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Proposed Relocation of Existing Gate Pier and Widening of Opening Facilitating Off Street Parking and Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Point at 79 High Street, Marshfield, Chippenham, SN14 8LT

Heritage Design & Access Statement



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1.0 Introduction

Martin Blake Associates Ltd have been appointed, to prepare an application for listed building consent in connection with the relocation of an existing gate pier and widening of an existing opening to facilitate off street parking and the installation of an electric vehicle charging point at 79 High Street, Marshfield, Chippenham, SN14 8LT.

Martin Blake Associates

February 2024.

2.0 Site Location

The site lies within the designated Marshfield Conservation Area.

The site is located on the South side of the High Street and is largely concealed from view behind No. 81 High Street. The arrangement of the site relative to the high street is common within Marshfield and is known as a burgage plot. Buggage plots are characteristically long and narrow, with a row of outbuildings stretching to the rear of a main house or shop.

3.0 Description of Property

The property is Grade 2* listed.

The reason for its designation is described in the listing description as follows:

Rarity: It is a relatively rare and intact example of a mid-C18 Unitarian meeting house, especially uncommon in the South-West region.

Architectural: A confident Classical design, befitting a mid-C18 nonconformist chapel.

Interior fittings: The high quality interior is a very good example of its type, particularly the distinctive C18 balconies and wainscoting.

Historical: The special interest of the building is elevated by its historical association with the nationally important figure of William Hazlitt Senior, pastor at the chapel from 1765-70, father of the famous essayist William Hazlitt, and founding pastor of the first Unitarian church in the United States of America.

Group Value: The retention of the attached burial ground and walls gives an additional sense of context to this place of worship.

The main building is constructed of ashlar limestone with ashlar dressings. The roof is clay tile.

The attached enclosing walls of the north facing area are rubble stone with coping stone. There is a gateway to the north (the subject of this application) which has ashlar 'V' jointed stone piers either side, with carved capstones. The listing description mentions that this wall and gate posts was likely realigned when the building was converted to a reading room in 1908.

This wall re-alignment can be seen in the comparison ordnance survey map extracts below.

4.0 Relevant planning history

Planning Application number: PK17/3294/F

Conversion of former British Legion Hall into 1 no. residential dwelling (Class C3) with associated works.
Approved. 29 December 2017

Planning Application number: PK17/3479/LB

Conversion of former British Legion Hall into 1 no. residential dwelling (Class C3) with associated works.
Approved. 29 December 2017



Fig 1. 1844-1888 OS Map Extract

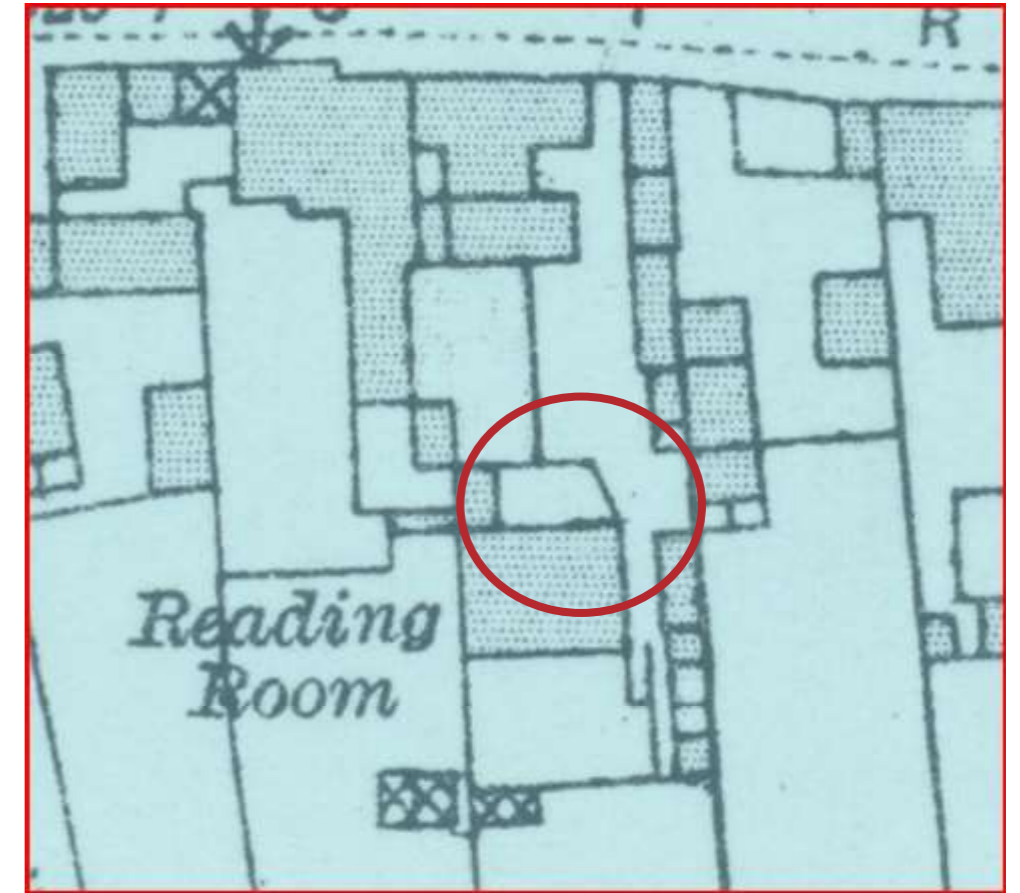


Fig 2. 1898-1939 OS Map Extract

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5.0 The Proposals

The proposals forming the subject of this application for listed building consent contemplate the relocation of an existing stone gate pier in order to facilitate an off-street parking space at the host building.

The proposals are confined to a section of low garden wall and a gate pier which had previously been relocated around 1908, when the building was converted to a reading room.

If permitted the relocation of the gate pier would resolve the following issues as well as enhance the wider area:

- Permit the installation and use of an electric vehicle charging point for the charging of an electric car or other electric vehicle. Such a charging point will assist with the local authority's aspiration for net zero carbon emissions following its declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019. The charging point, could potentially be used as part of a communal electric vehicle car charging scheme.
- Reduce parking pressures which exist on Marshfield's High Street.
- Improve the aesthetic of the High Street.
- Reduce disruption for neighbours when maintenance works are being undertaken on the host building. Given its age, there is regular maintenance which has to be carried out and currently there is nowhere for trades people to park, local to the property.

5.1.1 Planning Considerations:

Given the heritage sensitive nature of the host building (being grade 2* listed and within the conservation area) the proposals have been informed by the assessment of the context in which it is located together with the careful inspection of the planning archive for the host building.

Of particular relevance is the statement of significance and design and access statements which were prepared in support of planning and listed approval references PK17/3294/F and PK17/3479/LB respectively and the detailed listing description for the property which was updated in October 2023.

These documents highlight the fact that during the life of the building, its usage has undergone significant change, originally from a place of worship to a reading room, then to a meeting house and on to its current usage as a dwelling house.

A building's use often changes to reflect and adapt to the way of life at a particular time together with the pressures and challenges of every day life, which come about during those times.

In current times, the motor vehicle has become a necessity particularly when living in a rural village, such as Marshfield. It was interesting to note when compiling this application, the Sustainable Marshfield Easter Newsletter 2023 observed that:

'I have been looking at the most sustainable way to travel to and from Marshfield. Obviously, the most sustainable option would be to use a bus service that delivered a service as convenient and flexible as owning a car. We do have buses that come and go from the village, my observations are that they are mostly empty, under used and I have come to my own conclusion that they do not really serve the mobility needs of our very rural village.' [sic]

Emphasising the fact that private motorised transport is currently a necessity when living in the village.

Climate change has also become a significant issue of modern life, contributed to by the combustion engine. Ways of mitigating the effects of this must be considered as part of a building's use together with its ancillary elements, particularly as technology evolves.

In the case of these proposals, the applicant seeks to find a way in which to be able to provide a charging point for electric vehicles within its own demise, together with alleviating parking pressures on the High Street of Marshfield.

This application seeks to do this whilst respecting the overall character and setting of the listed host building. The area affected by the proposals is one which has already undergone change, at the turn of the last century, when the building's use changed to a reading room.

At that time, the wall in question was re-aligned to suit the change of use of both the host building and, presumably, the surrounding area. It is noted on *fig 1*. that there would appear to have been a boundary wall which extended down the east side of the host building providing a private walkway from the front area, to that of the rear graveyard. This has been removed and the wall of the front courtyard now extends off the northeast corner of the host building, on a new line. This change has eroded the significance of the wall, not reflecting the original layout, when the building was first conceived, but adapted to suit the needs at the time it became a reading room.

Whilst the proposal will affect the position of the left hand gate pier and the removal of a small section of non original low rubble walling, the overall character and setting of the host building is maintained. The gate pier will be re-built in a slightly different location, but it will remain the same in terms of its appearance.

The gravelled surface treatment of the area to the front of the building will remain unchanged. A row of stone setts will be introduced defining the demise between the private area of the host building and the shared access area beyond.



Fig 3. Photo of off street parking to former school in St Martin's Lane, Marshfield approved under application reference PK06/2137/LB.

The widening of the space between the gate piers will allow the parking of one car at the front of the host building and this ties in with the parking arrangement of other cars in the burgage, which are immediately adjacent to the host building. This can be seen in the photos of Figs 4 and 6

A study of vehicle manoeuvring has been undertaken in order to demonstrate that a large family car can enter and exit the burgage onto the High Street in a forward gear. This is shown on the accompanying plan.

This is similar to other arrangements in the village, notably the grade 2 listed Former School, 5 yards to the south of the former congregational church in St Martin's Lane, where specifically, Application reference PK06/2137/LB titled 'Partial demolition of boundary wall and creation of new vehicular/pedestrian access. Erection of 0.9m high wrought iron fences, 1.1m high pedestrian gate and 1.4m high stone piers' was granted consent.

Since this approval was granted, the argument for creating such parking provision has become all the more compelling.

The creation of such a space allows the provision of electric vehicle charging. As previously mentioned, this dovetails directly into the local authority's aspiration for net zero carbon emissions following its declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019.

Marshfield Parish Council also made a declaration in 2021 recognising the climate emergency which is being faced.

The provision of off street parking at the host property would reduce parking pressures on the High Street and in so doing improve the street's aesthetic.

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5.1.2 Materials

The proposals involve the relocation of an existing gate pier and the small reduction in length of an existing section of wall. No new materials are therefore proposed.

Mortar in connection with the walling and gate pier will be lime mortar/putty to match existing.

The existing gravelled surface will remain. A row of stone setts will be installed on the demise line between the host building and the shared drive, in a similar manner to that which exists to adjacent existing parking.

5.1.3 Access

Access to the host building will remain unaffected by the proposals. Access for vehicles will be greatly enhanced and will facilitate the use of environmentally friendlier electric vehicles.

5.1.4 Neighbour amenity

The nature of the proposals mean that there will be no detrimental impact in terms of:

1. Over bearing.
2. Loss of privacy.
3. Loss of natural light.

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion it can be seen that the proposals have been sensitively considered in order to enhance the appearance and amenity of the host building. The proposals respond positively to the existing building and that of the area in which it is set.

The proposals only affect areas which have been relatively recently altered, at the turn of the last century. This is considered in the context of the whole life of the building.

The proposals reflect ways of modern living and offer a sensitive and considered approach to the challenges of modern life and particularly that of climate change.

The proposals will have minimal effect on the character and setting of the host building.

The proposals will have no impact on neighbour amenity.

When considering the proposals, reference has also been made to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out similar aims. Whilst that document superseded Planning Policy Statement 5 "Planning for the Historic Environment", in March 2012, the accompanying 'Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide' is extant guidance and states the importance of plan form to the significance of the building and its understanding.

We would reiterate that through thorough research undertaken, the proposals are put forward with a good understanding of the host building and one with its best interests at the fore.

It is clear that in terms of the preservation of the listed building, the proposals will cause only limited harm and having regard to the matters outlined above, that harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial, a term found in paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework. That passage goes on to say that this harm should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

In this case, the degree of harm is very limited and capable of being remedied in the future; nothing of historic importance would be lost that could not be readily put back.

The proposals are to the benefit and continued vibrancy of the building and the environment.



Fig 4. Photo of off front elevation of host building showing adjacent neighbour's parking area.



Fig 5. Photo of front elevation of host building showing area of proposed parking. Left hand gate pier and section of wall reduction shown in foreground.



Fig 6. Photo to east of host building showing shared drive area and existing parking serving an adjacent neighbour.

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