



Design and Access / HERITAGE STATEMENT

The Heathers, Sawley, Lancashire, BB7 4LE

This design and access / heritage statement is prepared in relation to the proposed alterations to The Heathers, Sawley.

This report uses analysis recommended by Historic England and considers the proposal in relation to relevant planning policy.

This heritage statement has been compiled by Jane Leach, an experienced architect and registrant on the Royal Institute of British Architects Conservation Register.

The Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets, suggests 5 steps for proportionate decision making in relation to heritage assets:

1. Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected
2. Assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset
3. Assess the effects for the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance
4. Explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm
5. Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes

This statement will look at the first four of these.

Proposed Works

The works proposed to The Heathers include the following:

1. Demolition of the garage and entrance hall that connects it to the main house.
2. Alterations to existing doors and windows including: The high level window to the front elevation at ground floor level, the small window to the side elevation at first floor level, the kitchen door to the side elevation at ground floor, the rooflight to the front elevation, new window to the rear elevation at the lower ground level.
3. Construction of a replacement entrance, garage/gym and open plan living room on a larger footprint than the current garage and entrance hall, including glass canopy to entrance door, sliding folding doors to the rear, glazed garage doors to the front, glazed entrance door to the front, and using a contrasting material to the existing white render.

Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected

In this case the primary wider heritage asset and setting is Sawley Conservation Area, and the most significant heritage asset is the nearby grade-I listed Cistercian Abbey ruins.

The property The Heathers is itself not a heritage asset.

Sawley Conservation Area is a village that developed in relation to Sawley Abbey.

The village has more of an arterial structure as a growth of buildings along the roads leading to the abbey, rather than a village with a central focal point.

The historic character of Sawley is of rubblestone built simple forms with sandstone pitched roofs, vertical or square format windows with plain lintols and cills. There is very little decoration. Some properties are rendered.

The Heathers sits on the main road on the opposite side to the abbey. It is part of a stretch of relatively modern buildings, which are mostly large detached properties of varying styles, materials, and building lines. These buildings are not in keeping with the historic buildings in the area and are clearly modern developments.

There are many mature trees and shrubs in front of these more modern properties along the main road, which obscure views of these properties and contribute to the rural character of this streetscene. They are also set back from the roadside behind generous front gardens, which also reduces the dominance of these properties.

Assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset

The primary heritage asset is the Grade-I Abbey ruins, which is also a scheduled monument. There are other listed and notable buildings spread along the arterial routes to the abbey. While it is the green and open nature of the conservation area which characterizes the village as a whole, especially the trees.

As mentioned in the conservation area appraisal, there is some regret noted from architectural historians about the existing modern properties on the main street. They are considered to detract from the setting of the abbey. However, since they are now existing, these relatively modern buildings could be chosen to be celebrated and considered an interesting contrast to the historic setting.

These modern homes represent our contemporary lives and building styles and with the fullness of time will become part of our rich history. They are also largely screened by mature trees and set back from the road with generous front gardens, which does limit the visual dominance and impact of these modern properties on the streetscene.

In the case of The Heathers, this property is one of the development of modern properties considered to be detrimental to the conservation area and the setting of the abbey.

The Heathers is a relatively modern property built in the 1960's or 70's. It is typical of its era, in that it uses large expanses of horizontal glazing. It has an unusual form that in some ways mirrors the long building as a long block built perpendicularly to the main road, but instead of a simple roof pitching across the short width, like the long building, the roof is pitched to mirror the slope of the site down to the river. This unusual choice of roof pitch serves to reduce it's visual impact on the street as well as creating opportunities for valley views from the upper floor.

The building has a white rendered finish, with a grey concrete roof tile. The windows are white UPVc and there are some panels of white UPVc panelling. The overall form is relatively simple and undecorated which is reflective of the historic character of Sawley, so although this is obviously a modern property it is not completely out of character in all respects.

To the front of The Heathers the facade appears very closed. On the ground floor there are two high level windows, and the only larger window is to the dormer. There are also rooflights set within the pitch of the roof. The glazed entrance is tucked in at the side of the garage and gives a glimpsed view through the building to the valley beyond.

Assess the effects for the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance

The conservation area appraisal gives no guidelines or recommendations about new developments or alterations to the modern properties within the area. The report is largely focused on treatment of the existing historic properties and landmarks and protection of those.

Given this lack of guidance we have made our own considered approach for a design that closely matches and enhances the existing property, while not adding to the detriment of these modern properties to the conservation area as a whole.

The alterations are mainly to the existing garage and linking area. The replacement form is very similar to the existing and only marginally larger in footprint and as a result also in height to the ridge.

The addition of the chimney is the most significant change visually in form, but it is a relatively small element if tall. It needs a height of 600mm higher than the adjacent house in order to meet building regulations requirements. The height shown on the drawings is indicative of this height. As drawn it is the same height as The Heathers ridge on the main part of the existing building.

To create more visual interest we have explored alternative material finishes to the newbuild portion of the property. To create a low maintenance contrast with the existing white render we have proposed a Dark grey blue facing brick, the Staffordshire Blue Ketley Brick, which is very similar to the existing brick used as a plinth below the render up to DPC level to the existing building. Using darker and cooler colours has a receding effect, which will limit the visual impact of this on the streetscene.

Since the new garage is intended to also function as habitable space as a home-gym, the garage doors are proposed to be glazed instead of solid garage doors. This will make the front of the house feel more open, along with the replacement glazed front door with glass canopy over, which retains the glimpse through to the back, and the larger window to the new hallway and larger rooflight to the first floor study. These changes will make the front of the property feel less closed off and blank and create a slightly more open facade. These changes are visually very minor and subtle and will create more of a sense of openness, without being a dramatic change.

Explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

The proposals have been carefully considered as part of a programme of works to improve the quality of the accommodation provided within the home, so that it can better support a modern family lifestyle. Although this property is a relatively modern property it was built over half a century ago and contemporary lifestyles have changed since.

We have looked at ways to enhance the property in a way that minimises detriment.

The existing garage is proposed to be replaced by a similar form with a slightly larger footprint. The scale and roof form is similar to the existing.

The front of the garage is brought forward in line with the front of the neighbouring house, and the roof follows the existing roof pitch, which necessarily makes part of the ridge marginally higher than the existing. However, the increased scale of the new-build is not significantly noticeable as an increase from the main street.

The alterations to existing doors and windows are equally modest and similar in style to the existing property. Whilst visible, these minor alterations will have a relatively subtle effect on the appearance of the property from the main street and therefore on its impact, detrimental or otherwise, to the character of the village.

The Staffordshire Blue bricks that are proposed as the external finish to the new-build portion is likely to be the biggest noticeable visual change from the main street. These bricks are very similar to the existing bricks at plinth level below the render to the existing property, so they are in harmony with the existing and the texture and contrasting colour will enhance rather than detract from the view of this property.

The additional chimney is also a more noticeable addition since it is tall, but it is necessarily this height in relation to the neighbouring property, and since its height is relative to the neighbouring property that fact helps tie it in visually rather than it being a jarring new addition.

Since, as already mentioned, these modern properties are considered detrimental as they are, but there are no guidelines for how to treat alterations to them, so we suggest that these alterations are in harmony with the existing property and don't alter the buildings visually significantly enough to represent any additional detriment to the heritage assets.