



PHARMACY HOUSE, 18 HIGH STREET, OVERTON

Heritage Statement

Chambers Conservation Ltd, August 2021 – Issue 1

1.0 Introductory Information

- 1.1 This report has been written by Jennifer Chambers BA (Hons) BArch RIBA SCA IHBC. It is to accompany the planning and listed building consent applications for the project.
- 1.2 The report should be read with the following supportive documents / drawings:
- 01 - Ground and First Floor as Existing Rev A
 - 02 - Second and Attic Floors as Existing
 - 03 - Main Elevations as Existing
 - 04 - Outrigger Elevations as Existing Rev A
 - 05 - Site Plan as Existing
 - 10 - Ground and First Floor as Proposed Rev C
 - 11 - Second and Attic Floor as Proposed Rev A
 - 12 - Main Elevations as Proposed Rev B
 - 13 - Kitchen and Extension Elevations as Proposed Rev A
 - 14 - Site Plan as Proposed
 - 15 – Location Plan
 - Design and Access Statement
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2.0 Introduction

2.1 Purpose:

The purpose of the Heritage Statement is to explain and demonstrate:

- An understanding of the form, materials and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits
- An understanding of the significance of the asset(s)
- An understanding of the impact of the proposal on that significance

By understanding these matters it is intended that the building owner / occupier would:

- Avoid, minimise and mitigate negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of local and national planning policy
- Look for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance



2.2 The Nature of the Proposal

The project involves the repair and alteration to the existing house and integral shop unit including:

- Demolition of existing outbuilding
- Demolition of mid 20th century coal store
- Construction of new extension to rear
- Replacement of rear windows
- Reinstatement of lost floors / ceilings
- Replacement of existing first floor wall
- Insulation to roof
- Provision of new bathrooms (including some subdivision and new openings)
- The panelling to the shopfront stallriser will be restored to the earlier design
- Installation of services such as gas central heating and rewiring

The former pigsty at the end of the building will not be affected.

2.3 Designation Records

Pharmacy House is a grade II listed building – the listing description can be found in the appendix to this document. It sits between two further listed buildings and within the Overton Conservation Area.

As is customary, the statutory listing covers the exterior and interior of the building. Features in the garden (ie the pigsty) will be considered as curtilage structures and will therefore have some protection under the law.



Garden (including coal store)

2.4 Reference(s) in the Local Historic Environment Record

There are no known references in the local historic environments record relating specifically to the building in question, although the building features in various old photos of general High Street views.

2.5 Archaeological Potential

The wider area of the town has considerable potential for archaeology. The whole garden area has been planted and built on over the past two centuries therefore the chances of significant discoveries are very minimal. The area nearest the house has been disturbed with drainage and the constriction of the later outrigger and therefore is considered as having almost no archaeological potential.



Shop and kitchen

2.6 Planning History

No planning history is available for the building – given that the building has not changed significantly in over 50 years, it is likely that no planning or listed building consent applications have been made in that period.

2.7 Consultations Undertaken

Prior to the appointment of the Conservation Officer, the applicants / owners were advised to seek guidance from Nick Davies at Cadw, who suggested that they should appoint a conservation architect. The applicant discussed and agreed initial clearance work with Nick, which enabled the condition of the building to be better assessed. Following these discussions, the following work was undertaken:

- Clearance of vegetation within the completely overgrown garden (including the removal of a tree with a conservation area notice served).
- Removal of the collapsed later timber floor within the shop area
- Removal of modern debris inside the building
- Removal of modern wallpaper and floor coverings

The applicants submitted a pre-application request in March requesting advice on the planning matters and received the advice that planning permission would be required and that the design of the rear extension roof could be difficult.

Following Wrexham Council's appointment of Conservation Officer Kathryn Moore 26.07.2021, she undertook a site visit (with both owner and architect present) and advice including the following was given:

- The owner's careful approach and desire to preserve and enhance as much of the historic fabric as possible as well as the character of the spaces was welcomed.
- The approach for ventilating floor voids was discussed
- The upgrading of the ceiling and door to the shop was discussed (the building control officer was also present)
- She advised that repointing in NHL2 lime mortar was likely to be appropriate but hot lime should also be considered if suitably experienced masons can be found.
- The design of the extension was discussed – she preferred a visual contrast to the earlier elements but requested a simplification of the fenestration to the kitchen (this has been done).
- Replacement of the failing and poor-quality windows to the rear in painted timber with slimline double glazing was agreed to be probably appropriate, subject to detail.
- The subdivision of existing rooms and creation of new openings should be minimised – she agreed that for the most part the scheme respected this principle.

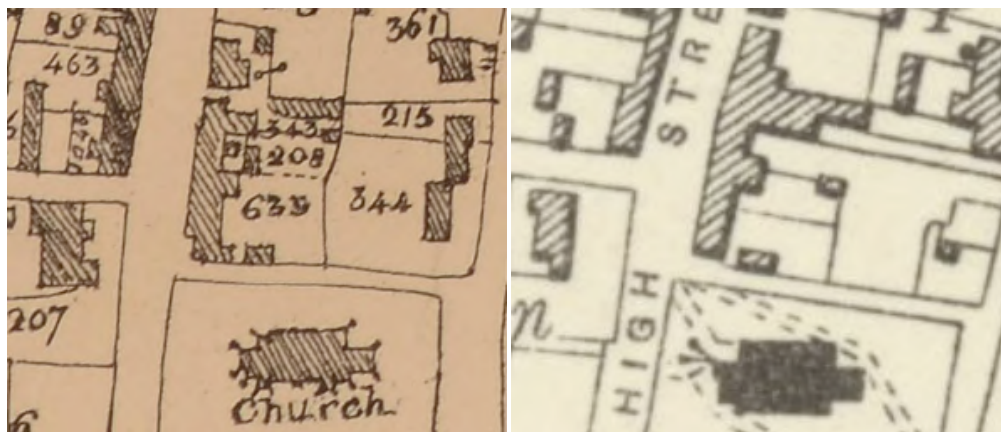
2.8 Approach and Methodology

The following assessment of the history and significance of the building has been made largely through a visual inspection and through anecdotal evidence obtained verbally from the owners from previous occupants (or friends of) together with information of the internet concerning the history of Overton.

3.0 The Heritage Asset and its Significance

3.1 Understanding the Form and History of the Heritage Asset

Pharmacy House appears to have been built as a townhouse in around 1800 as a pair with the adjacent Bank House. At the time of construction, it is likely that they were simple houses with the commercial elements at ground floor level added later.



Tithe and 1898 OS plan

It is recorded within 'Memories of Overton' on the Overton-on-Dee website, that there was known to have been a chemist shop and grocery store in the building from 1880 to 1883, when the Chemist was Henry Milner Hughes. Following his death, the firm was taken over by Francis Fitzjohn and later George Knox Mawr. By 1947, the shop was being rented by L Rowlands & Co from the Bryn-y-Pys estate. From 1931 the house was occupied by Fred & Sarah James and family. The shop remained in use as a Pharmacy until around 20 years ago. The house was occupied later, but had very little modernisation, for example with no fitted kitchen, central heating or electricity on the top floor.



Late 18th century images

The footprint of the house is currently similar to what it was likely to have been two hundred years ago. Originally there would not have been an outbuilding / annex evidenced through the presence of a blocked window opening on the rear wall of the shop. The current outbuilding / annex stylistically dates from the mid-late 19th century. It is constructed from softer, poorer quality bricks than the main house. There is an outbuilding shown up against the house on both the tithe and OS maps, but its position in relation to the boundary is inconsistent, therefore there is no definite dating evidence available – the existing structure may be the second outbuilding.

The floor plan of the main house is likely to be as it was in around 1900, when the use as a chemist was well established – the north side of the ground floor had been opened up to form a single space. The upper floors have four main rooms off the central landing, with the main difference being the small central room at the rear side on the first floor (whereas the second has a larger, asymmetrical room).

The front elevation would have had the shopfront added in the 19th century – this has been slightly altered in the 20th century, with changes made to the stallriser and capitals. The windows to the rear have been changed on a number of occasions in the 20th century – the oldest of which appear to be the Crittal style metal casements.

Within the garden, the pigsty structure was built in the late 19th century and the coal store (not on the OS maps) appears to be mid 20th century in terms of materials and character.

3.2 Assessment of Significance of the Heritage Asset

Externally, the front of the building has a high level of architectural and artistic interest. It is a well-proportioned and elegant building, sitting in a prominent position on the High Street, therefore it makes a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area and the setting of a number of other listed buildings. The general appearance of the building remains unaltered from the end of the 19th century – sash windows are still present and are, for the most part relatively early. The door surround is presumably original. The shopfront retains its original character and fits aesthetically very well with the rest of the building although has been altered slightly in more recent decades. The front elevation has a high level of historical interest as it depicts its original and early uses and adds to the visual illustration of the history of the town.

The rear elevation has a lower level of significance as it lacks the elegance and architectural interest and features of the front. It also has a slightly higher degree of alteration, with windows being later replacements of varying periods. The condition of the brickwork is also worse in places with cementitious pointing and surface repairs causing the erosion of the brick in places. The later outbuilding has some minor historical and artistic interest as it contains 19th / early 20th century features such as the quarry tiled floor, casement window and boarded, but the level of significance is limited by the utilitarian nature of the space and lack of rarity of its components.

The interior of the remainder of the building, however, has a relatively high level of significance. This is due to a combination of the ease in which the original floor plans can be seen and the presence of early / original features. Panelled doors are seen to almost every room. Fireplaces of varying styles are to be found in most of the principal rooms and help indicate the original purpose or status of the space. Sadly, original / early plasterwork is generally missing. There are no plasterwork features remaining (it is not clear whether there were ever cornices etc). Some early wall plaster remains to the second floor, although elsewhere it has been replaced in the 20th century. Joinery is simple but high quality and fits with the original nature of the building as a townhouse within a small rural town. The stairs are reportedly of oak but have undecorated balustrades – the ground floor stair is currently in a poor condition simply due to decades of use. The flooring within the house is generally of simple floorboards which vary in

character and quality again according to the status of the space – the front ‘parlour’ having the finest boards of a consistent width and of a higher quality of timber.

The interior of the shop has suffered from both poor quality mid / late 20th century fitouts and from the effects of damp. At the time of the purchase of the building, the timber floor was collapsing and was no longer safe – it was removed with the agreement of Cadw. Walls are crudely plastered and have a very inconstant appearance. There are remnants of fairly recent fittings. The significance of the interior of the shop is therefore limited.



Ground floor front and rear rooms



Second floor room with failing ceiling and bedroom



Hall and bathroom



Second floor room with lost ceiling (viewed from attic) and cellar

3.3 Impact on the Significance

As the building has been unused for quite some time and underused for decades, it is inevitable a scheme proposing its reuse will impact on its significance – the individual impacts will always vary across a scheme and some negative impacts may be identified as necessary to achieve an overriding positive change as a whole. The following text assesses the impact of the main changes to the building proposed within the scheme:

- Demolition of existing outbuilding – this will clearly entail the loss of an element that does make have a minor level of interest. However, the outbuilding is in poor condition and would entail a significant amount of repair (replacement of around 25% of brickwork and the floor slab).
- Demolition of mid 20th century coal store – this element has limited interest. Whilst it does visually recall some of the more recent history of the site, it has no architectural / artistic interest and could be said to distract from the setting of the listed building.
- Construction of new extension to rear – this would clearly change the appearance of the listed building from the rear view. However, this is not a view that is visible in its complete form from many, if any, other buildings and that was blocked by the overgrown nature of the garden for around a decade or so. The eaves and ridge height of the extension is limited to that of the existing outbuilding to minimise the extent to which it is seen. The render to the walls is deliberately chosen as a visual contrast, so this is can been clearly read as a modern extension, leaving the historical development phasing of the building clearly legible. Whilst there is clearly a visual impact, its magnitude is limited by the appropriate size and simple design of the extension.
- Alterations to rear ground floor – the construction of new extension to rear would entail the loss of two casement windows and the brickwork around it. The brickwork to this area is in particularly poor condition and the windows themselves are simple but unremarkable late 19th / early 20th century casements. The impact will therefore be limited.
- Replacement of rear upper floor windows – it is very unlikely that any of these windows are original to the construction of the building. They vary in type, condition and age – those in good condition are late 20th century, but of a relatively crude construction. The metal windows are relatively unusual but are beyond reasonable repair. On balance, the impact will be limited.
- Reinstatement of lost ceilings – this will have a positive impact as the visual character of the second-floor rooms would be reinstated. It should be noted that this ceiling (together with its neighbour in a very poor state of repair) will be reinstated in

plasterboard – this is a realistic measure to allow efforts and finances to be focused on the repair of the remaining lath and plaster ceilings.

- Replacement of existing first floor wall – whilst this will involve the loss of historic fabric this is understood to be necessary for the structural stability of the remaining fabric (the existing floor is bowing considerably – it would apparently not take any load except its own weight) – by reinstating as a lightweight timber stud partition, there would be much less structural intervention needed elsewhere that would have had a greater visual (and probably physical) impact. Further structural information will be supplied at a later date.
- Insulation to roof – this will have a completely neutral impact on the historic building as it will be generally loose-laid. The exception will be the board insulation over the reinstated ceiling, which will be used as a storage area. Care will be taken to ensure that the roof voids remain ventilated to avoid the risk of condensation issues.
- Provision of new bathrooms (including some subdivision and new openings) – the impact of this will be minimal as they are inserted into the rooms with no surviving features such as fireplaces and by stacking rooms requiring plumbing over each other the need for pipe ducts within voids is absolutely minimised.
- The panelling to the shopfront stallriser will be restored to the earlier design – this will have a positive impact as the earlier appearance and higher quality of the shopfront will be reinstated
- Installation of services such as gas central heating and rewiring – the impact of these works will be reduced by careful planning. As most plasterwork is relatively modern and most floors suspended timber, the likelihood of needing to damage historic finishes is limited.

3.4 Avoiding Harmful Impact(s)

The above assessment shows that harmful impacts of a significant magnitude will be avoided. Changes that involve alteration of historic fabric are limited and are done for a very specific purpose that has considerable ‘gains’ in terms of the appearance or use of the building

In general, harmful impacts will be avoided by the owners, due to their commitment to understanding what is special about their building and their patiently getting to know the existing building fabric to determine its age and significance - they are going to great lengths to source skilled craftsmen who have an understanding of the traditions involved in repairing or reproducing elements of a historic building of this nature.

3.5 Justification for Harmful Impacts

A building that has been unused for a great length of time and with significant condition issues will always need to be changed to ensure its future survival. Some changes, if considered alone, would always be identified as harmful. By sensitively upgrading the house to meet the needs of modern family life, it will help ensure that it remains in full use, which will in turn, mean that it is more likely to be kept in a good state of repair. The principal ways in which the building falls short of normal facilitates for a house of its size are as follows:

- Only having one bathroom
- The lack of a single space that could accommodate, for instance, a family gathering
- Thermal comfort

- Adequate electrical supply (ie missing to the second floor)
- Central heating
- Some structural issues

The scheme represents the minimum work necessary to address these issues.

Easy access to a bathroom is important from an accessibility and safety point of view. At first floor level, this does mean that the current proposal means the subdivision of the existing bathroom into three, but that would create a shared bathroom as well as ensembles for both the master bedroom and a spare bedroom which would be used by an elderly relative with limited mobility.

The creation of a new family room in the new extension makes an attractive, daylit space that can benefit from the comfort of double glazing and insulation but leave the rest of the floorplan undisturbed.

The existing kitchen annex is the most problematic part of the existing building in terms of condition and yet has a much lower level of significance. The applicant proposes that by rebuilding the kitchen to modern standards, the average thermal performance of the building as a whole will be upgraded whilst preserving what is special about it.

The only other change that will be non-reversible will be to the windows. The rear windows, which are either relatively modern and of crude construction or older and in a poor state of repair, will be replaced in painted timber with slimline double glazing. Through careful design, the overall appearance and character of the windows will be retained – the visual difference will only be visible upon closeup inspection.

The details of the structural repairs will be available later – it will be the intention to strengthen fabric (only where needed) generally by adding to the existing fabric (e.g. by pairing up an additional timber or adding a steel shoe) instead of more substantial replacement. This aesthetic impact of any structural work will be considered and minimised – most, if not all structural work will be in roof or floor voids.

In summary, the proposals have minimal impact as they are focussed on the least significant areas of the house – most rooms and the characteristic hallway are left unchanged. The scheme will preserve and enhance the significance of the building by repairing it and including the right level of upgrading of facilities that will support the continued use of the building as a family home in many years to come.

Appendix A – Listed Building Description

Entry Name: No 18 High Street E Side (Previously Listed As Chemist and Bank)

Listing Date: 16 November 1962

Last Amended: 15 March 1994

Grade: II

Source: Cadw

Source ID: 14437

Building Class: Commercial

Location: Between Church Cottage and the White Cottage.

County: Wrexham

Community: Overton (Owrtyn)

Community: Overton

Built-Up Area: Overton

Traditional County: Flintshire

History

Pair of houses of c 1800, incorporating a shop which was probably inserted during the C19

Exterior

The present shop front retains some elements of a late C19 or early C20 design. Brick with slate roof. 3 storeys, 5-window range, originally comprising 2 dwellings of unequal size. No 17 is a 2-window range, with doorway to right, No 18 a 3-window range with central entrance. Flush framed 12-pane sash windows to upper floor (9-pane to attic storey) and tripartite sashes to ground floor, all with flat arched gauged brick heads. No 17 retains its original doorway with canopy hood; insertion of shop front has modified the arrangement to the left, but the doorway alongside the shop appears to be early C19, and has case with bracketed entablature. Shop front itself has central doorway, windows divided by slim mullions and a transom, and fascia carried on brackets. Dentilled eaves band. Axial stacks, raised during the C19. Coped gable to left.

Reasons for Listing

A good building of c 1800, urban in character. Part of an important group of buildings on High Street.