

Heritage statement to support planning application

for addition of solar panels to roof

at Rushton House, Lower Chapel Lane, Grindleton

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement supports a retrospective planning application to Ribble Valley Borough Council for the addition of 14 flush-mounted solar panels to the south-east roof pitch of Rushton House, which lies within the Grindleton conservation area. It has been written by Stephen Haigh MA, on the instruction of the applicant Mr Cann, and a site visit was made by the writer on 25 October 2023.
- 1.2 This statement provides an assessment of significance for Rushton House (including any contribution it makes to the conservation area), and the potential impact of the development on it.

2 Planning background

- 2.1 An earlier application for 16 frame-mounted solar panels was refused on 29 September 2023 (ref: 3/2023/0297).
- 2.2 One reason for refusal was that "*The proposal would introduce a prominent, incongruous and unsympathetic form of development into the existing street scene that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Grindleton Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. There are no public benefits identified that would outweigh the harm caused. As such, the proposal fails to meet the requirements of Key Statement EN5 and Policy DME4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*"

3 Location and setting

- 3.1 The application property is a detached house standing within the junction between Lower Chapel Lane and Main Street, within the village and civil parish of Grindleton. The NGR is SD 75818 45808.

- 3.2 The house is set back from the highway on all sides and faces south-east onto its own garden, which is enclosed from Main Street by a stone boundary wall surmounted by established hedges. The boundary wall continues along part of the rear, where there is also an open forecourt used for parking.
- 3.3 The nearest neighbouring properties are 2-8 Lower Chapel Lane, comprising a short modern terrace; the nearest properties to the south-east are Crossfold Cottage and Crossfold House, approximately 50m away.

4 Heritage status

- 4.1 Rushton House lies within the Grindleton conservation area, designated in 1974, and the subject of a 2005 character appraisal¹. It is not identified as a "building of townscape merit" in the appraisal, nor is it listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

5 The application building

- 5.1 Rushton House is dated to 1851 on a plaque over the front² entrance, also inscribed with "K & A Rushton", obviously the two individuals who gave it its name. However, as the Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 map of 1850³ shows a building on the site, the 1851 date might possibly refer to alterations rather than the initial construction.
- 5.2 The house comprises a main two-storey block set side-on to Main Street and parallel to Lower Chapel Lane, with a three-bay front (on whose roof the solar panels have been installed), and there is two-storey wing adjoining its north-east end (see photo 1, below). This wing has been extended forward in the twentieth century, and has a single garage attached. There is also a small, twentieth century single-storey extension on the south-west gable.
- 5.3 The front of the main block is of deep courses of watershot sandstone and has a central doorway with monolithic jambs bearing a milled finish, over which the date-stone is situated. The four front windows are arranged symmetrically and all appear to have been three-light originally, but to have had their mullions removed and lintels replaced at a higher level in the twentieth century. The roof has a pair of stone gable chimney stacks and stone coping to the gables and ridge. The main covering is of blue slate laid in diminishing courses, which has been partly removed to install the solar panels to the south-east pitch.

¹ The Conservation Studio 2005 *Grindleton Conservation Area Appraisal*

² meaning here the south-east elevation, not the front in planning terms

³ Yorkshire, sheet 182, surveyed 1847

- 5.4 The rear of the main block is limewashed with exposed quoins and has a variety of windows including one to the staircase; the doorway (and everyday entrance) has a twentieth century appearance and bears a cantilevered canopy.

6 The conservation area

- 6.1 According to the character appraisal, the special interest that justifies the designation of the conservation area derives from:
- its highly visible position within the Forest of Bowland AONB, located on a terrace above the River Ribble, where it can be seen from the river and from neighbouring villages;
 - the survival of the medieval (possibly Saxon) street plan, with tenement plots running at right angles to the main street, linked by side alleys to a back road;
 - its important place in non-conformist history as the village that gave birth to the Grindletonian sect in the 1600s;
 - numerous historic buildings, including 17th and 18th century weavers' cottages, given extra height and bigger windows in the 19th century;
 - local details such as wells, farmhouses and barns, a pinfold, stone field boundaries and other reminders of the agricultural history of the village;
 - the close proximity of relatively wild moorland and open fields, which provide a rural setting to the village;
 - panoramic views to Chatburn, on the opposite side of the River Ribble, and to the shoulder and scarp of Pendle Hill.

7 Statement of significance

- 7.1 The pre-twentieth century part of Rushton House is significant for its traditional materials and architectural form, primarily to the front, where the doorway and date-stone are prominent features from within the garden, but concealed from public view. It is one of numerous such houses within the conservation area, most of them arranged in linear fashion along Main Street, where they form an irregular and varied group which has evolved over a number of centuries, up to the present day. Although it has a historic core of 1851 or perhaps earlier, Rushton House was substantially extended and altered in the twentieth century and so its individual significance is much constrained, as borne out by its omission from the list of buildings of townscape merit in the conservation area appraisal.

8 Proposed development

- 8.1 The application is retrospective and seeks permission to retain the 14 solar panels which have been installed to the front pitch of the main block. The panels

take the place of slates and so lie flush with those surrounding them, and all visible parts are black.

9 Impact of proposals

- 9.1 The solar panels are a discreet addition to the house which provides an obvious public benefit in the form of low carbon power generation. They occupy a small proportion of the house's roof area, and leave the traditional form of the ridge and gables intact. They are almost entirely concealed from public view, being only just visible from a limited viewpoint on Main Street, and even here the coursed stonework of the south-west gable is the dominant feature.
- 9.2 The present application differs markedly from the refused one in that it concerns a smaller number of solar panels, which are laid flush and not frame-mounted, so it cannot be said that they would be "prominent, incongruous and unsympathetic".
- 9.3 The slight change of materials to the south-east roof pitch of the house means that the character and appearance of the conservation area have been preserved, and any slight impact on significance is outweighed by the public benefit arising, ie a reduction in carbon emissions. In conclusion, the scheme is considered to be entirely acceptable in terms of its impact on the historic environment.

Stephen Haigh, MA
Buildings Archaeologist
3 November 2023

photographs below



Photo 1: South-east front, from within the private garden



Photo 2: A glimpse of the solar panels, from Main Street