

HISTORIC BUILDING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

PROPOSED SUB-DIVISION OF NO21 FAIRFIELD SQUARE, DROYLSDEN INTO TWO SELF
CONTAINED FLATS – FOR THE MORAVIAN UNION



INTRODUCTION

This document assesses the Heritage Significance of No. 21 Fairfield Square, Droylsden which is part of a group of buildings Listed as Grade II* as Heritage Assets and included in a Conservation Area, and to provide an impact assessment of the proposals using a system based on established criteria.

Assessing the impact of proposals is necessary to consider whether harm is caused to heritage assets as part of a scheme of works. Also, in determining applications affected Listed Buildings, Local Authorities are obliged to take account of Section 66(1) in the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act: 'the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest...'.

When deciding applications for works to Listed Buildings, local planning authorities follow advice set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to 'identify and assess the particular significance of heritage assets...taking account of available evidence and necessary expertise', when considering the impact of a proposal, 'to avoid or minimise conflict' between conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Proposals affecting heritage assets are expected to enhance and preserve their significance, or have a neutral impact. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, 'the greater the weight should be' (paragraph 132). 21 Fairfield Square is a Grade II* Listed Building within the Fairfield Conservation area, therefore its conservation is a high priority when proposals for alteration are put forward.

No. 21 Fairfield Square is a large, double fronted Georgian house and is owned and managed by the Moravian Union whose predecessors built the building and all the buildings in the Fairfield Moravian Settlement.

The Moravian Union is finding particular difficulty in letting the very large houses in the 'settlement' as there are fewer large families and these houses are becoming very expensive to run.

It is therefore proposed to divide the property into two flats and upgrade the premises to make them more attractive and provide better accommodation for tenants.

CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

21 Fairfield Square lies within the Moravian Settlement. The settlement was formed by the Moravians in the 18th Century and included a School, Church, Brethren House, Sisters House and around 50 houses. The settlement was originally located in an area of countryside, however it has, over time, become part of the Greater Manchester conurbation. The area was designated a Conservation Area in 1971 and extended in 1975 with the property being in the south eastern corner of the area. To the south of the settlement the Moravians constructed a Garden Village on Broadway. North of the settlement lies the Ashton Canal and a mix of styles and ages of housing from traditional pre 1919 terraced houses through to modern terraced and detached houses.

The streets are laid out to the strict separation of men and women at the time which is typified by the naming of the streets (Sisters Street and Brethren Court). The streets are mainly laid to cobble and York stone paving.

21 Fairfield Square Description

Historic England List Entry Number: 1356489

Five houses originally incorporating a weaving workshop in Nos. 21 and 22. Header bond brick with slate roof. Range totalling 13 bays which rises from 2 to 3 storeys in the central 2 houses. No. 21 has 3 bays and a central entrance. The doors have eared architrave surrounds and either flat hoods or pediments. 4-pane sash windows have stone sills and cambered brick-arched heads.

The second floor has casement windows. Eaves cornice and ridge chimney stacks. Various outshuts and wings to rear. The group contributes greatly to the Fairfield Moravian settlement and the weaving activities formed an important part of the community's economy.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Assessing significance is not an exact science and relies on weighing up a buildings importance with reference to its historic evolution, design quality, the level of alteration and the external setting.

English Heritage (now Historic England) issued conservation principles in 2008 to explain the approach to significance and identified 4 main aspect of significance: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. Within these categories, significance can be measured in hierarchical levels.

- **Exceptional** – An asset important at the highest national or international levels including ancient monuments, Grade I and II* Listed Buildings. The NPPF advises that substantial harm would be wholly exceptional.
- **High** – A designated asset important at a local to regional level, including Grade II Listed Buildings and conservation areas. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.
- **Medium** – An undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including (non-statutory) Listed Buildings or those that make a positive contribution to resetting of a Listed Building or to a conservation area. This may include less significant parts of Listed Buildings. Building and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible although there is usually scope for adaptation.

- **Low** – Structure or feature of very limited heritage or other cultural value and not identified as a heritage asset. May include insignificant interventions to Listed Buildings, and buildings/extensions that did not contribute positively to a conservation area. The removal or adaptations of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.
- **Negative** – Structure of 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.

DESIGNATION

The designation of 21 Fairfield Square come under the planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: 20 – 23 and 23A Fairfield Square; entry No. 1356489

Grade II* Listed first Listed in 1966 amended 14th July 1987

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

External Works:

- Removal of delaminated render to the boundary walls. Re-point and repair/replace bricks to match existing so far as reasonably possible.
- Carry out stitch repairs using a brick-tor system due to movement noted above the kitchen/utility windows.
- Take down and rebuild using the original materials a small section of gable wall adjacent to Staircase due to movement.

- Carefully rake out existing mortar and re-point the whole rear wall including side wall to outshut in lime mortar and brush off with stiff bristle brush prior to setting.

Internal Works:

- Carefully demolish one ground floor internal wall. There is no evidence that this wall is original to the building and has probably been inserted to compartment what was originally the weaving workshop at the rear of the property.
- Carefully install using 100mm timber studding new ground floor walls, floor to ceiling fill all voids with Rockwool sound attenuating batts and cover all both sides with two layers of 15mm Soundbloc on Gypframe GB1 resilient bar, joints staggered to provide one hour fire resistance, including curved area to reflect lost floor above and skim all.
- Carefully install using 100mm timber studding two internal walls to form bathroom and utility. Floor to ceiling – all clad both sides in 12.5mm moisture resistant plasterboard and skim.
- The large window into the existing kitchen is in very poor condition and rotten. It is also a relatively modern softwood window although it contains a rather nice stained glass section in the lowest light. This can not be original to the building and there is no mention of this opening in the Listing description. It was presumably originally a pair of doors giving goods access into the original weaving workshops for land hand looms, reels of thread and finished cloth. It is proposed to replace this window with a pair of hardwood glazed doors which will give light to the kitchen and give access into the back yard for the ground floor flat.
- Carry out works required in connection with beetle and wood boring insect infestation. Carry out repairs as required to timbers including staircase.

- Removal of the dilapidated modern existing kitchen units in the kitchen and utility room. Installation of new kitchen and utility room units.
- Removal of dilapidated bathroom to the 1st floor included suspended ceiling. Installation of a new bathroom suite. Carry out repairs to the assumed original ceiling above the suspended ceiling.
- Removal of all modern gas fires located in dining and living room. Retain original cast fireplace surrounds.
- Dry lining to inside of all external walls with 62.5mm insulated plaster board fixed to 19mm treated battens over D.P.M. All cut down at all window heads, reveals etc.
- Overboarding of existing ceilings of ground floor rooms with two layers of 15mm Soundbloc on Gypframe GB1 Resilient bar, joints staggered and skimmed including 100mm flexible slab supported on wire mesh between existing joists - to provide one hour fire resistance. Joists to be min 200mm deep TBC.
- Repairs to existing ceilings following water ingress – 2nd floor.
- Minor repairs as necessary to existing windows to ensure operation. Including, but not limited to overhauling sash mechanism, minor splice repairs and redecoration.
- All windows have slim line secondary glazing installed to reduce the heatloss through the building.
- Reduction in door width to small room on second floor to allow installation of bathroom fittings.
- Two new kitchen installations – ground and first floors.
- Two new bathroom installations – ground and second floors.
- New utility units – first floor.
- New W.C. etc. – first floor.

- Removal of 1m high plaster to ground floor to facilitate the inclusion of a damp proof course and re-plaster in sand lime cement as existing
- The rear door is a ledged and braced style (door) with minimal security. As this will become the entrance to the upstairs flat it is proposed that this be replaced with a new timber framed door in a similar style externally but with mortice locks to ensure the security of the property.

IMPACT ON THE HISTORIC FABRIC

Below is a brief summary of each aspect of the proposal as it affects individual spaces, with a summary of the heritage significance of the particular space, the impact and any mitigation recommended.

The following categories, cover the level of harm largely depending on whether the historic fabric is lost or new installations affect the spatial or aesthetic quality of a room:-

- Enhancement
- Neutral
- Slight Harm
- Moderate Harm
- Substantial Harm

The property has been empty for a number of years and consequently has suffered from water ingress, damp and wood boring insect infestations. In addition the fixtures and fittings are in need of replacement as they are at the end of their life. The size of the house (currently 6 bedrooms and one bathroom) has resulted in a property which is very hard to let.

The division of the property into two self contained flats will help to address the issue and hopefully enable it to cease being empty and thereby remain maintained in better condition.

Most of the works are considered to have a neutral impact. None of the proposed works will cause more than slight harm and should improve and protect the existing fabric, indeed most of the proposed work constitutes maintenance and repair. However the following aspects of the work will have significant effects on the historic layout and fabric of the building.

1. Division of the property into two self contained flats

This change will inevitably have an impact on the historic plan form of the building. However the front entrance and basic plan remain unchanged including the existing staircase. All the proposed internal dividing walls on the ground floor will be constructed in substantial timber studding, insulation and fire-line boarding. These walls will be entirely removable if the requirements change in the future and therefore although the change to two flats will have a moderate harm impact on the historic plan of the building the actual harm to the fabric will be neutral.

2. Division of original Back Yard

The new separating wall in the back yard although proposed to be of brick will also be entirely removable and will not stop the overall rear appearance being read in its historic context. Impact – slight harm.

3. Internal Alterations

Likewise to the sub-division walls the minor internal alterations are largely inconsequential to the historic plan or fabric of the building. The original weaving workshop to the rear has clearly been altered and sub-divided previously and the proposed changes are minor – Impact – Neutral.

4. Insulation etc. Improvements

The dry lining of existing external walls will have no significant effect on the plan or fabric of the building. Existing skirting boards, architraves etc. will be removed and re-fitted. This work is

necessary to give a realistic future for this building as residential accommodation due to the high heating costs.

Under drawing the existing ceilings with new plasterboard is necessary as the ceilings are in poor condition, and is required to provide one hour fire resistance between ground and first floor flats.

Impact – Enhancement.

Change of large ground floor window to glazed double doors

This proposal requires no change to the structural fabric of the opening which may have included doors originally accessing the weaving workshop. The existing window is not original and is rotten. The change to glazed doors will have no detrimental affect on the historic fabric of the building and this opening is not mentioned in the Listing description. This proposal will improve the attractiveness of the refurbished kitchen and give access into the revised back yard so that this may be used and maintained, rather than being a dumping ground as at present. Impact – Neutral.

Secondary glazing to all windows

The existing single glazed timber windows are to be refurbished and retained but it is necessary in the current times to reduce heat loss through the windows. If suitable rental accommodation is to be maintained slim aluminium framed secondary glazing units, generally horizontal sliding are proposed to be fitted inside the window reveals. These will have no lasting effects on the historic fabric or external appearance but will make the building quieter and more thermally efficient.

Impact – Enhancement.

Bathrooms

A new bathroom immediately below that existing is proposed. The existing 1st floor bathroom is to be converted to a utility room and new W.C. A further new bathroom is to be installed in an

existing room on the second floor. None of these alterations have significant effects on the historic layout or fabric and therefore the Impact is Neutral.

Kitchen etc.

The existing rear room on the ground floor is a kitchen and this is to be refurbished which constitutes no change to the existing situation. It is proposed to install a new kitchen in the existing room immediately above the ground floor kitchen. This has very minimal impact on the plan or fabric of the building and is therefore Neutral.

All other proposed works to the building constitute repairs or maintenance and as such can only have an enhancement effect on the historic fabric of the Listed Building as these will maintain the fabric into the future.

No. 21 Fairfield Square is Grade II* Listed which attributes considerable importance to its historic and architectural features which must be protected and preserved.

However, it is fundamental for the survival into the future of most historic buildings that they are retained in use, thereby ensuring their maintenance and also their continued useful purpose for people into the future.

CONCLUSION

No. 21 Fairfield Square is a significant building in its own right and in the Conservation Area but in it is currently too large and too expensive to run to attract any tenants. Without tenants the building has no purpose and the proposals contained in the foregoing are an attempt by the Moravian Union to give this building a reliable future providing attractive and economical lettable accommodation for local people and the proposals have a very modest detrimental effect on the historic character and fabric of the building and as such we recommend that Listed Building Consent is given for these proposals.

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