

Proposed Repairs

Houlkers Farm, Whins Lane, Read BB12 7RB

Heritage Statement

May 2025

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of the Report

This Heritage Statement has been commissioned by Mr Richard Wood. It is intended to form part of an application for Listed Building Consent for repair works and minor alterations to the former farmhouse known as Houlkers Farm at Read, Lancashire.

1.2 The Buildings

The former farmhouse occupies a two-storey range that faces approximately south (Figures 1 & 2), and for the purposes of description will be assumed to face due south. The eastern end of the building is in separate ownership, with a range of former farm buildings now converted to domestic use abutting it. At the rear the former farmhouse has a lean-to addition containing a kitchen and pantry / dairy.

On the opposite side of Whins Lane there are buildings that once belonged to the farm and are now in separate ownership.

The house was first Listed Grade II in 1968 and was retained on the Statutory List following the re-survey in the 1980s. The List description is brief, without any mention of the interior. The date is given as mid 18th century, but a detailed examination of the house suggests that it may be a little later.

1.3 The Proposals

The building has been unoccupied and requires repairs and upgrading works before it can be re-occupied. These will not adversely affect its historic character, but some will need Listed Building Consent.



Figure 1. An aerial view of the site from Apple Maps. The house and its front garden are to the left of the centre of the image.



Figure 2. Part of the twenty-five inch Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1890.

2.0 The Development of the Building

2.1 Architectural Evidence

The house is built of sandstone and has a stone slate roof. Its earliest feature is a two-light mullioned window, now without glazing, in the wall between the area under the staircase landing and the rear pantry / dairy. It probably dates from the early seventeenth century, but must be re-used or just be a small fragment of an earlier house, as the plan and other architectural features of the existing house are not consistent with a seventeenth century date.

The eastern end of the building is in separate ownership and could not be examined, but the plan form of the main part of the house, with solid masonry walls to each side of a central hallway, is not 17th century. The layout of the ground floor ceiling beams, which are parallel with the front wall and cased in plaster, is also unlikely to date from the 17th century.

The pitched tooling on the quoins to the chimney stack projecting from the west gable (Photograph 9) is characteristic of the late 18th or early 19th centuries. The lintels and sills to the two ground-floor windows at the front (Photographs 2 & 5) are wider than the present openings, suggesting that the windows were originally tripartite (i.e. with a wide central opening and narrower outer openings separated by flat-faced mullions). This type of window is also characteristic of the late 18th or early 19th century. The hob grates to the two first floor fireplace are a late 18th century type, and so could be original. The surrounds to the first floor fireplaces and the false keystone to the front door architrave are more mid 18th century in style, but this may be because the area lagged behind the latest fashions.

Internally, the main features are the oak staircase and balustrades (Photographs 22, 27 & 28). The tread brackets and turned balusters are

elegant, but the ramped handrail and cur-tail, all with with a flat tops, look like clumsy imitations of more refined work (Photograph 21). The raised-and-fielded panelling on the ground floor (Photograph 18) is oak, which is unusual, as this type of panelling is more commonly painted pine.

The single-storey lean-to at the rear is clearly a 19th century addition, although it lacks features that could accurately date it. It is on the north side and includes a large pantry with stone slab shelves that suggest that it was used as a dairy (Photograph 14). It also contains the present kitchen, but its lack of a fireplace suggests that cooking may have continued to be done in the main living room after the construction of the lean-to.

2.2 The Significance of the House and its Architectural Features.

The building is significant as a house that dates from before 1850 that is relatively intact and so meets the criteria for statutory listing. It retains a stone slate roof, and its main internal feature is the oak staircase. None of the windows is original and the ground-floor window openings at the front have been reduced in width. Both ground-floor fireplaces were altered in the late 20th century. A bathroom and separate WC (Photographs 35 & 36) were installed on the first floor, probably in the early-to-mid 20th century. The WC was installed in the corner of a bedroom, reducing it to an L-shaped space that is almost unusable as a bedroom.

Although the house appears to be structurally sound, it is in need of repairs and some upgrading. The only heating is by coal fires on the ground floor, and a back boiler provides hot water. The windows are single-glazed, and lack of maintenance means that they now need significant repairs or replacement.

2.3 The Proposed Works and their Impact on the Significance

Re-pointing the front elevation, and possible hidden strengthening above the ground-floor window lintels.

The lime pointing has eroded. The squared sandstone has narrow joints and is relatively soft. It is proposed to re-point with either a lime putty / sharp sand or a quicklime / sharp sand mix. This will enhance the character of the facade. There are areas of cement pointing above both ground-floor windows. This will be removed and replaced with lime. The stone lintels to both windows may need additional support, and if needed this will be by hidden stainless steel reinforcement or fixings.

Lime roughcasting and lime washing the west elevation.

The gable faces the prevailing wind and is suffering from some damp problems internally. Some thin lime roughcast remains to the right and left of the chimney and is evidence that the wall was originally rendered. It is proposed to re-render the whole gable with a roughcast of 'hot lime' or lime putty and coarse sand thrown directly onto the wall and finished with limewash for protection. This will reinstate an original finish and help to eliminate damp problems at this end of the house.

Replacing the windows with timber windows to match the existing, incorporating slimline double glazing and draughtproofing.

The existing windows are not original, and probably date from the early and mid 20th century. Re-painting has been neglected and there are now areas of wet rot and gaps that cause draughts. It is proposed to replace them with gloss painted timber replicas, with draught seals and low profile double glazing. The existing external appearance of the house will be unaffected.

Installation of a gas combi boiler with a balanced flue in the pantry.

The boiler will be mounted on a blank part of the wall, and the balanced flue terminal will be in a location where it cannot be seen from public views. Pipework and radiators will be positioned so that no damage is caused to historic fabric.

Opening out the two fireplace openings on the ground floor and installing solid fuel stoves.

The fireplace in the western ground-floor room is an incongruous late 20th century stone 'feature' fireplace with a redundant back boiler. The projecting chimney breast externally indicates the probable depth of the original fireplace. It is intended to carefully remove the 20th century fireplace and reinstate the original fireplace opening, including any fireplace surround that still exists. The tiled fireplace in the eastern ground-floor room is also incongruous, and it is proposed to remove it while retaining the late 19th century slate surround.

Removing the airing cupboard and cylinder from the existing bathroom, re-positioning the bath and installing a WC.

The present bathroom is mid 20th century and the alterations will have no effect on the historic character of the house.

Completely removing the existing WC and its enclosing walls to create a bigger bedroom.

The WC is an early/mid 20th century insertion into a bedroom and its removal will not affect the historic character of the house and will improve its character.

3.0 Conclusions

The proposed works are necessary for the continued use of the house and will improve its neglected appearance. The re-pointing, rendering and new heating system will help to eliminate the damp problems and so conserve the fabric. Because the present windows are relatively modern, replacing them with more energy efficient replicas will have no impact on the historic character of the house.

4.0 Photographs



Photograph 1. The front elevation.



Photograph 2. The left-hand ground-floor window at the front.



Photograph 3. The left-hand upper windows at the front.



Photograph 4. The front door.



Photograph 5. The right-hand ground-floor window at the front.



Photograph 6. The range that abuts the front of the house and is in separate ownership.



Photograph 7. The west gable wall.



Photograph 8. The west gable wall.



Photograph 9. The remains of lime roughcast on the west gable wall.



Photograph 10. The north-west corner of the building.



Photograph 11. The north side of the main house and east side of the lean-to.



Photograph 12. The north side of the house..



Photograph 13. The interior of the kitchen.



Photograph 14. The interior of the dairy /pantry.



Photograph 15. The interior of the dairy /pantry.



Photograph 16. Mullioned window within the ground-floor store.



Photograph 17. The sitting room at the west end of the house.



Photograph 18. Looking towards the west sitting room from the hallway.



Photograph 19. The inside of the front door.



Photograph 20. The cupboard below the staircase.



Photograph 21. The bottom of the staircase.



Photograph 22. The staircase.



Photograph 23. The eastern ground floor room, with an architrave to a blocked doorway.



Photograph 24. A slate fireplace surround in the eastern ground floor room.



Photograph 25. A partly collapsed ceiling in the eastern ground floor room.



Photograph 26. The eastern ground floor room.



Photograph 27. The staircase and first-floor landing.



Photograph 28. The staircase and first-floor landing.



Photograph 29. A first-floor window at the front.



Photograph 30. The western bedroom.



Photograph 31. The fireplace in the western bedroom.



Photograph 32. The eastern front bedroom.



Photograph 33. The fireplace in the eastern front bedroom.



Photograph 34. The eastern first floor room - a flying freehold.



Photograph 35. The first floor bathroom.



Photograph 36. The first floor WC.