

AROSFA, FRON ISAF, CHIRK WREXHAM



HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document is produced in support of a retrospective application for Listed Building Consent for unauthorised changes made by a previous owner. The present owners recently purchased the house and wish to regularise matters.

The house is semi-detached, one of three properties which were originally a single farmhouse. All three properties are listed together as Grade II (CADW reference number 20263). The listing suggests that the date is early- to mid-17th century, most probably converted to three cottages in the 19th century. The building would have originally been part of the Chirk Castle estate, and it may be that parts of it are older. The reason for designation is given as:

“Included a representing a fine early C17 or earlier substantial farmhouse. Much of its early constructional detail, and its layout as hall and cross wing type plan was retained in its conversion to 3 picturesque cottages in the C19.”

The designation was made in July 1998, and at the time of the designation Arosfa was not accessible. However, archive photographs from the Zoopla website show some of the internal changes that have been made since it was previously sold in 2019, as well as garden landscaping and outbuildings. One of the conservation officers from Wrexham Council has visited and reported on the changes which have been made since 2019.

Changes which do not need Listed Building Consent:

- The kitchen units which have been replaced.
- The carpets which have been installed to most rooms providing that the original floors are still intact below.

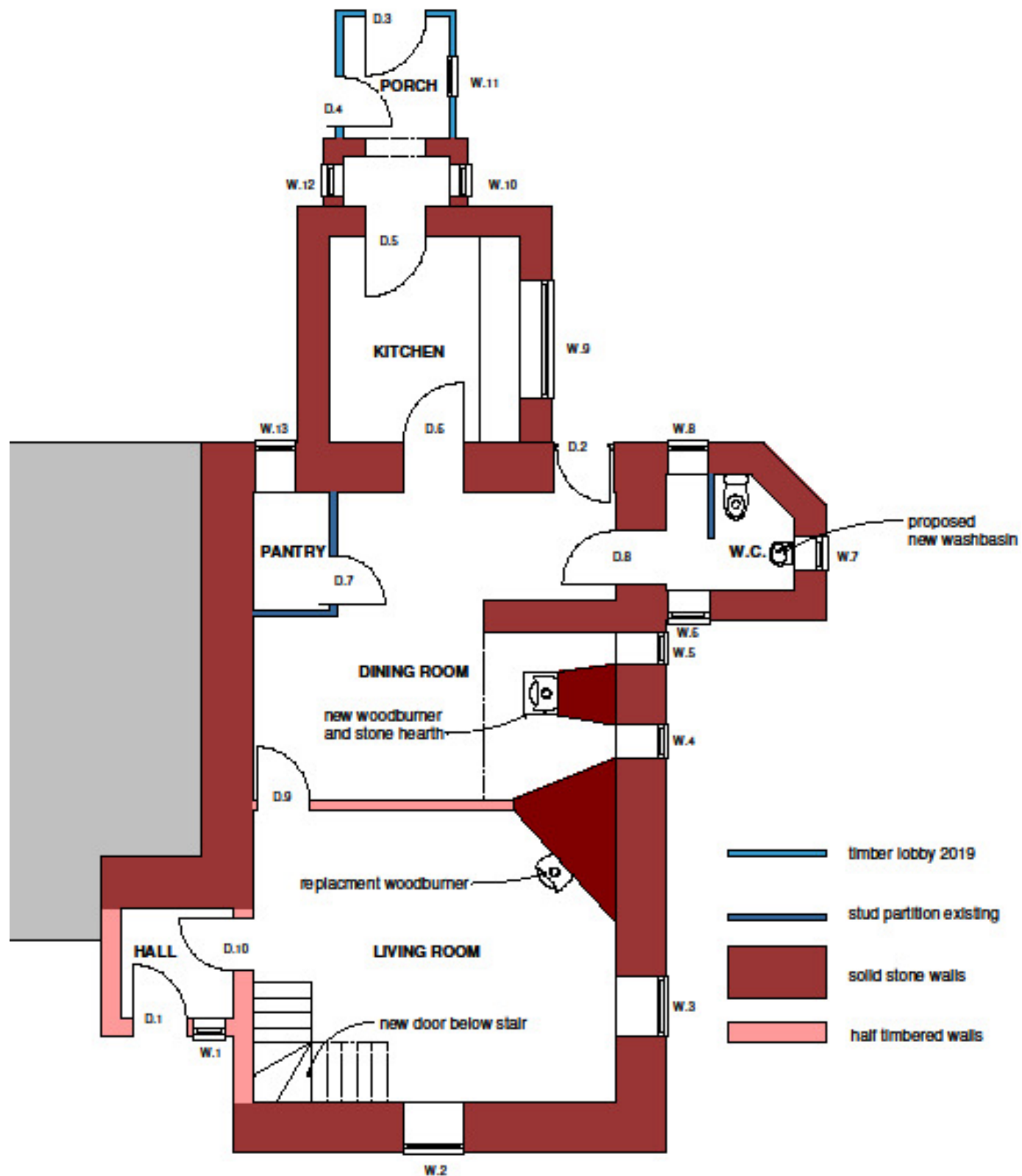
Changes which need Listed Building Consent, and for which consent would probably have been granted had an application been submitted prior to the works:

- The new chimney pots which have been added.
- The new en-suite bathroom which has been installed off the rear bedroom.
- The bathroom which has been partially removed from the ground floor to form a pantry. *[The bath and plumbing may be still in place beneath the wooden boxing that is now in place.]*
- The log burner which has been installed within the dining room inglenook.

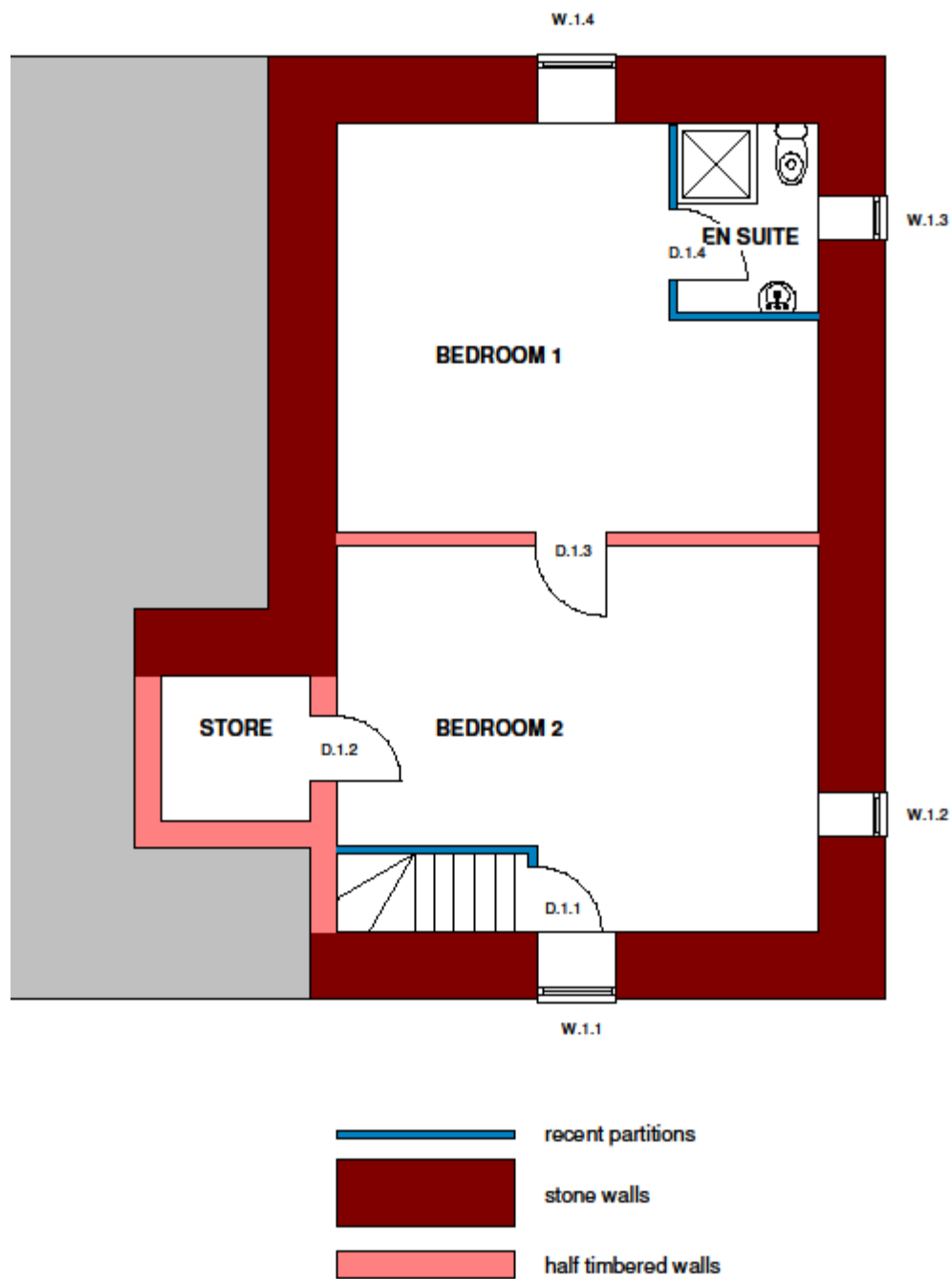
Changes which have been made but which would have been unlikely to have been granted Listed Building Consent in their current form had they been submitted prior to the works:

- Around 3/4 of the windows have been replaced. The new windows are timber but with basic mouldings. The replacement windows are double glazed.
- There has been an addition of a rear porch – this is timber clad with a corrugated metal roof. The window is a reclaimed fixed paned single glazed window with an elegant, fine, vertical glazing bar (it was possibly originally a sash).
- Some of the external walls have been repainted - due to the really poor weather conditions at the time of the visit it was difficult for Jennifer Chambers to guess at what type of paint was used but it appears most likely to be a modern masonry paint.
- A soil vent pipe has been added to the rear elevation.
- The top of the stairs to the front bedroom has had a partition erected around it.

2. PLANS



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

3. IMPACT OF CHANGES MADE SINCE 2019

3.1 Replacement wood-burning stoves

The stove and a new hearth plinth in the dining room replaces an open fire.



Screenshot from 2019 Zoopla archive



Photograph taken 5/5/23

The stove and a new hearth plinth in the living room replaces a previous stove; the fireplace surround is unaltered.



Screenshot from 2019 Zoopla archive



Photograph taken 5/5/23

Both these stoves have flues inserted into the existing chimneys, and new chimneypots have been installed to comply with current regulations.



Screenshot from 2019 Zoopla archive



Photograph taken 5/5/23

Although the new chimneypots do affect the external appearance of the building, they would have been necessary when more efficient modern wood burners were installed. Any reduction in significance is in my opinion

outweighed by the increased thermal comfort and saving in carbon, which in the long term will help to ensure that the heritage asset is sustained in use.

3.2 Erection of timber porch



Photos taken 5/5/23

The screenshot of the Zoopla 2019 archive external view (above, 3.1) shows the kitchen and lobby without the porch. The timber construction is similar to the construction of other outbuildings in the grounds shown on the 2022 Zoopla website, while the corrugated iron roof is similar to one on an outbuilding next door.



Screenshot from 2022 Zoopla website

Compared to the 2019 Zoopla archive screenshots this shows the extensive amount of work that has been carried out by the previous owner to landscape the garden.



Screenshots from 2019 Zoopla website

It can be seen from the 2019 pictures that the stone shed was in poor repair; this has now been re-roofed.

3.3 External paint finish



Screenshots from 2022 Zoopla website

The CADW listing report says that the stone walls of Arosfa were colour washed, but by 2019 this had washed away although traces remain on the front elevation (see screenshot of Zoopla archive above, 3.1, and below).

The listing report also says that the half-timbering next door had rendered and whitewashed infill at the time of listing. The previous owner has painted the stone gable wall at the front of the property and the stone walls of extensions at the rear. The paint used would appear to be a breathable lime-based paint, but we have not analysed it. If it is, it will protect the stone, give some weather protection as well as enhancing the significance of the building.



Screenshot of front elevation from the Zoopla 2019 archive

3.4 Replacement windows

The windows are numbered on the plans (above, section 2).



W.1



W.2



W.3



W.4



W.5



W.6



W.7



W.8



W.9



W.10 (W.12 is similar)



W.11 outside



and inside



W.13



W.1.1



W.1.2 (W.1.3 is similar)



W.1.4



Lintel over W.1.4

Windows W.2 and W.3 on the ground floor and W.1.1 and W.1.4 on the first floor are modern double-glazed replacements, with timber frames stained black externally. The window visible from the Zoopla 2019 archive on the rear elevation, now replaced by window W.1.4 appears to have been a 20th-century Edgma type casement, but the windows shown on the archive which have been replaced by windows W.2 and W.1.1 may have been older. Window W.3 has two horizontal glazing bars in each casement, similar to the previous window, but the other replacement windows only have one. What appears to be a lead covering has been fitted over the lintels above W.2 and W.1.1. The lintel over window W.1.4 has a bad split, and it might be advisable to treat this with a lead cover in the same way. The timber lintel over window W.3 is unchanged, but a lead flashing has been inserted below the cill.

Window W.11 is a reclaimed window, possibly originally part of an 18th-century sash window as it has a thin ovolo and fillet glazing bar, visible from

the inside. This is unlikely to have been re-purposed from elsewhere in the building and was most probably purchased from a reclamation yard.

Other windows appear to be unchanged since 2019. They are in various states of repair, and some will need maintenance in the near future. Some of them are fairly crudely constructed, and these may well date from the time of the original farmhouse, but it is difficult to be certain without documentary evidence.

3.5 New en suite shower and toilet

The ensuite in bedroom 1 is a new construction, with stud partition and a framed, ledged and braced cottage-style door. It has been tucked in behind the chimney and makes use of the existing small window W.1.3. The floor has been raised which will allow for a services void above the existing floorboards shown on the Zoopla 2019 archive. The waste feeds into a upvc soil vent pipe on the rear elevation, which is shown on the 2022 Zoopla screenshot.



Photos of en suite taken 5/5/23



Screenshots from Zoopla 2019 archive and Zoopla 2022

The previous owner has clearly tried to reduce the impact particularly on the floor, but without an invasive investigation of the state of the boards below the new floor it is difficult to say whether they have been significantly damaged. The partition is stud and therefore a reversible intervention. On balance therefore the additional amenity would in my opinion compensate for any loss of significance. The plastic pipework is more problematic. Whilst cast iron is a suitable material for rainwater goods, it is not really suitable for foul drainage. I would therefore recommend leaving the SVP and associated plumbing as it is. It would be more damaging to route the pipework inside the building.

3.6 New partition and door to stair

The stair has been enclosed with a stud partition. It is possible but unlikely that the handrail and balustrade was encapsulated within the partition; it is more likely

that it has been lost. The partition and door will reduce draughts between the ground and first floor, and so will improve amenity, but this may not outweigh the reduction to significance by the loss of the balustrade. However, as we do not have any details apart from the archive photograph I would ask for retrospective consent for this intervention rather than an attempted restoration. The door at the head of the stair is a framed, ledged and braced cottage-style door which seems appropriate.



5/5/23



Zoopla archive

3.7 New door to storage space below stair



Photo taken 5/5/23



Screenshot from Zoopla 2019 archive

A vertically boarded door has been fitted to create a cupboard for storage below the stairs. This is in keeping with the style of doors in the rest of the house.

3.8 Paint over glass in door D.6

Door D.6 is similar to door D.2, and probably pre-dates the 1970s kitchen extension. The glass has been painted over on both sides, and it would be good to remove the paint if this is possible.



Door D.2

3.9 Carpets laid over floors

Carpets have been laid over the tiles on the ground floor and the floorboards on the first floor. The first-floor carpets will preserve the floorboards from damage. The tiles below the ground floor carpets appear to be intact, although only a few small corners of carpet were lifted. The carpet has what appears to be an impermeable underlay which would limit the ability of moisture in the floor below to evaporate. If the old tiles are laid on earth, this may lead to moisture ingress into the walls as there will be no other route for moisture to evaporate. I suggest that the moisture content at the base of the walls is monitored, and if it increases the underlay should be replaced with a permeable underlay on an intelligent membrane.

3.10 Conversion of ground-floor bathroom into pantry

The ground-floor bathroom has been converted to a pantry, and it appears that the existing bath has simply been boarded over with the plumbing disconnected. The bath is shown on the 2019 Zoopla plan, but the modelling is generic and the bath may have some heritage value. It would be worth lifting the worktop to investigate.



Photos taken 5/5/23



Screenshot from Zoopla 2019 archive

4. IMPACT STATEMENT

The changes made since the house last changed ownership have improved amenity. The loss of the stair balustrade is regrettable, but apart from that the impact of these changes is relatively minor, and the landscaping is a considerable improvement.