

Sharon Holman, Wrexham County Borough Council.

By email: sharon.holman@wrexham.gov.uk

18th February 2020

Your ref.: P/2020/0065

Our ref. **156552.**

Dear Sharon,

Alteration and new Extension at Holt Hill, Holt, Wrexham

Thank you for notifying the SPAB of the proposals to alter and extend the grade II listed house. Whilst we have not had an opportunity to visit the building, we would like to offer the following observations.

Holt Hill is a building dating from late 16th century which was remodelled and altered in the early 18th century. The HIA describes the phasing of the building, with the earlier fabric and architectural details retained within the core of the house.

This application proposes a number of alterations to the building, some of which are appropriate, whilst some are harmful to the character and special architectural historic interest of the building. For clarity we have provided our observations under the following headings;

Removal of existing structure

This application proposes to remove the glazed single storey structure lean-to located to the east of the building. This structure is modern and unsympathetic in its design and we have no objection to its removal.

Work to the existing fabric – Ground Floor

The proposal to reinstate the front door and timber sash window on the east elevation can be justified and will have a positive contribution to the character of this elevation. The bonding within the brickwork clearly demonstrates the aperture of the former openings. We would however seek further substantiation for the reinstatement of a ‘Georgian style’ canopy above the new door. Whilst this is a typical detail from this period, there doesn’t appear to be any supporting justification for its conjectural reinstatement in this context. Are there any indications of fixings to the brickwork or historic images which show a canopy in this location?

Work to the existing fabric – First Floor

At first floor level, we have strong concerns regarding proposal to form a new opening within the fabric dating from 1680-1700 to create a new connection between the proposed master bedroom, walk in wardrobe and en-suite. This will result in substantial harm to the fabric and character of the building with little justification given the scale of the existing room and proximity of the existing doors. We strongly encourage the applicant to revise this aspect of the design and object to the current configuration.

Similarly, we do not consider the current proposal of forming an En-Suite partially within Bedroom 2 and the landing to be a sympathetic and well resolved detail and will result in a peculiar boxed partition within the corner of the bedroom which is harmful to its character and results in the partial loss of fabric dating from 1700-1730. We note, that we are open to the opportunities of amending the 20th century partitions to accommodate a new layout however the submitted proposals are not be considered appropriate.

The position of the new doors connecting the first floor of the extension do not correlate with existing window openings of the west elevation. This approach results in the unnecessary loss of additional early fabric to suit the position of a new ensuite. This approach is entirely inappropriate and can not be supported.

Roof Plan

The roof plan identifies several new conservation rooflights however the photographs contained within the HIA shows a large proportion of the roof timbers are early in date. The ceiling level also does not appear to follow the roofline within these spaces making the introduction of rooflights intrusive and harmful the character and fabric of the building.

New extension

The Society has a long-established and well-respected conservation philosophy with clear views on the approach that should be taken to new work, such as extensions. We believe that new work of this kind should 'complement not parody' the original and that 'modern needs should be expressed in a modern [architectural] language'. We advocate high quality design and craftsmanship which is sympathetic to the original but does not attempt imitation. Work that sets out to replicate or emulate the original designer's work will inevitably confuse the history of a building or mislead the onlooker. It is also unlikely to be successful and risks compromising the original's integrity. Stylistically, the new extension appears a hybrid of traditional and modern styles, we do not consider this appropriate.

Furthermore, we have concerns over the scale of the proposed extension. The new two storey structure masks a large proportion of the 1700-1730 elevation and extends substantially beyond the line of the existing rear elevation dominating the western view of the house. We consider the scale, design and approach of the new addition to be inappropriate and harmful to special architectural and historic interest of this grade II listed building.

Until the concerns raised within this letter are addressed, we would like to raise an objection to this application. We trust are comments are helpful to you.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elgan Jones', is positioned above the typed name.

Mr Elgan Jones RIBA AABC
Casework Officer