The Victorian Society

Ms Sharon Holman
Wrexham County Borough Council Planning Department
Via email

Planning_comments@wrexham.gov.uk

24 March 2025

Dear Ms Holman

RE: P/2025/0242 | Pickhill Farm, Pickhill, Cross Lanes, Wrexham, LL13 0UL (Grade II, C16-C19). Application for complete demolition of listed building.

Thank you for consulting the Victorian Society on this application. Having considered the proposal carefully, we **object** to these plans in their current form.

Built in the C16 with a C19 outrigger, Pickhill Farm is a Grade II-listed property, meaning it is recognised for its national significance and special interest. The principal elevation is constructed out of a local brown sandstone with dressed quoins. At the rear, there is a small section of timber framing. It is in a state of some disrepair, with the C19 outrigger being in a worse state than the C16 main house. The property appears to have been for sale as recently as 2021.

The application seeks to demolish the Grade II-listed property in its entirety due to its poor state of disrepair, which would result in the total loss of the building's significance.

The Heritage Statement
We object to this scheme on the grounds that the huge level of harm has not been justified. We echo the concerns of HB&P but also request a phasing plan of the buildings and a more detailed photographic survey, going room by room, which is necessary to assess this application. The heritage statement does not effectively assess the harm proposed.

The Structural Survey
The extension appears to have been in a state of disrepair for some time, with no evidence or information provided of works being carried out to mitigate or rectify the damage. The photographs of the property from its sales particulars in 2021 show the property in a decent state of repair. As per the TAN 24 (2017, pg. 20), Wrexham County Borough Council will have to satisfy itself that any form of deliberate neglect has not occurred.

The Victorian Society
1 Priory Gardens, London W4 1TT | 020 8994 1019 | Charity No. 1081435 | Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3940996
admin@victoriansociety.org.uk | www.victoriansociety.org.uk

Patron: HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG, GCVO
President: Griff Rhys Jones OBE
Vice Presidents: Sir David Cannadine FBA FRSL FSA FRHistS | Rosemary Hill FRSL FSA | Lord Howarth of Newport CBE PC | Sir Simon Jenkins FRSL FSA FLSW
Chair: James Grierson
Director: James Hughes

The structural survey is inadequate and does not justify the level of substantial/total harm proposed. There is no clear indication that the building is beyond any form of repair. The Society echoes HB&P in requesting a thorough Structural Survey completed by a CARE Accredited specialist who is familiar with the needs and requirements of historic buildings.

The survey and heritage statement combined fail to meet the TAN 24, which clearly sets out how demolition is the last option and requires immense justification. Reuse and repair should always be considered as the primary options.

In conclusion, the justifications for complete demolition are weak, and the heritage statement is incomplete. Serious doubts remain over the degree to which the building has been neglected, the root causes of the present condition and the options for addressing them. Demolition is always a last resort for heritage buildings – once removed, the historic fabric is lost forever. An application for the total loss of a listed building is extremely rare and the circumstances required to justify it even rare. TAN 24 (para. 5.15) is very clear on this: '*an application for the demolition of a listed building should be made in exceptional circumstances and only as an option of last resort. Consent for demolition should not be given simply because redevelopment is economically more attractive than the repair and re-use of a historic building*'. While the state of repair a building is in should be considered, this must be balanced against the '*importance and value derived from its continued use*'. Should this damage be proven as deliberate neglect, this state of repair should be given less weight (TAN 24, 5.15).

TAN 24 (5.15) also stipulates that all efforts to secure new use for the building, *'including the offer of the unrestricted freehold of the building for sale at a fair market price that its condition and situation'.* Applications for demolition must also be weighed against the proposals for the site's replacements – the current proposals do not reflect the current building or its historic context in their current form and would therefore be an inappropriate replacement.

The Society strongly objects to this application and urges your Authority to refuse. I would be very grateful if you could inform the Victorian Society of your decision in due course.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Ollivier
Northern Conservation Adviser