

Consortium Trust

Helmingham School House

Heritage Impact Assessment

This document has been prepared in connection with the proposed renovation of the school house at Helmingham Primary School to provide office accommodation for the Consortium Trust.

Location

Helmingham Primary School, School Road, Helmingham, Suffolk, IP14 6EX
School office telephone number: 01473 890267

Helmingham School House viewed from the B1077.



Listing status

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

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The building is Listed Grade II as “Helmingham Parish School and Masters House”.

List Entry Number: 1051969

Date first listed: 16-Jan-1995

Citation: “Parish School. 1853 and later C19. Brick in Flemish bond. Pantiled roofs, gables and gable-facing dormers with ornamented vergeboards. One and two storeys. Roughly U-shaped plan. Double gable-facing wings to left of earlier build served as the master's house. Entrances between the gables and in porch to the left return; chimneypiece to rear of left return. Each gabled range with shallow canted bay. Flat-arched windows with leaded casement lights. Hall range of six windows to rear, half dormered, of a later building with wooden sash glazing. Broad facing-gable range to right. Stacks to right-hand of master's lodge and tall octagonal stack to right inside corner. smaller facing gable wing to right return. Interior of hall with glazed trusses. Listed for its group value with St John's Row to the north.”

Project outline

Helmingham Primary School is a small rural primary school in central Suffolk. It is an academy and part of the Consortium Trust. The school is part of the Helmingham Estate and is a historic building that is Grade II listed. It comprises the main school and the adjoining School House. For some years the ground floor of the School House has been used as a nursery school, while the upper floor has been used for storage and as an office.

The nursery provision is being integrated with the main school and its location transferred to an existing classroom in the main school. The Trust proposes to refurbish both floors of the School House to create office space for the Trust.

Method

The project aims to renovate the School House to modern office standard. It will require repurposing some rooms, upgrading heating, lighting and carpets and redecoration.

Finishes and material to match existing, e.g., using breathable paints/washes over any existing breathable paints/lime washes.

No changes to be made to the external appearance of the windows.

Any electrical work will be carried out by a qualified electrician.

Oil boiler work to be carried out by Oftec qualified engineer as necessary.

Schedule of works

Heating

Remove existing oil-fired boiler and replace with new wall-mounted oil boiler in Room 16 with open air vent, by Oftec engineer.

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Boiler location to comply with Building Regulations diagram 41.

Replace existing oil tank with new, compliant tank.

Radiators to have TMVs.

Position of any new wall openings to be agreed in advance by email with Heritage Officer.

Item 1 – Replacement oil-fired boiler and distribution system extended to serve both floors

Glazing

Thermal efficiency to be improved by installing secondary glazing to the inside of windows throughout both floors of the School House. Sufficient ventilation should be ensured by panels being openable.

Item 2 – Openable secondary glazing to be installed throughout School House.

Example of window to be fitted with secondary interior glazing



Lighting

Lighting is particularly poor in the upper floor and is to be upgraded throughout.

Item 3 – Replace lighting with LED throughout School House.

Curtains / blinds

There are no curtains or blinds in the lower floor rooms. Some windows in the upper floor have curtain track and curtains.

Item 4 – Blinds to be installed throughout School House; existing curtains and track to be removed.

Decoration

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Decoration is required throughout School House.

Item 5 – Redecorate throughout School House.

Carpets

New carpets are required throughout School House.

Item 6 – New carpets throughout School House; new vinyl to kitchen, toilets and bathroom; anti-slip covering to stairs.

Structural

There is a significant crack to Room 21, another nearby in Room 23 and a further crack in Room 19. We are advised that these are the result of historic movement and that they should be filled and monitored for any further movement.

Item 8 – fill and make good cracks in Rooms 21, 23 and 19.

Rooms 16 and 13

It is intended that Room 13 (existing SH kitchen) should become Reception and Room 16 (existing SH boot room) should become a Staff Room.

Room 16 has a brick floor. This is to remain in place.

Room 16 – exterior door to be widened to accommodate wheelchair access.

Where necessary internal doors to be widened or remodelled to accommodate wheelchair access via Room 16 to ground floor toilet and Room 17.

Room 13 - strip out existing services.

Room 16 - install new services (sink, water heater, plumbing for dishwasher, worktop, mechanical air extraction).

Item 9 - Room 13 (SH kitchen) to be refurbished as Reception and Room 16 (SH boot room) to be refurbished as Staff Room. Install mechanical ventilation in Room 16.

Photo of Room 16 brick floor



Lower Floor Toilets

Strip out existing fixtures

New vinyl floor

Improved mechanical air extraction.

2 x new adult cubicles with floor to ceiling enclosure. One to be accessible.

Hand wash basin – double (or integrated in cubicles)

Window frosting

Item 10 – Convert existing toilets to 2x adult toilets, one to be accessible. Upgrade mechanical ventilation.

Room 24 (Basement)

There is a basement under the property that will remain sealed up.

Item 11 – check basement for combustible material and ventilation and reseal

Upper floor bathroom

Retain existing fixtures

Renovate and box in pipework

Install mechanical ventilation and heating

Item 12 – Renovate existing bathroom. Install mechanical ventilation.

Exterior

Remove blue canopy

Remove black fencing

Remove short section of low brick wall

Remove shed

Item 13 – Remove canopy and fencing, wall and shed.

Example of windows to remain unaltered



Heritage impact of proposed works

The proposed renovation is part of wider plans to enhance the vitality and appeal of the primary school and nursery and so improve its sustainability. The proposed works will therefore contribute to the efforts to preserve the buildings' original intended use for education.

The building has been altered on several occasions during its life and few historic features remain within the interior. The renovations are not expected to have a significant adverse effect on those few historic features that remain inside the building. Finishes and material will be selected to match existing, for example using breathable paints/washes over any existing breathable paints/limewashes.

The proposed works to the interior are not expected to have a material adverse effect on the sites heritage value.

The greatest visual impact of the proposed works will be to the exterior. No changes are to be made to the external appearance of the windows. It is proposed to remove the blue canopy, the black fencing, a short section of low brick wall and a shed. This will open up the rear of the building to provide additional parking and a more appealing entrance to the office space. The canopy and fencing are late 20th or early 21st century additions and the visual appeal of the rear of the building would be improved by their removal.

Photo of canopy, shed and fencing to be removed



The proposed exterior works are expected to improve the external appearance of the site and to have no material negative effect on its heritage value.

Engagement with Local Authority

Pre-application advice has been sought from the Local Authority's Heritage Officer, who has made the following comments:

"Heritage Summary and Recommendation

Many of the proposed works would not require Listed Building Consent, in some cases potentially with informal agreement instead, once it is clear what is proposed. Where works would or may require Listed Building Consent, and also Planning Permission, there are no immediate concerns in principle, but this would be subject to further detail.

I would be happy to provide further follow-up advice once the exact works required are determined, where relevant.

Heritage Discussion

The pre-application proposes alterations to The Old School House, currently functioning as a nursery, and conversion of the nursery to office space. The Old School House is attached to Helmingham Primary School, which together form a single Grade II listed building, listed as Helmingham Parish School and Master's House, described as '1853 and later C19. Brick in Flemish Bond... Double gable-facing wings to left of earlier build served as the master's house.'" Given the listing description, the former master's house may represent the later C19 phase. As such, it likely has lesser historic interest than the school part of the building, but is still of sufficient age to likely have some historic interest, as well as contributing to the history of the building as a

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whole. The heritage concern relates to the potential impact of the works on the significance of this listed building.

I have no issue with the principle of changing the use of the former schoolhouse to office space, that would serve the academy trust that runs the school. This part of the building has already lost its likely original use, as a master's house, plus the proposed use would appear to maintain a functional relationship between both parts of the building.

The associated physical alterations proposed are not all described in detail in the submitted documents, so the following also considers principles, as well as additional works discussed on site in general terms.

Heating:

Replace Internal Boiler in Room 16 – This is of no concern in principle. If new openings through external historic fabric are required as part of this, I would advise that further detail is submitted to agree the position of these, but this may be agreeable by email by itself. I would not require any further detail in this case with any new minor internal holes for pipework etc.

Replace and add Radiators – There was no evidence of any historic radiators. Furthermore, there are limited historic features internally, so it is unlikely that any new radiators, or associated pipework, would cause any harm to the significance of the building, and therefore I would not require Listed Building Consent for this.

Other Heating – If any other works are proposed in regard to heating, these should also be detailed to confirm acceptability and whether Listed Building Consent would be required.

Secondary Glazing:

Providing that existing fenestration openings would not have to be modified to install secondary glazing, and secondary glazing frames could simply be installed within existing window jambs, behind the existing fenestration, then this would be acceptable and not require Listed Building Consent.

N.B. Secondary glazing would be the more appropriate option where existing windows are of historic interest, though there were some windows that appeared to be later insertions, not of historic interest or traditional form, such as the first-floor rear window in the room above that labelled no.16 on the plans. Therefore, as an alternative, windows like this could be replaced with more traditional single or slimline double glazing, if desired. Nonetheless, this would require Listed Building Consent, in order to ensure appropriate detailing.

Lighting:

The proposed replacement of existing internal lighting would not cause any harm and would not require Listed Building Consent. If any new external lighting is required, then this may require Listed Building Consent, subject to detail.

Curtains/Blinds:

The replacement/addition/removal of curtains and blinds would not require Listed Building Consent.

Decoration and Carpets:

Internal decoration would not require Listed Building Consent, providing that matching types of finishes are used e.g., using breathable paints/washes over any existing breathable paints/lime washes. Nonetheless, the majority of internal finishes are likely already modern masonry paint or similar. If any external decoration is proposed, then further detail of this should be submitted, to confirm acceptability and whether consent would be required. The replacement of carpets and addition of vinyl flooring to the kitchens and bathrooms, and anti-slip material to the stairs, would not require Listed Building Consent.

Structural:

Minor repairs to and infilling of the cracks, using matching materials, would not require Listed Building Consent. If more major works are subsequently found to be required, e.g., reconstruction of walls, please provide more detail so it can be determined if consent would then be required.

Rooms 16 and 13:

I consider that the removal and addition of services in these rooms would not require Listed Building Consent, or further detail, with the exception of any proposed external vents and pipework, for which details of location and products should be submitted. Nonetheless, this may be agreeable by email.

The submitted Statement refers to retaining as is the brick floor in Room 16, but I believe the possibility of works to it was discussed on site. It was not clear when this floor dates to, but it may be of historic interest. If a change in the floor level of this room would be required, it may be acceptable in a certain form, e.g. relaying the brick floor as the new finish floor layer (whether raised or reduced). This may be subject to further detail on its significance as part of a Heritage Statement.

Lower Toilet Floors:

As with the above, I would request details of any proposed external vents and plumbing. I would also request detail on the method of 'window frosting' and the nature of the relevant windows, but these may again be details agreeable by email.

Room 24 (Basement):

The described works would not require Listed Building Consent.

Upper Floor Bathroom:

As with the lower toilets (see above).

Exterior:

Removal of Rear Canopy, Shed, Oil Tank and Low Wall to rear— None of these features appeared of any particular historic interest, so I am satisfied their removal would not cause any harm, providing adjacent fabric is then made good as relevant. Furthermore, the canopy is not particularly sympathetic to the building, so there would likely be an enhancement from its removal. For this reason, I would request Listed Building Consent for the removal of the canopy, but not for the other removals.

Rear Fencing:

I would have no issue in principle with the replacement of the existing fencing to the rear of the site, as discussed on site. However, I would advise against new/further close board fencing, as this is a modern, suburban style of fence, that would be out of keeping in the setting of a rural historic building of this nature, and thus harm significance. Picket fencing, like that already on site, or post and rail fencing, would be more in keeping with this context.

Other, discussed on site:

Handrail on steps at front of the School – I would have no issues with this, and it would not require Listed Building Consent.

Other changes in floor levels, and widening doors – Providing improved access to a historic listed building could constitute a heritage benefit that may outweigh harm from the associated physical works. Furthermore, given the relatively late date of the building, the impact of altering internal floors and internal/external doorways

may only be minor. Nonetheless, some further information on the significance of features to be altered or lost should be provided first so it is clear what the impact of the works on the significance of the building would be. This may include conducting investigative works to establish the nature of any existing floors to be lowered/excavated, and establishing the rough age of any doors/doorways and the walls they are located in to be altered, as part of a Heritage Statement.

The alterations should also be kept to the minimum necessary and start with where there is evidence of previous alteration.

For example, if the external door on the rear elevation of the old school house would need widening, there was evidence that this opening may previously have been altered on one side, which may lend support to widening on this side, but the widening should also avoid disturbing specific historic features such as the nearby low-level brick arch.

Partitioning off stairwell – The existing stairwell appeared to be of some age and thus potentially of historic interest. Nonetheless, if it can be partitioned off without particular loss of the staircase or elements of, then this would not raise concerns in principle in this case, subject to detail. This may again potentially be agreeable by email exchange.

Blocking a Doorway between rooms 21 and 23 – The door and frame in this position appeared to be of some age and thus historic interest, but it would appear possible to simply block up behind the door, while retaining the door and frame in situ. This would not be of any concern (assuming there would still be an access to room 23, e.g. for maintenance purposes), and I would not request Listed Building Consent for this, if the works were conducted as above.

Heritage Summary

Those works most likely to require Listed Building Consent would be the removal of the rear canopy, as it affects significance and is attached to the listed building, albeit the effect would be positive and would therefore be supported, as well as any excavations and removal of floors and widening of doors, and the enclosing of the staircase, subject to detail. Nonetheless, subject to this detail, these works may still be considered acceptable.

I would be happy to provide further free follow-up advice to this pre-application as to whether any proposals would require Listed Building Consent, once it is established exactly what is required. I would also be happy to provide further advice on any other element of physical work proposed as part of this scheme, that I may have missed off from the on-site discussions.

I shall leave confirmation on which works would require Planning Permission to the Planning Department.”

Any changes to the current schedule of works will be made in consultation with the Heritage Officer so that there is no material negative impact on the site's heritage value.

Conclusion

The proposed changes will not have a material negative impact on the heritage value of the site and will contribute to plans to secure the site's future as a place of education.