

Heritage, Design and Access Statement | Hollybush Lane Farm list building consent for fireplace removal, restoration of existing conditions, and installation of new wood burner

1.0 Introduction

Hollybush Lane Farm is a grade two listed farmhouse located on the outskirts of Penley, Wrexham. The listing document describes the property as follows:

A mid C18 farmhouse. In the mid C19 a parallel rear wing was added, later extended beyond the gable end of the original house, all of which is shown on the 1873 Ordnance Survey.

A Georgian 2½ storey 5-bay house of hand-moulded brick with concrete-tile roof on dentil eaves, and brick end stacks with moulded caps. The symmetrical front has a plat band between storeys. The central boarded door has a 2-pane overlight under a segmental head. Windows are segmental-headed small-pane cross windows in wooden frames. To the R of the entrance is a C19 small-pane iron-frame basement window. The L gable end is roughcast in the lower storey, evidence of a former lean-to, and has a replacement attic window on the R side. The R gable end has a replacement attic window to the L side.

The parallel rear wing is narrower and lower, also of brick with slate roof on dentil eaves. The rear elevation has a central gable, replacement casement windows in earlier openings, and double half-glazed doors in a former window opening. The R end is later, of a different colour brick, and projects beyond the gable end of the main range. Its entrance is on the N side, a segmental-headed boarded door to the L of which each storey has a replacement 2-light casement window, under a segmental head in the lower storey.

The main range is centrally planned with stair hall. The kitchen on the L has a chamfered spine beam with run-out stops, and fireplace with a large timber lintel. The parlour on the R side has a finely moulded cross beam. The full-height open-well stair has turned balusters and square newel. Beneath it are brick cellar steps. In the upper storey the rooms R and L have chamfered cross beams, and in the L-hand room box framing is exposed in part in the rear wall. The 2 roof trusses are late C19, with queen posts and collar beams, and iron bolts.

In the rear wing is a closed-string service stair.

The modest changes proposed in this consent application are focused on relieving weight of the existing open fireplace from the floor and building structure, improving the heating performance above the cellar, and increasing safety.

2.0 Background & Conditions

During the planning stage of the cellar restoration at Hollybush Lane Farm - *Planning Application P/2022/0737, Granted 15/11/2022* - it was identified that the mid-20th century fireplace was placing a large structural load on the joists and lintel below. The fireplace is located in the Dining Room, located in the North-West corner of the house marked in blue as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 - Position of Dining Room and Fireplace on Sketch Plan

The fireplace itself is positioned centrally to the West wall. Based on the design and style, it is presumed to be an addition to the farmhouse circa 1950/60 - *Figure 2*.



Figure 2 - Fireplace detail

It is believed that the fireplace had been constructed of tile laid onto brick or concrete. The weight of the fireplace appears to have resulted in movement in the structure around and below the fireplace surround as seen in *Figures 3, 4 and 5*. The joists below the Dining Room floor require repair and as such we wish to limit structural loading on the repaired joists while balancing the heating requirements of the room and house.



Figure 3 - Structural failure below fireplace



Figure 4 - Detail showing movement of fireplace due to overloading of floor



Figure 5 - Detail showing movement of fireplace due to overloading of floor

In addition to the 20th century fire surround being out of keeping with the 18th century character of the property, the open hearth is inappropriately small, presenting health as well as safety concerns for the occupants of the house including three small children under the age of 10.

Following discussion with the conservation officer, consent is sought for the removal of the fire surround, restoration of existing conditions, and installation of an enclosed wood burning stove. It is our intent to sensitively undertake these modifications with minimal impact to the existing heritage quality of the building.

3.0 Heritage Assessment and Schedule of Works

Whilst the proposed changes are relatively minor, they have nonetheless been carefully considered to avoid any harm to the heritage asset, restore original material as appropriate, and provide a long-term, sustainable approach to heating.

Fire Surround Removal

The fireplace will be carefully removed, first by removing the laid tiles using hand tools and then deconstructing the structure that is understood to exist under the tiles. Best practice historical methods per SPAB/Historic England/Cadw will be used to mitigate any potential damage to the surrounding material - such as floorboards, lime plaster, and the chimney hearth behind the fire surround.

Chimney recess repair

There is evidence under the existing 1950's fireplace that the original slate outer hearth is in place - *Figure 6*. Given the extent to which the original chimney remains in place is unknown, approval is sought for two approaches to restore the original opening based on what is found during removal/investigation.

1. Should the original fabric of the inner hearth, throat, and firebox remain in place, it is proposed to restore the original condition. Non-corrosive slate cleaning methods will be used as needed so as to not damage the underlying stone. Any repointing or replastering that is required will be done in appropriate lime materials.

2. Should the original materials not be present when the fireplace is removed and the recess exposed, we propose to repair and extend the lime plaster to the edge of the fire opening, expose the brick, and then repoint in lime mortar. It is our intent to maintain as much of the original material as possible however, should the brick be spalled beyond reasonable repair, the chimney opening would be lined with an appropriate fireproof backing.

Should neither of these approaches be appropriate, consent will be sought from the local authority for an alternative approach.

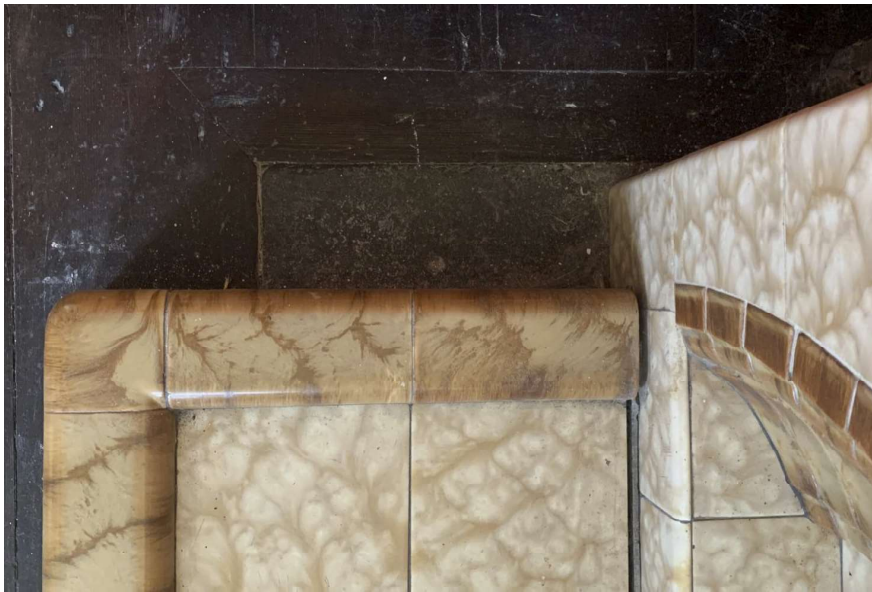


Figure 6 - Detail of slate hearth revealed under fireplace

Stove installation

It is believed that a flue liner has been previously installed in the chimney above the fire hearth. No changes are proposed to the flue, it will simply be thoroughly swept and inspected prior to installing the new stove.

The flue liner will be utilized for the installation of a Firefox wood burning stove - *Figure 7* - which will be positioned on the existing slate hearth. A sealing plate will be installed out of sight at the top of the chimney hearth. An angled black vitreous pipe will be used to connect the stove to flue liner using an appropriate collar and adapter at each joint. Installation will be carried out by a HETAS approved installer.



Figure 7 - Proposed woodburning stove

A small wireless carbon monoxide detector will be installed in the room in a concealed location but inline with manufacturer's recommendation and specifications. This would be surface mounted and entirely reversible.

Vent Detail

Due to the age of the building and size of the stove, an external air vent is required to ensure appropriate air intake into the fire to conform with wood burning stove regulation. In order to further increase airflow through the cellar, a requirement to control moisture in this area of the building, we propose to place a small, baffled metal grate in the floor to the left hand side of the stove, in the vicinity to where an external vent detail has been approved for the cellar.

4.0 Design and Access Statement

Use: There is no proposed change to the existing residential use.

Scale and Amount: There are no proposed changes to the scale and amount of the existing dwelling.

Layout: There are no proposed changes to layout of the existing dwelling.

Landscaping: There are no proposed changes to layout of the existing dwelling.

Appearance: The dwelling's external appearance will remain unchanged.

Access: There are no changes proposed to the access of the dwelling.

5.0 Conclusion

The overall proposal would have minimal impact on the heritage qualities of the listed building. The removal of the 20th century fireplace does remove a feature that was honest to the period in which it was installed, however has little connection to the overall character of the 18th century building. The removal of loading on the surrounding structure is a carefully considered intervention to protect value of the heritage building, and the installation of a closed wood burner is a minor modification that will result in a more sustainable and safer situation for the occupants of the building.