
BOWLAND SURVEYORS LTD.

Cross Trees, 6 Whalley Road, Hurst Green. BB7 9QJ

Heritage appraisal and heritage impact assessment for the replacement of internal timber stairs (retrospective listed building consent application).

Produced by Daniel L Noblett B.Sc. (hons) M.Sc. (Bldg.Cons) AssocRICS.

24 January 2025 | Reference: 2024-77 | Version 3.0

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report concerns the retention of a replacement stair and alterations to a doorway lintel within 6 Whalley Road which is a grade II listed building. These works were undertaken in 2018 without listed building consent. Whilst harm is minimal and the works adequately justified, the owner now seeks to regularise the works with a retrospective listed building consent application.

1.2 To summarise, the stair was replaced because it was in poor condition with loose treads and risers of unequal heights making the stairs precarious to navigate. In addition, there is a doorway at half height on the stair which was poorly detailed which made use of it within the stairwell unsafe. The design of the new stair has been altered slightly and the doorway head height increased to ameliorate these issues.

1.3 The replacement stair and lintel alteration are of high quality workmanship and it is not immediately obvious without close inspection that these works have been undertaken. In my view, whilst the building has been altered and there has been a loss of historic fabric, the heritage interest for which the building was listed has been preserved and harm is negligible. Moreover, the works were required to replace a deteriorated and unsafe part of the building and as such can be considered essential repairs.

1.4 The building was listed in 1983 at grade II. (LEN 1072305) and is described by Historic England as a *Row of 3 cottages, late C18th. Squared sandstone with stone slate roof. 2 storeys. Windows and doors have plain reveals. All the cottages are separated by straight joints, which suggests that No. 6 (at the left) is the earliest. No. 6 has a wooden porch. To the left is a sashed window. To the right is a casement in what is probably a blocked doorway. Further right is another sashed window. On the 1st floor are 2 sashed windows. No. 4 has a sash window to the right of its door with a similar window above on the 1st floor. No. 2 has a bow window to the right of its door, with a modern window above on the 1st floor. The chimneys are between the cottages and on the gables¹.*

¹ NHLE entry: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1072305?section=comments-and-photos>

2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS & HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The property comprises an end terrace at the eastern end of a row of three adjoined and similar cottages. The property is built from coursed gritstone blocks to its roadside elevation, random rubble stonework to its gable and rendered masonry to the rear. The roof is covered with stone slates. To the front elevation is a small, open-fronted timber porch and to the gable is a modern single-storey extension which replaced an older similar structure. The property has been extended to the rear also with the addition of a second pile.

2.2 As per the listing description, the building likely once stood on its own, with the cottages to the west added at a later date. Regressive mapping indicates little alteration aside from the modern addition of the gable extension and the porch since the mid-C19. In addition, the presence of what is likely a blocked doorway to the right of the existing front door suggests that number 6 was once two small cottages, each with a single room on the ground and first floors.

2.3 The planning history available on the RVBC website is set out below.

3/2023/0611 Listed building consent for proposed single-storey extension to rear, insertion of roof lights on rear roof slope and removal of internal wall. Refused.

3/2023/0612 [as above] Planning application for proposed single-storey extension to rear and insertion of roof lights on rear roof slope. Refused.

3/2008/0172 Listed building consent application for the repair of existing boundary fencing and provision of 3no bollards to boundary. Structural repairs to gable. Reinstatement of window to gable. Replacement of trestle to porch. Approved.

3/2007/1046 Retrospective listed building consent application for replacement of existing modern windows to rear elevation. Replacement of window to gable elevation. replacement of porch to front elevation. Lowering of ground levels to rear garden by 150mm. Replacement of render to rear elevation, like for like. Refused.

3/2007/0914 Listed building consent application for the demolition of existing timber lean-to extension (single storey) and replacement with single storey extension to contain utility and cloaks. Approved.

3/2007/0913 Listed building consent application for the demolition of existing lean-to extension to side elevation and replacement with new single storey extension. Approved.



Figure 1: Terraces present on the 1847 6:1 OS map.

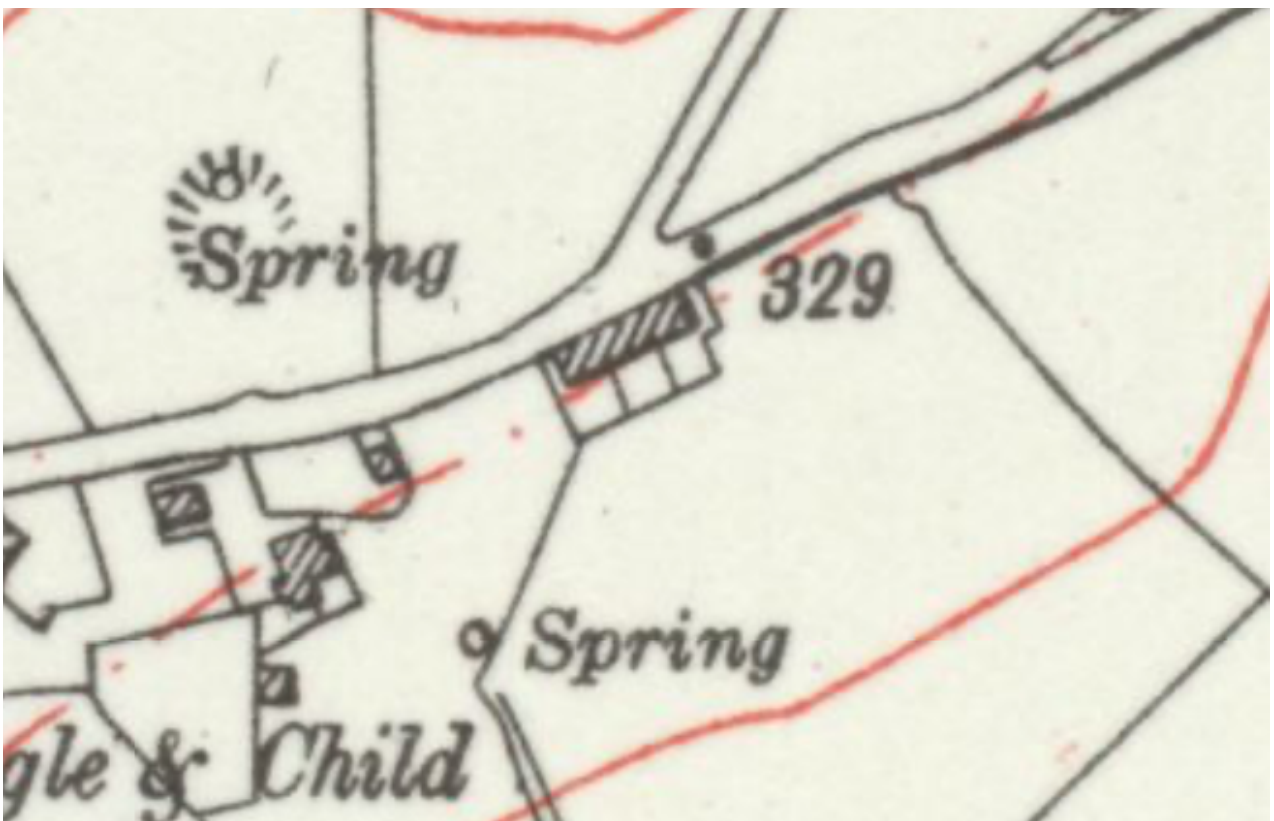


Figure 2: No discernible alteration apparent on the 1933 edition 6:1 OS map.

3.0 HERITAGE APPRAISAL

3.1 This section of the report responds to the requirements as set out in paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024² (NPPF). Under the heading “Proposals Affecting Heritage Assets” is stated the following:

3.2 *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation”.*

3.3 Historic England (2019)³ describes how *“There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.”*

3.4 The building is a small residential property that likely dates to the late C18th and as such provides physical evidence of historic domestic living practices by virtue of its planform and general construction. Originally it likely comprised two separate cottages evidenced by what appears to be a blocked doorway to the principal elevation. The two small cottages were likely adjoined in the early/mid C19th (possibly later) by virtue of the appearance of the infilled lower portion of the former door opening. Since then the property has been extended to the rear with the addition of a second pile forming a kitchen, breakfast room, bedroom and bathroom. The property has also been extended to the gable with the addition of a single-storey utility. These alterations therefore illustrate the development of the property over time in response to the needs of the inhabitants. Archaeological interest beyond the extant envelope of the building is however minimal and further investigation is not required in this regard.

3.5 Historic England (2019) describes historic interest as *“An interest in past lives and events. Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity”*

3.6 The building is illustrative of historic building practices and techniques, particularly as they relate to the traditional nature of the stone walls and stone slate roof. Such methods of building can be seen throughout the

² MHCLG (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

³ Historic England (2019) Statements of heritage significance HEAN 12.

region and Interest in this regard is relatively modest. There is no evidence of associative interest that is readily available.

3.7 Historic England (2019) describes architectural interest as *“interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.”*

3.8 The building is typical of the local vernacular with its main walls built from locally quarried gritstone and roof covered with stone slates which were likely sourced from further afield. The appearance of the external aspect of the building is a positive contributor to the setting in which it resides and is likely the primary reason it was listed in the mid-1980s. Internally there are few features of note aside from the fireplaces and exposed timber beams. Interest derived from rarity of design or composition is minimal.

3.9 The Lancashire Historic Environment Record does not hold any further information regarding the building. Hurst Green is detailed in the Lancashire Pevsner architectural guide however, the property in question is not⁴.

4.0 STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 The property is a pleasant example of a vernacular rural cottage and as stated above is a positive aspect of the built environment of Hurst Green and the designated conservation area. However, heritage significance overall is relatively modest with respect to evidential, illustrative and architectural interest as described above.

⁴ Hartwell & Pevsner (2009) The Buildings of England: Lancashire north. pp: 349-351

5.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The risk for harm may have arisen due to the removal of the prior stair, however, it is unknown whether this stair was original or a later, poor-quality replacement.

5.2 The reason for replacement was due to the poor condition of the stairs which had loose treads as well as unequal riser heights throughout. In addition, the doorway that provides access from the mid-height level of the stairs was poorly detailed with regard to head height which made its use precarious.

5.3 The alterations therefore comprise the replacement of the entire stair with an almost like-for-like assembly, albeit with improvements to ensure that the riser heights and tread depths are equal. In addition, the bathroom steps now discharge onto a full step rather than across two steps on the main staircase as it did prior (please see figures 1 & 2). The lintel height of the doorway upon the stair was increased from 1550mm to 2000mm to improve access and thus safe passage. The timber-planked enclosure wall was replaced with a plasterboard-clad stud partition to improve acoustic resistance and provide robust support for the stairs. It is understood that the timber-planked enclosure was also in poor condition and of poor quality. The door at the bottom of the stair was re-used and the door under the stairs was installed along with the stairs.

5.4 Regarding the materials used, the stair is constructed from softwood timber and the raised lintels comprise oak units. There is little recorded evidence of the former stair aside from a single photograph available from old sales particulars, please see figure 2. This photograph shows a timber-planked wall that encloses the stairs which has been replaced with a stud partition wall and plastered. At the time the works were undertaken a building control application was made which also shows the layout of the former stairs⁵.

5.5 In my view there is likely a low order of less than substantial harm that has arisen by virtue of the loss of historic fabric. However, harm has been mitigated insofar as is practical by ensuring that the replacement stair is of high quality and appropriate in terms of appearance. Given that the stair was potentially dangerous and in poor condition, this can be largely considered a like-for-like essential repair of a deteriorated portion of the building.

5.6 This position is supported by Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance⁶ (CPPG) published by English Heritage. Under the heading 'Periodic Renewal' Paragraph 114 states that *periodic renewal of elements of a significant place, intended or inherent in the design, is normally desirable unless any harm caused to heritage values would not be recovered over time*. Paragraph 116 then goes on to state; *The justification required for periodic renewal will normally be that the fabric concerned is becoming incapable of fulfilling its intended functions through more limited interventions*. Given the quality of the works and the prior

⁵ RVBC building control ref: 3/2018/0963/B Available: <http://5.61.123.171/Northgate/BC/BCExplorer/BC/ApplicationDetails.aspx>

⁶ Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008) English Heritage.

unsafe and deteriorated condition of the stairs, paragraphs 114 and 116 of CPPG are relevant and have been adhered to.

5.7 In addition, under the heading 'New Work and Alteration' paragraph 141 of CPPG states that *Quality of design, materials, detailing and execution is obviously essential in places of established value. Conversely, places of lesser significance⁷ offer the greatest opportunity for the creation of the heritage values of tomorrow, because they have the greatest need of quality in what is added to them. Their potential will only be achieved if all new work aspires to the quality routinely expected in more sensitive places.* As found in the heritage appraisal, the building is of modest (or as above 'lesser') heritage interest. However, significance has been retained overall and it ensured that the replacement stairs are of high quality.

5.8 Lastly, paragraph 142 states; *The need for quality in new work applies at every level, from small interventions in a historic room, to major new buildings or developments. Small changes need as much consideration as large ones, for cumulatively their effect can be comparable.* The replacement stair can clearly be categorised as a 'small intervention' and in my view, the quality achieved in their replacement will not contribute to cumulative harm. This is notwithstanding the fact that, internally, the building is of minimal heritage interest.

6.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

6.1 The national planning policies regarding heritage assets are contained within the National Planning Policy Framework [2024] specifically section 16 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'.

6.2 **Paragraph 215 states:** *"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use".*

6.3 As above, a low order of less than substantial harm has likely arisen. However, this is adequately justified in the interests of periodic renewal, safe passage of the stairs and thus the ongoing safe use of the building.

6.4 Section 66(1) of the 1990 Act states the following: *In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State 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.* In my view whilst there is a low order of less than substantial harm as per paragraph 215 of the NPPF, the special interest for which the building was listed has been preserved.

⁷ It is reasonable to suggest that grade II listed buildings exist on a spectrum of interest with those at one extreme approaching grade II* status and those of lesser interest approaching non-designation. In my view, this property is at the 'lesser' end of the spectrum.



Figure 1: Replacement stair as seen from the bathroom doorway. The red line indicates the former position of a step (see figure 2). This has been removed and the steps reconfigured so as to form a small landing making use of the 'bathroom' steps safer.



Figure 2: Prior stair from sales particulars, note the bathroom step discharging across two steps on the winder portion of the stair.



Figure 3: Stairs as seen from the living room. The bathroom stair now discharges on to one large full step.



Figure 4: Stair enclosure.



Figure 5: Underside of stairs.



Figure 6: Altered lintel over bathroom/ bedroom entrance.



Figure 7: As above, prior timber lintels and reclaimed timbers used.