

58 CHURCH STREET, RIBCHESTER, LANCASHIRE, PR3 3YE:

HERITAGE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF LBC APPLICATION FOR INTERNAL WORKS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been produced to support an application to Ribble Valley Borough Council for listed building consent at 58 Church Street, by the owners Mr & Mrs Hindle, via their agent Janet Dixon Town Planners Ltd. It provides a summary of the significance of the heritage asset (a grade II listed building, within the Ribchester Conservation Area), and its setting, together with an assessment of the potential impact of the proposals on that significance, in accordance with Paragraph 128 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* and has been produced by Stephen Haigh MA, a buildings archaeologist with over 15 years professional experience in the region, following a site visit on 25 April 2014.
- 1.2 The present listed building consent application is in part retrospective and includes the following proposals:
- the removal of partitioning forming an entrance lobby and the formation of a new entrance lobby;
 - the removal of a staircase leading from the ground floor to the first floor and the insertion of a new staircase;
 - repairs to the previously severed ground floor ceiling beam and the removal of a previously installed salvaged timber support post to the ceiling beam;
 - the removal of partitioning at first floor, installation of non-original partitioning to allow for the formation of a revised room layout;
 - the removal of a recently installed staircase leading from the first floor to the attic floor.
- 1.3 The present application follows the carrying out of some internal works within the last year by the present applicants, who at that time did not appreciate the need for listed building consent to be obtained. Work at the site has now ceased, pending the outcome of this and another listed building consent application. An earlier application for internal works (3/2014/0552) was refused on 12 August, so the proposals have been revised to take account of that decision, a consultation response from English Heritage, the planning authority's delegated item report, and subsequent discussions between the council's Principal Planning Officer (Conservation & Design) and the applicants' agent.

2 Identified heritage assets

2.1 The building has been listed since 1983, at grade II with Group Value, as part of 50-58 Church Street, which comprises a row of nine terraced houses on the east side of Church Street in the centre of Ribchester (National Heritage List no: 1072260). The statutory description reads:

Row of houses, late C18th. Squared sandstone with slate roofs and brick chimney caps. 2 storeys. Each house of one bay, with a door to the right. All the windows are modern, those to nos. 53-56 having plain stone surrounds, those to nos.57 and 58 having plain reveals. The doors have plain stone surrounds, except that to no.57, which has plain reveals. The ground-floor window surround to no.54 is wide and possibly reconstructed. No.55 has an additional ground-floor window to the left, with plain reveals, possibly in a former tunnel doorway. No.56 has a doorcase with fluted pilasters, fluted frieze and open pediment on console brackets. Above is a plaque dated '1795'.

2.2 The building also lies within the Ribchester Conservation Area, designated in 1973.



3 Setting

3.1 The property lies within the historic core of Ribchester on one of the village's main thoroughfares, which is dominated by broadly similar terraced houses of two or three storeys, many of which were built as weavers' cottages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though there are also some larger and more modern houses in the vicinity. No 58 forms the south-east end cottage in a row of nine, and faces south-west. There is a side street next to the property with a former barn across a small yard to the rear, now much altered and in use as an electricity sub-station.

4 Historical background

- 4.1 There was a significant Roman fort and settlement at Ribchester but thereafter the village was generally of much diminished importance, until the late eighteenth century when its economic fortunes flourished as a result of the success of the domestic handloom weaving of cotton, although in 1773 it was still described as a “poor village”.
- 4.2 The terrace of 50-58 Church Street is 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 at that time, on a rising tide of prosperity brought by the growth of the textile industry in the region¹.
- 4.3 No. 58 has been extended at its south-east gable by the addition of two storeys. Although map evidence indicates there was a structure in this position by 1892, the external appearance of the present extension suggests that it was largely or entirely rebuilt *circa* 1978, when Building Regulations approval and a Housing Improvement Grant award were awarded for its heightening to two storeys, partly to accommodate a bathroom. That work, and other changes to the earlier part of the building undertaken at that time, were carried out as Permitted Development².

5 Description of the house

- 5.1 The original part of 58 Church Street comprises a single cottage, one bay wide and on two storeys, with attic. 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 (now redundant), above which are timber fascia boards. Comparison with other members of the terrace shows that the two front window openings have been much altered: formerly they would have been lower in height, and they were probably changed to their present forms in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. At the rear, the ground floor French doors were evidently introduced in the 1978 alterations, but the first floor window opening appears unaltered. The present blue slate roof and brick chimney are also the result of alterations: a stone slate covering on a slightly less steep pitch would have existed formerly (as can be seen from inside the roof space), which accounts for the redundant gutter brackets to the front.

¹ Lancashire County Council and Egerton Lea Consultancy 2006 *Ribchester: Lancashire Historic Town Survey Programme, Historic Town Assessment Report 2006*

² Planning application 3/77/0975/P

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The interior of the original house is divided into a larger, heated front room and a smaller, unheated back room on both ground and first floors, though parts of the brick dividing walls (perhaps non-original) have been removed in previous alterations. The front ground floor room has a fireplace opening with stone surround (of indeterminate date), and a fireplace can also be inferred on the first floor, though there the fireplace was removed in 1977. Original spine beams over the front rooms carry the upper floors, and there is a second pair of historic beams at right angles to these, in the rear ground floor room.
- 5.4 Until the recent alterations the staircase was situated within the rear room and its position and gradient can still be seen within the adjacent plastered wall; this is also its position on the 1977 existing survey drawing and possibly was its original position, though it is understood that the one removed was not the original structure, and so probably a 1978 replacement. It was evidently steep and probably quite simple in construction, perhaps without risers, though exact details are not known.
- 5.5 The addition of the extension in two phases means that four openings have been inserted in the original south-east gable: the earliest of these, from the living room, was blocked and the other three inserted in 1978.
- 5.6 The attic comprises a single, unheated room whose floor joists and boards have been replaced in the present alterations. The historic means of access to it is not known: no stairs are shown on the 1977 plan. Aspects of the historic roof structure are visible within this space (purlins and some original rafters in the rear pitch), along with a small blocked opening to the gable, but otherwise it lacks features of interest.

6 Assessment of heritage significance

- 6.1 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. However, although the historic origins and character of this group are readily apparent, the uniformity of the original design for the row (with the exception of no 56) has been much eroded over time, and in particular the extension of no. 58 at its south-east gable, in two phases of work, has contributed to this diminution.

- 6.2 Aspects of the interior also contribute to the heritage significance of the building, despite the 1977 changes, which included changes to circulation within the original dwelling, in part associated with the building's extension. The significant aspects include the plan form, with its division into front and back rooms (still discernible despite the removal of part of the dividing walls), and the location of the staircase within the rear ground floor room. The pair of first floor beams are also an essential component of the plan form and structure.

7 Impact statement

Removal of partitioning forming an entrance lobby and the formation of a new entrance lobby

- 7.1 The entrance lobby appears to have been a twentieth century insertion and its reconstruction would be neutral as regards any impact on heritage significance.

Removal of a staircase leading from the ground floor to the first floor and the insertion of a new staircase

- 7.2 The replacement of the previous staircase by the present unauthorised one undoubtedly had a negative impact on the internal space and its historic plan form, so it is proposed to re-site the new stair further back into the ground floor space, much closer to its historic position, which would also allow repairs to the severed beam overhead (see below). This would not be an attempt to restore or recreate the historic stair, as modern standards impose a need for a less steep gradient, and risers and steps to reflect modern day safety and building regulations requirements.

Repairs to the previously severed ground floor ceiling beam and the removal of a previously installed salvaged timber support post to the ceiling beam

- 7.3 It is accepted that the unauthorised severing of the ceiling beam had an obvious negative impact on the fabric and internal space of the heritage asset, and it is proposed to piece-in a repair to restore the beam to its original length, spanning the room. This would reduce the impact of this aspect of the unauthorised work to the minimum now achievable.

Removal of partitioning at first floor, and installation of non-original partitioning to allow for the formation of a revised room layout

- 7.4 The unauthorised removal of some elements of partitioning from the first floor has had a slight effect on the plan form but it is likely, although impossible to prove, that these were relatively modern elements inserted to give privacy to the rear bedroom, which was probably not a concern when the cottage was built. Some new partitioning is now proposed to give additional privacy regarding access to the bathroom within the extension, in line with modern standards, and the minor effect this would have on historic plan form is considered fully justified on this basis.

Removal of a recently installed staircase leading from the first floor to the attic floor

- 7.5 There is no evidence for there having been a second staircase prior to 1977/8, and that removed during the unauthorised work was evidently very modern, and of poor quality construction; its removal therefore has a positive impact on the building's significance.

Stephen Haigh, MA
31 October 2014