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Retrospective Planning Application for open timber garden structures at the front and rear of The George Hotel, Hayfield

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

1884.Db.01

May 2023

Site Description and context

The George Hotel is located in the heart of Hayfield, within the Conservation Area. It is situated on Church Street, which slopes up from St Matthews Church and the river.

Church Street is quite densely built up with a mix of houses and commercial properties varying from single storey, 2 storey and 3 storey. To the immediate south, are 2 storey Victorian houses, to the north, closer to the church, are 3 storey weavers cottages with commercial premises at ground level. Buildings are constructed mainly with gritstone walls and a mix of stone and slate roofs.

The date on the signage for the George Hotel says 1575, however, that is not visible from the outside as it has been changed and extended many times over the years. The southern end of the building may have been built in the 1840s and the function room was used as an Oddfellows meeting room. The photograph dated 1900 in the Hayfield Conservation Area appraisal, shows an additional gabled building with large chimney right up to the road edge, attached to the southern 'function room' part of the hotel. This has since been demolished, but its base forms part of the front retaining boundary walls. The building has some modern extensions including toilet and fire escape extension. The most recent planning application was from 2014 for the conversion of a first floor function room to 3 additional hotel rooms.

The George Hotel contributes to the conservation area due to its massing, it being set back from the road behind a stepped retaining wall, the age of the building, proportion of the older openings and by virtue of it being part of the views down the hill towards the church. The rear has modern extensions and the car park as well as the bypass so its contribution to the conservation area is limited.

The main building frontage is set down from Church Steet with a stone retaining boundary wall at the back of pavement. There are some railings above over part of it. The space between the building and retaining wall forms a small terraced area.

At the rear, there is a single storey flat roofed extension which houses the wcs, as well as a single storey flat roofed extension where the rear door giving access to the pub from the car park is. The car park is accessed via a driveway top the south of the building, or a pedestrian route to the north. There are a couple of seating areas to the rear of the pub, one close to the building and another across a small pedestrian bridge over the stream.



▲*Pl. 3 - Church Street, Hayfield circa 1900 (courtesy of Philip Griffin and www.picturethepast.org.uk)*

Image from the Hayfield Conservation Area appraisal looking north down Church Street. The George Hotel is located on the left hand side with an extension to the front with gable and chimney facing the road.



Current Google image.

There have been some changes to the streetscene and the view down to the church, but the main character of the buildings stepping down the hill towards the church with the hills in the background remains the same.

Proposals

The George Hotel is owned by Marstons. The current lessee took over the running of the hotel in October 2023.

The pub business is very difficult at the moment, with many pubs and hotels nationwide closing down every day. Retaining customers and attracting new to come in and spend money is vital to keeping these pubs open. Hayfield is popular with tourists and walkers, but we are in a cost of living crisis and people aren't spending as much. Even the Royal Hotel located around the corner on the other ride of the river has just closed.

In these circumstances, the applicant started erecting two garden structures in April of this year in order to enhance the appearance and create a more welcoming outside seating area. It has been part funded by Marstons.

The structures were reported to HPBC Enforcement, who advised that a planning application was required for the garden structures.

The garden structures are open frames, with timber vertical posts and a spars across at high level. They are constructed out of oak, for longevity, and the posts have been set on postcrete. There is a stain on the timber at the rear which has not yet been put on the front structure. They give the feeling of enclosure yet are fully open. There is no roof.

At the front, the structure is 3 posts next to the stepped pavement retaining wall, with the joists taken back to the front of the building. The structure is no higher than the existing high retaining wall (which was the base of part of the building, now demolished) and is tucked down next to the stepped retaining wall at back of pavement. From across the road, it is mostly hidden by parked cars and is not overly visible. It forms a small area which can fit 2 tables underneath. It creates a 'deliberate' seating area, rather than yard space infront of the pub.

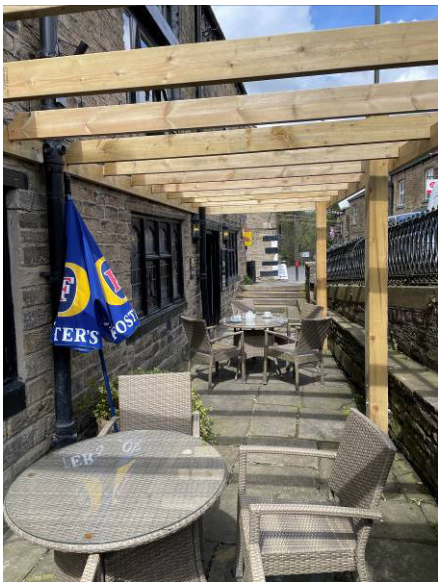
At the rear, there was already a paved beer garden. This is accessed from the rear door and a pathway along the back of the building. There is a timber bridge over the stream to a futher fenced in garden seating area. The timber garden structure has been constructed over the existing paved beer garden and over the bridge. It doesn't touch the building.

The structure is visible from the pub car park, but has been stained dark to fit in with the pub.It is not obtrusive and is partially hidden by the rise in land on one side and vegetation on the other. Due to the change in levels across the site, the top of the garden structure is at a similar height to the fence and wall to the entrance to the carpark. This reduces its visibility. To reduce it further, the applicant is proposing to replace the existing 950mm high fence panels and install 1.8m high timber fence, stained brown to match elsewhere.

When it was constructed, new fencing was installed at the back of the space to hide the rear kitchen access including the bins and for safety as there is a drop in height. A handrail was also added to help with access up the stone steps to the beer garden. In addition, a new gate was installed within the fencing to the beer garden to allow direct access from the car park and make the rear beer garden more accessible.

Photographs at Church Street



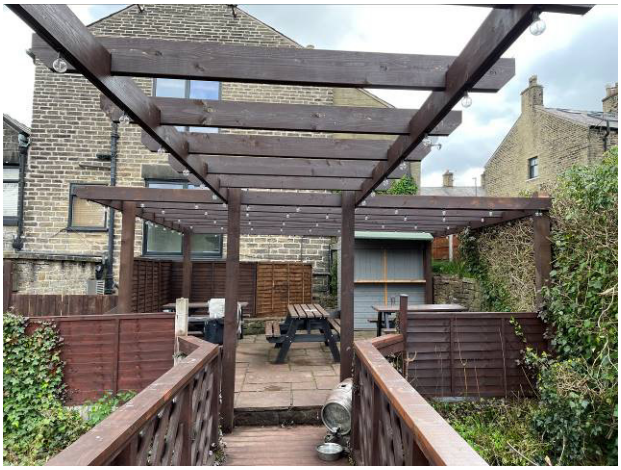




Photographs at the rear











Conclusion

Construction of the structures was to co-incide with spring / summer when the warmer weather means more people are likely to sit outside. The structures are to allow the the pub to appear more well kept, welcoming and approachable to a wider range of people including families, and to encourage more people to use the pub including its outside spaces. More people using the pub means more jobs. People staying in the rooms and using the pub also visit other commercial premises in Hayfield; good for the circular economy of the area.

The George is located in the Conservation Area, but both timber structures are tucked down, limiting their visibility. The rear has flat roofed extensions, extract pipes, the car park and the bypass so there is no detrimental impact on the conservation area or the building. At the front, the structure just slots in to an existing space and makes better use of it; it can be a used, vibrant space rather than a left over dumping ground. It doesn't hide the entrance to the building, and the beams sit above the ground floor windows with the existing stone heads visible. It has no impact on the long views down the road the the church which are important to the character of the conservation area.

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MAY 2023