

SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by Mr S Brothers who has recently purchased Hill House. Its purpose is to confirm the significance of the listed building and its setting, and the impact of the proposed repairs and alterations.

This report is to support a new application for planning and listed building consent. Hill House was originally built in the late 19C as a private dwelling but was later used as an independent school. The original building has been substantially altered and extended with the majority of these works having been carried out in the early 20C when additional land was acquired extending the site area substantially to the east and south of the house but with further extension and alteration works carried out later during its use as a school. The school closed in the 1990's and the property was returned to residential use. The existing internal layout is shown on the Floor Plan in the Appendix). It is now vacant. It is a designated Grade II listed heritage asset, having been first listed in April 1985. It was included in the statutory list for its architectural merits, including its residential features. It stands in the Much Hadham Conservation Area. Hill House is a two-storey house built in the mock Tudor style with solid brick walls and black painted external timbers under a pitched clay tiled roof with the slopes incorporating central bands of decorative tiles, laid to resemble fish scales. The original building has been substantially extended to the north, south and east (Photographs 1-7). The extensions to the north and south are of very similar design and construction to the original building but the part single storey and part two storey extension to the north east is later and is unsympathetic to the remainder of the building and has no redeeming architectural features (Photographs 8-14). The majority of the windows are metal framed casements with lozenge pattern panels in timber sub-frames but there are some painted timber casements, Crittal casements and Upvc double glazed casements to the side and rear extensions. The front entrance has a mock Tudor arch to the door opening and this is replicated internally to some ground floor openings (Photographs 15-16). The original building plan form has been significantly altered over the years. The existing layout is more appropriate for a school than a house.

The property is in need of a fairly comprehensive programme of repair and refurbishment to restore it to good structural condition together with some re-arrangement of the internal spaces to provide a layout suited to domestic living requirements.

The summary of the scope of the proposed works is as follows :-

1. Remove inserted timber stud and plasterboard infill to opening between the entrance hall and dining room (to the north of the entrance hall);
2. Remove lift from dining room and make good first floor where lift opening exists;
3. Remove school-era partitioning around staircase to improve natural light and re-expose stair banister and spindles;
4. Remove inserted lobby area and cupboard adjacent to cloakroom and relocate lobby door to existing cloakroom door opening;

5. Remove dark corridor between the dining and family rooms and the kitchen to improve natural light and create space suited to residential living. To achieve this it is proposed to remove the west facing kitchen wall, remove the inserted doorway at the south end of the corridor and partially remove the dining room east facing internal wall to create a reception hall lit with natural light from the stairwell behind. In addition to this it is proposed to partially remove the northern wall of the kitchen to form 2no. coffered arched openings;
6. Remove timber stud and plasterboard partition wall in first floor bathroom which has been built across the front window;
7. Replace existing timber fence to site frontage and replace with black painted timber picket fence more in keeping with the area;
8. Reinstate the annexe extension for use as a garage, remove metal garage doors to north side of rear extension and replace with timber bi folding garage doors, rendered finish to be replaced with black featheredged timber cladding.
9. Remove the small cupboard walls and door in the link between the main house and annexe, outside the boiler room.
10. Replace the two wooden doors on either side of the link between the main house and annexe with double glass doors and replace existing flat roof with a tiled ridge roof.
11. Remove door & small door wall from bottom of stairs in annexe

The proposals put forward minimise harm to the heritage asset, improve the external appearance of the existing unsympathetic extension at the north east, redress the unbalanced and unsympathetic fenestration to the east elevation of the south extension and reconfigure some of the interior to provide spaces more suited to residential use.

The proposals are consistent with advice and policies in the NPPF.

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTEXT

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

4.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

5.0 CONCLUSION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the significance of heritage assets to be assessed when changes are proposed, and for the impact of the proposals to be assessed in relation to significance.

The property is Listed Grade II. The list description is as follows :-

“House, now a school. Mid-late C19. Red brick, imitation Tudor. Exposed timber frame and brick noggin to upper storey. Old tile roof. Many gables and projections but basically a 7 window range with 5 windows close to road. This part has central door in an arched recess with moulded wooden lintel, to either side of which is a jettied gable end with ornamental bargeboard, the S gable combined with a large square chimneystack. North recess part has a gable to the street and 2 facing N. The windows are 2 and 3 light casements with leaded, lozenge shaped panels, most slightly projecting with tiled window heads. Later flat roof extension on front with classical cornice. S elevation has canted, 1st floor oriel and ornate bargeboard.”

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to assess the significance of the building and the impact of the proposed works. The report covers the following key issues:-

- A summary of the history and development of the building;
- A statement of significance of the interior and exterior of the building;
- A heritage impact assessment of the proposed works in the contexts of national policy.

2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTEXT

2.1 CONTEXT : SITING AND SURROUNDINGS

Hill House is a large detached house facing west situated on a generous plot in the centre of Much Hadham village. It stands in the Much Hadham Conservation Area. The village Almshouses abut the site to the north and to the north of the Almshouses there is St Andrews JMI school. Much Hadham Sports Association fields are directly opposite, on the west side of Tower Hill. Detached houses abut the site to the south. There are three listed assets within a 100m radius of the site :-

- **St Andrews JMI School.** Grade II. The list description states *“Village school. Incorporates C16 cottage parallel to street of 4 timber frame bays. Remodelled late C19 when school rooms were added. Ground floor faced with C19 gault brick; upper floor with mock timber framing on 3 S bays, timber frame and brick on N bay. Old tile roof in 3 units, that on S a late C19 addition. C19 casements to both floors, small pane metal casement to N Ground floor probably earlier. Original chimneystack*

towards S. Late C19 school buildings of 2 slate roof blocks now linked by 1926 addition. Former girls' school on S has gable end to road with open bell turret surmounted by weathervane. Plain bargeboard, 3-light sash window. Boys' school L shaped parallel to road. External chimneystack and 3 triple sashes."

- **Almshouses.** Grade II. The list description states "Rebuilt 1866. Tudor style. Red brick with stone dressings and old tile roof, half-hipped at ends. Single storey. Street elevation has 3 doorways with moulded 4-centre arches, and 4 sets of 2, 2-light, diamond leaded casements, also 4-centre arched. 4th entrance is in projecting gabled porch on S end, which has tiled roof and raised date plaque above the door. 4 tall chimneystacks with chamfered corners and angled dentils."

- **K6 telephone kiosk.** Grade II. The list description states "Telephone kiosk. Type K6. Designed 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Made by various contractors. Cast iron. Square kiosk with domed roof. Unperforated crowns to top panels and margin glazing to windows and doors."

2.2 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF HILL HOUSE

Hill House is of late 19C construction. It is shown on the 1883 and 1898 Ordnance Survey Maps as a detached house of cross-shaped plan form (Appendix Maps 1 and 2). By 1923 the site had been enlarged and the building substantially extended to the north, south and west sides, with the extension on the south side including a glazed conservatory or similar structure at its southern end which no longer exists (Appendix Map 3).

The planning history, obtained from EHDC web site, provides the following information:-

3/05/1397/FP & 3/05/1398/LB – change of use from school to residential. Decided – consent not required.

3/06/1979/LB – Listed building consent granted for two storey pitched roof over garage (rear). Replace lead on single storey flat roof (front).

3/08/1939/LB – Listed building consent granted "to install Harmony Home lift – through floor – size 720mm x 11.70mm, complying with BS 5900 1999 – from ground floor study to 1st floor library. Cut aperture at first floor level, including trimming of floorboards and joists. Fit 13 amp dedicated power point with RCD".

A search of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record did not reveal any further relevant information about the building. The part single storey, part two storey extension to the north east is obviously of 20C date and believed built in the 1960's or 70's. It is in a style out of keeping with the remainder of the building, is of no architectural merit and detracts from the appearance and significance of the remainder of the building and it's setting.

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 ASSESSING SIGNIFICANCE

Assessing significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets and is embedded in the historic environment section of the NPPF. When considering the impact of proposed development, the NPPF advises that the more significant the heritage asset the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation (policy HE9). English Heritage issued Conservation Principles in 2008 to explain its philosophical

approach to significance and managing change and identified four main aspects of significance : evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. Within these categories, significance can be measured in hierarchical levels and in this statement the levels used are :

Highest – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Grade I and II* listed buildings.

High – a designated asset important at a national and sometimes at a regional level, including Grade II listed buildings.

Medium – an undesignated asset important at a local or regional level, including local (non-statutory) listed buildings or those that make a positive contribution to the setting of a listed building or to a conservation area. May include less significant parts of listed buildings.

Low – structure or feature of very limited heritage value and not defined as a heritage asset. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings, and buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area.

Negative – structure or feature that harms the value of a heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

3.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF HILL HOUSE

Hill House is listed Grade II. It is of high significance as a good example of a late 19th Century house built in the mock Tudor style with a number of external architectural features which set it apart from nearby buildings. The property makes a strong and positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and, in particular, the street scene. Not all parts of the building are of equal significance; the external wall finishes (exposed timbers with brick noggin), metal casement windows, decorative roof tiling and roof perimeter joinery are of high significance. The west elevation of the original section of the building has pleasing symmetry but is somewhat marred by the later windows in the west elevation of the south early 20^C extension. The original plan form has been lost through subsequent extension and alterations. The mock Tudor arch entrance door and mock Tudor arch internal door openings are of high significance. The C20 extension to the north east is considered to have a negative impact of the asset as do many of the alterations and additions carried out internally to meet the needs of a school.

4.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT & NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

4.1 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS

1. Remove inserted timber stud and plasterboard infill to opening between the entrance hall and dining room (to the north of the entrance hall). (Photograph 21).
2. Remove lift from dining room and make good first floor where lift opening exists. (Photographs 22-23);
3. Remove school-era partitioning around staircase to improve natural light and re-expose stair banister and spindles. (Photographs 24-27).
4. Remove inserted lobby area and cupboard adjacent to cloakroom and relocate

lobby door to existing cloakroom door opening. (Photographs 28-31);

5. Remove dark corridor between the dining and family rooms and the kitchen to improve natural light and create space suited to residential living. To achieve this it is proposed to remove the west facing kitchen wall, remove the inserted doorway at the south end of the corridor and remove the dining room east facing internal wall to create a reception hall lit with natural light from the stairwell behind. (Photographs 22, 32, and 33). Create new opening in the east facing wall of the dining room (the room containing the lift) would result in some loss of historic fabric but since the original building plan form has been substantially lost due to previous extensions and alterations this would not have a detrimental impact on plan form. Removal of this wall combined with the opening up of the original arch opening between this room and the entrance hall and removal of the partitioning around the stairwell would create an attractive, naturally lit reception hall and greatly improve the ground floor layout for residential use. The west facing kitchen wall is contained in a later extension to the original building and would not necessitate removal of any historic fabric. All existing mock Tudor arch door openings are to be retained. The partial removal of the North facing kitchen wall would result in the loss of some historic fabric but again this would not be detrimental to the plan form due to it being lost within various previous extensions. Two new coffered archways would be formed in this wall to replicate the similar openings throughout the property to be more in keeping with residential use and therefore this would not have a detrimental impact upon the heritage asset.

6. Remove timber stud and plasterboard partition wall in first floor bathroom that has been built across the front window (Photographs 34-35).

7. Replace existing timber fence to site frontage and replace with black painted timber picket fence more in keeping with the area. (Photographs 36-38).

8. Reinstate the annexe extension for use as a garage, remove metal garage doors to north side of rear extension and replace with timber bi folding garage doors, rendered finish to be replaced with black featheredged timber cladding. (Photograph 11).

12. Remove the small cupboard walls in the link between the main house and annexe, outside the boiler room. The newly exposed door and wall of the boiler room will be rendered to match.

13. Replace the two wooden doors on either side of the link between the main house and annexe with double glass doors and replace existing flat roof with a tiled ridge roof. The ridged tile roof will cover the existing flat roof and handmade reclaimed clay tiles will be used to match the roof of the main house.

14. Remove door & small door wall from bottom of stairs in annexe.

4.2 MITIGATION – POSITIVE IMPACT

Item 1 – Remove infill from opening between entrance hall and dining room. This would reinstate the original opening to give better proportions and natural light.

Item 2 – Remove lift. The lift is no longer required. Removal and reinstatement of the first floor is a positive action.

Item 3 - Removal of school partitioning around stairs. The partitioning is out of keeping with the building and its proposed use and is of no architectural or historic merit.

Item 4 – Removal of inserted lobby area adjacent to cloakroom. The inserted partitioning and joinery is of no architectural or historic interest, is unnecessary for the proposed use and forms part of the proposal to achieve more light in this part of the building and a ground floor layout suited to residential use.

Item 5 – Removal of walls and addition of double doors will create a bright and functional kitchen space and remove the dark corridors established for the school requirements, creating a true heart to the home

Item 6 – Removal of internal 1st floor partition building across window. This would remove the inappropriate wall across the west facing window in the bathroom and adjacent bedroom.

Item 7 – Replacement of existing timber fence on west site boundary and replacement with black painted timber picket fence would improve and enhance the external appearance of the site and the overall street scene.

Item 8 – Reinstate the annexe extension for use as a garage, remove metal garage doors to north side of rear extension and replace with timber bi folding garage doors, rendered finish to be replaced with black featheredged timber cladding would improve the appearance of this structure when viewed from the north.

Item 9 – Removal the small cupboard walls in the link between the main house and annexe, outside the boiler room would and create a slightly larger and cleaner space.

Item 10 – Replacing the two wooden doors on either side of the link with glass doors will create a much more light-filled space which will also be more aesthetically pleasing, making the link feel more integral to the main house. The ridged tile roof will cover the existing flat roof which is more in keeping with the main house.

Item 11 - Remove door & small door wall from bottom of stairs in annexe will create a more free flowing space.

4.3 THE PROPOSALS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NPPF

The Revised National Planning Policy Framework (revised July 2021) advises local planning authorities on decision-making, with Section 16 relevant to the historic environment. Local authorities are advised to take account of the “desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation” (section 197). A key principle enshrined in the NPPF is the conservation of heritage assets and the presumption

against substantial harm to an asset's significance (section 200). Significance must be taken into account in assessing the impact of a proposal, to avoid or minimise conflict between conservation and any aspect of the proposal (section 195). The proposals for Hill House entail only minimal loss of historic fabric which will not result in 'substantial harm' to the significance of the heritage asset, so the tests in section 201 of the NPPF do not apply. Section 202 applies instead as the harm is "less than substantial". The proposal causes very limited harm and this is outweighed by the positive contribution made by the other proposed alterations as well as the significant investment in refurbishment the new owner has committed to. The modest proposals will enhance the character and appearance of the heritage asset and will remove some existing alterations that detract from its appearance, particularly on the street-facing west elevation. The project as a whole has a significantly positive impact on the building in putting it back into its original residential use. Removal of unattractive school-era internal insertions and the other limited internal alterations will make the building more suited to day-to-day living and help to secure the assets future as a residential property.

5. CONCLUSION

Hill House is a heritage asset of significant value. The Grade II listed building contributes to the historic building stock in Much Hadham and the wider local environment and makes a strong and positive contribution to the street scene. The main scope of the proposals relate to the reversal of previous unsympathetic alterations and overall the package constitutes a positive impact on the building and it's setting. The proposals result in only minor loss of historic fabric internally and allow for restoration of some areas back to their original form and layout and will have a positive impact on the use of the building and it's ongoing usefulness. The proposals are consistent with advice and policies in the NPPF.

6. APPENDIX

- a. Existing Floor Plan
- b. Map 1 – Ordnance Survey map 1883
- c. Map 2 – Ordnance Survey Map 1898
- d. Map 3 – Ordnance Survey Map 1923
- e. Photographs 1-46