

Design and Access Statement

Ref: 994-RP01

Proposed Chimney Repairs
At Ashfold School, Dorton House,
Dorton, Aylesbury HP18 9NG

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Revision

PL01 –Planning Issue –22/04/24

Introduction

This Design statement has been produced by Morse Webb Architects to support the Listed Building Application submission for the repairs to the existing chimneys on the Grade I listed Dorton House at Ashfold School. This report should be read together with the submitted drawings and specialist reports.

The proposal is for the careful deconstruction of two chimneys to the south and west of Dorton House due to their structural failure and the reconstruction of the said chimneys to match the existing using reclaimed and new brickwork to match existing.

Assessment

Existing Site Location

The proposed site is located at Ashfold School in Dorton in the Aylesbury district of Buckinghamshire. The proposed site is located within the grounds of Ashfold School to the south of the village. The existing independent school occupies part of the historic country estate of Dorton House. Dorton house being the main school building and a grade I listed example of a Jacobean mansion.

The chimneys to be prepared are on Dorton House, a grade I listed building. The existing building forms a prominent part of the existing site as well as a focal point of the schools character.

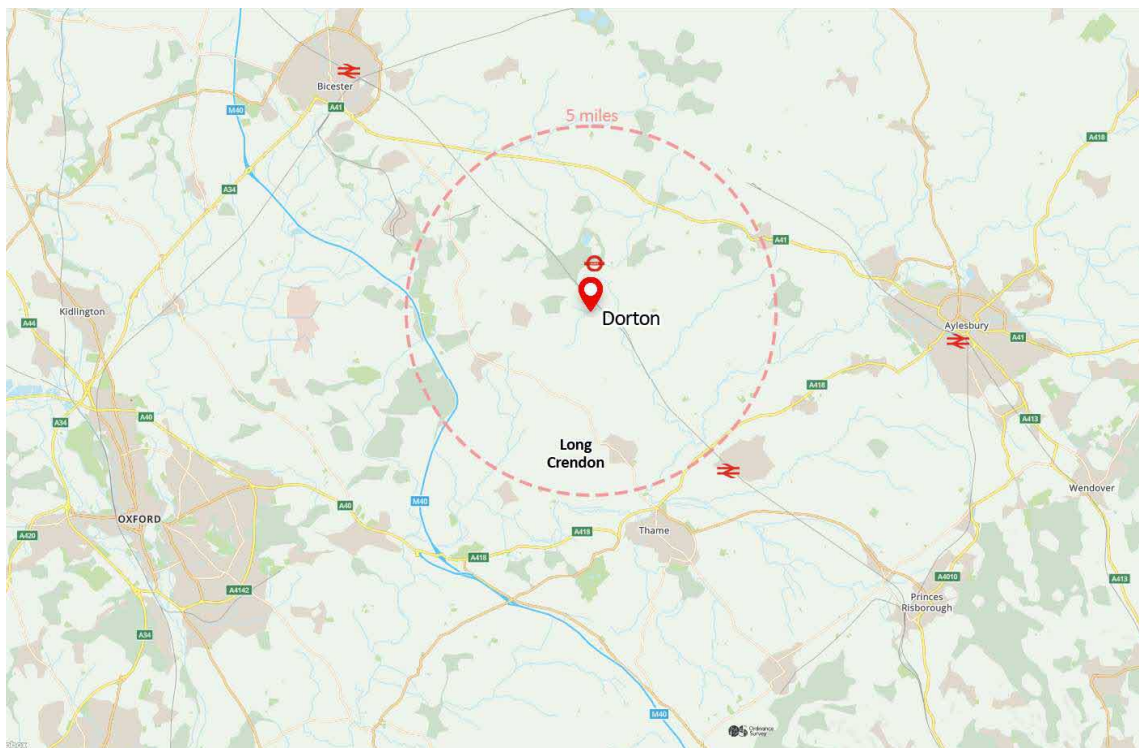


Fig 1: Site location

Existing Site – Dorton House



Fig 5. Dorton House - east front elevation.

Grade I listed designated heritage asset. Listing no. 1124266. Refer to full listing description in appendix 1

Former mansion/country house, now converted to use as a school. Dorton House is a large architecturally and historically significant grade I listed detached manor house with Jacobean style origins, situated at the centre of the Ashfold School site. The historic country house would have once stood at the centre of a significant country estate, including landscaped gardens, outbuildings, and surrounding parkland.

The mansion, originally constructed around 1626 and built for Sir John Dormer, would have reflected a typical Jacobean style country house of the era. Constructed over two storeys in a half H shaped plan, with the two eastwards projecting gable fronted wings enclosing the entrance courtyard. The house underwent significant alterations in the C18 including alterations to windows, stucco render and potentially reduction in the chimney heights. After removal of the stucco in the late C19 it features red brick walls with ashlar quoins and plinth, a parapet with a stone string course and coping, and tiled roofs with large octagonal brick chimneys.

The southern wing of the H plan original house would have originally been the service wing of the house, as evidenced by the more irregular fenestration pattern and additional chimneys to the southeastern gables. The southern wing now accommodates the school kitchen, dining rooms, and dormitories on the upper floors.

Record and photographic evidence of the original building suggest that the chimneys were shorter in the late C18-early C19 . It's likely that the original Jacobean mansion would have had tall chimneys which may have been reduced in the C18. Renovations.



Fig 6. Dorton House –east elevation circa 1832 with alterations and stucco



Fig 6. Dorton House –east elevation circa 1907 with alterations and stucco

It is not known how closely the early C19 rebuilt chimneys match any earlier chimney on Dorton House however they can be seen to follow a similar style to that of other period properties such as Dinton Hall in Aylesbury or Blickling Hall in Norfolk.

The existing chimneys to which this application relates have been identified due to their very poor condition and pronounced tilts. The first group is the south central stack (A) to the southern end of the central block consisting of eight stacks. The second group is the south west stack (B) which is to the rear of the southern wing to the ridge of a gable.

South Central Stack A

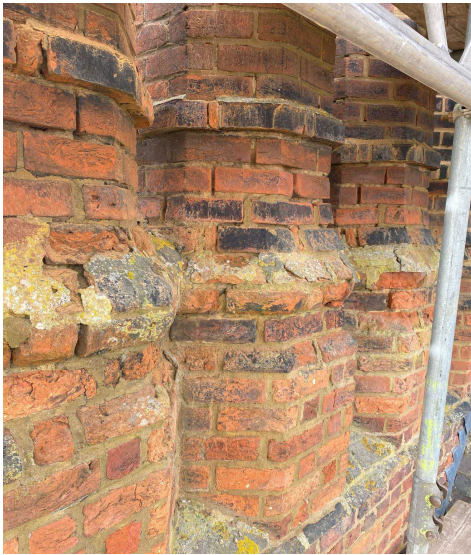
The existing chimneys of Dorton house all follow a similar arrangement and form albeit with varying numbers of flue shafts. The south central stack A is built of a red brick rectangular plinth projecting through the tiled roofs. The plinth brickwork is in English bond with a light lime mortar, generally in better condition than the flue stacks above, stepped lead flashing is dressed down onto the existing plain clay tiled roofs.



South Central Stack A

A projecting horizontal stringer course separates the plinth from a transition section which then separates out into separate octagonal flue stacks which meet again at their heads. The chimney above the stringer is generally in poor condition and has seen poor quality repair with inappropriate mortar over preceding years.

The transition section is made up of several shaped projecting brick courses, with plinths, radius and watertable shapes vertically as well as the transition from rectangular to octagonal via 135-degree shaped bricks. Most of the special shaped bricks have seen significant weathering with much of the detailed edges eroded by the elements forming rounded corners as well as more extreme spalling and missing bricks. Previous mortar repairs have been carried out with a hard cement-based mortar with aggregate.



Transition section of stack A



The south central chimney stack A has eight octagonal flue stacks. The bricks to the main central section of the shaft are in average condition but had be re-pointed with a modern cement mortar with a course aggregate. There are also a number of replaced bricks with cut faces which have spalling. Stack 5A has an active metal gas flue with mesh cowl, this stack has a significant crack down both its south and north faces.



Flue stacks south central chimney A

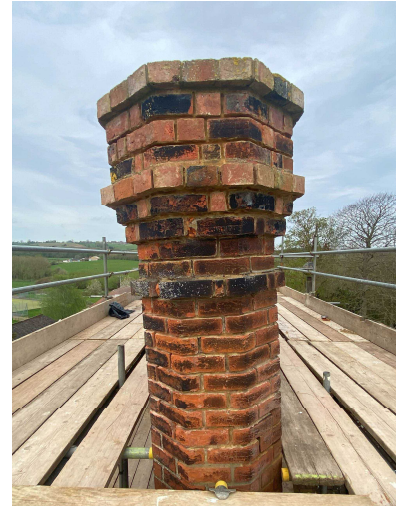


Flue stack 5A showing crack

The heads of the flue stacks corbel outwards from the individual shafts to re-connect. The brickworks condition is better however the mortar joints again have failed with previous repairs breaking out and individual bricks lifts and falling away. Mortar flaunching closes of the head of each stack with the existing terracotta flue liner finished flush with the flaunching.



Flaunching and liner



Tilt to stack head

South West Stack B

The plinth to the base of stack B is a continuation of the gable below, slightly off centre from the ridge of the gable. Red brickwork with light lime mortar in English bond brickwork. The gable is capped with buff stone copings which rise up to meet and finish either side of the chimneys base. There is also a horizontal profiled stone band across the width of the chimney base. Evidence of a climbing vine, now dead, extends up the gable and across the chimneys base.

As with stack A the transition section is in a generally poor condition with significant weathering to the shaped bricks, open mortar joints and some loose or missing bricks.



There is a significant lean-to stack B as can be seen within the flue stacks. The flue stacks lean from the transition section towards the prevailing wind in the south.

Planning History/Involvement

There has been limited planning application directly related to Dorton House over the past 10-20 years, albeit there have been other application relating to other surrounding buildings on the school site. Below are those relating to Dorton House directly.

Initial discussions concerning the chimney have been had directly between the School and Jenny Martin, this has been to secure emergency permission for the taking down of the south west stack following advice from the structural engineer.

Previous new dwelling planning applications

Year	App Ref	Description	Status
2014	14/01395/ALB	Internal alterations to improve shared kitchen and toilet accommodation to part of the west wing second floor attic	Approved
2010	10/00890/ALB	Repair and renewal of external stone terrace including paving, steps, copings and retaining walls	Approved
	10/00663/ALB	Renewal of part first floor internal corridor floorboarding	Approved
2008	08/00124/ALB	Replacement flooring at first floor - internal	Approved
2006	06/01896/ALB	Replacement of existing flooring with new oak floor boarding in entrance hall and saloon	Approved

Design

Existing and Recording

The existing chimneys have been measured and recorded. The existing drawings record the layout and elevations of the existing chimneys while photos have also recorded the existing condition. Photos are also to be taken as the chimneys are taken down.

The chimneys are to be taken down to the projecting stringer course below the transition section. Further inspection by the structural engineer is to be carried out at this point. During breaks in the works each flue is to be temporary capped with paving slabs on bricks to protect the shaft from weather while allowing ventilation.

The existing chimneys are to be carefully de-constructed with the aim of retaining for re-use as much material as possible. Brickwork is to be taken down and locations recorded for re-use. Bricks are to be carefully cleaned of previous mortar and inspected for integrity. Retained masonry is to be stored on site. Storage is to be raised off the ground and always protected from the weather.

Layout

The proposed arrangement and layout of the re-built chimneys is to match the existing utilising as many of the existing bricks as possible. Where new materials, bricks, are required they are to match the existing shape/profiles, dimensions and colour of those being replaced as closely as possible.

The new chimneys are to be constructed with a Natural Hydraulic Lime (NHL) 3.5 Mortar. A suitable coloured NHL 3.5 mortar is to be chosen to match the existing masonry below the respective chimneys.

On completion each of the unused flues are to be capped with a red terracotta disused ventilation cap. The existing flue which is currently connected to an existing boiler is to be relined with a new twin wall flue internal and capped with a suitable cowl to the approval of the councils conservation officer.

Access

Access to the site will be as existing. Deliveries will be made to the front of the school before being transferred around the school to the base of the scaffolding. Scaffolding access has been installed to allow safe access to the chimneys for the duration of the works.