

The Old Ring O'Bells Inn Design & Access & Heritage Statement

Ring O'Bells 18 St Marys Road BA6 9SP Meare

Historic England listing:

MEARE CP ST. MARY'S ROAD (North side) ST44SE

3/55 The Old Ring O'Bells Inn with wall and pier -

GV II

(Incorrectly marked on O.S. map as Ferlingmere House).

Monastic dwelling, subsequently a rectory, then an inn, now a house. Postulated medieval establishment, rebuilt C17, external features renewed C20. Roughcast, double Roman tile roof, coped verges, 3 brick ridge stacks. Two storeys, 3 bays, 2 and 3-light stone mullioned windows, weathered string over right 2 openings to ground floor, small oval opening in a dressed stone surround. Door opening between first and second bays in a moulded stone surround with a 4-centred head, stopped label, reproduction ribbed door. Two bay outshut to left is not of special interest. Coursed and squared lias rubble wall at right-angles to right of frontage, dressed coping, rusticated ashlar gate pier at roadside with moulded capping. Included primarily for group value with the Church of St. Mary which is adjacent; some historical interest.

Listing NGR: ST4552341672

As stated by the Listing: this former public house is **"Included primarily for group value with the Church of St. Mary which is adjacent"** Although the building is itself Grade 2 listed, its' "heritage significance" derives primarily from its' context. It is an important part of the "setting" and visual context of Grade 1 listed St. Mary's Church.

Both buildings were part of the estate of Glastonbury Abbey, the two buildings are historically and visually linked: they each provide the setting for the other. In this context The Skittle Alley is a discordant aberration - it is a modern structure attached to a Grade 2 listed building and although it has no historic, aesthetic or architectural value, it too is listed by association. The subject of this application is almost "accidentally" listed – any replacement naturally needs to be carefully considered but few would argue that its' removal would not be an immediate "heritage benefit".

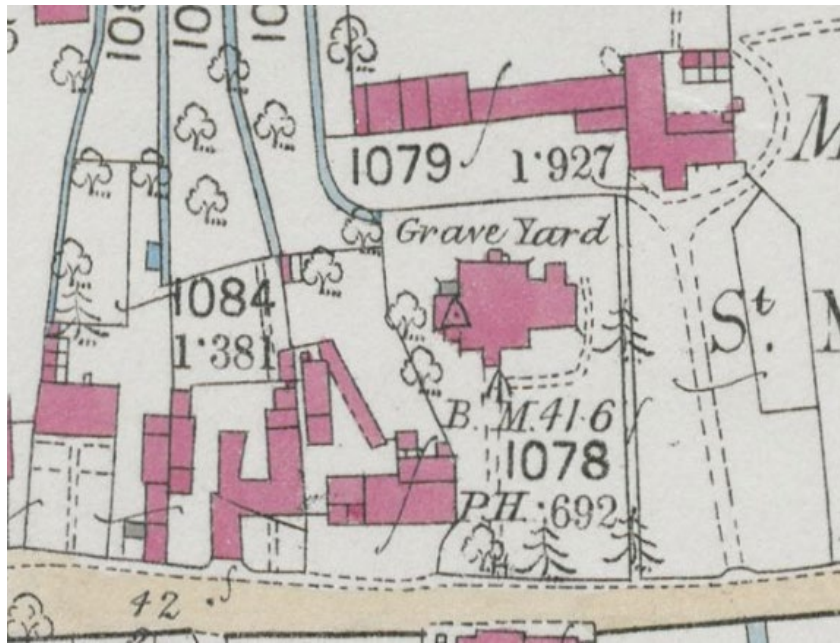
The present proposal does include a replacement building but importantly it suggests a separation between the old and the new buildings, it also dramatically improves the view from the Church: by moving the ridge away from the boundary, using sympathetic materials and discreet design this proposal replaces an eye-sore with a pleasant and useful building.



The photograph shows that this important setting is not improved by the present state, form and materials of the old Skittle Alley: the dismal concrete structure dominates the western view from the Church – the vista is one of immediate dereliction: the blue-lias wall (built circa 1830 but based on earlier foundations) is falling down, and just beyond it, unused for many years, the alley stands dilapidated, derelict and potentially dangerous.



The Tithe Map (1804) suggests that there was once a building north of the main house that has now disappeared; it seems to “follow” the Church boundary wall.



The Ordnance Survey (1888) reveals that by the late nineteenth century the house has become a Public House and that several other buildings have been built to serve the property – the long, slender feature running far from but almost parallel to the boundary is strangely similar to the modern Skittle Alley; it is tempting to postulate that this too was a skittle alley, built after the first Ordnance Survey, to be eventually replaced by the modern structure we see today. Its' placement is odd – it only makes sense as a division between the “public” and the private spaces of the Public House. Although these and the other ancillary building were still present in the 1914 OS (below), they have now gone - though it seems likely that perhaps the present garage is a remnant?

