

From: [Emily Holland](#)
To: [Rachel Robinson](#)
Subject: HPK/2024/0094 and 0095
Date: 30 May 2024 14:11:02
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi Rachel,
Objection.

This is an extensive project where there remains contentious elements, and ambiguous details.

I will attempt to convey this in a bullet point manner with reference to drawings or documents where possible, due to the sheer quantity of items and details involved.

Please don't hesitate to ask for clarity if there is anything unclear.

For the avoidance of doubt; where something is not addressed during discussion this is not to be taken as an agreement to or an approval of unless otherwise noted.

Page 14, heritage statement. 6.7 building condition report summary.

1. External wall damage.

Mortar analysis of the original is expected to ensure and inform new lime specification due to the extensive procedure surrounding this element. A plan, i.e stages and timeframe will also be expected. Notwithstanding physical impact, the quantity of alteration here will have an impact on the character and outward facing appearance of the building as a whole. Happy to word conditions for this. Consequently, pre bought generic NHLs will not be acceptable for this sizeable element. Removal of strap pointing in principle is not an issue, this has clearly been misunderstood – it is the quantity, methods and specification that must be approached with full attention.

2. Timber floors.

What is 'dripping wet', how long has this been monitored or managed for? i.e dehumidifiers, opening windows. Details regarding but not limited to method of new, construction and affixing into walling required.

3. Ground water.

The existing tanking and cementitious mortar is retaining the moisture and pushing it up the walling. Landscape management and directing water appropriately away from the building is encouraged. DPCs are not permitted and will not be supported. Envisaged remediation may be suitable subject to drawings.

4. Internal damp.

With both 3 and 4 here – what is the plan? What are the stages of approach? Ventilation and humidity is barred by existing conditions, and exacerbated by the external conditions. Perhaps the removal of internal harmful elements is a priority, with repointing second after this - and so on? There is no clear timeline for all of these features which are intrinsically tied. It would be absolutely pertinent to open all doors and windows once previously installed tanking and internal modern plasters are removed – to let the building dry out, if it is as bad as described. Then move onto the next stage, for example. It would be unwise to simply go straight to the reapplication of limes and other materials to walling that is so very wet. What new 'solid floor' is envisaged? Lime screed atop the earth? Is this for the full ground floor? What original floor remains (stone setts, tiles, anything?).

5. Windows.

Units for attention will require annotating on plans, similarly those that are being 'left alone' should also be identified. What types of repairs are prescribed for each?

6. External steps.

This appears to be an add-on. What is the material need? Continuing to rebuild and contrive elements is an accumulation of the dilution of character. I don't see justification for this.

7. Restore joinery.

10 year paint guarantee is simply marketing for plastic based paints. Traditional paints and or oil treatments are encouraged.

6.6 conclusion. Page 14.

I do not agree that its existing conditions have affected the 'buildings roots'.

7.1 introduction. Page 15.

Need and potential for change.

'dysfunctional internal layout'. Based on what? This is not a modern building. This doesn't seem to take account of age, primitive character or significance.

Drawings:

Ground floor.

1. Rebuilding of stone steps (external) at both sides. There is no justification for this, therefore I don't see a material need. It is not an enhancement.
2. Five wall vents and or extract grilles. Particularly invasive and harmful to the character of the building. This concept is typically found at lower levels to Victorian townhouses or modern buildings. I don't see a need at the moment, where other elements will substantially alleviate humidity and atmosphere complaints. Again, once tanking and cementitious mortars are removed and vapour permeable materials are introduced - the building will return to a consistent state over time. Again, windows should be opened regularly to allow this internal humidity to escape and where the downstairs toilet has its own window, there is no material need for another invasive external grille. Nonetheless, I am not confident in the material need for a small downstairs shower (this point raised again later). A major contributing factor to this traditionally constructed building is that solid stone walls (a conductor) are slow to heat, there is no cavity, they almost always cold and the demands imposed upon the fabric from internal elements not natural to a building of this age will be exacerbating internal conditions ontop of unsympathetic repairs and the like. Adding more modern elements and features and creating more holes, gaps, vents and though plugging up other areas does not have conservation methods in mind, nor does it have the long term behaviour of the building in mind. The analogy that comes to mind is two steps forward, five back. There will not be a balance achieved in terms of a dry warm building.
3. New stair. Irregardless of any perceived physical impact, it is inappropriate in size and style for this nature of primitive former chapel *come* school house. It also appears to be an inefficient use of floor space with the contriving of a ground floor foyer where there is no precedent for one. The existing stair conditions are more than successful for the character and age of the property. I don't see a justification for this alteration and it is more of an exacerbation.
4. Cut back paving and drainage. May be acceptable subject to drawings.
5. Removal of existing kitchen stud partition. Acceptable in principle with retention of small wall nibs. Acknowledgement of a serving hatch not particularly critical. Other points relating to this later expanded.
6. New items such as wool fibre, insulations, and the like will need to be noted on a full materials list.
7. Window reinstated where alcove is, door to remain as is at existing playroom (rear left bay of GF). There would be less disturbance to the fabric to leave this as is. My initial comments echoed, where the attempt to turn back the clock to reinstate an imagined original reverses positive change and erases historic interest, would not be deemed a conservative approach. In many areas it is argued works expand on legibility, but others it is being erased or undone.

8. System boiler and cylinder are not shown on the existing plans to be able to realise any change.
9. New doorway to proposed kitchen from proposed living room is too close to the wall and does not allow for a traditional door aperture.
10. Underfloor heating. This is in the room with the most damp and dripping walls or floor? Further investigation and clarity required. Is this area under a water table and able to safely and feasibly contain new modern infrastructure such as this if it is always so sodden?

First floor.

1. Windows reinstated following conservatory removal. Only one is annotated to the left, are both being reinstated? Repair/care to walls once conservatory has been removed requires attention.
2. Inclusion of five bedrooms seems to be quite enthusiastic and at the moment not an effective use of such a large space? The existing conditions are particularly ample and simple, though the proposed in fact creates quite a lost floorplan. There at this time is no justification for this change in order to be able to assess harm. This change neither enhances or preserves any historic significance, nor makes the building more legible as noted in the supporting information. The guest bedroom appears particularly crammed in and with the inclusion of a tiny bathroom. I don't see any public benefit to this in particular where there is yet more invasive intervention required to accommodate moisture and ventilation. I suggest revisions.
3. Rebuilding of the existing stone steps to west elevation. I don't see a material need or justification, and they already 'match' as seems to be a reason given for change. It appears to be more sanitisation of the buildings humble features and erasing of signs of age. The analysis notes the primitive aged character and for example turnover of the top step due to wear and tear. These are honest elements of age and survival not to be simple wiped away clean.
4. Glazed external doors restored to match existing. I presume this means the existing joinery will be restored and retained?
5. Timber clad bin store at external wall is unsupported. There are ample places that are not at the historic school house gable entrance to store modern paraphernalia. This does not take account of setting or character.
6. Iron balustrade and handrail. What is the justification? This is a private dwelling with little footfall, I don't see how this is appropriate for the character of the listed building. There doesn't appear to be any on the archived photographs either therefore I am not confident this would be an enhancement. There seems to be some short ankle high items in the existing, which is more than successful and subservient.
7. Removal of conservatory supported. As above repairs and attention once it is removed, are required.
8. Provision of en suites. Again as above, the smallest is not constructive when for example existing bedroom 4 could be revised to accommodate existing shower room? Another example, proposed bedroom 2 is bigger than the proposed master and can utilise the existing bathroom as a new ensuite? What are measured as critical works and what is then going to equate to sensitive and controlled disturbance.

Roof plan.

1. Roof vents. Unlikely supported on such a well survived roof, they will be particularly obvious and unable to be subservient due to the substantial material differences. I am also struggling to see a material need with so many large windows, paired with new vapour permeable materials it is not a critical intervention.

Floorplan and functions.

It appears that the building has now, on a sliding scale; gone from one extreme to the other. There is almost *so much* provision for simply bedrooms, the ground floor only accommodating one living room space, and a disconnected 'snug' ; it all seems quite lost. The amount of substantial alteration and change proposed I feel lacks cohesion or logic where it is difficult to see any justification, *falling separate* from practical listed building repairs and maintenance. The analysis notes the former uses, relationships between areas and legibility of the floorplans among other elements. Though I am concerned the scheme is not faithful to the investigations or proactive in being informed by them. For example, a 'pantry' would not be found at what was assessed to be a remote vernacular cottage in the hills, with chapel come school master accommodation, and is more at home in a Georgian or Victorian townhouse or terrace of a larger plan and more storeys.

In light of the current project, it appears that in terms of revisions and functions- that more can be done from the starting point, and informed by the existing conditions to a degree. Subsequently, and in line with SPAB guidance, it would be wise to take an honest approach that is faithful and respectful of the building. My previous points are echoed where positive change has occurred from previous interactions with people, it would be unfaithful to sanitise and contrive something of this age and condition into something 'perfect', therefore with the opportunity to disturb less of the building overall. Piecemeal change that may or may not have happened from the 1970s is not the sole justification and reason for a total overhaul and to turn back time. I am concerned the scheme looks to transform the building into something 'new'. As mentioned previously, it would therefore be more wise to devise a programme of repairs and maintenance in a staged approach. As I fear attempting to undo so much all at once, appears to have gotten this scheme adrift and it is no longer clear what it is that is wishing to be achieved.

At 5.0 of the design and access statement there is the following brief:

- *Remedial works for building fabric.* This should be a priority and separated out from subjective works.
- *Reinstate some composition of original building form.* The existing conditions, minus conservatory and ground floor utility, appear to be the only two factors substantially hindering this. Nonetheless the significance of the building is retained. It is already highlighted the two ground floor bays in cruciform, and the open plan school room above.
- *Acknowledge cruciform walling to floorplan.* For example, the removal of one stud walling to the proposed living room, but the installation of another in the proposed boot room and proposed pantry doesn't seem to contribute to this point. In addition, the installation of a grand staircase doesn't acknowledge the humble character either. Is the acknowledgement of the floorplan through the new supporting wall for a new stair? I am not confident in this reasoning.
- *Improved movement.* This would require some explanation as there are currently five external doors over two levels among a fairly giving floorplan. Perhaps this alludes to locations of the functions, less the scale and form of the footprint?
- *New first floor layout.* Sees more the inclusion of further bedrooms, less the inclusion of a enhanced layout? Not clear on this.
- *Kitchen space hub.* At the moment this proposed area seems to be the least disturbed out of the whole project, except the existing conditions provide a kitchen / diner already where the stud walling is proposed to be removed here. The later would provide a slightly larger space to that proposed? This point expanded on later.
- *Utility and bootroom.* May be acceptable as proposed but existing conditions are smaller and preferred however these types of spaces are more at home at a farmhouse, and modern farmhouse. I am not confident in a ground floor shower room.

- *Work from home space.* This doesn't appear to be accommodated for at all, with no links to any other core areas.

In the conclusion, it is said the major positives are removal of the conservatory and its lower utility which broadly speaking is agreed, and creating internal acknowledgement of the cruciform plan (to GF) to reveal better understanding of the buildings former functions. Later, the justification for the new internal first floor revisions are based on again, apparent 1970s piecemeal development and that *presence of an open plan schoolroom was lost in the conversion.* I disagree and do not understand this point. Especially as at 7.4 of the heritage statement it is contradicted; *the quantity of walling confuses the space as being understood as the original open teaching space.* The building's historic interest and significance is strongly evident and I believe quashes its own point. The building as a whole, all of its features including but not limited to; terms of scale, form, footprint, fenestration and other vernacular features already assessed retains the legibility of a school house come chapel. The contention derives from forcibly adding exacerbation of modern elements. It is therefore not an enhancement or a sensitive intervention, and does not continue to reveal better understanding of the asset's former functions and instead simply is a continuation of alien modern elements. **To conclude,** there is harm both in terms of architectural character, survival, building integrity, significance and historic interest, and due to the quantity of items and lack of overall certainty, it is an accumulation of harm with substantial ambiguity surrounding any clear and convincing justification. There is direct harm imposed. I would not be able to provide full support and recommend refusal. I do not see the scheme falling faithful to Section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990, and it is not considered there any public benefits to outweigh this harm. I fear it is still a way off from preservation and enhancement, where the overall significance of this asset is assessed and confirmed as high. There is a vast amount of sanitisation and contriving of modern features and infrastructure where again I cannot see clear and convincing justification. I am also concerned there appears little confidence and some confusion in some of the items, where they are again not justified or explained. This is a listed building, protections covering the heritage asset, any object or structure fixed to the building and within the curtilage. Consequently, for example alterations to steps and railings, whilst not seen as critical, are not a material need in terms of its long term conservation or longevity. The accumulation of harm at this present time is not outweighed by any substantial public benefit where the existing conditions in terms of function and floorplan operate suitably in the form of a private residence in considering its age. I am not confident in the reasoning of any 'future proofing', as again a private humble dwelling it successfully remains. Moving forward, I encourage the support of a heritage consultant as currently I do not have full confidence in the project where I am concerned it lacks cohesion and clarity.

I will make suggestion for the following staged approach.

Firstly, a programme of priority works for the care and maintenance of the building fabric and or structural envelope should be devised. Separating out any cosmetic or subjective short term works to items such as but not limited to stairs, steps, ensuites and railings. This programme of works would consist of the following but not limited to items of repair and maintenance:

Repainting.

Rainwater management and drainage.

Joinery (both doors and windows) repairs.

Rainwater goods repair or replacement.

Removal of wet gypsum plasters, tanking and other vapour inhibiting materials.

Secondly, an order of priority works in terms of internal relationships to rooms and functions (perhaps separated into zones informed by the original floorplan, significance and existing conditions).

For example a starting point this would consist of the following under each heading

provided in the brief:

- Reinstatement / acknowledgement of original building form and composition.
Following on from the stair being left as is, the cruciform wall reinstated with a traditionally sized doorway and aperture (not central). Kitchen to remain in its location to avoid unnecessary overhaul of services and invasive works. This floor space scale is the same as wishing to be achieved at the back bay of the house.
- Material need for a 'pantry', seems to contribute very little, with such a big utility space and disconnected 'snug'?
- Upper floor – for example provision for a reading room / office not currently accommodated for : related traditional functions acknowledging former past.

Important: Please note I cannot offer time to visit and provide 1:1 project guidance due to limited resources and current caseload at this time. I solely cover both authorities with no team or assistant, and I am at maximum capacity. Due to this I have been willing as shown above to offer inroads to break this scheme down into a clearer project with the listing status in mind.

Thanks

In your communications with me please always quote the planning reference number if you have one.

Due to work levels at this current time there will be a delay in responding to your query, however, I shall endeavour to do so as soon as I am able.

Emily Holland. Principal Conservation Officer.

Development Services.

High Peak Borough Council / Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

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