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Heritage Impact Statement



Statement prepared for:

Mr S Jones
Pickhill Farm
Cross Lanes
Wrexham
LL13 0UL

Statement required for:

Proposed replacement dwelling at Pickhill Farm, Cross Lanes, Wrexham. LL13 0UL.

Explaining Objectives

Our client's main objective with this project is to provide a home for that won't effect the health and wellbeing of their family.

The proposal is to fully demolish the existing grade ii farmhouse and replace with a purpose-built new home which can have a positive impact on the surroundings and improve the character of the site.

The main objectives revolve around the sustainable nature of development and the viability of refurbishing a property that hasn't been maintained for decades. This has ultimately meant the demise of a structure that is listed, it is not sustainably viable to renovate, structurally repair and damp proof the unit which currently occupies the site.

Due to the poor state of repair, and other examples of farmhouses which are within the county borough, its de-listing and demolition is not thought to have a wider impact to the local area or preservation of other historic buildings.

The applicant has obtained advice from several professionals who are of the opinion that the property is in poor condition and requires de-listing to allow demolition of the dwelling. Elements of the property are under water with clear deterioration of the structure between the months of October 2023 & March 2024.

This is confirmed by a report completed by Wolfenden engineering where the following is written:

"What is evident is that the lateral movement does appear to be on-going and has deteriorated considerably between the October 2023 and March 2024 site visits."

Subsequent structural surveys have been conducted by Andrew Hannett who is a highly experienced structural engineer working locally for a number of years within his report which completed in May 2024 he confirms the following:

"In order to restore the property into a habitable condition and safeguard its long term durability, extensive and intrusive repairs will be required. This may result in a considerable proportion of the original fabric being replaced. We therefore believe that the property is beyond economic repair and should be de-listed and demolished."

Understanding Significance

Pickhill farmhouse was listed in 1963 with amendments to the listing in 1996, the property was listed as a good example of a C16 farmhouse with later alterations. During its designation as a listed building in 1963 it is highly likely the farmhouse was a good example of a C16 centenary farmhouse.

The farmhouse as sated above was has elements originally constructed in the C16 century, over the course of time it has had alterations and additions to a H-plan footprint. The main house is constructed of local brown sandstone laid randomly with dressed quoins to the south whilst the northern portion is of brick construction, the stonework element of the structure is understood to be of earlier construction with the brickwork additions thought to be later additions/alterations to the original property.

There is a small section of timber framing to the rear of the property which has been infilled with brickwork and blocked stone mullioned window to the first floor. The roofs are finished with natural roofing slate with brickwork chimney stacks occupying the roof lines of the property.

The property is accessed by means of a private driveway located on the B5130, the property is very well screened by prominent barns and dense vegetation. There is very little trace or documentation available to confirm its historic importance to the area we have delved into historic OS maps to get an understanding of the additions to the property.



OS Map of the area – 1830-1880



OS Map of the area 1948-1973

The earlier map illustrates the main footprint of the dwelling clearly which is very similar to the later plan between 1948-73 this does illustrate an addition to the north-west which appears to be detached to the main building.

Studying existing drawings of the property which have been completed by Redbox surveys, this indeed is the case, the existing drawings note the various materials used to form the building denoting earlier and later additions to the property. The H plan property is sprawling and covers a large area when viewed from above.



Floor Plan of Existing Farmhouse

Internally the property hasn't been maintained for a number of years, photographic evidence of this can be found within the structural report completed on the property, this does mean features are present within the property such as fireplaces and floor beams which provide the property with some character and provenance.





Internal photos of dwelling showing decay to structure

Although there is vary little information available to us, the farmhouse is in close proximity to Pickhill hall which was part and the main residence of the owners of the Pickhill Estate.

The earliest deeds of 1724 suggests Pickhill Hall was present (the estate) it provides the following information the "provincial Baroque" (Hubbard) remodelling of the earlier building (Date stone of 1681) around this time. Although Pickhill Hall would appear to be a later addition than the C16 farmhouse, due to its location it would be no surprise if Pickhill Farmhouse was at some stage under the stewardship of the Pickhill estate.

It does appear as though over the course of time the address has altered, according to the OS plan dating back to 1948 the farm was listed as Pickhill Upper Farm, with another property in the vicinity labelled as Pickhill Lower Farm, the shortened version of the property to Pickhill Farm has probably only occurred due to owners recognising no other farms have the same name and the address has been simplified over the course of time.

Identifying Proposed Changes including Assessing the Impact and Reasoning

The total internal floor area of the existing dwelling is approximately 396m² spanning over 2 floors. Although sizable the dwelling is dwarfed by the barns on site, this can be seen by the floor plans below illustrating the barns adjacent to the dwelling.

As stated within other sections of this document demolition of the existing farmhouse is sought, due to its current state, which is documented extensively within the structural reports which accompany this application.

Although a listed building many of the features of the dwelling will be lost due to the significant work required to repair the issues that have been identified, the sprawling nature of the property make the repairs difficult and costly.

Clear structural defects are present on the existing structure, this is clear by photographs we have obtained from the structural survey completed by Andrew Hannett. The linier movement in the

structure is ongoing this is evident by 2 separate visits by a structural engineer who confirms this is indeed the case.

The existing dwelling has a serious water ingress issue, the lower basement level is currently under water, this is highly likely to be the reasons behind the structural issues that are ongoing at the property.

The structural engineer has included the following statement within their report: "*The abstraction of water may have removed fines within the underlying formation and exacerbated the movement. The depth to the water table would make an excavation to a significant depth tricky. The depth of the basement and the condition of the outrigger walls also significantly increases the risk of collapse during repair making an insitu repair impractical.*"

It is understood the water table is fairly low in this area, meaning excavations that would be needed to stabilise the structure, this would be totally impractical and would increase the risk of collapse as noted by the structural engineer. Due to the nature of the repairs required many original features of this listed building would be lost.



Evidence of Structural Issues.

Full demolition of the farmhouse is proposed due to the unsustainable nature to repair and the fact the property is now not a good example of a C16 farmhouse due to the defects outlined above. The property hasn't been maintained for decades this has meant deterioration of the property to a point of significant structural issues which will fundamentally change and alter the listed building.

As stated previously the site is dominated by brickwork barns, there are many architectural features on these structures, the barns appear to be in good condition and would remain unaltered as part of the proposal.

Following demolition of the farmhouse, the proposal is to develop the land and create a 4 bedroomed detached property which respects and enhances the characteristics of the site, the proposed dwelling is to add significant interest to the site with gable projections and lower eaves.

The inclusion of glazed gables to the rear with a glazed family area is intended to make use of the views from the property, these are supressed currently with the form and design of the existing dwelling which is beyond economical repair.

The opportunity to develop a new build property will allow the occupants to reside in a sustainable home, with renewable heating sources required the dwelling will be efficient compliant and safe. The proposal will allow the family to occupy a dwelling on their site.

Conclusion

The works that proposed will enhance the appearance of the site, the C16 farmhouse is listed due to being a good example of a farmhouse of that century.

The property was listed in 1963, at that time the property will have been a good example as stated within the listing, as several decades have passed the property is now a poor example of a C16 farmhouse due to its structural issues and defects.

Optimism remained attempting to retain the structure on site however, as time has passed the property has worsened, in just 6 months between structural inspections at the property the linier movement within the structural walls is continuing. A decision was forced following the second structural report which confirms the property requires demolition.

The owner has had to vacate the property after attempting to reside in the dwelling, health and the safety of his family has ultimately meant the property has become vacant due to the issues surrounding the damp and structural defects.

Poor maintenance over the course of decades has seen the decline in the structural stability of the property, a previous owner would pump out water from the basement on occasion which could have a significant detrimental effect on the stability of the property with the removal of fines within the walls attributing to the movement within the structure which is evident today.

Due to the poor state of repair the property is in, it is clearly justified the farmhouse is no longer a good example of a C16 farmhouse, its de-listing and demolition wouldn't have a significant affect on the area or setting.

The construction of a new dwelling at the site would compliment the simplistic form of the barns opposite which dominate the site, they are indeed arguably of greater interest than the farmhouse with architectural features such as circular windows, they also appear to be in a good state of repair in comparison to the dwelling, which would further suggest the basement which is currently under water is the reason for the demise of the farmhouse which is unfortunate but now unavoidable.

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