

Design, Access and Heritage Impact Statement for works to Wraxall Manor, Higher Wraxall, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 0HP.

Agent: TFH Reeve

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Listing Information:

Grid reference: ST 5664001139

Listing Reference: 1302719

Heritage Impact Statement:

To be read in conjunction with the Historic Building survey undertaken by John Thorp of Keystone, and the Listed Buildings officer's pre-application response.

Wraxall Manor is the significant Dorset house of a prominent Cromwellian lawyer; probably built from 1651, and representing an advanced floor plan for its time. The "Chapel" is probably not a chapel but the remnant of a 16th century house of some status. The two elements now linked into a single building by the very extensive 1905 work. Apart from linking the buildings into an integrated whole, the work of this period has left its imprint on every aspect of the Manor including a complete re roofing of all but the "Chapel" remnant. Joinery and floor finishes are almost all of this period as are the Georgian revival details and the main stair.

The current ownership now restores the Manor with its stable block, farm yard and surrounding land.

The Manor is fundamentally sound, there are a few structural issues. The most significant is the tying of the four gables to the 1905 roof. Please see appended A.Waring Structural Engineer's proposal, which straps them back to the roof. However in the later years of the previous long term ownership, much essential maintenance was neglected. Hoppers and down pipes blocked, flashings failed and vegetation and ground levels were not controlled. The house was full of asbestos. The services are dated and inadequate. The asbestos has been removed under a previous permission, the work resulting in damage to a number of lath and plaster ceilings. Please see appended repair method statement.

The result is a large house requiring very significant expenditure.

The proposed works consist mainly of schedules of repair. Please see appendices, Windows, Stone, schedules. The replacement of cement render with lime. The re plumbing and re wiring the house. The lowering of ground levels, making sure that roof water leaves the house to effective soakaways, and the replacement of damp damaged areas with appropriate lime plaster and breathable finishes. The Edwardian floor finishes are to be refurbished and retained. The good quality period sanitaryware, baths, etc are to be retained refurbished and reinstated.

As is usual with project of this kind opening up may reveal further defects and also further historical information. The soft strip currently authorised may give clues to previous fire places in the kitchen and the proposed library and the re instatement of these can be conditioned separately as appropriate. Furthermore the continued engagement of Keystone may reveal further information as Covid19 hindered sources become available. The pre application response tabulates the issues and the submission follows this number form.

The reintegration of the Manor with its surroundings in a single ownership is a benefit and a protection to its setting.

Following the officers response and numbering:

Ground Floor:

1. Rear Courtyard - The lowering is only to the extent of being able to replace the cement surfaces with reclaimed York stone (please see drawing number 1317-15) and will not have any structural impact.
2. Proposed Playroom - The stove will be removed and a simple fire surround and internal treatment to be conditioned. Proposed door and surround detail (please see drawing number 1317-03).
3. The rear door Corridor - The removal of this wall will enable this area to be properly lit and become a useful space for dogs boots and coats. The original form will remain indicated by the Engineer's down standing beam. There is a minor loss of Edwardian joinery of the form replicated thought the house.
4. Kitchen / Family Room - The fireplace will be retained without alteration.
5. Kitchen / Family Room - The going of the stair from the Rear Hall to the Kitchen / Family Room will be eased but the form modified to accommodate the significant nib left to indicate the original wall position.
6. The proposal is to retain significant knobs and a down standing beam so that the original passage is clearly delineated by the clear parallel remnants on the walls and the ceiling. The down standing beam to be of sufficient depth to retain the electric bell housings in their current position (please see drawing number 1317-13).
7. Kitchen / Family Room - The proposal is to lengthen the current window to a door into the courtyard garden. Proposed door and surround detail (please see drawing number 1317-06).
8. Loggia - The loggia features in the Curt Di Camillo post card but it must be slightly later than the link infill as it makes an unhappy conjunction with the link roof and fenestration. The proposal is to remove all the recent infills and the roof structure. This will leave the early salvage horizontal beams and the Edwardian oak uprights on their stone bases as a simple pergola over the flagged area. A glazed door to replace the 1905 "repro" door will give access to the pergola and light to the room behind (please see drawing number 1317-08). The fire place to this room has lost its chimney (please see Di Camillo post card in appended Keystone report). This flue exists intact at roof level and it is proposed to reinstate this (please see drawing number 1317-03).
9. Entrance Hall - The intention is to provide a minimalist glass screen within the hall (please see drawing number 1317-06). This would be entirely reversible with no impact on any historic fabric. Its purpose is not the removal of any existing feature, but to allow the main door to be left open and light to penetrate the passage in most weather circumstances. This creates the most evocative view within the house as door and arches can be read in conjunction.
10. Library - The Servery element will be created as a "pod" so that the original height and proportions of the room can still be read. The opening up may reveal some clue as to the form and scale of the original fireplace. A suitable fireplace can be subsequently conditioned.
11. Rear Porch and door - The modern canopy will be removed and the Edwardian glazed door retained without alteration.
12. The Cottage - This has of recent years been let as a separate entity. It is part of the Edwardian works and would have formed part of the service courtyard (see blocked door), probably a tack room, and not part of the living accommodation. The interior is much modified in recent times. The current proposal would result in the further loss of the original form division into discrete elements served by external doors, but these have no current use or function. The fireplace would remain.
13. The Staircase - The stair and the landing created to serve it are part of the 1905 works. The metal balusters are a later insertion and have resulted in a lowering of the handrails in relation to the newels. It is proposed to replace these with plain stick wooden balusters ((please see drawing number 1317-14).

First Floor:

14. Shower room - Following advice the shower room would be created within a reduced height "pod" so that the room continues to read as a whole. A window to light this (please see drawing number 1317-05) follows the 1905 detailing and is inserted in the 1905 fabric of the wall (please see appended Keystone report).
15. Cupola - A cupola slightly reduced in scale and height from the original submission will light the stair and landing. Below this it is proposed to vault the ceiling up to the cupola. This will avoid any light shaft effect and allow scope for a plaster work scheme (please see drawing number 1317-12). To create this will require the removal of two of the bottom chords of the 1905 trusses and the insertion of steel work to pick up the loads.
16. Form Bathroom - As proposed. The WC retained and reused.
17. Form Bedroom - The proposal no longer requires an opening or any loss of historic fabric.
18. House Keeper's Store - previously designated as Housekeeper's Store to be repurposed as new Bathroom for First Floor.
19. Form Bathroom - The object being to change the hierarchy of the rooms slightly by altering the proportions the joinery retained and re-positioned.
20. To provide bathroom to Bedroom 6 - This would provide a bathroom (currently a bedroom) En Suite to Bedroom 6. The opening could be fitted with the joinery set from the removed wall in the Rear Hall.
21. Vault ceiling and remove partitions - There is no intention now to proceed with this scheme, and the room layouts and landing will be retained.
22. Ground Floor Utility - The insertion of a WC in the corner of the proposed Utility too (formerly the flat kitchen) will not affect any historic fabric and is ultimately reversible.
23. There is now no intention to open any portion of the, possibly early, and repositioned blind windows in this room.
24. Bedroom 2 - There is now no intention to introduce plumbing to the porch chamber room. And the re-worked partition to hide the bathroom facilities will take simple "pod" form.
25. First floor Bedroom En Suite - The interesting basin and 1930s bath will be retained and refurbished.
26. The opening formed will retain the proportions joinery and hinges of the recessed cupboard.
27. External Courtyard Buildings - It is proposed that the northern courtyard buildings, currently sheds, are re-purposed to provide a Plant Room and a garden WC. The gable end of this building is unstable and needs to be brought down and re-built like for like without the cement pointing.

Conclusion:

The pre-application advice has been acted upon.

Alterations to, and impact upon, the historic fabric of any period is consequently reduced and very minimal. Those suggested represent a minimum to allow this resurgent house to operate as a coherent 21st century family home.