

This report needs to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

DATE INSPECTED:

TELEPHONE CALLS: YES / NO

DATE:

Ribble Valley Borough Council

DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT - REFUSAL

Ref: AD/CMS

Application No: 3/2014/0553/P (LBC)

Development Proposed: Cleaning of external stonework at 58 Church Street, Ribchester

CONSULTATIONS: Parish/Town Council

Parish Council – While the Parish Council believes that the sandblasting of stonework on a listed building is inappropriate it will not object, since however much the council might wish it, what has been done cannot be easily undone. In particular an abrasive cleaning method, including blasting of any kind, is likely to cause damage to the stonework. It is sensible for this to be used only after a small test area has been prepared to ascertain the suitability of the techniques and the effect on the fabric, character and appearance of the building.

On the broader question of conservation yet again, we have a situation in relation to a listed building within the conservation area that could have been averted had the Borough Council earlier adopted a more positive attitude. This application provides a perfect example of the need for some simple guidance to be given to newcomers in the conservation area.

Ribchester is an attractive village with Roman and pre-Roman antecedents. Church Street, at the village heart, leads down to the bank of the River Ribble and is characterised by terraces of modest houses. Typically they are built of stone with slate roofs and although some have been marred by the incorporation of unsuitable modern features, they still form a harmonious and attractive whole. While, in the older part of Church Street, dormer windows and some roof lights are untypical of the roof scape, the character of Church Street has still not been seriously eroded. Much of this change can be laid at the lack of a coherent management plan for the Conservation Area that has been apparent for some time. The Parish Council has always believed that, in fairness to property owners, the Borough Council should produce a document that sets out the reasons why we have a Conservation Area, what it is meant to achieve and how the Borough Council seeks to protect it. Without such a document homeowners can be left very much in the dark and may, possibly through ignorance of the "rules", ignore restrictions on development. New owners are particularly vulnerable to this, as they may well have moved to the area unaware of its history, although it could be argued that a more perceptive owner might have first made enquiries before embarking on a course of action.

Although not part of this particular application, the Council wishes to point out that the applicant has removed the cast iron guttering from the front of the property and has partially replaced it with a barge board out of character with the remainder of the terrace.

CONSULTATIONS: Highway/Water Authority/Other Bodies

English Heritage – *it is clear from the EH letter on 3/204/0552 (Internal works) that comments also apply to this application.*

(Summary) The grade II listed 58 Church Street is of significance for its Georgian design within a row of contemporary buildings in the Ribchester Conservation Area. There have been unauthorised works of alteration to the building. This is a potentially serious matter punishable by law. The current listed building consent application requests retrospective authorisation for the works. EH support the local authority in any further action they deem necessary to resolve this problem. It is impossible to understand the impact that the changes

have had on the significance of the building as the significance assessment appears to have been made after the works were implemented. EH would not require the owner to restore the staircases; however, there are opportunities to improve the character of the listed building in mitigation of the harm caused to the significance of the building.

(Advice) – The grade II row of houses from 50-58 Church Street were built in the late 18th century. They were built as one development with similar detailing and features. Higher quality materials are used to the principal south-western elevation than the other elevations reflecting its value. Key elements that add to the significance of the building includes the Georgian design embodied in the proportions and details of the design; the craftsmanship and materials used; and the relationship between number 58, the rest of the row on Church Street and the Ribchester Conservation Area.

The retrospective listed building consent application is for exterior and interior works including the cleaning of the stonework.

It is hard to judge the impact of many of the alterations and removals on the significance of the building as many of them have already been implemented and it does not appear an assessment of the significance of these elements of the building was appraised before the works began. Although, a thorough heritage statement accompanies the application it appears the evaluation of the significance of elements is based on anecdotal evidence rather than expert appraisal of in situ fabric. It is unclear whether the staircases were historic or whether they were in their original location. During the works one of the first-floor joists were cut. EH recommend that this damage should be made good and any structural work required should be implemented by the applicant.

It is for the local authority to decide whether to investigate any offence committed at 58 Church Street under section 9 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. It is an offence to execute any works for alteration which would affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest without listed building consent under section 9 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act.

(Recommendation) EH support the local authority in action it might wish to take against the applicant. It is impossible to understand the impact that the changes have had on the significance of the building as the significance assessment appears to have been made after the works were implemented. EH would not require the owner to restore the staircases; however, there are opportunities to improve the character of the listed building in mitigation of the harm caused to the significance of the building and the damage caused to the first-floor joist should be made good.

If, notwithstanding EH advice, RVBC propose to approve the scheme in its present form, please advise EH of the date of the committee and send EH a copy of the report at the earliest opportunity.

Historic amenity societies – Consulted – no representations received.

CONSULTATIONS: Additional Representations

No representations have been received.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

NPPF.

NPPG.

HEPPG.

Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan:

Policy ENV20 - Proposals Involving Partial Demolition/Alteration of Listed Buildings.

Policy ENV19 - Listed Buildings (Setting).

Policy G1 - Development Control.

Policy ENV16 - Development Within Conservation Areas.

The Core Strategy Submission version as proposed to be modified

Policy DME4 – Protecting Heritage Assets.

Policy DMG1 – General Considerations.

Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal.

POLICY REASONS FOR REFUSAL:

Harm to special architectural and historic interest, setting and significance of listed buildings and the character, appearance and significance of Ribchester Conservation Area. Visual conspicuousness and incongruity of the stonework finish, the loss of the stonework's 'patina of age' and damage to important historic fabric. NPPF paragraph 17, 131 and 132, Local Plan ENV20, ENV19, ENV16 and G1 and Core Strategy DME4 and DMG1.

COMMENTS/ENVIRONMENTAL/AONB/HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES/RECOMMENDATION:

50-58 Church Street Ribchester is a Grade II listed (one entry in list), late C18 row of houses prominently sited within Ribchester Conservation Area. The list description identifies "*squared sandstone ... each house of one bay above is a plaque of '1795' (No. 56)*".

The immediate street scene includes the Grade II listed Nos. 8-15, Nos. 16-22, Nos. 23 and 24, Nos. 25 and 26 and Nos. 28 and 29 Church Street and a number of Buildings of Townscape Merit (The Conservation Studio consultants; adopted by the Borough Council following public consultation 3 April 2007) having a positive contribution to the conservation area. No. 58 Church Street is within the setting of these buildings and other properties within the row 50-58 Church Street.

The Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal identifies:

- (i) An Important View to pass along Church Street and in front of 58 Church Street;
- (ii) *Ribchester village is dominated by rows of handloom weavers' cottages, many of which were built in the late eighteenth century (Overview);*
- (iii) *The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, 21 of which are listed; Narrow, closely developed streets of former handloom weavers' settlement; Handloom weaver's cottages, including two with cellar loomshops, particularly in Church Street and Water Street; The prevalent use of local building stone (Summary of Special Interest);*
- (iv) *Ribchester's greatest period of expansion and prosperity was from the late eighteenth century, when rows of handloom weavers' cottages were built in Church Street and Water Street, transforming a small rural settlement into an industrial village (General Character and Plan Form);*
- (v) *The conservation area is primarily residential (Definition of the Special Interest of the Conservation Area: Activities/Uses);*

- (vi) *Ribchester has a high number of buildings surviving from the late eighteenth century, and some are probably rebuildings or alterations of earlier structures. It seems highly likely that Ribchester was substantially rebuilt from the later eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century corresponding with its growth as an industrial village and centre of handloom weaving. The survival of these buildings in Ribchester has retained a character that would have been shared by many of east Lancashire's textile towns around 1800. In these other settlements later expansion led to the replacement of earlier buildings which as a consequence of overcrowding were often regarded as slums. In Ribchester it is clear that these handloom weavers' cottages were well built for their period and a cause of pride as indicated by the numerous examples with initialled datestones.*

In keeping with many small provincial towns, the impact of Georgian building techniques was notable but also mixed with local building techniques and building customs continued to be used. Some of the cottages whilst being broadly vernacular in style have high quality classically inspired detailing on their sandstone door surrounds. As with many other towns where nineteenth century development was limited, the physical environment retains a distinctive local individuality. Typically of such settlements, the status of the buildings and the occupants was mixed throughout and there was no development of specific class related areas. Overall, however, there is a high proportion of handloom weavers' cottages, built as two-up, two-down properties. Some had either first floor or ground floor weaving windows, but others had separate loomshops added to the rear of the buildings, or in the rear yards. Although the highest concentration of weavers' cottages is in Church Street and Water Street (Architectural and Historic Character);

- (vii) *The buildings of Ribchester were constructed mainly in Millstone Grit, with some fine grained sandstone used for decorative features, such as door and window surrounds. Stone flags and slate were used for roofing. In the late eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century most buildings were constructed using water-shot stone building techniques. Older buildings were rubble-faced, and later nineteenth century structures were built using pitch-faced stone blocks (Building Materials and Local Details);*
- (viii) *Insensitive alteration of historic buildings spoiling the conservation area's historic character and appearance (Weaknesses: the principle negative features of the Ribchester Conservation Area);*
- (ix) *Continuing loss of original architectural details and use of inappropriate modern materials or details. Many of the unlisted, and some of the listed, buildings in the conservation have been adversely affected by the use of inappropriate modern materials or details (Threats to the Ribchester Conservation Area).*

Relevant Planning History

A public complaint alleging unauthorised works to the listed building is being investigated by the Borough Council. Uninvited retrospective applications have also been received in respect to 'Internal works' (3/2014/0552) and 'Replacement of existing windows and insertion of two conservation style velux windows' (3/2014/0569).

3/1988/0863 – Replacement windows. LBC granted 13 February 1989.

3/1977/0975 – Alterations and extensions. RVBC letter 9 November 1977 confirming works to be permitted development.

Relevant Legislation, policy and guidance

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that when considering applications for listed building consent, special regard shall 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 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses i.e. *"the general duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions"*.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in the exercise of planning functions special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - the Governance and Legal Director of English Heritage ('Legal Developments' Conservation Bulletin Issue 71: Winter 2013) states that the courts have said that these statutory requirements operate as *'a paramount consideration'* and *'the first consideration for a decision maker'*.

The recent *Barnwell Manor* Court of Appeal ruling has provided further clarity on consideration and weighting of these statutory requirements within the 'planning balance'. In the original judgment, Mrs Justice Lang confirmed that 'desirability' means *'sought-after objective'* and that *'in order to give effect to the statutory duty under section 66(1), a decision-maker should accord considerable importance and weight to 'the desirability of preserving ... the setting' of listed buildings when weighing this factor in the balance with other 'material considerations' which have not been given this special statutory status'*. In respect to the Court of Appeal decision, Gordon Nardell QC and Justine Thornton ('Turbines, heritage assets and merits', Local Government Lawyer, 24 April 2014) state *"the key point is that once a decision-maker finds harm to setting, there must be some express acknowledgement of the 'considerable' weight to be given, in the balance, to the desirability of avoiding that harm. It is not enough to ask in a general sense whether benefits outweigh harm, but whether they do so sufficiently to rebut the strong presumption against permission"*. Furthermore and in respect to considerations of 'less than substantial harm', the Secretary of State's decision on Lane Head Farm, Cumbria (recovered appeal; decision 16 April 2014; paragraph 11) is noted *"having regard to the judgment in the Barnwell Manor case, the Secretary of State takes the view that it does not follow that if the harm to heritage assets is found to be less than substantial, then the subsequent balancing exercise undertaken by the decision taker should ignore the overarching statutory duty imposed by section 66(1). He therefore sees a need to give considerable weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of all listed buildings"*.

Robin Purchas' QC recent judgement in *North Norfolk* is also noted *"inspector's approach seems to me at this level to have balanced the relative harm and benefit as a matter of straightforward planning judgement without that special regard required under the statute"* (paragraph 73).

The Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan (June 1998) is particularly relevant at Policies

ENV20, ENV19 and ENV16.

The NPPF is particularly relevant at paragraph 6, 7, 8, 14, 17, 126, 128 -134,186- 190, 196-197, 215- 216 and Annex 2.

NPPF paragraph 132 states "When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification".

The NPPG is particularly relevant in stating:

Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and effective conservation delivers wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits.

Distinctiveness is what often makes a place special and valued. It relies on physical aspects such as:

*building forms;
details and materials;
style and vernacular.*

A thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset under consideration and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

*The **extent and importance of setting** is often expressed by reference to **visual considerations**. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our **understanding of the historic relationship between places**.*

Pre application discussions are an opportunity to discuss the design policies, requirements and parameters that will be applied to a site.

The HEPPG is particularly relevant at paragraph 113-122, 142 -143, 149-151, 153, 158-163, 179-180 and 187.

*HEPPG paragraph 180 states "**The junction between new work and the existing fabric needs particular attention, both for its impact on the significance of the existing asset and the impact on the contribution of its setting**. Where possible it is preferable for new work to be reversible, so that changes can be undone without harm to historic fabric".*

*HEPPG paragraph 151 states "**Features such as tool marks, carpenters' marks, smoke blackening, decorative painting, pargetting or sgraffito work are always damaged by sand-blasting and sometimes by painting or other cleaning**, as is exposed timber".*

*HEPPG paragraph 150 states "Even when undertaking repair, care is needed to maintain the integrity of the asset. Some repair techniques, such as the use of **cement-based mortars** in place of softer lime, will **affect the integrity of the existing building and cause permanent damage** to the historic fabric, as well as being visually unsympathetic. Repointing of historic mortar will normally leave the significance of the asset unaffected".*

HEPPG paragraph 179 states *"The fabric will always be an important part of the asset's significance. **Retention of as much historic fabric as possible is therefore a fundamental part of any good alteration or conversion, together with the use of appropriate materials and methods of repair. It is not appropriate to sacrifice old work simply to accommodate the new**"*.

HEPPG paragraph 187 states *"Small-scale features, inside and out, such as historic painting schemes, ornamental plasterwork, carpenters' and **masons' marks**, chimney breasts and stacks, inscriptions and signs, will frequently contribute strongly to a building's significance and removing or obscuring them is likely to affect the asset's significance"*.

HEPPG paragraph 114 states *"The extent and importance of **setting** is often expressed by reference to **visual** considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as ... **spatial associations**; and, by our understanding of the **historic relationship between places**"*.

HEPPG paragraph 163 states *"Restoration involving the stripping-off of later layers of work or **abrasive cleaning is only likely to be acceptable where it can be shown***

that:

- 1. **The later layers are not of significance in themselves.***
- 2. **They are damaging the original and other significant fabric.***
- 3. **By their removal there would be an enhancement to the significance of the building that outweighs the loss of the later addition"***.

Core Strategy Submission version as proposed to be modified is particularly relevant at Policy DME4.

'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment' (English Heritage, 2008) identifies four groups of heritage values: Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal.

Paragraph 91 states:

*"Evidential value, historical values and some aesthetic values, especially artistic ones, are dependent upon a place retaining (to varying degrees) the **actual fabric that has been handed down from the past; but authenticity lies in whatever most truthfully reflects and embodies the values attached to the place (Principle 4.3)**. It can therefore relate to, for example, design or function, as well as fabric. Design values, particularly those associated with landscapes or buildings, may be harmed by losses resulting from disaster or physical decay, **or through ill-considered alteration or accretion**"*.

Paragraph 128 states:

"The concept of authenticity demands that proposals for restoration always require particularly careful justification. Reinstating damaged elements of work directly created by the hand of an artist normally runs counter to the idea of authenticity and integrity".

Paragraph 130 states:

*"The heritage values of the elements that would be restored decisively outweigh the values of those that would be lost - **Any restoration inevitably removes or obscures part of the record of past change to a significant place, and so reduces its evidential value, as***

well as potentially affecting its historical and aesthetic values. Restoration may, however, bring gains by revealing other heritage values, such as the integrity and quality of an earlier and more important phase in the evolution of a place, which makes a particular contribution to its significance. Careful assessment of the values of the elements affected is essential. Where the significance of a place is the result of centuries of change, restoration to some earlier stage in its evolution is most unlikely to meet this criterion".

'Constructive Conservation in Practice' (English Heritage, 2008) states "Constructive Conservation is the broad term adopted by English Heritage for a positive and collaborative approach to conservation that focuses on actively managing change.

The aim is to recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the changes necessary to ensure their continued use and enjoyment ...

... The Principles also underline the importance of a systematic and consistent approach to conservation. In order to provide this consistency, we are guided by a values-based approach to assessing heritage significance".

English Heritage state that whilst **'The Setting of Heritage Assets'** (English Heritage, October 2011) contains references that are now out of date, it still contains useful advice and case studies. It is stated that:

'where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting ... consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset'.

'the cumulative impact of incremental small-scale changes may have as great an effect on the setting of a heritage asset as a large-scale development' (4.5).

'A conservation area that includes the settings of a number of listed buildings, for example, will also have its own setting, as will the town in which it is situated. The numbers and proximity of heritage assets in urban areas means that setting is intimately linked to considerations of townscape and urban design'.

'The degree of conscious design or fortuitous beauty in a townscape setting and the degree of visual harmony or congruity it provides will vary, but will always be an important consideration ... where a development in the setting of a heritage asset is designed to be distinctive or dominant and, as a result, it causes harm to the asset's significance, there will need to be justification for that harm'.

The **'Building in Context Toolkit: New Development in Historic Areas'** (CABE, EH, the architecture centre) identifies 8 building in context principles.

The Ribchester Conservation Area Management Guidance (The Conservation Studio consultants; subject to public consultation) states:

'Stone cleaning: All stone cleaning techniques have an inherent risk of damaging the stone and must be selected and executed with care.

Cleaning may sometimes be desirable to prevent the harm caused by corrosive dirt or to reveal where problems are hidden by encrustations. However, **cleaning is less justifiable for aesthetic reasons alone, and consideration must be given to its impact on the historic character of the building (e.g. loss of 'the patina of age') especially if located in a terrace.**

Cleaning with water and bristle brushes is the simplest method, although water cleaning can lead to saturation of the walls.

Abrasive cleaning methods, including blasting of any kind, are likely to cause damage and should only be used where the necessary skills are available to carry out the work without harming the stonework. Techniques that use hand-held and mechanical tools with carborundum heads, rotary brushes and abrasive blocks should be considered as a resurfacing technique rather than a cleaning method.

Prior to cleaning, a sample panel(s) in an unobtrusive location should be prepared to ascertain the suitability of the technique and the effect on the fabric, character and appearance of the building.

'Masonry Decay: Dealing with the Erosion of Sandstone' (Historic Scotland, 2005) states "stone cleaning should be generally avoided or, if it is thought necessary, it should be carried out to the most stringent standards and in the least damaging manner".

The Conservation, Repair and Management of War Memorials (English Heritage/War Memorials Trust, 2014) contains generic information on stone cleaning and states:

"Sandstone - A sedimentary rock found most commonly in the north and west of England. It varies considerably in texture, durability and colour ... These differences in appearance and behaviour derive from the way in which different grains (mainly quartz but also clay, feldspar, mica and glauconite) are bound together by the natural cement of the stone (mostly quartz but also calcite and iron compounds). The mineral content and the type of cement give rise to the geological terminology such as argillaceous sandstone (containing significant amounts of clay) or calcareous sandstone (quartz bound together by calcite) ... Although many sandstones appear durable, they are susceptible to weathering and deterioration (page 17).

Cleaning - Stone is vulnerable to inappropriate cleaning processes that lead to the pores of the surface being exposed; this allows pollutants to collect and microbiological growths to become established. The cleaning process might have been too aggressive (for example sand blasting), inappropriate for the type of stone (for example chemical cleaning of limestone with acidic-based cleaners) or too frequent (for example regular maintenance using a pressure washer).

Pointing - Cement mortars were often used in the past, but these tend to be hard and impervious. They will tend to crack and encourage moisture movement through the adjacent stone rather than through the pointing; this can lead to accelerated decay of the stone (page 30)

Reasons for cleaning - Cleaning is a complex issue. It involves both aesthetic and technical considerations and should be viewed as a major intervention. For this reason, it is important to seek the advice of a qualified conservator or other conservation specialist ... As a general rule, memorials should be cleaned primarily for technical reasons – for example to remove soiling which is causing damage to the historic material or to allow further treatment to be carried out. The aim of cleaning is not to return the memorial to a 'like new' appearance, but to safely remove particulate deposits, staining and biological growths ... An appropriate cleaning strategy is one that uses the mildest and least damaging methods to achieve the desired cleaning effect, while minimising any alteration of the underlying material. The method should be controllable (both in practical and health and safety terms) and must not deposit by-products (for example detergents) that cannot be completely removed ... However, even quite gentle regular cleaning of stonework can result in increased exposure of the surface pores of the stone; this provides a suitable location for pollutants to collect and biological growth

to take root. As a result, the memorial gets dirtier more quickly and a more frequent cycle of cleaning can become established

... Appropriate cleaning requires correct evaluation of:

the nature of the material, eg the mineralogy of the stone, the type of metal

the condition of the material

the nature and extent of soiling

the biodiversity and importance of biological growth including lichens, mosses and algae, some of which are protected by law

Initial cleaning trials, carried out in a discreet part of the memorial, are essential, not only to demonstrate the effectiveness of the options but to manage expectations by showing what result cleaning can achieve. The least abrasive and invasive methods should be trialled first before resorting to more aggressive methods. In practice, more than one method may be appropriate for different types of soiling and substrate ... In all cases, operatives must have experience of using the methods, equipment or chemicals on weathered historic surfaces because inappropriate cleaning can cause irreversible damage".

"Graffiti on Historic Buildings and Monuments: Methods of Removal and Prevention" (English Heritage, 1999) is also of interest.

"Masonry Cleaning: Nebulous Spray" (Ian Constantinides and Lynne Humphries in Building Conservation, 2003) states:

"it appeals to building owners since their investment is readily seen. However, focusing on the aesthetic benefits of cleaning does risk overlooking the cause of the soiling and ignoring the history of the building. Cleaning has become one of the most controversial aspects of conservation, raising fundamental questions. Is it always necessary or even beneficial? Are we too ready to clean? Many buildings have been damaged by cleaning in the past, and even the most appropriate cleaning techniques can be harmful. Arguably the most beneficial aspects of cleaning are to reveal the condition of the building where the dirt may have concealed cracks or structural faults and to slow down deterioration by removing damaging materials ... It may be that the soiling causes stone deterioration or decay, or reduces the permeability of the substrate; or it may simply appear as an unsightly surface discoloration. Over time architectural surfaces build up a patina that is due in part to airborne particles, weathering cycles and the mineralogy of the stone itself. Unlike surface dirt, the patina does not simply lie across the surface of the stone but is combined to varying depths within the masonry, be it stone, brick or terracotta. Although not necessarily damaging in itself, removing this layer detracts from the historic interest of the original and may expose a weaker substrate to decay. Another consequence of removing the build-up of patinas or encrustations is the potential mobilisation of minerals beneath the stone surface, leading to discolouration".

"Air/Water Abrasive Cleaning of Stone and Brickwork" (Nicola Ashurst, in Building Conservation, 1996) states:

"The decision to clean an historic building is not one which should be made lightly, as cleaning can have significant physical and visual results. A period of detailed investigation must be undertaken to determine whether cleaning should be undertaken and, if so, the details of how this should be done. The nature and condition of all substrates must be understood, not forgetting pointing materials, as must the soiling to be removed. The latter may include atmospheric soiling, paint, limewash, metallic staining, anti-pigeon gel and graffiti. Each can require a different cleaning approach or at least modifications to the system selected for use elsewhere

... The design of a cleaning regime for an historic building is often deceptively complex, requiring specialist professional input

... This can be difficult to achieve due to the intimate relationship between the stone and its soiling, as the soiling can be embedded deeply in between the surface particles

... Air abrasive cleaning techniques are most successful on surfaces of even profile and consistent surface texture and hardness. An air abrasive stream cannot on its own differentiate between the removal of soiling and the removal of masonry. Nor can it distinguish portions of masonry which are closer to the nozzle from those further away or areas of masonry which are softer. Damage to the masonry can only be avoided through the skill and ability of the operator to make the necessary adjustments in technique"

'Stone Replacement' (M. Coulson in Building Conservation, 2007) states:

"Perhaps the first question to be asked is: why are we contemplating stone replacement? Is it for purely aesthetic reasons? If so, we should seriously question our motives. Remember, we are dealing with fabric that is of historic and/or architectural importance, and therefore a vital element of the building's record. With replacement, the patina of age will be lost, leaving a sometimes stark reminder, maybe for years to come, that this is new stone."

Normally the only reason stone should be replaced is because it has failed, compromising the structural integrity of the building".

'The Need for Old Buildings to Breathe' (Philip Hughes, SPAB, 1993) states:

"modern buildings will be damp without a barrier to moisture because the economy of design does not provide a massive and absorbent structure, but old buildings will become damp if an impervious layer is applied to them because this prevents water within the structure from evaporating ... as the moisture content of the wall increases, the likelihood of decay also increases. Timbers quickly succumb to wet or dry rot attack because their moisture content is too high. Timbers often occur in solid masonry walls in the form of lintels, spreaders for beam or joist ends, as bonding timbers or as fixing blocks

... Remedial action should ideally involve the removal of any impervious materials and their replacement with porous ones. This is not always possible without doing further damage to the fabric of the building

... Where walls have been mistreated in any of the ways mentioned, it is essential they are kept as dry and as well ventilated as possible. Water must not be allowed to enter the top of the wall or behind the impervious material".

'Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Application of Part L of the Building Regulations to Historic and Traditionally Constructed Buildings' (EH, March 2011) states:

"Breathability may sound simple, but the actual behaviour of liquid water and water vapour, and their effects on other aspects of the performance of both the building envelope and the internal environment, can in reality be very complex" (page 29).

The now defunct 'Guidance on alterations to listed buildings' (Annex C to PPG 15 1994) stated:

"alterations to wall surfaces are usually the most damaging that can be made to the overall appearance of a historic building"

"cleaning can have a marked effect on the character of buildings, but also because cleaning processes can affect the historic fabric. The cleaning of a building within a homogeneous terrace would obviously affect the appearance of the terrace as a whole".

The now defunct 'Best Practice Guidance on Listed Building Prosecutions' (CLG, 2006) stated:

"The options open to a local authority – enforcement enables an authority to require remediation of unauthorised works to a listed building to either bring a building either back to its former state or, where that is not practical or desirable, to alleviate the unauthorised works. The focus of enforcement action is clearly the building itself. Prosecutions, meanwhile, cannot remediate the building but will, where appropriate, both punish a perpetrator of unauthorised works and act as a deterrent, both to others and to the commission of repeat offences".

APP/T2350/A/06/2028551 (February 2007) – 45 Church Street, Ribchester

*"Ribchester is an attractive small town with Roman and pre-Roman antecedents. Church Street, at the heart of the town, leads down to the bank of the River Ribble and is **characterized by terraces of modest houses**. Typically they are built of stone under slate roofs and **although some have been marred by the incorporation of unsuitable modern features, they form an harmonious and attractive whole, whose character has not been seriously eroded"***

APP/T2350/F/09/2094978 – 20 Church Street, Ribchester (Grade II listed) is prescient:

"The appeal is allowed ... whereas the front elevation of the row of houses, and those of other houses to both sides, is well preserved, the rear elevation has been seriously eroded".

Mike Harlow, Governance and Legal Director, English Heritage (in 'Legal Developments' Conservation Bulletin Issue 71: Winter 2013) states: *"Planning decisions are all about balanced judgment, but in that exercise there must be a sense of the weight society, through parliament, wishes to place on an objective like heritage conservation. The protection of listed buildings and conservation areas is clearly regarded as highly important, and that obviously should not be forgotten, out of respect for the democratic will as well as the law".*

Submitted information

Whilst retrospective, the submission omits all information concerning building cleaning methodology and implementation - see section 10 (b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The Listed Building Consent Support Statement identifies that re-pointing works have been carried out on a 'like-for-like' basis. This implies that hard cement pointing has been raked out and then replaced with the same.

The Heritage Assessment and Impact Statement quotes LCC (2006) "the terrace of 50-58 Church Street is a of a single main phase of construction, which can tentatively be dated to 1795 by the date stone on no. 56, and all nine cottages are generally considered to have been built for handloom weavers".

The Heritage Assessment and Impact Statement identifies:

"walls are of punch-dressed, coursed sandstone to the front but of less well-finished stone to the gable and rear, and incorporate moulded stone brackets for guttering" (5.1).

"The extension at the south-east gable uses squared sandstone of a very different character, incorporating 'jumpers', and the uniformity of its elevations suggests that this part of the building was at least re-faced, if not re-built in its entirety, during the 1978 work" (5.2).

"Assessment of Heritage Significance – the nature of the heritage significance of 58 Church Street is primarily its position within an essentially intact row of nine terraced cottages built c.1795, which forms an important part of the historic core of Ribchester ... the interior of the cottage is of much lesser importance in defining its designation" (6.1).

"Conclusion – the cottage's significance as a designated heritage asset arises from its being one of a row of nine cottages, built circa 1795 as a group which forms an important part of the village of Ribchester" (7.6).

"Stone Cleaning – with time the stonework of no 58 will regain some of its patina" (7.1).

Conclusions

Cleaning has resulted in the stonework looking new (compounded by modern pointing) and 58 Church Street being conspicuous in the listed row and the street scene (even in comparison to Nos. 55 and 57 which a photograph from the early 1990s shows have been cleaned). This has harmed the integrity of No. 58 (built 1795) and the setting of every cottage in the contemporaneously built row (particularly No. 56 – the eye is now drawn to No.58 rather than the former's distinctive door case and dated plaque).

In considering NPPF paragraph 132, I note that no justification or explanation is made for the harmful works other than a hope that "with time the stonework of No 58 will regain some of its patina". The absence of a cleaning methodology does not assure me that there has not been permanent damage to the fabric of the building (exposure of the surface pores of the stone; by-product deposition; mobilisation of minerals beneath the stone surface). The absence of a conservation philosophy does not assure me that the intentionally rigorous restoration considerations above have been examined. I would also concur with English Heritage that *"it is impossible to understand the impact that the changes have had on the significance of the building as the significance assessment appears to have been made after the works were implemented"*.

The Heritage Statement suggests that 'recent' cleaning has led to a loss of row uniformity. However, a comparison of the early 1990s photographs (apparently taken soon after the cleaning of Nos. 55 and 57 and which shows their stark appearance similar to that of No.58 today) with the present façade shows that much of row uniformity had been regained in the last quarter century and I note the comments of the Planning Inspector at 45 Church Street (*"harmonious and attractive whole, whose character has not been seriously eroded"*). Unfortunately, the cleaning of No. 58 has undermined and set back this lengthy process.

In my opinion, any public benefit (contractor employment; NPPF paragraph 134 and consideration of less than substantial harm) resulting from the works does not outweigh the harm to the listed buildings and Ribchester Conservation Area.

I am mindful of the comments of Ribchester Parish Council and note the information contained within the Ribchester Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Guidance, the applicant's decision not to seek pre-application advice in respect of works to the listed building and the possible considerations for local authorities when unauthorised works cannot be undone, remediated or alleviated. I am also mindful of English Heritage that *"this is a potentially serious matter punishable by law"* and note that English Heritage *"support the local authority in any further action they deem necessary to resolve this problem"*.

In attaching considerable importance and weight to the statutory duties at section 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I would therefore recommend that listed building consent be refused.

RECOMMENDATION: That listed building consent be refused.