

Norbury Court

Roof Insulation Heritage Statement

Historic Environment Record Summary

The findings below were derived from the National Historic Environment Record¹ and the Devon & Dartmoor Historic Environment Record.²

Constructed in 1758-1762 by Alexander Rowehead, probably with William Robinson as consultant architect, for the Navy Board, Norbury Court is one of the original buildings that comprised the Royal Navy Hospital at Stonehouse.³ The hospital was set up to care for injured, disabled and sick seamen who had served in the Royal Navy.⁴ It was the first hospital in England to be built on the pavilion plan with separate ward blocks to isolate groups of patients and reduce contagion.⁵ The layout consisted of eleven main blocks and four single-storey pavilions (of which Norbury Court is one), laid out on three sides of a formal quadrangle, fronted by colonnades, which served as an exercising area in bad weather.

When completed, the Stonehouse Hospital was regarded as amongst the finest of its kind in Europe. It was much praised in the C18 (being illustrated and described in John Howard's *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales, 1784*), and it influenced French hospital planning following the visit by Coulomb and Tenon in 1787. French hospital plans were, in turn, adapted as the pavilion plan and advocated by Florence Nightingale from mid-C19.

The ward quadrangle forms the centrepiece of an extensive example of Neo-Classical institutional planning. This is a complex of outstanding historical significance in the development of institutions for the care of the sick, which forms the principal part of a remarkable and complete military hospital complex.⁶

¹ The National Heritage List for England: <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results.aspx>

² Devon & Dartmoor Historic Environment Record: https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MDV15468&resourceID=104

³ Millfields Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan, March 2007, Plymouth City Council.

⁴ https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=62aee6f4-7d6a-4ae5-80e8-dcd7ab38a7bc&resourceID=19191

⁵ https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=62aee6f4-7d6a-4ae5-80e8-dcd7ab38a7bc&resourceID=19191

⁶ *The Buildings of England*: Pevsner N: Devon: London: 1989: 654 & 655; *Journal of Royal Medical Service*: Gordon Pugh, P D, Surg. Capt. Royal Navy: History of the Royal Naval Hospital Plymouth: 1972-; Morrison K: *Royal Naval Hospital, Stonehouse*: Cambridge: 1992: 100373

The hospital closed in 1995, and since then, a number of the buildings at the site have been converted into dwellings, offices and commercial premises. Norbury Court became an office for architects Stride Treglown in 2000.

The group of buildings that make up the Royal Naval Hospital lie in the Stonehouse Peninsula Conservation Area.

The National Grid Reference for the buildings is: SX4663954703

Statement of Significance

This is a complex of outstanding historical significance in the development of institutions for the care of the sick, which forms the principal part of a remarkable and complete military hospital complex.

Architecturally, the building maintains significance through its Grade II* listing status. It is characterised by the monumental nature of the building and the confident use of robust architectural forms; it is built using quality traditional materials and techniques comprising cut Plymouth limestone rubble with limestone dressings, including rusticated quoins and bands above the ground floor, 1st-floor strings and plain architraves, riven slate-hipped roofs behind coped rubble parapets over bands.⁷

The exterior was altered through unsympathetic alterations during its tenure under the MOD, compromising its quality; many of these, however, have been previously repaired by Stride Treglown.

The layout of the interior is largely original but is devoid of historic details.

It makes a positive contribution to the character of the site.

Assessment of Heritage Values

Evidential Value: Low

The building and site are relatively well understood and, therefore, have low potential to yield additional evidence about past human activity.

Historical Value: High

The building and site are significant elements in the narrative history of the area.

Aesthetic Value: High

The building and site have high aesthetic value and contribute positively to the area.

Communal Value: High

The building and site represent communal value for their historical associations and presence within the community.

Group Value: High

While of local interest in its own right, the buildings and site form part of the wider historical pattern of planning in the area.

⁷ The Buildings of England: Pevsner N: Devon: London: 1989: 654 & 655.

Generally

Generally speaking, the conservation approach we advocate is to do as little as possible but no less than necessary in the interests of best-practice conservation.

Proposals

The proposed works are for internal roof insulation to the existing office.

Ventilation slates are required, but due to the parapets, these will not be visible from ground level.

There are no proposed changes to the external elevations of the listed building.

The existing timber boarding in the loft space is believed to be original and will be retained. Missing boards will be replaced with new ones in the interests of safety.

The sheepswool insulation will be laid over the existing timber floorboards.

The internal layout of the building will remain the same.

For details, see the enclosed Drawings, Schedule of Works and the Conservation Specification & Methodology documents enclosed with this application.

Heritage Impact Assessment

Existing

The building is mid-C18 and remains largely unaltered externally. The original layout has been subdivided, and little historic features remain. The Tuscan colonnade has been enclosed with low-level concrete block walls and a glazed infill above, which have a negative impact.

Heritage Values

Existing details preserve architectural and historic interest.

Significance

The external walls and primary internal walls are of high significance; the internal rooms comprise an area of medium significance.

Proposals

The removal of the original sarking will be the minimum required to achieve the goal. The maximum amount of historic fabric will be retained. The work is reversible.

Impact

The impact will be positive. The level of impact will be low.

Justification

Works are necessary to secure the building's ongoing viable use as a Grade II* listed office.

Mitigation

The proposals use complementary materials (sheep wool), and the ventilation slates are sensitively designed. The installation seeks to do as little as possible but as much as is necessary in the interests of authenticity and conserving historic fabric.

Conclusion

The design has been carefully articulated to be sympathetic and complementary, which will greatly improve the thermal performance of the building (the roof is currently not insulated) and will provide a benefit to heritage through securing the ongoing viable use of the building as an office.

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