



ENGLISH HERITAGE

SCHEDULE

The following entry has been added to the list:-

507832

TL1834229280

BRAND STREET

Town Hall

Grade II

Town Hall, built 1900-1901, extended to the east in the later C20. Designed by Edward Mountford and T Geoffry Lucas for Hitchin Urban District Council.

MATERIALS

The building is constructed in red brick, laid in English bond, with rendered details and stone dressings.

PLAN

Approximately rectangular with a slightly projecting front office range, and late C20 extensions linking with the former Workmen's Hall and gymnasium to the east.

EXTERIOR

The building comprises a Neo-Georgian front range, with 'Wrenaissance' influence, and a rear hall in the Arts and Crafts style. The office range has stone capping to the brick plinth and quoins to the corners. The hipped tile-covered roof has a central cupola, an end stack at the east elevation and a stair turret beneath a gablet at the west elevation. A slightly projecting central panel of one bay framed by pilasters is clad in stone. At ground floor, a central moulded arched entrance with enlarged keystone has recessed later C20 glazed and timber doors with small-paned leaded lights above. Iron lantern brackets and suspended lanterns are above either side of the arch. Carved at the top of the pilasters are the letters HU (to the left) and DC (to the right) with AD and MCM (the date in Roman numerals) beneath. At first floor, a pair of lancet windows with small-paned leaded lights and a moulded stone lintel lie beneath a pediment with central carved coat of arms and foliate motifs. The pediment and eaves rest on modillions. On either side of the central bay are three windows each to the ground and

first floors. At ground floor, four are original mullion windows with small-paned leaded lights; two to the left of centre have inserted transoms. All first-floor windows are mullion and transom windows with leaded lights.

The hall to the rear has a tiled gable roof and rough-cast render at the upper levels. It is five bays long, has a rectangular plan and lies at a right angle to the front range. Each bay is defined by half-buttresses and has a semi-circular or Diocletian window with two mullions beneath the eaves. There are two tile-hung dormers to each pitch with timber casement windows. The west elevation has a central opening at ground floor with stone quoins, part glazed doors and a canted, pent roof. To the rear is a remodelled brick extension with hipped roofs, partly constructed in the same style as the hall, which accommodates the stage and back rooms internally.

The later C20, flat-roofed single and two-storey extensions to the east obscure the east elevation of the hall and have no historic interest. The linked, much altered, two-storey gymnasium has a half-hipped roof covered in slate with dentil cornice, some contrasting brickwork and replacement windows.

INTERIOR

In the office range, a central ground-floor foyer has contemporary quarry tiles, plain dado rail and cornices and a wooden plaque commemorating honours won by Hitchin men in World War I. A simple, enclosed staircase leads to the first floor. The rooms off the staircase are plain in decoration, served by corridors with arched openings, plain dado rails and cornices. The Lucas room on the first floor has two entrance doors with a moulded architrave. A fireplace at the east end has a deeply coloured tile and carved wood surround. There is a plaster cartouche, thought to represent the Lucas family crest, surrounded by foliate and shell motifs above. There are deep cornices, some with egg and dart motifs.

To the rear of the foyer double doors lead to the multi-functional hall. The hall has an adjustable sprung wooden floor, contemporary with its construction, and a barrel-vaulted ceiling with prominent concrete beams rising from columns and elaborate consoles to the cornice. The details on the consoles represent a rose and lavender, crops grown locally for the horticultural and pharmaceutical industries. Contemporary brass light fittings remain. To the north, the stage has a simply moulded proscenium arch and remodelled rooms beneath. To the south, a first-floor gallery is supported on three slender columns; a separate access to the seated gallery is at the first floor. On the east side, an inserted double opening leads to a remodelled corridor partly integrated into the later C20 extensions which incorporate a new entrance into the complex and link the hall with the former Workmen's Hall and Gymnasium. The latter now serves as a late C20 sports facility and the former hall has been subdivided; neither have fixtures and fittings of interest.

HISTORY

Hitchin Town Hall was constructed for Hitchin Urban District Council in 1900-1901 as a replacement for the Old Town Hall of 1840, also on Brand Street. Built on land donated in 1897 by local dignitaries Frederic Seebohm and William and Alfred Ransom, the competition to design the Town Hall was won by Edward Mountford and T Geoffry Lucas. It was constructed at a cost of £7,300 and combined council offices and a hall. A small extension at the rear of the hall was built on land donated by Dr Oswald Foster and appears to have been either constructed or remodelled during the interwar years. In the 1960s the hall was extended to the south-east, linking it to the Workmen's Hall and Gymnasium of 1841, resulting in some exterior and interior remodelling.

SOURCES

NHDC. Proposed Register of Buildings of Local Interest in Hitchin. July 2009.

Field, Richard. Hitchin, A Pictorial History 1991.

A Stuart Gray. Edwardian Architecture A Biographical Dictionary (1985) p.237, 267-9

Pevsner, N and Cherry, B. The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire: 2nd Edition (1977) pp 204-205.

The Builder 30 March 1901, p.320

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

Hitchin Town Hall of 1900-1901, Brand Street, Hitchin is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural Interest; the front range of the building has carefully considered detailing expressing civil dignity balanced by the domestic quality of the flanking bays and elevations of the rear hall. The building was designed by E W Mountford and T Geoffry Lucas, renowned architects in the design of municipal and domestic buildings with many listed buildings to their names
- * Intactness; both the exterior and interior of the building are largely intact
- * Interior; the Lucas Room is distinguished for its decorative plasterwork
- * Group Value; Hitchin Town Hall has group value with the designated old Town Hall, the contrasting architecture of the two buildings demonstrating the evolution of the building type from the mid-C19 onwards.

Dated:- 14. oct 2010

Signed by authority of
the Secretary of State for
Culture, Media and Sport



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English Heritage