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Heritage statement to support planning application
for the replacement of existing external stairs
at 11 Bridge End, Billington

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement supports a planning application to Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC), for the replacement of existing modern external stairs with a new steel balcony, at 11 Bridge End, Billington. It has been written by Stephen Haigh MA on the instruction of the applicant Ralf Meiklejohn, and a site visit was made by the writer on 20 May 2024.
- 1.2 11 Bridge End is a private dwelling which lies within the Whalley Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (Section 69), conservation areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”, and the local planning authority has a statutory duty to consider this in any relevant application.
- 1.3 The property is also identified as a Building of Townscape Merit within the local planning authority's Conservation Area Appraisal¹, so considered to make “a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area”, and therefore likely to be considered a non-designated heritage asset during consideration of the application.
- 1.4 No other heritage assets are considered relevant to the application, given its location and nature.

2 Location and setting

- 2.1 The site lies at NGR: SD 73231 35894, within Billington civil parish on the north side of Bridge End, about 40m west of Whalley Bridge over the River Calder, and occupies a steeply sloping site close to the river, opposite the grounds of Whalley Abbey on the north bank.
- 2.2 No. 11 forms part of a building containing three dwellings in total (photo 1 below): at street level it appears as a semi-detached house, adjoining no. 9, but the lower floors of the building contain a third dwelling, built back-to-earth. Between

¹ The Conservation Studio, 2005 *Whalley Conservation Area Appraisal*

11 and 15 to the west is an open passage which descends to the rear of the property, and contains the stairs proposed for replacement.

3 The Whalley Conservation Area

- 3.1 The conservation area was designated in 1972 and its special interest can be summarised as deriving in part from its setting on the River Calder, surrounded by rolling hills. Whalley is a small town with something of a rural character, built around a former Cistercian abbey, and with other parts of its historic core built along the main thoroughfare (King Street, which becomes Whalley Road beyond the bridge).
- 3.2 The identification of the building as being of townscape merit is made only on the Townscape Appraisal Map, and no reference to it or the group at Bridge End in which it stands is made in the written part of the appraisal.

4 Historical background

- 4.1 Historic Ordnance Survey maps suggest that the building dates from the period between the 1840s and 1890s.

5 The application building

- 5.1 The front of the house is faced with random sandstone rubble, and has a traditional stone cornice serving as rainwater guttering, but the three openings have modern, sawn sandstone surrounds which contrast with those in the adjoining dwelling at no. 9 (photo 2). The rear of the building is similar to the front in that it is random sandstone with most openings having modern lintels, but it is interesting to note that the north-west corner has toothed quoins, suggesting the building once continued further in this direction or was planned to do so.
- 5.2 The passage entrance to the west is formed by a stone wall with arched doorway through; the passage descends steeply along the side of the house via stone stairs, now largely concealed by a modern timber platform and stairs, which give access down to the garden close to the river bank, and project slightly beyond the rear elevation (photos 3 & 4). The platform at the top is served by a modern doorway in the side of the house, which itself is coated with modern roughcast render.

6 Proposed development

- 6.1 It is proposed to remove the existing timber platform and staircase, and a new steel platform enclosed by railings would be erected in their place, to enable use of the side doorway from the house. The platform would be set well back from the rear elevation, and would not impose on a window within the side of the neighbouring house (no. 15). The historic stone steps would be made good, and would be brought back into use as the means of access within the passage from the street down to the rear of the property.

7 Statement of significance

- 7.1 The application property forms one of a small group of stone-built houses at Bridge End, close to the edge of Whalley, mostly dating from the late 19th century. The different parts of the group vary in their architectural details, but all are built on a steep slope with their frontages facing south onto Whalley Road, where they display some degree of formality. Their rear elevations face north, and are much plainer architecturally, but are distinguished by their much greater height. Their significance is attributable to their grouping here, and to their varied, traditional stone exteriors with slated roofs, with a few architectural details to the street front.

8 Impact of proposal

- 8.1 The proposal is very small and arguably trivial in scale, but the removal of the existing timber stairs and replacement by the steel platform would slightly enhance significance of the buildings of townscape merit and the conservation area, as the timber stairs currently protrude beyond the rear elevation, whereas the proposed steelwork would be set back from that. Its black painted finish also means it would not be visually intrusive.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 The proposed scheme would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, and no harm to designated or non-designated heritage assets would result, so it is entirely acceptable insofar as any impact on the historic environment is concerned.

Stephen Haigh, MA
Buildings Archaeologist
23 May 2024



Photo 1: The group at Bridge End, north side of Whalley Road



Photo 2: 11 Bridge End: front elevation, with entrance to side passage at left



Photo 3: Rear of the group, facing north towards the river. Arrow points to existing staircase



Photo 4: Present staircase proposed for removal and replacement with recessed platform

