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Reference: KR:354:6.01a

The Old Rectory, Main Street, Preston Bissett, Buckinghamshire. MK18 4LU.
Design, Access & Heritage Statement

This report provides a historical assessment and supporting information for consideration of the planning and listed building submission for a new single storey extension to provide a new Breakfast/Family Room alongside the minor reconfiguration of internal layout at The Old Rectory, Preston Bissett.

The original fabric of the listed building is largely unaltered and alterations are concentrated on the recent conservatory and new single storey extension.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Old Rectory is situated to the North of Preston Bissett on Main Street; set back from the road and once the fulcrum of the Parish of St John the Baptist located to the South of the property. The Old Rectory sits centrally within its plot following the development of the original grounds with a substantial house adjacent known as Rectory Gardens (constructed circa late 1970's).

The site is located within the Preston Bissett Conservation Area but not situated within an AoONB.

The Old Rectory is Grade II listed as follows;

SP 6529 PRESTON BISSETT MAIN STREET (east side) 7/94 The Old Rectory

-- II

House, former rectory. 1840. Colourwashed render, slate roof, brick stacks. Tudor style. 2 storeys, 3 bays. Barred casements.

Outer bays have shallow pitched gables with stepped bases and square traceried panels to centre; canted bay windows to ground floor, paired casements with pointed arched top lights and flat Tudor hoodmoulds to first floor. Similar single light and hood to first floor centre.

Ground floor centre bay projects slightly and has 4-centred arch with hoodmould, carved head stops and double glazed barred doors.

N. and S. sides have similar first floor windows and wooden cross windows with barred lights and hoodmoulds to ground floor.

Listing NGR: SP6583629971

PROPOSAL/DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks consent to add a single storey contemporary extension off the existing Kitchen to the NW of the property and set back from the principal elevation. Works include remodelling and re-roofing of the recent Conservatory that proves rarely useable during summer or window months.

Reconfiguration of the 'link/infill' extension (between the original house & adjacent outbuildings/stables) improves the access, entrance and overall layout and flow of the property whilst retaining the original fabric of the main house.

A loft conversion of the original hayloft to the outbuildings provides additional accommodation for family & a home office at Ground Floor.

Site Accessibility

The existing driveway, parking and overall accessibility is unaltered in this application.

In this rural location there will inevitably be a reliance on vehicle transport, however, rural bus services do run from nearby villages with onward links to trains services at Bicester, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes.

Site Ecology

Using Buckingham County Council Ecology & Trees Checklist & Natural England's Standing Advice, we have determined that no bat surveys are required for this application.

Site Landscaping and Trees

All trees within the Conservation Area are protected on the application site, however, no trees are affected in this application.

Site Planning History

Available and relevant Planning history relating to The Old Rectory is outlined below;

12/01918/ALB	Demolition of existing lean-to single storey and replacement with new conservatory/summer house at rear. Permission Granted.
12/01917/APP	Demolition of existing lean-to single storey and replacement with new conservatory/summer house at rear. Permission Granted.
08/00181/APP	Erection of Conservatory. Permission Granted.
08/00050/ALB	Erection of Conservatory. Permission Granted.

PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE AND ADVICE

The National Planning Policy Framework, in paragraphs 189 and 190, expects that both applicant and local planning authority take responsibility for understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the impact of a development proposal. Local authorities should, the NPPF explains, consider the significance of the asset in order to 'minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'.

It is not the intention of government to prevent change or freeze-frame local communities. Current policy and good practice show that change, if managed intelligently, can be successfully accommodated within the historic environment. This not only sustains significance but can add to the way we experience and understand historic places.

Local Planning Policy/Guidance

The Adopted Local 2013-2033 forms the basis of determining applications alongside the NPPF. Relevant Policies that have been adhered to are:

Section 8 of The VALP - Built Environment

Heritage assets

- 8.1 The historic environment is an asset of great cultural, social, economic and environmental value. It contributes significantly to our quality of life and to the character of Aylesbury Vale, representing a non-renewable resource that once lost is gone forever. Heritage assets are defined as those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest, over and above their functional utility. Significance can be made up of many different aspects of an asset's interest, and may be harmed by development directly affecting the physical fabric of the asset or within the setting of the asset. Government planning policy sets out that local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The following paragraphs supporting policy BE1 'Heritage assets' are the response to that requirement.
- 8.2 There are many different types of heritage asset; some are formally designated, others are non designated. The council's aim is to protect and enhance Aylesbury Vale's heritage assets through the identification of those of local significance and through ensuring that development is managed in a way that sustains or enhances their significance and setting. The effect of a planning application on the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining any application. The LPA will require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected including any contribution made by their setting. As a minimum the Historic Environment Record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise.
- 8.3 In weighing up applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Listed Buildings

- 8.7 The special interest of a listed building may be adversely affected by alterations or extensions to its physical fabric, or by development within the curtilage or development within the setting. The objective of listing buildings is to ensure their protection for future generations to enjoy. In addition to the normal planning application process, listed building consent is required for all works that would affect a building's special interest.
- 8.23 An understanding of the significance of any heritage asset, whether designated or non designated, lies at the heart of all decision making. Without understanding the significance of an asset it may not be possible to make an accurate assessment of the impact that a development will have on that significance. The significance of a heritage asset is based on its key heritage values. These values are defined by Historic England as the historic, evidential, aesthetic and communal values. By understanding the heritage values of an asset it is possible to assess the archaeological or architectural interest of a building, structure or site. Finally, the setting of an asset can contribute a great deal to its significance, by virtue of its positive impact on understanding the heritage values and interest of the asset as a whole. The definitions of heritage values and interest below have been prepared with specific reference to Historic England's Conservation Principles – Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment and Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing.

Evidential

- 8.24 Evidential value is the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. This can include land use, the hierarchy of places, historic building techniques, fashion and trends in architectural design. The setting of places, for example the rural hinterland of the Vale's villages, can contribute to this value as it shows historic linkages between places and economic functions.

In this application, the building and land use is fully preserved. The immediate and wider setting of the listed asset is unaltered and the evidential value is maintained.

Historic

- 8.25 Historic value lies in the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present and is often illustrative or associative. The links between places and people or events in history feeds into this value, and the tangible way in which modern day settlements have been affected by historic events (such as the setting up of a mediaeval market square) is key to understanding the development of a place.

The continued use of the Old Rectory as a residential property at the heart of village life, but evolved to suit the needs of modern family life ensures that the historic value of the Old Rectory is preserved.

Aesthetic

- 8.26 The intellectual and sensory impact of a place creates its aesthetic value. This may be as simple as the appreciation of a historic house and garden for its beauty, or the less formal glimpsed views around an historic settlement.

The property, its immediate and wider setting are fully preserved in this application and the extension/alterations are respectful of the historic fabric which is sensitively preserved and maintained.

Communal

- 8.27 The collective experience or memory of a place and the meaning that it holds for people who relate to it form the communal value of an asset. In terms of publicly accessible places and spaces this is often fairly easy to define, but is harder to interpret for areas that are not easily visible to communities. Neighbourhood plans and associated documents offer a good opportunity to try to define the communal value of a place or heritage asset.

Archaeological interest

- 8.28 There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of people and cultures that made them. Identification of archaeological interest will be made in conjunction with the Council Archaeological Service. Sub-surface archaeological interest is considered and advised on separately by the service.

Architectural interest

- 8.29 The architectural interest of a building or structure may be aesthetic, based on the intrinsic design value derived from local styles, materials, workmanship or any other distinctive local characteristic. It may be in part derived from the local context of a place, or an association with a known architect or designer of regional or national note.

The submitted proposals ensure that the existing house vernacular is respected and preserved whilst the contemporary addition offers a clear delineation between the new and old through the employment of sympathetic but contrasting materials, building form and modern construction details.

- 8.30 The integrity of a building or structure may add to its interest – a degree of intactness and lack of harmful external alteration may make a building more significant. Equally, the ongoing organic development and growth of a building over centuries may be what gives it its value and interest.

We consider that the new and contemporary extension to the house provides an opportunity for a clear and distinct evolution of the house and its' architecture. We would submit that this contemporary solution takes the opportunity to explore a clearly modern architectural approach. The unapologetic clean lines and contrast between solid and glazed openings successfully delineates the history and progression of built form on this former Rectory.

Setting

- 8.32 The setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings within which the asset may be experienced. It is not fixed and may evolve over time. Elements within a setting may be positive, negative or neutral, and so the ability to appreciate setting may be harmed or improved by development within the setting of an asset. Setting must not be confused with curtilage, to avoid confusion with residential curtilage for permitted development rights as this may differ.

The overall setting and experience of the Old Rectory is preserved in this proposal. The principal entrance elevation and approach are unaltered and the largely glazed extension sits comfortably in scale and proportion against the backdrop of outbuildings to the rear

Curtilage

- 8.33 Curtilage in heritage terms, refers to an area around a building and, with listed structures, the extent of curtilage is defined by consideration of ownership, both past and present, functional association and layout. The setting of a historic asset will include, but generally be more extensive than its curtilage.

The curtilage of the Old Rectory is fully preserved in this proposal.

BE1 Heritage assets

The historic environment, unique in its character, quality and diversity across the Vale is important and will be preserved or enhanced. All development, including new buildings, alterations, extensions, changes of use and demolitions, should seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, including their setting, and seek enhancement wherever possible.

Proposals for development shall contribute to heritage values and local distinctiveness. Where a development proposal is likely to affect a designated heritage asset and/or its setting negatively, the significance of the heritage asset must be fully assessed and supported in the submission of an application. The impact of the proposal must be assessed in proportion to the significance of the heritage asset and supported in the submission of an application. Heritage statements and/or archaeological evaluations will be required for any proposals related to or impacting on a heritage asset and/or possible archaeological site.

Proposals which affect the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be properly considered, weighing the direct and indirect impacts upon the asset and its setting. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining heritage assets wherever practical, including archaeological remains in situ, unless it can be demonstrated that the harm will be outweighed by the benefits of the development. Heritage statements and/or archaeological evaluations may be required to assess the significance of any heritage assets and the impact on these by the development proposal.

The council will:

a. Support development proposals that do not cause harm to, or which better reveal the significance of heritage assets

b. Require development proposals that would cause substantial harm to, or loss of a designated heritage asset and its significance, including its setting, to provide a thorough heritage assessment setting out a clear and convincing justification as to why that harm is considered acceptable on the basis of public benefits that outweigh that harm or the four circumstances in paragraph 133 of the NPPF all apply. Where that justification cannot be demonstrated proposals will not be supported,

and

c. Require development proposals that cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset to weigh the level of harm against the public benefits that may be gained by the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

Development affecting a heritage asset should achieve a high quality design in accordance with the Aylesbury Vale Design SPD and the council will encourage modern, innovative design which respects and complements the heritage context in terms of scale, massing, design, detailing and use.

In this instance the fabric, setting and legacy of this listed asset is fully preserved. The works extend to the formation of an opening within an existing wall, however, the plan form of the retained room is fully preserved so that it remains clearly visible and distinct in its original form.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Significance is defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) as: 'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'. Placing the asset in its historical context and describing its characteristics and appearance is an important component of the evidence gathering exercise. This both informs our understanding of a site's significance and the contribution of its setting to this significance.

The Old Rectory was included in the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest on 13 February 1984. See below;

The Old Rectory is Grade II listed as follows;

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-- II

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Outer bays have shallow pitched gables with stepped bases and square traceried panels to centre; canted bay windows to ground floor, paired casements with pointed arched top lights and flat Tudor hoodmoulds to first floor. Similar single light and hood to first floor centre.

Ground floor centre bay projects slightly and has 4-centred arch with hoodmould, carved head stops and double glazed barred doors.

N. and S. sides have similar first floor windows and wooden cross windows with barred lights and hoodmoulds to ground floor.

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The significance of The Old Rectory relates primarily to the origins of its function and use as a Rectory of unusual vernacular in the local area along with its overall form/roofscape and architectural fenestration detailing. The original house was distinct and separate from the outbuildings and over time has been merged with the outbuildings to provide additional accommodation (see historic maps below);

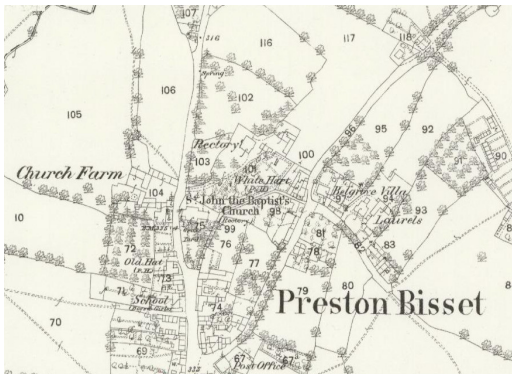


Fig 1: Historic Map circa 1880

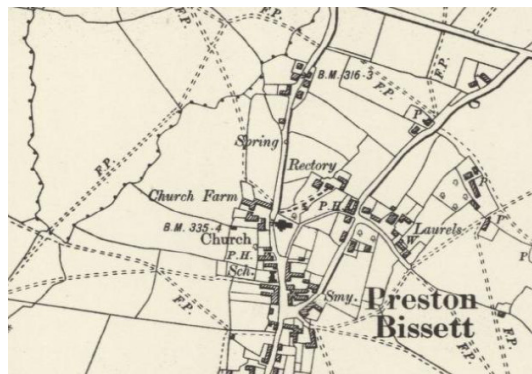


Fig 2: Historic Map circa 1900



Fig 3: Historic Map circa 1930



Fig 2: Historic Map circa 1960

Originally comprising a simple 4-room plan from the Old Rectory has been extended over the decades and more recently (believed to be circa 1930's) was extended to the rear to infill and link the main house to the existing outbuildings to the North of the house which now provide extended accommodation and Utility/Storage space.

More recently a conservatory to the South was added but discussions with the applicant established that the space was largely un-useable throughout the year due to the large expanse of glazing present.

The original outward appearance, massing and plan form of the Old Rectory is fully preserved in this proposal. We would submit that by virtue of its scale, position and contemporary design, the proposed extension to the listed structure would result in no harm to the character and spatial plan form of the property and would therefore preserve the character and appearance of the original building and its setting.

The proposals have minimal impact on the fabric of the property and are clearly identifiable as an addition clearly de-marking the evolution and history of the listed asset.

Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in Feb 2019, the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

This modest extension will extend the quality of family life for the applicants family that are committed to maintaining and protecting this historic asset during their stewardship.

In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset the NPPF (Feb 2019) states in paragraphs 193 and 194 that: 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.'

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (March 2014) seeks to provide further advice on assessing the impact of proposals explaining that what matters in assessing the level of harm (if any) is the degree of impact on the significance of the asset. It states:

'In determining whether works to a listed building (or its setting) constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.'

The proposals in this instance can be assigned as 'less than substantial harm' and that there is no demonstrable harm caused by the extension to any key element of the special architectural or historic interest of the property.

The NPPF explains in paragraphs 195 and 196 the differences between 'substantial' harm and 'less than substantial' harm, advising that any harm should be justified by the public benefit of a proposal. In cases where there is less than substantial harm, paragraph 196 states:

'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.

The PPG also seeks to provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes 'public benefit', as it is the public benefit that flows from a development that can justify harm. In weighing the public benefits against potential harm, considerable weight and importance should be given to the desirability to preserve the setting of listed buildings.

Public benefits can flow from a variety of developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social, or environmental progress as described in the NPPF, paragraph 8. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits. It explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits, such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
- Securing the optimum viable use for a heritage asset.

Historic England explains its approach to managing the historic environment and how we experience places stating in 'Conservation Principles' (April 2008) paragraph 88: 'Very few significant places can be maintained at either public or private expense unless they are capable of some beneficial use; nor would it be desirable, even if it were practical, for most places that people value to become solely memorials of the past'.

In this instance the proposed extension provides an opportunity for an improved Family space/ configuration at the heart of the home that provides a dramatically improved link to the gardens. The internal reconfiguration results in the lightest of touches to the existing building and is largely concentrated around the infill extension between the house and outbuildings that has limited impact on the historical fabric. The proposed extension secures the continued investment, preservation and maintenance of the house and surrounding vernacular buildings.

It also comments in paragraph 86: 'Keeping a significant place in use is likely to require continual adaptation and change; but, provided such interventions respect the values of the place, they will tend to benefit public (heritage) as well as private interests in it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and private investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognised heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process'.

We would submit that this extension fulfils Historic England's advice in this respect by being a clear and evidential layer of evolution in a contemporary form.

Historic England has published 'A Guide for the owners of Listed Buildings' (June 2016). On page 12 'adding an extension to a listed building' it states;

A new extension should not dominate a historic building: this usually means it should be lower and smaller. There is no rule on the ideal percentage increase in size: it all depends on the size, character and setting of your house.

An extension will usually have less effect on your historic home if it is built onto the back and not seen from the front. This is because the back is usually less architecturally important than the front.

The exterior needs to be carefully designed. You should usually aim to use matching or complementary materials for walls and the roof. However, cleverly chosen contrasting materials in a modern design may work for some buildings, where the extension can then be clearly 'read' as different to the old house. But the effect should not be so different that the extension is more prominent than the main building."

CONCLUSION

It is not the intention of government to seek to stagnate historic assets. Current policy and good practice show that change, if proposed sympathetically, can be successfully accommodated within the historic environment.

This application proposes a modest single storey extension using contemporary and contrasting materials and details to the existing fabric. The extension presents as subservient and in sympathetic character with the existing house which remains overwhelmingly dominant in its current form and character.

The principal view & approach to the Old Rectory is unaltered by the proposals and does not cause any physical harm to the heritage fabric of the listed building.

We would conclude that the alterations preserve the historic asset and its immediate/wider setting and that the proposals fulfil all aspects of Local/National policy and wider guidance on historical conservation. We make specific reference to BE 1 which states that the Local Authority will support development proposals that do not cause harm to, or which better reveal the significance of heritage assets and we conclude that this important criteria is met by this submission.