19/02/25

Issue 01

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Site Address:

Newport Civic Centre  
Godfrey Road  
Newport  
Gwent  
NP20 4UR

1.2. Newport Civic Centre is a grade II\* Listed Building. A copy of Cadw's Listing description is attached to this Statement at Appendix 'A'.

1.3. Previous Newport Norse records of the building comprise:

- Contemporary building journals.
- Photographs
- the architects' original floor and service plans
- Detailed drawings for completion of the new central hall (dated 1962).
- 1937 Council minutes.
- 1939 contract documents for the new assembly hall (never completed).
- Letters pertaining to the later construction of the clocktower.

There has been no dedicated archaeological assessment to date of the building.

1.4. This Heritage Impact Statement has been compiled by Newport Norse (NN) on the instructions of Cadw and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in support of an application for listed building consent. It proposes the following scheme:

- Overlaying mastic asphalt and later roof coverings with Derbigum Olivine (polymer-modified bitumen);
- Introducing tapered insulation;
- Carry out essential repairs and maintenance;
- Replacement of existing rooflights (new designs to be confirmed);
- Replacement of existing cat ladders for new;
- Drainage improvements; and
- Capping-over of isolated rooflights.

Please refer to the attached site plan (Appendix 'B'), which shows the location of the main building in relation to Newport Crown Court.

1.5. The applicant wishes to commence a programme of much needed roof repairs and maintenance to the flat roof areas below the tower. It is their intention to help to establish the long-term care and protection of the building. This will ensure that the building continues to operate as the civic and administrative focus for Newport City Council. Subsequent applications will be submitted concerning works to parapets and the installation of PV panels.

1.6. A roof condition assessment has been undertaken in readiness for the works to identify the type and extent of defects, as well as appropriate repair methods and materials. During this assessment, selective core samples were taken to confirm the material construction of the roof waterproofing build-up, the deck type, and the existence, if any, of incorporated insulation. These were undertaken with a 'light touch' to minimise the loss of historic fabric and the cores were completely sealed following inspection.

- 1.7. A building-wide structural assessment has also been undertaken by *Mann Williams* who have also produced a 'Prioritised Schedule of Defects' and 'Roof Access and Risks' drawings. The former has highlighted the poor condition of the roof coverings in general and the associated risk to the internal structure of the building. Rooflights and external ladders have also been flagged-up as needing attention because of health and safety concerns. The 'Roof Access and Risks' drawings focus on areas of roof that need to be accessed for routine maintenance, including the location of plant and rainwater goods. It also pinpoints the current access/egress arrangements, which have found to be inadequate, and risks, such as fragile rooflights and unguarded edges.
- 1.8. This Heritage Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the general principles set out within Cadw's 'Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales 2017' and Cadw's 'Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales'.

## **2.0. THE SITE: BRIEF DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

- 2.1. The site is bounded by a predominantly residential area to the immediate south, west, north and north-east, with the south-east aspect facing the city centre and Newport (South Wales) railway station further east. The site is at a higher level than the city centre, which falls away to the east and towards the river Usk.



**Left:** the main core and clocktower of Newport Civic Centre (2024)

- 2.2. Newport Civic Centre is of high significance. Construction began in 1937 but, interrupted by the war and subsequent austerity, the building was not completed until 1964 with the erection of the clock tower and the completion of the central hall as per the original specification. Phase 4, a proposed assembly hall attached to the west side of the central core, was unfortunately never realised.

According to Cadw, the Civic Centre's heritage significance relates to it being "...a well-designed and well-preserved major civic building, designed by a prominent early C20 architect, with a scheme of C20 municipal decoration comparable in Wales only to the murals of Frank Brangwyn at Swansea Guildhall." As such, it was designated Grade II\* listed in 1999. Cadw consider Grade II\* listed buildings to be "particularly important buildings of more than special interest. These make up about seven per cent of the total number of listed buildings in Wales."



**Left:** image of the west wing, Clytha Park Road, taken shortly after completion in 1939

2.3. Contextual note on the other building on the site:

Newport Crown Court (no work currently proposed): As described in 'Pevsner Architectural Guides, The Buildings of Wales – Gwent/Monmouthshire, 2000, J. Newman':

CROWN COURT, Faulkner Road. 1989-91, by PSA Projects Cardiff, design director John Roberts. Set at the foot of the slope between the arms of the Civic Centre, and effectively harmonising with it without compromising its own modern style. Portland Stone facing, of course. Seven-by-five-bay pavilion, of two storeys, the upper recessed above a loggia formed by a deep, rectangular lintel carried on slender rectangular piers, placed to set up a rhythm of alternating wide and narrow bays. Note how the piers are set back, not at the angles of the building. In the centre the lintel is brought forward polygonally over the projecting porch.

2.4. Significance: As described in 'Pevsner Architectural Guides, The Buildings of Wales – Gwent/Monmouthshire, 2000, J. Newman':

CIVIC CENTRE, Godfrey Road. A white presence which dominates distant views of the town from its hillside site. The impulse to build, when the town already contained a town hall and a shire hall, came from the decision in 1936 to move the County Assizes from Monmouth to Newport. The competition to design the new building held that year was won by T. Cecil Howitt of Nottingham. The sw wing, containing the courts, was built 1937-39, but Howitt's design was fully executed only in 1964, with the completion of the central entrance hall, stair and tower.

The style is ghostly classicism thought appropriate for public architecture of the period, influenced no doubt by Percy Thomas's Swansea Guildhall, but entirely lacking in the panache which infuses that building. The plan consists of a central ceremonial block of two storeys, with a recessed third storey, and a tall, tapering, axial clock tower. To l. and r., stepping down hillside, administration blocks, also two-storeyed. The principal entrance is through a high, plain, round-headed arch on the sw, uphill, side. Similar arches penetrate the downhill ends of the side blocks. All walls are faced with Portland stone. Channelling is introduced on the lower storey of the downhill side of the central block, above which rise the five tall, rectangular windows of the council chamber, their impostes are formed of curious convex fluted panels, the nearest approach to columns anywhere in the building. Elsewhere, the walls are given an equally curious quilted texture. But what goes furthest to undermine the monumentality of the building is the use of shallow pitched roofs

everywhere, covered in brown pantiles. Even the pyramidal cap of the clock tower is given this treatment.

The main entrance leads into a square STAIR HALL, lit artificially from a central, square ceiling panel painted pale blue, which is raised above three stepped tiers of coffering. \* The stair rises in two easy, straight flights to a broad, glazed balcony on all four sides of the hall. The walls here were painted 1961-4 with a series of eleven rectangular murals by Hans Feibusch, illustrating the history of the county from the first Celtic settlement to the building of the George Street Bridge, opened in 1964. A broadly treated figure style and semi-naturalistic colouring unite the disparate subjects. As a scheme of municipal decoration, it is perhaps unsurpassed in C20 Britain – the murals of Frank Brangwyn in the Guildhall, Swansea, being a special case. (Feibusch's preliminary studies are displayed downstairs, some of them different in composition from the paintings.) – SCULPTURE. Labour, 1929 by David Evans. Small bronze group of two straining miners.

The COUNCIL CHAMBER, at the head of the stair and looking over the town, is flooded by light from its five tall windows. Flat ceiling decorated with large, shallow coffers painted red.

The hillside below the centre block is terraced and planted in a large semicircle.

\* It had been intended to use natural lighting.

### Significance Values

- Evidential value: **HIGH**  
There are numerous sources of information detailing the development of the building and site. Drawings and written records inform the alterations made over time and how the building was used. The earlier elements of the building, including the court rooms and core, are of a higher quality of design and detailing. However, the later post-war work, whilst part of the original design, have been executed to a lesser quality. The different uses of the building can still be read, for example the courtrooms, prison cells, police functions, council chambers and committee rooms.
- Historical value: **MEDIUM/HIGH**  
Some evidence exists of the history of the site from the demolition of the houses that once existed there to the construction of the new Civic Centre and its later extensions. However, this information itself does not result in historical value of great significance. The way in which the site does increase in historical value is by association with the royal visits (including the sod cutting of the original build) and through civic events throughout the years.
- Aesthetic value: **MEDIUM/HIGH**  
The Art Deco design and its overall size, positioning and orientation add to the aesthetic value of the building. The later 1950s and 1960s fitouts are unfortunate in their detailing which is seen to be of lesser quality and detailing than the original 1930s elements.
- Communal value: **MEDIUM**  
Given the purpose of the building in performing civic functions and becoming the focus of major civic events it is expected that the local community will draw great communal value from the building. This can be seen in the photographs taken during such events where the people of the town (later, city) are seen around the building. These events are specific to Newport rather than of national note. There is an argument that because public access has gradually reduced over the period the communal value of 'special place' will have been reduced.

### 3.0. PROPOSED WORKS AND JUSTIFICATION

Overall, the building's roofs are in very poor condition in terms of their external coverings and are now in need of significant repair and refurbishment if they are to successfully protect the building from the country's increasingly high levels of rainfall. Externally, there is evidence of extensive repairs using felt patches and coating systems; internally, water-ingress is apparent in multiple areas of the building. When it rains there are areas of significant ponding, which has encouraged moss and vegetation growth, restricting drainage. Furthermore, ponding increases the likelihood of water penetration in these areas.

Rainwater outlets are frequently blocked, compounding the problem of water-ingress. Those located in lightwells are difficult/unsafe to access for maintenance and many cast-iron rainwater goods show signs of significant corrosion. It is evident that the current drainage strategy is inadequate for the complexity of the roofscape and the prevailing climatic conditions.

Collectively, this presents a compelling argument for upgrading the existing roofing system to address inherent defects, ill-conceived repairs and essential maintenance needs. This will ensure that the structure is adequately protected from water damage and help avoid any loss of original fabric and historic architectural detailing.

#### 3.1. Roof Works:

- 3.1.1. The flat roofs below the tower are to be overlaid with Derbigum Olivine (polymer modified bitumen).

*These works are necessary to mitigate against further water-ingress and associated decay of historic fabric. Following the roofs above level 4 west, this section of the building has been identified as having the most roof leaks and the existing mastic asphalt covering has reached the end of its serviceable life.*

- 3.1.2. The applicant originally considered renewing these areas of roof with new mastic asphalt. However, it has been decided **not to progress** with this method and instead to overlay with Derbigum Olivine.

*This approach has been decided upon for the following reasons:*

- **Cost** – Working on a flat field area price, mastic asphalt will be around £98 m<sup>2</sup> compared with £60 m<sup>2</sup> for Derbigum Olivine. Tapered insulation suitable for asphalt application is approximately 35% more the cost of the equivalent PIR insulation to meet current Building Regulations Part L requirements. The applicant has only a limited budget and, given that all flat roof coverings have reached the end of their serviceable lives, this approach will enable more of the roofscape to be addressed.
- **Aesthetics** – Most of this area of roof is hidden behind relatively high parapets and is not visible to the public. However, the flat roof immediately below the tower is fairly visible. For this reason, it has been decided not to apply insulation beneath the new covering so that its existing upstand can be maintained. As is standard, these coverings have at some stage been protected with a coating of silvery solar reflective paint. This is visually obtrusive and likely jars with the architect's original design intent. By contrast, Derbigum Olivine (opaque olive-green finish mineral cap) will provide a more subtle and natural finish. It will be subservient to the Portland Stone clad elevations and bold Italianesque tile roofs.

- **Performance** – Derbigum Olivine has a proven track record with similar applications. Its multiple waterproof layers incorporate reinforcement, which will accommodate thermal movement without the risks of breaks in the membrane.
- **Environmental benefits** – Derbigum Olivine has impressive environmental credentials. Its naturally-sourced upper mineral layer neutralises carbon dioxide during rainfall and is fully recyclable at the end of its life (circa 50 years).

### 3.2. Insulation:

- 3.2.1. An opportunity has been identified to introduce tapered insulation to meet current Building Regulations Part L requirements.

*This work is proposed to both improve the thermal efficiency of the building and address inadequate drainage falls. Currently, these roofs are without insulation. As previously discussed, insulation will not be applied to the roof immediately at the base of the tower.*

### 3.3. Replacement of cat ladders:

- 3.3.1. The two cat ladders on this section of roof will be replaced with new ladders (Roof-Pro high strength galvanised mild steel cat ladders) finished in polyester powder coated (PPC) white to match the existing.

*These ladders are significantly corroded, making them unsuitable for safe access and increasing the likelihood of historic fabric being lost due to lack of routine maintenance. Their embedded fixings are also corroding, resulting in localised spalling to adjacent masonry. The new ladders will comply with current British Standards and dispense with the need for costly temporary access scaffold when carrying out maintenance and inspection.*

### 3.4. Replacement of service duct doors and frame:

- 3.4.1. Service duct doors and frames will be replaced with new weather-stripped PPC aluminium doorset (white) complete with barrel bolt to slave leaf and lock to main leaf.

*The existing softwood doors are not original. They are in poor condition and providing a route for water-ingress. Replacement provides an opportunity to increase the height of the inadequate upstand and introduce a more robust and durable material (PPC aluminium).*

### 3.5. Replacement of existing drainage outlets:

- 3.5.1. Existing drainage outlets are to be replaced with a new sumped gutter detail. These are to be located at a higher level to the existing outlets to accommodate for the increased level of the new roof system.

*The existing outlets are insufficient to cope with the volumes of rainfall Wales has experienced of late. Several have been 'sleeved' at some stage, resulting in smaller diameter outlets.*

### 3.6. Capping over rooflights:

- 3.6.1. Five number rooflights are to be removed and capped over. All of these are no longer in possession of their original glass – they have been capped with fibreglass.

### 3.7. Replacement of metal walkways:

3.7.1. Three number significantly corroded, and relatively modern, walkways are to be replaced like-for-like.

*The existing walkways have reached the end of their serviceable lives and are inadequate to permit safe access for routine maintenance.*

## 4.0. IMPACT

- 4.1. The proposed works will make a positive contribution in sustaining the heritage values and significance of the main building. The proposed works have been considered carefully in accordance with relevant heritage guidance and the established legislative framework.
- 4.2. Whilst there will be a noticeable visual impact from renewing the roof covering, this is offset by the positive contribution that fixing this area of roof will make; namely, the preservation of historic fabric and the continued use of the rooms below. Indeed, the new felt covering is considered a visual improvement on the current silvery reflective finish.
- 4.3. Collectively, the programme of essential repairs and maintenance will have a positive impact in addressing years of benign neglect, helping to safeguard the future of the building.
- 4.4. The physical impact of the proposals on the building's fabric is minimised by the careful selection of a roof system (Derbigum Olivine) that has a proven track record.
- 4.5. The impact on significance values (Section 2.0) is as follows:
- Evidential value: There will be a negligible effect on evidential value since the as-designed roof covering will be replaced by a modern material and some rooflights will be boarded over. However, this will be mitigated by the benefits in weatherproofing these roofs and preventing further loss of historic fabric in the building below.
  - Historical value: The building's historic context and associations will be strengthened by addressing noticeable neglect and safeguarding the future of the building.
  - Aesthetic value: Aesthetic value will be retained and strengthened. These roofs will have a smart uniform finish as opposed to the current patchwork as a result of numerous repairs.
  - Communal value: Communal value will be retained and enhanced in enabling the continual occupation of the building as the civic and administrative focus for Newport City Council.

## 5.0. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. This application has been prepared with great care and has been submitted following pre-application consultations with Laura Smith, Principal Heritage Officer to Newport City Council (NCC) and Jonathan Green (Cadw).
- 5.3. Newport Norse discussed the works with Jonathan Green during a site visit on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024 where he gave specific advice on the level of information that would be required in support of an application for such works.

## **6.0. SUMMARY**

- 6.1. We believe that the proposed works are proportional to address the onerous repair and maintenance requirements for this section of the building. These have been carefully thought through with due regard for national, and local, planning and heritage policy and guidance.
- 6.2. The overall aim of the proposals is to return the building to a semblance of its former glory and ensure that it can continue to safely operate as the civic and administrative focus for Newport City Council.

## **7.0. DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT**

### **7.1. Layout**

The overall layout of the property is not affected by the proposals. The extent and impact of the proposed works has been addressed in the preceding parts of the Heritage Impact Statement.

### **7.2. Character & Appearance**

The proposed works have a limited impact upon the character and appearance of Newport Civic Centre. It is envisaged that they will significantly enhance the present building.

### **7.3. Scale**

No alterations to the scale of Newport Civic Centre are proposed.

### **7.4. Environmental Sustainability**

Derbigum Olivine has been specified for the two flat roof areas because of its proven performance and impressive environmental credentials. Derbigum Olivine's naturally-sourced upper mineral layer neutralises carbon dioxide during rainfall and is fully recyclable at the end of its life (circa 50 years). Insulation has also been specified to improve the thermal efficiency of the roofs in scope.

### **7.5. Community Safety**

The proposed works have no impact on community safety.

### **7.6. Community Involvement**

The proposed works will have no impact on community involvement.

### **7.7. Access**

The proposed works will have no impact on access.

## APPENDIX A – CADW'S LISTING DESCRIPTION

### Description

Commissioned by Newport Corporation in 1936. A u-plan complex, facing SE, set on a sloping site. Elevations of unbonded Portland stone in panels. Basement level of brown rock-faced Derbyshire sandstone. Roofs of brown pantiles, with deep coffered eaves. Steel casement windows. SE front of three storeys, with taller advanced two-storey centre block containing council chamber: five bays. Centre block has tall upper windows with balcony to centre three bays; rusticated ground floor. Tall tapering clock tower set above central block on low square base; pyramidal roof. Tower has panel-like raised sides, simple clock. Three small square openings below eaves to each side. Flanks of centre block of seven bays, the outer bays slightly advanced, with hipped roofs. Lower two floors have parapet roofs and project in front of end bays. Long wings, stepped down the slope in three stages, 1+11+6 bays. Flat roofs behind parapets; rock-faced plinths. Lowest blocks have SE entrance facades each of two storeys and five bays, the centre entrance bay higher and advanced, with pyramidal roof. Entrances set within giant round-arched openings with glazing above, similar to those at Cambridge University Library (by Giles Gilbert Scott). Openings have cable-mouldings. Projecting door surrounds of polished black granite within Portland stone frames. Carved and painted shields above. NE elevation stepped up slope in three two storey blocks, each slightly advanced of one another. Six bay lower block. Middle block of eleven bays with entrance within giant central opening; door surround as above. Upper block of five bays, with similar door; three bays slightly recessed to the right. SW elevation has similar upper block, its entrance with shield and date of 1939 above. Nine bay middle section, the taller pyramid-roofed centre bay containing entrance within giant cable-moulded arch, as SE elevation. Six bay lower block. NW elevation contains current entrance. Central entrance range of fifteen bays, two storeys. Upper storey set behind parapet roof as to SE. Wide centre bay with tower above, containing entrance, set within giant arch: later glazing and balcony. Five bay returns to centre block to single bays which have round-arched service entries to SE court. Range to left of nine bays; right range of eight bays with delivery doors to centre.

(Source: Cadw Listings database) S Garfi 3/10/06

Designed by Thomas Cecil Howitt in Art Deco style, the Newport Civic Centre was finally opened to the public in 1940. This centre of local government houses the city council, courts (NPRN: 304460) and mayor's office.

## APPENDIX B – SITE PLAN

