

HERITAGE DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT FOR LIKE-FOR-LIKE REPLACEMENTS TO INTERNAL ROOMS OF HELMINGHAM HALL, HELMINGHAM ESTATE, 1P14 6EF.

INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared with the purpose of setting out the detail of the background and justification of the minor works carried out relating to the retrospective application for Listed Building Consent. Following an incident within Helmingham Hall, Farcroft Restorations Ltd were instructed by Quadra Claims Services Ltd to carry out like-for-like repairs to the affected small areas. Quadra Claims Services Ltd received their instruction from Hiscox insurers, who insure the estate for the current owners Edward & Sophie Tollemache.

The incident occurred on 19th October 2020. A hot water cylinder above the 1st floor bedroom ceiling had developed a leak which then passed down into a 1st floor bedroom and adjoining hallway before soaking into the ground floor rear entrance hall and adjoining hallway / passage. Except for the 1st floor bedroom, the damage was very superficial and predominantly amounted to some drying of surfaces and small, localised repairs to lath and plaster walls due to drying probes but mainly redecoration.

The main concern was the 1st floor bedroom ceiling (L 5.1 x W 3.7 x H 3.2) which was close to collapse before we arranged for it to be acrow propped up temporarily pending review and how it responded to drying. There were significant bulges and cracks evident which are likely to have resulted from the loss of key on the laths. For safety, the lathe and plaster ceiling was removed in entirety as it could not be pinned back to the joists. The occupants also had concerns over its stability as this is a young child's bedroom, so safety of a replacement like-for-like ceiling was paramount.

As we were advised during prior consultation, this Listed Building Consent application only relates to the replacement bedroom ceiling.

See appendix 1 for the overall scope of works schedule (separate document)

See appendix 2 for the incident photos, reinstatement progress and completion photos (separate zip folder)

HERITAGE DESIGN

Site and context

Helmingham Hall is a moated manor house in Helmingham, Suffolk, England. It was begun by John Tollemache in 1480 and has been owned by the Tollemache family ever since. The house is built around a courtyard in typical late medieval/Tudor style. The house is listed Grade I on the National Heritage List for England, and its park and formal gardens are also Grade I listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

The present Helmingham Hall may have been initially constructed in 1510 on the site of an earlier house called Creke Hall. The exterior was altered between 1745–1760, again in 1800 by John Nash, and in 1840. The original half-timbered walls have been concealed by brick and tiles. The house is surrounded by a moat 60 feet wide, over which it is reached only by two working drawbridges, which have been pulled up every night since 1510. These were originally operated with a windlass but in recent years this has been replaced by an electric motor.

In addition to the house and gardens, several other buildings and structures on the estate are listed Grade II. The garden wall to the southwest of the hall, two urns and a male and female statue, a sundial and an obelisk, the tea rooms, bridge, game larder, and revetment are all listed Grade II. The gate lodge to the northeast of the hall and the left and right front lodges are also listed Grade II, as is the entrance gateway and piers between the front lodges. The Church of St Mary on the edge of the park has connections with the Tollemache family dating back to the Middle Ages.

[source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helmingham_Hall]

The existing historic ceiling fabric of the bedroom in question is lime plaster and hardwood lathes.

See appendix 3 for Helmingham Hall listing details provided by Historic England.

Heritage Design Principles and Concepts

With listed buildings, the overarching design principle is to uphold the status quo; to keep work to as minimum as necessary, in order to retain as much historic fabric as possible. For any work that is essential, the governing principle is to restore/replicate the finishes on a like-for-like basis to existing character and appearance, by using appropriate materials in a manner that is in-keeping with the listed classification of the building.

A second design principle governing work of this nature is to ensure the safety of the occupants.

Plans showing the affected areas have been submitted with the site plan to the Planning Portal in association with this application: PP-10241779.

Heritage Design solution

To mitigate against the loss of historic fabric, dehumidification and continual monitoring of the moisture content and stability of the bedroom ceiling was undertaken initially. (This was not undertaken by Farcroft Restorations, but by Richmonds on behalf of Hiscox). Whilst this was successful in drying out the plaster on the bedroom ceiling to a suitable level, the resulting shrinkage and cracking in the plaster surface was not deemed safe to leave in place, given that it had de-bonded from the lathes and could have fallen at any point. Unfortunately, this meant that the removal of the existing ceiling plaster, and thereby loss of historic fabric, was unavoidable. The plaster had de-bonded to such an extent that pinning was not an option.

In the process of removing the plaster, it became very apparent once the lathes were exposed that they were not suitable to be retained, and were replaced with seasoned oak lathes for the following reasons:

- Some of the lathes fell down with the plaster, as they had become detached from the timber subframe
- The majority of the lathes were very brittle and snapped with very little pressure
- Lathes that remained in place were barely held in place
- Therefore, the existing lathe surface was not deemed to be of adequate integrity to support the weight of several coats of new lime plaster, even in the short term. For the safety of the occupants, the right thing to do was replace them with new oak lathes.

Works were carried out in accordance with the guiding motive of restoring the finishes to the pre-incident condition. Therefore, there was no change of layout or surface finishes, and any fixtures and fittings (for example ceiling lights) were reinstated in exact pre-incident positions.

Affected plaster surfaces were sympathetically replaced to match pre-incident condition using lime plaster. Affected surface decorations were re-decorated using suitable breathable paints.

In summary, it is a disappointment that this water leak incident resulted in loss of historic fabric. However, given that this is a small bedroom and the loss of fabric accounts for only one room in the entire Helmingham Hall, our view is that the loss is very minimal and has no visible impact on the overall heritage and grade 1 listed status of the building. The room is also not situated in a prominent position within the building, thereby further reducing the impact of the loss of historic material. We would also suggest that this essential work carried out supports the listed status by improving the longevity of internal finishes in the building.

Materials list:

- Scratch coat lime plaster, second coat & top coats supplied by Anglia Lime Company – replicating the original thermal properties of the ceiling
- Horse hair fibres
- Hardwood lathes from Shrubland Sawmills, Ipswich

Consultation / Policy

Prior to works commencing, Hiscox contacted the Heritage department of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, initially on 27/10/20. An outline of the incident and summary of the required works was provided, for which the Council provided written approval to proceed with the works and advised that a retrospective application should be made for the Listed Building Consent relevant to the works. Due to the critical timing surrounding this incident, the works were authorised to proceed based on the need to stabilise the situation due to concerns of safety, and also because the works involved reinstatement only. Farcroft Restorations then also made contact with the Heritage and Design Officer Tegan Chenery on 17/11/20, who was very supportive in providing advice on how to make the correct retrospective application. Tegan Chenery also advised that the application was only required for the replacement bedroom ceiling.

See appendix 4 for the communications – separate zip folder

ACCESS

Access requirements are set out in Part M of Building Regulations, “Access to and use of Buildings”. There are two/three vertical levels to this property. The applicability of Part M is limited: there is no intended change of use or layout and whilst the general principle is that nothing should be made worse, some minor practical improvements have been effected as follows: New electrical socket to the affected bedroom (replacements of existing fitting) complies with the guidance in Part M. As all works were internal, this application does not deem there to be any affect, negatively or positively, on the existing external access arrangements. All in all, the accessibility remains unchanged.

Appendix 3 for Helmingham Hall listing details provided by Historic England

HELMINGHAM HALL

Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: I

List Entry Number: 1033070

Date first listed: 09-Dec-1955

Statutory Address: HELMINGHAM HALL

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Suffolk

District: Mid Suffolk (District Authority)

Parish: Helmingham

National Grid Reference: TM 18656 57685

Details

HELMINGHAM HELMINGHAM PARK TM 15 NE 4/80 Helmingham Hall 9.12.55

GV I

A large country mansion, built round a courtyard, for Lionel Tollemache (High Sheriff of Suffolk and Norfolk 1512 and 1530; ob. ante 1553). Three major phases of remodelling: c.1745-1760 for the 4th Earl Dysart; c.1800 by John Nash for the 6th Earl; and c.1841, probably by A. Salvin, for John (later 1st Lord) Tollemache. The north, south and east ranges retain substantial parts of the original timber-framed house of which small sections of close-studded and jettied framing are exposed. The exterior is almost entirely encased or rebuilt in C18 and C19 red brick, apart from the upper floor of the south range which is hung with C18 red mathematical tiles above a narrow jetty. Embattled parapets and crowstepped gables. Plaintiled roofs: a number of late C16 and early C17 axial chimneys of red brick with circular and octagonal shafts in groups of 2 or 4. Courtyard plan: a central late C16 gatehouse has a 4-window range at either flank, terminated by set-forward gables. To rear of the courtyard are parallel hall and kitchen ranges; on the east is a C16 range of lodgings; and to west a parlour wing rebuilt in 1841. Windows on the south elevation by Nash have Gothick hoodmoulds and small-pane casements, those at ground storey with transomes. The terminal gables of c.1600 have 2-storey splayed bays with plastered mullions and transomes and leaded glazing, a broad moulded plaster cornice at 1st and attic floors, and octagonal corner pilasters capped by finials of carved brick which are repeated at the gable apex. These gables form the model for the design of the west front of 1841, the entire motif being repeated, with the introduction of diaper patterning in burnt headers. The mid or late C16 front gatehouse is in narrow bricks with splayed buttresses and a round-arched gateway, which until c.1800 had an entablature with pediment. At that time the corbelled oriel and crowstepped gable were added. An original gateway of c.1530 behind: timber-framed, with a depressed 4-centred arched head with carved spandrels and buttress shafts; a pair of large oak doors with ribbed panels and fine tracery at the head may be a little earlier. The courtyard face, remodelled by Nash, has reinstated a carved timber cill from an oriel window of c.1530. The great hall remains open, with queen post trusses: the arch braces are filled

with trefoils, and beneath the tie beams and wall pieces are pendant bosses. Although the details are probably by Nash, the roof may have a C16 core. Much fine interior remodelling in particular the Boudoir of c.1745-60. The house is surrounded by a broad C16 moat with possibly medieval origins; the revetments with low parapets are of C18 red brick. For full details of the house and its history, Country Life: Helmingham Hall, Suffolk: Arthur Oswald; five issues August-October 1956.

Listing NGR: TM1865657685

Legacy: The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: 279699

Legacy System: LBS

Sources

Books and journals

'Country Life' in Country Life, (1956)

Other

Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England, Part 39 Suffolk,

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1033070>