



Baldock Town Hall

Introduction

During May 2011 Stanburys Ltd offered their services to BTHG to complete a condition survey on Baldock Town Hall and produce a report on their findings. Permission was sought from NHDC for access to the Town Hall, which was granted. Stanburys completed the survey over the course of a couple of days, completing a fully documented report of their findings. An outline copy of the report was submitted to NHDC for their records. The survey was carried out at no cost to BTHG.

Current Condition

Baldock Town Hall was built circa 1887 as a community asset for the people of Baldock. When first built it also housed the local Fire Station.

It is a three storey construction with two intermediate levels with fair faced brick and rendered elevations and a tower, all with pitched roof. The building has some retained brick chimney stacks but a number of chimneys have been bricked up and do not penetrate the roofline, so are no longer functional.

The building has several internal staircases at either the North (2) or South (2) ends constructed of concrete and brick or timber with timber handrails and balustrades. There are also stairs to external (now out of commission) public toilets in the basement.

The building has been left empty since 2008. It is not in good decorative order although it is in mostly fair to good condition, structurally, neglected in parts (mostly externally) due mainly to failure to decorate regularly inside and out and deal with damp. There are some elements that need more attention but mostly general maintenance.

It has undergone some refurbishment at different times, and aside for Baldock Museum, which operates part-time from one part of the Town Hall, it is currently unoccupied.

There is usable accommodation on two main levels:

- Ground Floor consists of: Office space, toilets and kitchen in one area and Baldock Museum in another

Baldock Town Hall Group



- First Floor consists of: Large main hall with stage, kitchen, balcony
- Intermediate Levels: changing rooms, toilet.
- The Basement consists of storage, boiler room and decommissioned public toilets

Although the building was originally designed for the various uses listed above, the internal layouts are not restricted by them. The refurbishment of the internal and external fabric will be sympathetic with the building's design intent for use by the community.

Required Reactive Maintenance:

External:

- 5 of the concrete roof tiles on the pitched roof sections have slipped and a few others show signs of movement.
- The valley gutter between the tower and the pitched main roof is full of debris and vegetation.
- There are gaps in some mortar joints between coping tiles on the gable walls along the front of the building at first floor balcony floor level which is permitting water entry and subsequent damage to the brickwork below and penetrate to the inside of the balcony.
- There is evidence of spalling to a number of chimney bricks
- Soffits and Fascia timber boards are generally in poor condition with peeling paint
- The wire mesh bird guards are in need of a repair.
- There is a broken piece of rainwater downpipe on netting which appears to have come off the West tower side gutter which has collapsed.
- External walls are showing damage in places with spalling to the face brickwork but notably the gaps under the stone coping in the mortar
- There is crack damage over the kitchen window on the West side in Bell Way where the arch has dropped slightly and there is a crack running through the mortar joints above

Baldock Town Hall Group



- Some of the external woodwork window frames are in urgent need of protective decoration as there is exposed timber on a number of the windows with flaking paint. All windows are all in need of anti-rot protection.
- External doors, apart from the main street entrance to the Hall, are not in a good condition and require repair and redecoration.
- Any lightning protection earthing tapes from the roof need to be checked.
- The external timberwork is in general need of repair and pointing, made good to protect and preserve the building and prevent water ingress
- Backing up of water in the rainwater down pipes and hopper due to blockages has caused water to escape and regularly made the walls damp in a number of places. It is essential that rainwater systems are cleaned out regularly.

Internal - Basement:

- All basement room walls are showing very high levels of rising damp in some cases to the top of the wall, thereby also becoming an issue on the ground floor. Internal dividing walls are only slightly less damp. The damp is excessive and remedial action is required.
- The boiler room has no dedicated ventilation source relying on downdraft from the open chimney opening underneath the boiler flue and cut back entry door to allow air movement from the corridor via the open window at the corridor end
- There is an abandoned pipe projecting into the boiler room from under the roadway pavement which is plugged off. However there are signs that the plug was recently opened and liquid presumed to be filthy water sprayed up onto the ceiling. This pipe should be permanently decommissioned and removed.
- All concrete basement floors are strewn with untidy miscellaneous debris which should also be removed for health and safety reasons.
- The larger basement store has exposed floor joists above in the SE corner with established rot in several, which is in urgent need of attention.
- The old basement toilets areas and cubicles were also in poor condition regarding cleaning, damp and the need for redecoration and restoration of ceiling panels.
- Toilets could all require rewiring

Internal – Ground Floor:

- The entrance area walls were all showing damp to some degree up to the first floor level.

Baldock Town Hall Group



- There is some evidence of the electric water heater in the ground floor kitchen may be leaking at the top where rust is showing on the casing.
- The ground floor offices have been recently treated for a severe attack of timber dry rot and as a result all the timber flooring and skirting affected has been removed and replaced with a block-board floor.
- The museum rooms are sadly also damp for the same reasons as at the south end of the building, rising damp from the basement. Without ventilation condensation has also run down the walls in cold weather.

Internal – Intermediate Levels:

- All rooms are in poor decorative order and in addition have a number of cracks in the plaster and some damp

Internal – First Floor:



- The floorboards were damaged in some areas of the main floor.
- The rooms are in poor decorative order.

Internal – General:

- There are fire extinguishers in virtually all rooms which are now overdue for retesting
- There are the two live Chubb fire alarm systems installed which were not tested but presumed to be functional



- The boiler and heating system requires a full maintenance overhaul

Baldock Town Hall Group



BTH – Basement ceiling joists

BTH – Blocked Rainwater downpipes

BTH - Decommissioned public toilets

Notwithstanding the above comments, the building is, for its age, in sound condition, and with cleaning and decoration being completed, it could very soon be brought back into use.

