



ENGLISH HERITAGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Ben Pratley >
Planning and Building Control
Reading Borough Council
Civic Centre
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 7TD

Direct Dial: 01483 252026

Our ref: KMB1

Reading Borough Council
Your ref:

27 MAY 2011

25 May 2011

Dear Ben

Planning

Kingsmeadow Baths, Reading

I had the opportunity to visit Kingsmeadow Baths in the company of Bob O'Neil, of the Kingsmeadow Baths Trust, on the 20th April and was very concerned with regards to the condition of the structure. The metal roof covering has largely failed, flashings have been stolen from the tiled roofs and guttering is missing. As a result large amounts of water have been passing through the roof, causing sections of the timber sarking and structural members of the roof to fail. Temporary repairs to address these issues have proved completely inadequate and I am concerned that unless urgent measures are taken further historic fabric will be lost.

I understand that Reading Borough Council owns the building and at present its future is uncertain, with the Kingsmeadow Baths Trust being allowed a period of two years to prepare a strategy and seek funding for restoration as a swimming pool. Responsibility for maintenance continues to rest with the Council. While there is no legal duty for an owner to maintain a listed building the Council has a moral obligation to maintain the building, which is clearly set out in English Heritage guidance *Managing local authority heritage assets*, which states that:

'It is essential to local authorities' credibility as stewards of the historic environment that they set a good example in the management of their own heritage assets. This means demonstrably achieving the standards they expect of others.' and *'Planned maintenance and repair programmes are essential for all heritage assets, and should be based on regular, detailed inspection and condition reports'.*

If the building was not in Council Ownership we would be strongly urging that an urgent works notice was served under the terms of s.54 of the Planning (listed buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990.

I appreciate that, at this time of austerity within the public sector, the Council is short of funds. However, the deterioration of the building could be halted while efforts are made to secure its long term future without major expense by undertaking temporary works to ensure that the building is wind and weather-tight.

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The National Monuments Record is the public archive of English Heritage

This could include covering failed areas of roofs with felt, metal or plastic sheet, replacing missing guttering using plastic components and replacing lost valley gutters and flashings with felt and flash band.

Failure to carry out even the minimum of temporary repairs to the building can only be seen as deliberate neglect. The Council is therefore reminded that, as set out in HE7.6 of PPS5, neglect that has taken place since the date of listing cannot be a factor taken into account when considering an application for listed building consent for the demolition of or major alteration to the building.

Yours sincerely



PP **Richard Peats**
Historic Buildings and Areas Adviser
South East Region