**Manor House briefing - March 2015**

In July 2014, there was a severe fire which damaged a University of Birmingham-owned property, the Manor House, on Manor House Farm. This property was bought by the University in 1953 from the Cadbury family and used as a student residence until 2007. It is not a nationally listed building as recognised by the Secretary of State but is one of 441 locally listed buildings in Birmingham.

Since the fire, the University had sought to establish a way of retaining Manor House in our plans for the redevelopment of the site. In line with this desire, we had recently awarded a contract to remove hazardous material from the site and to install a temporary roof to protect the rest of the property.

However, once this work had begun, it became clear that much of the property was damaged beyond repair and in a dangerous state. As a result we have no choice but to take down substantial parts of the structure and this work began with the removal of some chimney stacks which were deemed to be unstable last week.

We will then commence the removal of the hazardous material from the site, followed by removal of defective walls and structures, which will take a number of weeks.

**What is the work which has already been carried out?**

The University of Birmingham had to remove parts of the chimneys as soon as possible as there were concerns about their stability in any winds. Once this work is finished, we will continue removing hazardous material before taking down the damaged walls and other parts of the structure from Monday (16th).

**What is the work being done on Monday 16th?**

We will start by removing hazardous material, and then, when that is complete, take down walls and other parts of the structure which are in a dangerous state. We are moving as quickly as possible to make the structure safe after the full extent of the damage has been revealed.

**Will the rest of the house be taken down?**

Once the walls have been removed, we will have to reassess the remainder of the structure to establish whether it too needs to be taken down. At the moment, there are some parts of the structure which it is not safe to access. We will be able to access these areas when the dangerous parts have been removed to reassess.

We have spent the seven months since the fire investigating fully all options to retain the structure of the property despite its extensive damage. However, safety is our number one priority and following the structural engineers’ report, we recognise that it is impossible to preserve the entire property following the damage it has sustained.

**What was happening to the house before the fire?**

Prior to the fire, the building was awaiting planning approval from Birmingham City Council to be sensitively converted into flats as part of a wider redevelopment of the site. One of the reasons that the planning process had taken longer than usual was because of the desire of both the University and the developers to ensure that the building was refurbished and converted sympathetically. Many people had put a lot of time and effort into developing the conversion scheme in order to retain the Manor House in the redevelopment of the site before the fire.

**What happens to these plans now?**

Once this phase of work is complete, we will reassess what options are available to us, and will ensure the local community are kept informed throughout the process.

**How long will it be until the site is clear?**

The contractors and engineers will move as quickly as practicable to safely take down dangerous elements of the structure, but the timescale and extent of work will have to be reviewed as the work progresses.

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