

# Glossop & District Heritage Trust

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Patron Edward William Fitzalan Howard, 18th Duke of Norfolk  
Chairman Anthony Wright

25/9/23

Development Control

High Peak Borough Council

Dear Sirs

## **Re: HPK/2023/0337 Shire Hill Hospital Bute Street Glossop SK13 7QP**

This is an initial response on behalf of Glossop Heritage Trust to the above Reserved Matters application. It covers the proposed alterations to the three historic buildings which are to be retained; archaeological recording of the historic buildings to be demolished and the earlier previously-demolished historic buildings at the east end of the site; and retention of datestones, gate piers and boundary walls. We may wish to comment on the issue of retention of internal features in the retained buildings, but at the time of writing the survey referred to in the Heritage Impact Assessment, carried out by Michael Dyson Associates in 2022, has not yet been uploaded.

The buildings to be retained are:

1. The original Glossop Poor Law Union workhouse, built 1838-40
2. The workhouse barn, built 1842-3
3. The "infill block" between the buildings above, built (in stages) between 1843-79

At the east end of the site it is likely, from the initial archaeological investigation, that there are sub-surface remains of the Glossop Parish workhouse, built 1833-35; the stone-breaking shed; the casual or tramps' ward and porter's lodge; and the yard between. The original gate piers and a section of boundary wall survive, as do the gate piers of the later, 1890s, entrance onto Bute Street.

## **Significance**

Although not Listed, the original Union workhouse is a heritage asset of more than local significance, being very untypical of early Union workhouses. Although all Poor Law Unions were governed by the 1834 Poor Law (Amendment) Act there were substantial local variations in interpretation, and the size, design and mode of operation of the Glossop workhouse reflected what appears to have been a local policy of minimal compliance with the harsher requirements. This was probably because the Glossop Union was largely contiguous with the Duke of Norfolk's Glossop estate. The Guardians, who were mostly the Duke's tenants, would have been heavily influenced by his agent, and the Duke in turn would have been able to shield them from any over-zealous enforcement by the Poor Law Commissioners. Victorian newspapers often carried lurid accounts of the evils of the workhouse system, and as a benevolent aristocrat he would not have wanted any such publicity about an establishment which he effectively controlled.

The workhouse appears to have functioned from the beginning primarily as a welfare institution, housing, with the exception of the casual ward, mainly those paupers who were unable to look after themselves due to age, infirmity or homelessness, the vast majority continuing to receive out-relief. As a result it was smaller than the norm for an area of the size of the Glossop Union, with just four resident staff – master, matron, assistant matron and porter - and this plus its simple rectangular plan and an absence of large open “wards”, with domestic-sized living areas on both floors opening on to a single corridor, would have made it impossible to achieve the strict segregation by sex and age which the Act envisaged. Although there were separate living arrangements – men to the left, women and children to the right - the 1857 Poor Law Map shows no evidence of separate exercise areas. At the 1841 census there were 45 inmates, and that number had not increased 10 years later despite a 35% increase in the town’s population.

It was also much plainer in style than most other union workhouses, even those of the early period. Before dormer windows were added in the 1860s when the attics were converted into dormitories for the children, it was, as was the preceding parish workhouse, in appearance basically just a scaled-up version of the local terraced “industrial cottages” of the period, with no embellishments apart from the main door (see below). It was therefore more typical of small Georgian parish workhouses than the grand edifices of the later Victorian period and was clearly intended to be purely functional and not to make a public statement about the munificence of the ratepayers or to strike fear and awe into those coming through its gates. Indeed, it may have been deliberately inconspicuous, as it would have been visible from Glossop Hall, the Duke’s local seat, 700 metres away, and in full view of All Saints RC Church, built by the Duke in 1837, just 530 metres away.

The barn, along with a cowhouse and piggery, was built to support a small farming operation on the land which is still part of the larger plot within which the development site now sits. Whilst vegetable gardens and even farms were a common feature of workhouses, survival of farm buildings within the curtilage of a workhouse appears to be rare, so making the barn perhaps an even more significant heritage asset than the workhouse itself.

As a group, these three buildings represent the greater part of the Union workhouse as shown on the 1857 Poor Law Map. Apart from the loss of the chimneys, and the addition of doors plus the 1980s uPvc windows and door canopies, the front elevations of the main building and the infill largely retain their original appearance, and the exterior of the barn is also largely original. Given that there appears to be relatively little scope for retention of interior structures or features, their external appearance is therefore their key surviving historical attribute. The barn is still clearly a farm building, and the very plain architecture of the workhouse, mirroring the local vernacular housing of the period, reflects a particular, and perhaps almost unique, local approach to the implementation of the Victorian Poor Law under the influence of a powerful aristocratic family.

### **The proposals**

Given the above, it is therefore of concern that some of the proposed changes appear designed to harmonise the appearance of the buildings with that of the rest of the development at the expense of retaining their distinct historic characteristics. First of all, the over-arching roof would have the effect of merging the barn with the other two buildings and thus blurring its identity as a separate building with a distinct function, and this would be compounded by the replacement with a rectangular window of the distinctive end window with its semicircular fanlight and keystones. If a larger window is needed, this should be in the original style, and this should then be carried over into the other windows.

Secondly, if additional doors are needed along the frontage of the former workhouse these should as far as possible match the original style, without modern embellishments. Until the 1980s there was only one main entry door, in the centre of the main workhouse building. By 1879 there was a cuboid stone porch in front of it, but this is not shown on the 1857 map so was almost certainly a later addition. It was removed in the 1980s and two additional doorways were then created, one being close to the junction between the infill block and the barn. This is described in the 2019 Heritage Impact Assessment as a “stylistic 19<sup>th</sup>-century door” and is almost certainly the original main door and surround, hidden behind the porch, which had been removed and relocated in order to allow widening of the main entrance. Door and surround should be preserved as-is and returned to their original position, and other doors should be designed to be as compatible as possible, and in timber rather than uPvc. The canopies currently over the doors are 1980s and inappropriate and should not be retained or replicated.

The proposed new narrow first-floor windows are out of keeping with the period and detract substantially from the historic appearance, destroying the symmetry, and as they do not line up consistently with the interior layouts as shown in the brochure it is not at all clear that they are strictly necessary.

The proposed window design is also inappropriate, carrying over the modern style of the rest of the development. On 1960s photos the windows were two-pane sashes, as at present but in wood. However, those on the earlier parish workhouse were multi-pane (12 or 16-pane) sashes. It is quite possible, as only three years separated the two buildings and architect and builder were probably the same, that the original windows on the Union workhouse were also of the multi-pane type. Either type of sash window would be appropriate for the period, but multi-pane designs were more common on institutional or industrial buildings, probably due to cost and risk of breakage.

## **Archaeology**

Although a good deal of detail of internal features is given in existing reports, a full building record to the accepted standard should nevertheless be made of all the historic buildings before demolition.

At the east end of the site, the preliminary excavation by Salford Archaeology in 2020 established a high likelihood of survival of remains of the demolished buildings shown on earlier maps. Together with the yard, gate piers, wall and neighbouring quarry, these comprised the original Parish workhouse completed in 1835, and the site is therefore significant as the complete undeveloped site of a workhouse complex which preceded the coming into force of the 1834 Act. The main workhouse building, which was visited and recorded by the Glossop and District Historical Society shortly prior to its demolition in the late 1960s-early 1970s, subsequently became the infirmary for the new Union workhouse, then almshouse-type accommodation for elderly inmates after a separate infirmary was built in 1897, and finally, after the infirmary was extended in 1927, accommodation for nursing staff, the “workhouse cottages.”

Next to it was an outhouse plus an open-sided shed, also recorded by the Historical Society, where “casuals” broke stone in return for their night’s stay. The casual or tramps’ ward was on the east side of the yard, with the attached porter’s lodge next to the gate. It appears to have been a single-storey building and continued in use into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but had gone by the 1950s. There is no documentary or map evidence that the sites of these buildings were re-used in any way after demolition so the survival of foundations and rubble-filled cellars is highly likely.

**Other surviving features**

Any inscribed datestones from demolished buildings should be recovered and incorporated appropriately into the landscaping of the site. The gate piers at both gates should also be retained together with surviving boundary walls. The gate piers at the Bute Street entrance have been in that location only since the 1890s but are very likely to have been transferred from the original gate for the Union workhouse which opened onto Blackshaw Clough.

Yours faithfully

Roger Hargreaves

for Glossop and District Heritage Trust