

Conservation Response.

Date: 09/11/2023.

File/Application ref: HPK/2023/0404 & HPK/2023/0403.

Case Officer: Rachel Robinson.

Proposal: 'Listed Building Consent for remodelling of existing listed property' & 'Remodelling of existing listed property'.

Site Address: The Old School, Highgate Road, Hayfield, Derbyshire, SK22 2JL.

Dear Rachel,

Objection.

Whilst the terminology in the application titles are cause for concern in themselves, the project at this site has a number of contentious elements.

Assessment:

An unusual place, and a well survived structure. The Old School House, *GII, List UID: 1201615*, has a mixed history of in actuality only two functions by modern standards, was for a meaningful amount of time, a modest vernacular school house with ancillary functions. The Heritage Statement goes into detail to explain that the former school house may, at an even earlier time, have been a primitive dwelling: now lost. The building location is within Hayfield Conservation Area, at the top and at a high point in the village seen to act as a marker in the landscape.

From preliminary investigation, the school house was *'long the only institution of the kind in Hayfield'*. Further archives have revealed the former name 'Stone Head School' was built circa 1814 after the Wesleyans had introduced the need for such in Hayfield, in 1795. (Education was said to be very few and far between, meaning most children did remain illiterate). *"In 1836 the school closed after a Wesleyan or Warrenite; Dr Bunting, decreed that education cease on Sundays. A vast blow to a small remote community like Hayfield, trustees allowed education to continue elsewhere in the village and other rooms were hired"*.

Whilst apparent that the original construction and function of this building was a schoolhouse with associated functions, it feels tenuous that in infancy it was solely private residences thought of as occurring at separate times. Any former smaller scale cottages are lost. 'Demolition' and total replacement (again by modern standards) of simple vernacular dwellings in a remote village where materials, skill and craft was marginally scarce, is not often apparent.

The vernacular of the High Peak, and as you gradually ascend further north, sees statuesque 2-3 storey dwellings with varieties of both narrow, wide and reoccurring irregular fenestration. Where the topography is dramatically varied and communities surround valleys, two and three storeyed buildings are seen, making for a stepped down appearance in the urban character. Contributing to the historic significance, and legibility of ancient areas. This can be seen in particular in the vicinity of this site. Similarly, often fenestration of this vernacular is marginally varied at less prominent elevations, like the rear, or at rooms with less demand for large reveals. This results in smaller more

primitive windows appearing. Additionally, with structures associated to religious groups, often with more financial security the wealth afforded the structures to be more deliberately designed. The footprint of this building is vast and stocky and sits to attention perpendicular to the grain of the village. There is little evidence in the masonry to suggest the arched entrance at west gable is a later addition, nor does it appear that the structure's height has been altered with regard to building up, or upon, or altering the overall form. There is also little evidence to suggest the structure had a core, and was later revised. The chimneys match neighbouring counterparts (shown on OS Maps provided), complete with vernacular thickstones, a high percentage of lintel and cill details match and the gable sees evidence of flue branching throughout.

The details become ambiguous still. Typically in rural communities such as this and with religious associations it is also probable for schoolmasters as noted, to reside close to, or within school buildings due to the closeness of the communities. Be that on separate floors, or separate wings in more grandiose cases. In the case of Chapels for example, they were arranged in similar plan and footprint as in this case with two entrances, one at a gable and sometimes accessed via external steps. Visitors, (or worshippers), entered through a more public entry, whilst cottage-type accommodation was included alongside to be used by a clergyman, minister or chapel-keeper where site specific. The north elevation in this case affords a slightly more domesticated perspective facing the village, with respective doors. With the rear and west gable affording its second function of a school. Both with the potential to be inspired by, and have its construction related to the topography as noted previously. It should also be noted the majority of fenestration remains extant and uniform across the site.

In light of this, it is deemed based on this assessment that this structure as seen today was built deliberately in this form, with relationships between floors as was. This then marries with build date and date assessed by the conservation area appraisal as when the green was 'enclosed'. This makes for a highly significant building.

There does not appear to be much analysis on original location of internal stairs, if they did ever reach from ground to first, which often this can be demonstrative of a building's former life. Primitive stone cottages predominantly see short narrow stairs at a corner, with timber frame buildings the same unless consisting of bays. The indicative historic plans as thought of on page 10 of the Heritage Statement do not expand greatly on where they may have been, consequently further translating to me that there were two ground floor accommodation type areas, with main function above accessed separately from the west gable. This would then marry with build date and community activity noted previously. This also mirrors page 12 of the Heritage Statement noting the domestic stair is not original.

The north facing elevation is impressive and faces the core of the village across a small green open space. Consequently, and quite literally to use the term 'keeping up appearances', this elevation may have been deemed principal. Consciously designed, and with the aid of wealth resulting in what is seen today to be a well-proportioned handsome building. Any alterations or changes at the rear and screened by the topography may therefore have been thought of as secondary, which would give light as to potentially why the rear has received substantially more attention.

This asset boasts the full range of Heritage Values. I do not agree that elements are generally of medium significance, nor that 'the spine wall is the only recognisable evidence of its past construction'. The asset is a rare and historically interesting oddity. Later cosmetic changes or finishes, and 1970's alterations form a limited view in relation to this assets survival condition, and nonetheless do in fact maintain the building's legibility remarkably well. In reference to the 'indicative historic floor plans' as thought of, two walling elements are determined as from the 1970s, and it

appears ceiling and floor heights are of a fair size. On the contrary, for example in rural cottages nationally of 16thC origin and earlier, they are substantially smaller.

To surmise this portion; any former uncivilised elementary building is lost and is assessed as not forming a substantial episode in this structures history, in order to be comprehensively drawn upon. As assessed this structure, seen deliberately designed and constructed to be schoolhouse; with simple chapel-master *come* schoolmaster accommodation. It has a traditional form, to which I am not sure whether the proposal looks to better reveal the significance of, or continue to force it to be further domesticated, and be further altered with the intensification of modern elements. I am not confident this is sensitive and at this time appears to confuse its remaining legible history. The latter forming part of the merits for listing designation.

The supporting information notes that the concept is to '*remodel*' and '*refurbish*' the listed building. This stance is not faithful to a heritage asset, does not have long term conservation in mind, and does not form a long term view with the listing status in mind. I am concerned there is conflict with NPPF paragraphs 199 and 202. Setting out to reinstate or restore features, attempts to turn back the clock, and is often a destructive process risking leaving a building without signs of age or evidence of its past interactions with people. Knowledge of an original design, or thoughts of an imagined original is not sufficient reason for erasing change, and particularly so where it has added positively to a buildings historic interest.

The proposed ground floor plan shows a contemporary generic open plan kitchen / diner. This is not traditional and there is no precedent for it. I cannot see how it is appropriate. I note there are existing later internal alterations, however again, they maintain the building's legibility remarkably well and with reference to the existing floorplan; the original cruciform footprint at ground floor remains successfully mirrored and honest in approach.

The proposed first floor does not differ greatly from the existing conditions. The cruciform footprint from ground floor appears mimicked here, focusing functions around a central spine as described.

The addition of new infrastructure, i.e; cabling/wiring/pipework etc must be clearly marked on plan and demonstrated in section. There is little information by way of ventilation for bathrooms, ensuites, and kitchen as these functions appear to be rearranged entirely throughout, and this is a particularly invasive intervention. I am struggling to see how generic ensuites are traditional, or are sensitive to the character of the building. They are an alien feature. Further to this, I am not sure whether it does relate as it is not clear – there are vents proposed for the roofscape. Information surrounding this is vague, what are they for and what physical harm may arise from this element.

The proposed notes insulation of external walls. I presume this actually means internal walls, as external insulation is not permitted. It translates as seeing the inclusion of an internal shell of insulation. However, there is little detail as to how it will be affixed, what method of installation, whether there will be a gap between the solid masonry and the inner shell. Again, in order to achieve this throughout it will be particularly invasive and destructive without appropriate investigation.

The inclusion of this inner shell is said to '*increase the wall thickness and window and door reveals from their original state*'. I am not confident in which case this is entirely feasible without seeing comprehensive drawings or method statement. If that is to be the result of this element I am concerned this does not have the special interest of the building in mind and would be deemed harmful.

The proposal discusses removal of all strap pointing. There is no real justification as to why this is required. This masonry is by its construction not finely pointed, as would be cut stone. Though

unsympathetic repairs may have taken place at a prior point, I cannot see an investigation into what damage it is causing or whether it is original in order to determine this is a priority. Is it cementitious?

Does any original lime survive, or survive underneath? I suggest this is investigated thoroughly as again, entire removal will be particularly destructive. This is a vulnerable element, as such it is pertinent that mortar analysis be undertaken to any original surviving, to accurately prescribe a fresh mix.

The loss of the two front doors to north elevation is not supported. This pair are matching elements, mirroring each other with respective surviving ironmongery. Their loss has no clear and convincing justification. It simply looks to sanitise the character of the asset. The proposed units are uninteresting, and are typically seen in later Georgian - early Victorian red brick dwellings or villas.

I do not support the door opening enlargement to suit a modern double door. There is no precedent for this and it is not traditional. I do not see it as an enhancement. I agree that in reference to page 22 of the Heritage Statement; it would impose an adverse effect of the heritage of the property as it was likely not a doorway that was of primary use to the original building.

Removal of the conservatory*, it must be demonstrated its removal would not cause demonstrable physical harm. I will note it is a particularly ugly addition and does impose heritage harm in terms of character and setting.

There may be no issue with the attention paid to rainwater goods, however there does not seem to be much by way of ample and appropriate drainage details. I presume this may be what 'aco drain' is. Clarity required. Method of attachment of units to walling and their correct locations marked on elevation is required, similarly the repair of masonry where existing is removed will require attention.

I will not comment substantially on landscaping at this time.

Other elements of concern:

- Tanking membrane. This is not supported and does not have the health or integrity of the historic fabric in mind. It is not a conservation appropriate method, and is pointless if traditional limes are proposed to be used in the pointing. Further investigation is required. If this area is prone to moisture ingress, investigation of external elements requires attention.
- Underfloor heating. Little detail surround this; existing conditions of the flooring retained with heating installed inside? Biscuit mix screed cementitious? This will not help humidity and internal conditions.
- Removal of gas stone vents. Though there is no images of these, are they traditional iron or brass plates?
- New roof and wall vents. Clarity and justification required. This building has two chimneys with four flues, and circa 19 windows.
- Expanding foam. Proposed to be used at 'rear glazed door detail'. This is harmful and does not have the health of integrity of this historic fabric in mind. It is not a conservation appropriate method.

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The conclusion notes that some instances of less than substantial harm will be imposed on the architectural interest of the structure. However, architectural interest is not solely what this asset holds. I believe the project does not put this building first, and risks confusing the history of the structure. The scheme is an accumulation of harmful interventions, materials, approaches and non-traditional features to which reduces the remaining special interest of the building, diluting the asset further toward becoming a shell with a wholly untraditional and unrecognisable core.

To conclude:

I cannot see that proposal looks to better reveal the significance of the asset. The proposals would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building, contrary to Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. I do not agree that only some, or diminutive harm will be imposed. I deem the project to cause less than substantial harm, it is not considered that there are public benefits to outweigh the heritage harm identified. I cannot support this scheme and recommend refusal.

This scheme contravenes the following Local Policy:

Policy EQ7. In particular:

"...preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage or an area through preservation or appropriate reuse and sensible development, including enabling development, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss or other relevant provision of the NPPF apply".
"...requiring proposed developments that affect a heritage asset and or its setting including alterations and extensions to existing buildings to demonstrate how the proposal has taken account of design, form, scale, mass, use of traditional materials and detailing, siting and views away from and towards the heritage asset in order to ensure that the design is sympathetic and minimises harm to the asset".

This scheme has conflict with regard to the following NPPF paragraphs:
202.

For Case Officer: *- Conservatory. This appears to be unauthorised work. Clarity required.

Applications history:

031555. Refused.

031556. Refused.

032001. Refused.

032012. Refused.

HPK/2017/384. Refused. Resubmission of refused 2015 application with Conservation Officer comments.

The Heritage Statement comments this does not concern the building in terms of heritage and significance. This is incorrect. For completeness this unauthorised work will require regularisation and does not have a limited time associated to it as would be full planning permissions. The structure's proposed removal may have to be dealt with as part of alleviating this complaint.

Regards,

E Holland.
Principal Conservation Officer.