

This email was copied to Geoff Pook, Portfolio Holder for Asset Management at EDDC also all EDDC Cllrs for Sidmouth, the Chair and Deputy Chair of Sidmouth Town Council and STC Town Clerk.

Dear Mr Kinsey,

It is now over two weeks since my Structural Surveyor, Barry Honeysett, contacted you to arrange to do a survey of the Drill Hall. At the time you told him he could not do one as there was no access to the basement until EDDC unblocked a sealed door ( breeze block).

As I said to you in our telephone conversation on Tuesday I know that access to the basement is possible if a sheet of chipboard is removed from the back staircase. I know this because I was there when the repair was being made and could see past the workmen into the basement, unfortunately the workmen would not let me enter to take photographs. I asked you if there were internal walls in the basement which meant that all of the basement could not be surveyed by using this opening. Your reply was that you had not visited the building and so did not know.

You further said to me that EDDC had to remove vegetation at the back of the Drill Hall before a survey could take place. I expressed surprise as the only vegetation there is soft; that is plants not shrubs or trees. Your response was that you hadn't seen it but that a survey would be allowed as soon as EDDC had made the building and surrounding area safe.

I had asked, by email, that I be sent the sales particulars for the Drill Hall. You had neither sent details nor replied to me to explain that details could not be supplied. In our conversation on Tuesday you told me that you did not yet have sales details but you expected them to be available within 10 working days. Upon me asking whether it would be a freehold or leasehold sale you replied it would be a long leasehold with a peppercorn rent. When I further asked what this peppercorn rent would be you said you expected that it would be £1. You did not give me the length of the lease and as far as I am aware the formal term 'long lease' could refer to anything from 125 to 999 years. I do not know if you were using the term in its formal sense or colloquially.

Since our conversation I have put together the information attached. There are two photographs showing the back of the hall with the small amount of vegetation as well as the chipboard panel at the base of the stair which would need to be removed to give access. There is also the EDDC Statement of Significance from the Planning Application, 12/2254/COU, for demolition in 2012 which shows that the basement can be surveyed through the access at the bottom of the rear stair. Part of the basement is marked 'not surveyed' but I have no idea if this is because it is unreachable or if there is another reason. If it is unreachable then presumably the external door EDDC need to reopen is the basement door which is under the window on the front west, not shown on this plan. This opening is rendered and painted so it can not be seen whether it is closed with breeze block, but as you have not been to the hall you would not know this. It therefore seems unlikely that this is the door referred to.

As I said to you, I am very concerned that EDDC have started the clock ticking on the 6 months available for community bids and yet community groups are not able to get the basic information required to judge if a bid is feasible. You have not made any written information at all available, so we can not judge the integrity of the building from your sales particulars, and you will not permit us to gather our own information. Obviously I have no idea whether the fault lies with JLL or EDDC but the fact is that there is now less than 6 months to 11th Jan 2019 when bidding closes.

I urge you and EDDC to adhere to the promise that was made that community groups would have 6 months before the bid closed. In order to access grants we have to be able to show the condition of

the building, if we are prevented from doing this then it is unlikely we will have grants in place by the deadline as the grants processes are slow and we can not expect quick decisions. There is also the potential for us missing grant deadlines. If we are prevented from getting grants in place then it makes a mockery of the stated aim to allow community groups to bid, and I would not be able to let that go unchallenged.

I would be very grateful if I could have a detailed response from you, in writing, as soon as possible. I would like confirmation of the information you gave me that

- 1) You have not yet visited the Drill hall
- 2) You do not know if all the basement is accessible
- 3) EDDC are in the process of removing vegetation and unblocking access so a structural survey can be carried out
- 4) Sales particulars will be available before the end of this month and probably by the 23rd July
- 5) That my structural engineer will be informed as soon as the date of access being available is known, so that advance knowledge enables the survey to take place at the earliest opportunity
- 6) That any delay in the start of the practical period for community bids will be reflected in a delayed end. That is, that if we can't start our preparation work until the end of July the dates for bids to be in will be pushed back to the end of January and the 3 month period for commercial bids will not start until three months before that end date.
- 7) I would also like to know the exact meaning of the phrase 'long lease' in this particular instance, the annual peppercorn rent, and a guarantee that this rent will not change for the length of the lease.

I ask for these assurances in writing as I need evidence to show to potential funding partners who are, understandably, reluctant to commit themselves until I can show them hard facts. The Press Release from EDDC is not sufficient.

Yours sincerely, Mary Walden-Till

#### Attachments



PDF file Statement of Significance

<http://planningapps.eastdevon.gov.uk/Planning/StreamDocPage/obj.pdf;jsessionid=5CE5A25868CB1ACF7CA0AE2B0E2282FD?DocNo=1033947&PDF=true&content=obj.pdf>