

58 CHURCH STREET, RIBCHESTER, LANCASHIRE, PR3 3YE:

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT AND IMPACT STATEMENT

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been produced to support an application to Ribble Valley Borough Council for listed building consent at 58 Church Street, by the owners Mr & Mrs Hindle, via their agent Janet Dixon Town Planners Ltd. It provides a summary of the significance of the heritage asset (a grade II listed building, within the Ribchester Conservation Area), and its setting, in accordance with Paragraph 128 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* and has been produced by Stephen Haigh MA, a buildings archaeologist with over 15 years professional experience in the region, following a site visit on 25 April 2014.
- 1.2 There are a number of different aspects to the current proposals, some of which are being applied for retrospectively. They include:
- Cleaning of the exterior stonework
 - Replacement of windows to front and rear, and insertion of roof lights to rear
 - Internal works including replacement of staircases on ground and first floor

2 Identified heritage assets

- 2.1 The building has been listed since 1983, at grade II with Group Value, as part of 50-58 Church Street, which comprises a row of nine terraced houses on the east side of Church Street in the centre of Ribchester (National Heritage List no: 1072260). The statutory description reads:
Row of houses, late C18th. Squared sandstone with slate roofs and brick chimney caps. 2 storeys. Each house of one bay, with a door to the right. All the windows are modern, those to nos. 53-56 having plain stone surrounds, those to nos.57 and 58 having plain reveals. The doors have plain stone surrounds, except that to no.57, which has plain reveals. The ground-floor window surround to no.54 is wide and possibly reconstructed. No.55 has an additional ground-floor window to the left, with plain reveals, possibly in a former tunnel doorway. No.56 has a doorcase with fluted pilasters, fluted frieze and open pediment on console brackets. Above is a plaque dated '1795'.
- 2.2 The building also lies within the Ribchester Conservation Area, designated in 1973.



3 Setting

- 3.1 The property lies within the historic core of Ribchester on one of the village's main thoroughfares, which is dominated by broadly similar terraced houses of two or three storeys, many of which were built as weavers' cottages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though there are also some larger and more modern houses in the vicinity. No 58 forms the south-east end cottage in a row of nine, and faces south-west. There is a side street next to the property with a former barn across a small yard to the rear, now much altered and in use as an electricity sub-station.

4 Historical background

- 4.1 There was a significant Roman fort and settlement at Ribchester but thereafter the village was generally of much diminished importance, until the late eighteenth century when its economic fortunes flourished as a result of the success of the domestic handloom weaving of cotton, although in 1773 it was still described as a "poor village".
- 4.2 The terrace of 50-58 Church Street is of a single main phase of construction, which can tentatively be dated to 1795 by the date-stone on no. 56, and all nine cottages are generally considered to have been built for handloom weavers at that time, on a rising tide of prosperity brought by the growth of the textile industry in the region¹.
- 4.3 No. 58 has been extended at its south-east gable by the addition of two storeys. Although map evidence indicates there was a structure in this position by 1892, the external appearance of the present extension suggests that it was largely or entirely rebuilt *circa* 1978, when Building Regulations

¹ Lancashire County Council and Egerton Lea Consultancy 2006 *Ribchester: Lancashire Historic Town Survey Programme, Historic Town Assessment Report 2006*

approval and a Housing Improvement Grant award were awarded for its heightening to two storeys, partly to accommodate a bathroom. That work, and other changes to the earlier part of the building undertaken at that time, were carried out as Permitted Development².

5 Description of the house

- 5.1 The original part of 58 Church Street comprises a single cottage, one bay wide and on two storeys, with attic. Walls are of punch-dressed, coursed sandstone to the front but of less well-finished stone to the gable and rear, and incorporate moulded stone brackets for guttering (now redundant), above which are timber fascia boards. Comparison with other members of the terrace shows that the two front window openings have been much altered: formerly they would have been lower in height, and they were probably changed to their present forms in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. At the rear, the ground floor French doors were evidently introduced in the 1978 alterations, but the first floor window opening appears unaltered. The present blue slate roof and brick chimney are also the result of alterations: a stone slate covering on a slightly less steep pitch would have existed formerly (as can be seen from inside the roof space), which accounts for the redundant gutter brackets to the front.
- 5.2 The extension at the south-east gable uses squared sandstone of a very different character, incorporating “jumpers”, and the uniformity of its elevations suggests that this part of the building was at least re-faced, if not re-built in its entirety, during the 1978 work.
- 5.3 The interior of the original house is divided into a larger, heated front room and a smaller, unheated back room on both ground and first floors, though parts of the brick dividing walls (presumably non-original) have been removed in previous alterations. The front ground floor room has a fireplace opening with stone surround (of indeterminate date), and a fireplace can also be inferred on the first floor, though there the fireplace was removed in 1977. Original spine beams over the front rooms carry the upper floors, and there is a second pair of historic beams at right angles to these, in the rear ground floor room.
- 5.4 Until the present alterations the staircase was situated within the rear room and its position and gradient can still be seen within the adjacent plastered wall; this is also its position on the 1977 existing survey drawing and possibly was its original position, though the present builder reports that it was not the original structure and so was probably a 1978 replacement. A second flight

² Planning application 3/77/0975/P

directly above this one appears to have served the attic floor and is also believed to have been a replacement. Both were evidently steep and probably quite simple in construction, perhaps without risers, though exact details are not known.

- 5.5 The addition of the extension in two phases means that four openings have been inserted in the original south-east gable: the earliest of these, from the living room, was blocked and the other three inserted in 1978.
- 5.6 The attic comprises a single, unheated room whose floor joists and boards have been replaced in the present alterations. Aspects of the historic roof structure are visible within this space (purlins and some original rafters in the rear pitch), along with a small blocked opening to the gable, but otherwise it lacks features of interest.

6 Assessment of heritage significance

- 6.1 The nature of the heritage significance of 58 Church Street is primarily its position within an essentially intact row of nine terraced cottages built c.1795, which forms an important part of the historic core of Ribchester. However, although the historic origins and character of this group are readily apparent, the uniformity of the original design for the row (with the exception of no 56) has been much eroded over time, and in particular the extension of no. 58 at its south-east gable, in two phases of work, has contributed to this diminution. The interior of the cottage is of much lesser importance in defining its designation, and was no doubt subject to considerable change before the listing of the building in 1983, not least because of the changes to circulation which resulted from the extension of the building.

7 Impact statement

Stone cleaning

- 7.1 The recent stone cleaning has had a low impact on the building's heritage significance, its setting, and the setting of other heritage assets. The historic, hand-dressed character of the stonework remains obvious, and it is clear that other buildings within the terrace have also been cleaned similarly in recent years (eg. Nos 55 & 57) so this aspect of the group's uniformity had already been lost, and with time the stonework of no 58 will regain some of its patina.

Windows and roof lights

- 7.2 All of the present windows are late twentieth century casements fitted following the granting of LBC in 1989, but of similar form to their

predecessors³. They have large panes and are of a type which is inappropriate to the building's historic origins, and they detract from the appearance of the building and the conservation area. It should however be noted that the front openings (not those in the extension) have been enlarged, and their proportions are very different from their original, late eighteenth century forms. The painted timber sashes proposed for these are an appropriate replacement for these tall openings of late nineteenth/early twentieth century date. Elsewhere, timber casements are proposed which are clearly more suitable for the smaller and less vertically pronounced openings. The overall impact of the proposed new windows is therefore positive.

- 7.3 Retrospective permission is also sought for the two new roof lights which have been fitted to the rear elevation: these are of flush fitting, conservation-type and have minimal impact on the building's heritage significance.

Internal works

- 7.4 Listed building consent is also sought for internal works, some of which have already been carried out. These include the replacement of an entrance lobby; the removal of the ground floor stairs and their replacement with new stairs, necessitating the removal of part of a ceiling beam and its support by a salvaged timber post; the removal and replacement of partitioning on the first floor to allow for a revised room layout; the replacement of the attic stairs and chipboard flooring on the second floor; and the replacement of insulation and boarding to the underside of the roof.
- 7.5 The majority of the internal works for which consent is sought are believed to affect or have affected only modern fabric, as it is understood that the entrance lobby, staircases, and floors all consisted of modern materials and did not form part of the historic structure. The exception is the partial removal of the first floor beam to accommodate the new staircase, but the loss of only approximately 25% of this historic element does not detract significantly from the room's historic appearance and allows the original structural form of the building to be seen.

Conclusion

- 7.6 As stated in 6.1 above, the cottage's significance as a designated heritage asset arises from its being one of a row of nine cottages, built *circa* 1795 as a group which forms an important part of the village of Ribchester, and no meaningful significance derives from its interior, which is not of special

³ Application no 03/88/0863

interest and had already been subject to considerable alteration prior to the present and proposed works taking place. The works for which consent is sought therefore cannot be considered to have a harmful impact on the significance of the heritage asset, nor on the setting of this or any other heritage assets.

Stephen Haigh, MA

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