

Donald Insall Associates
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

Erddig, Wrexham

Heritage Impact Assessment

For The National Trust



Contact information

Matt Osmont, Architect (Practice Director)
E: matt.osmont@insall-architects.co.uk

Conwy Office
Y Becws
Pool Lane
Conwy
LL32 8PZ
www.donaldinsallassociates.co.uk

Version:
1- 25.09.26 - Consents Submission - Opening Up

This report and all intellectual property rights in it and arising from it are the property of or are under licence to Donald Insall Associates Limited. Neither the whole nor any part of this report, nor any drawing, plan, photograph, other document or any information contained within it may be reproduced in any form, including online, without the prior written consent of Donald Insall Associates Limited. All material in which the intellectual property rights have been licensed to Donald Insall Associates Limited, and such rights belong to third parties, may not be published or reproduced at all in any form, and any request for consent to the use of such material for publication or reproduction should be made directly to the owner of the intellectual property rights concerned. Checked by: MO

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Objectives	2
3.0	Context	3
4.0	Significance	5
5.0	Summary of Condition	6
6.0	Proposals	7
7.0	Justification	8
Appendix I		9

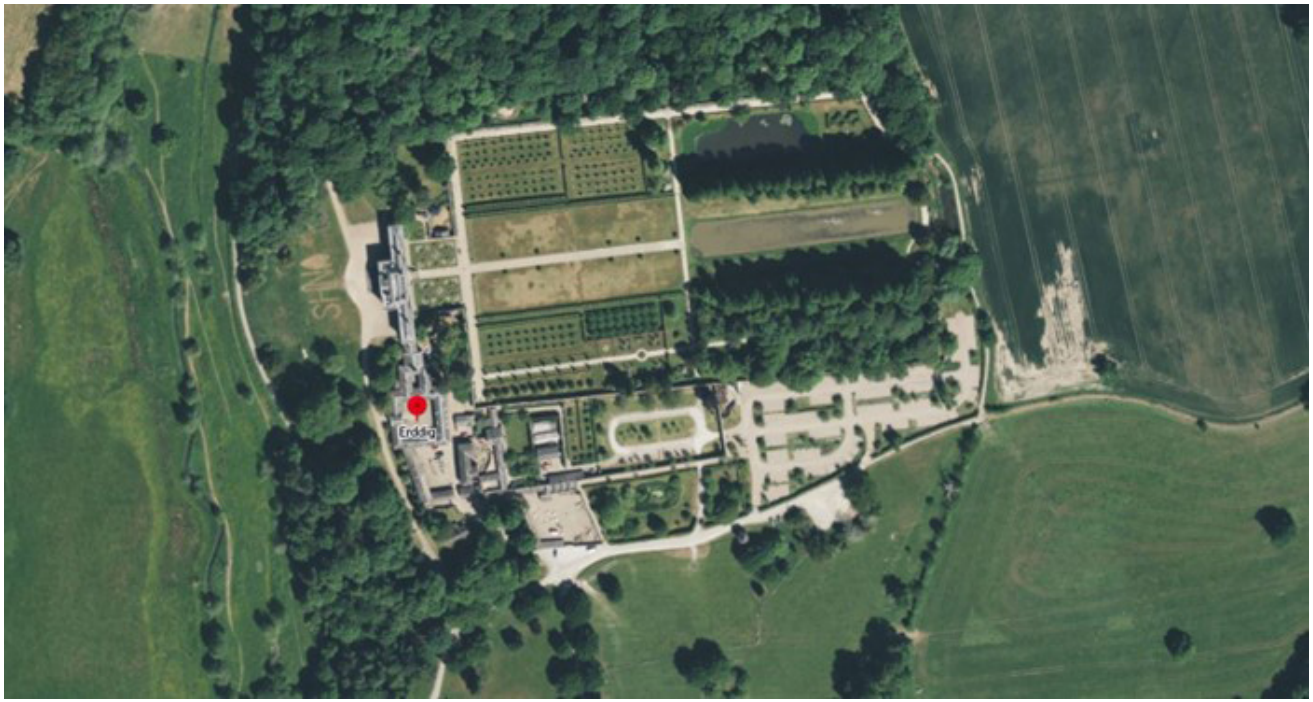
1.0 Introduction

This application includes opening up works and installation of attic / loft access boards to facilitate the installation of passive fire protection works and the upgrading of the existing Fire Alarm System (FAS).

A detailed assessment was carried out by a consultant surveyor, a National Trust surveyor and accredited conservation architect. This concluded that there are currently several breaches in the existing compartmentation lines and the FAS is old and does not comply with current regulations nor meet the requirements of National Trust insurers; all of which present an unacceptable risk to the mansion and its occupants.

This document preceeds an associated submission of an application for listed building consent for the full project to install a series of passive fire protection interventions across the property and replace the FAS in its entirety with a L1/PI system that is compliant with current regulations and building users insurance requirements. The information submitted seeks to secure permission to undertake limited opening up works to inform the broader scope of works the future submission, for which there has been previous consultation with the conservation officer.

While the guidance of Cadw's 'Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales' has been closely followed, this assessment is also proportionate to the scale and nature of the works being proposed.



Aerial view of Manor House, Google image

2.0 Objectives

When the National Trust first took ownership of Erddig Hall in 1973, a programme of restoration was carried out over four years. However, since then, the property has been maintained in a piecemeal fashion, with repairs and alterations carried out as and when required. The existing FAS has subsequently been insensitively installed, with little regard to the building fabric or historical significance of the property. The present need to replace the existing FAS therefore presents a great opportunity to remove previous interventions that have a detrimental impact on the character of Erddig Hall and replace these with a comprehensive system that is both compliant with concurrent standards and that will have a far less visual impact on the property. The future wider submission includes a schematic proposal to replace the whole FAS.

Testing of the wiring for the FAS has been undertaken, where possible, Further testing of the wiring for the FAS is to be done during the PCSA, for which opening up works is required where possible. There are some areas that are not safe access to undertake the survey, the provision of loft boards will allow for the completion of the surveying, and will inform the final design of the replacement FAS, which will then be included in the following LBC application.This will ensure that the works undertaken are proportional to the consents in place.

By far the most prolific issue across Erddig Hall is small breaches in the compartmentation lines, such as gaps in fire barriers, holes in ceiling lines and unsealed service penetrations. To finalise proposals for fire stopping, some areas of opening up are required to expose the breaches in compartment lines.

Following an assessment of the historic doors, it was also concluded most offered inadequate fire protection and so widespread upgrading of the doors would be required. However, upon further assessment, it was subsequently found that alterations to the historic doors would be disproportionately invasive and could be mitigated with the introduction of a small number of new fire doors, a new partition wall and a single fire curtain to the bottom of the existing staircase. The full LBC will include for installing a new fire curtain, partition wall and fire doors that will be reversible in nature and have been designed in such a manner that has the least visual impact on the historic character of the property. To inform the final design of these elements some localised opening up or preliminary works to expose where further fire stopping will be required has been included within this application.

The overriding objective with the future proposed interventions has been, where possible, to improve the fire protection of the property while at the same time mitigating the visual impact of any such intervention. Regardless, these improvements are critical to the safety and prolonged life of the property, and to make it safe for continuing use. The opening up and preliminary works will inform the future proposals, and allow to de-risk the works on site by providing more certainty.

3.0 Context

Erddig Hall was constructed 1683-7 by Cheshire mason Thomas Webb for Joshua Edisbury, who became bankrupt shortly after its completion in 1709. In 1721-4, London lawyer John Mellor extended to the north and south, with two-storey wings. Upon his death in 1733, the house was bequeathed to his nephew Simon Yorke. Erddig remained within the Yorke family for 240 years, with each successive owner being named either Simon or Philip. Remodelling of the property was instructed by the Yorke family in 1773-4 by James Wyatt and in 1827-8 by Thomas Hopper.

The nationalisation of the Coal Board in 1947 meant coal was mined from beneath the house and along with serious subsidence, financial troubles saw a rapid decline. Shortly after inheriting Erddig, Philp Yorke III entered into negotiations with the National Trust, which finally took ownership in 1973. Philip died in 1978 as the last Squire of Erddig, however, he lived long enough to see Erddig Hall returned to its former glory following a four-year programme of restoration.

Erddig contains some exceptionally fine neo-classical interiors, such as the magnificent State bedroom with its fragile bed embroidered in Chinese silk and chapel with late 18th century fittings. Other rooms, less ostentatious, are typical of the upstairs-downstairs layout of a great country house. These rooms are very plain and reflect their uses as service accommodation.



Ornate interiors. Including Red Bedroom (Picture) & State Bedroom with its fragile bed embroidered in Chinese silk - currently being conserved



Kitchen

Historical Significance

Erddig is founded on the ancient settlement of Castell-y-Glyn, where a Norman Motte and Bailey overlooked the Afon Ddu and Afon Clywedog. Joshua Edisbury commissioned Thomas Webb to construct Erddig, partially furnish the interior and lay out the gardens in 1683. However shortly after its completion, Edisbury fell into debt and in 1716 ownership of Erddig transferred to his primary creditor, lawyer John Mellor. Mellor was hugely significant to the history of Erddig and added two wings in 1720 to create a suite of 'rooms of parade' along the East Front. These rooms were filled with furnishings of outstanding quality.

Following Mellor's death in 1733, Erddig was inherited by his nephew Simon Yorke, the first in a line of Yorkes that would own the property for the next 240 years. Simon's son Philip inherited Erddig in 1767 and started a long association with William Emes, who was commissioned to resolve the flooding of the lower meadows and increase the land value. Philip also remodelled the West Front of the house, redecorating and rearranging many of the principle rooms and introducing yet more fine paintings and furniture. He bought and demolished neighbouring Sontley in order to relocate the estates agricultural operations away from the house. This opened up the river to which local people were invited to walk along and enjoy the Estate.

Simon Yorke II inherited the estate in 1804 and made significant alterations to the interior of the House in 1826. His son, Simon Yorke III was very active with woodland management, felling and replanting trees in the plantations, while also instigating many improvements and modernisations including the construction of Manor Farm.

Ownership transferred to Philip Yorke II in 1894 and marked the beginning of the estates decline. His son Simon Yorke IV inherited the property in 1922, however, following the depression, two world wars and ongoing mining subsidence causing damage to the property, there was very little money available and so no further alterations or improvements were made to Erddig. Philip II's younger brother, Philip III inherited the estate in 1966 and was determined to keep the property and its contents intact. This led to a gradual deterioration of the estate and lengthy negotiations with the National Trust who took passion in 1973 and continue to hold the property today.



Present day image of the front elevation



Present day image of the rear elevation

4.0 Significance

With a continuity of ownership stretching 240 years and the antiquarian interest of the Yorkes, the social history of Erddig is recorded to a level of detail few other country houses can match. Furthermore, the remarkable series of portraits of servants, with associated verses, makes this one of the most fascinating of social stories. The comprehensive records of the estate and close social connections with those who have owned and served under it means Erddig has a high historic and cultural significance.

Erddig has always been significant to the local economy, continuing to employ people, albeit within the tourist rather than service sector. Up to 40 people are employed by the National Trust to manage the property during the visitor season, which as a major tourist destination, sees some 80,000 visitors every year. In addition, the estate is also utilised by thousands of people for walking, orienteering, road racing, hot air ballooning, cycling and countless other recreational pursuits; a Country Park open from dawn till dusk as Philip Yorke I had originally intended. The Erddig estates continued influence on the local community and economy further contributes towards its social value and cultural significance.

The River Clwedog and surrounding lands have heavily influenced the prosperity and history of Erddig. William Emes attempted to prevent flooding by changing the course of the river and in so doing, created two levels to the surrounding meadows which increased the value of land. While flooding is still a problem today, the land is fertile and farming has since been successful. Indeed, good relationships have continued with tenant farmers and residential occupants in the houses and cottages of the estate, many of whom are second / third generation and remember the Yorkes in residence. These close social ties between the estate, its owners and tenants that continue to today, along with the influence it has had on the surrounding landscape, further reinforce the high cultural significance of the Erddig estate.

The Erddig estate is a designed landscape consisting of a cleverly integrated composition of parkland, pleasure grounds, vistas, woodlands, water courses and gardens. Successive generations added to and enhanced rather than changed the works of their predecessors. In doing so, much of the fundamental structure remains in place, with extensive records showing their development overtime. As such, Erddig holds a high historic as well as aesthetic significance.

While the later stages of the Yorke line saw a decline in the fortunes of Erddig, paradoxically it was the lack of resources and the reluctance of Simon Yorke IV to part with anything in the house that saved the house and park from modern, destructive improvements that may have been detrimental to its overall significance. As such, many of Erddig's Neo-classical interiors retain many of their historic fixtures and fittings, including fine examples of 18th century Chinese wallpaper, a chapel with late 18th century fittings and magnificent State bedroom featuring a fragile bed embroidered with Chinese silk. As such, Erddig maintains a high evidential as well as aesthetic / architectural significance.

5.0 Summary of Condition

As with most historic buildings, Erddig was not designed with modern services, indeed when Simon Yorke IV inherited the estate in 1922, he became a recluse with no electricity or telephone installed, instead keeping away from the outside world. Where they have been installed, they rarely fit well with the interior design and quality of the historic fabric. As it currently stands, the later service interventions do not comply with concurrent regulations and an upgrade is well overdue. The items that require upgrading are as follows:

Fire Alarm System (FAS)

The existing fire alarm system is old, noncompliant with current regulations and has a number of known faults. During piecemeal alterations redundant fittings and cabling have been left in place, adding to the visual impact of modern services.

Fire Doors

Following an assessment of the historic doors, it was concluded that most offer little to no protection to the spread of fire. This assessment also revealed incomplete / compromised compartmentation of the property.

Access Hatches

There are a number of access hatches to the third floor and roof void that are damaged and no longer function as required.

Gap Filling

There are various minor gaps within the interior fabric of the building that compromise the fire compartmentation of the interior spaces.

Ceilings / Underside of Staircases

There are a small number of ceilings / underside of staircase that have become unstable / suffered widespread damage. This has substantially compromised there to provide horizontal compartmentalisation to the spread of fire.

Roof Void Fire Barriers

Within the roof void / third floor, the existing fire barriers / lath and plaster partition walls offer little to no protection to the spread of fire due to poor execution / installation or system failure due to the system being beyond its serviceable lifespan / damage.

Security Interventions

The main entrance door to the Western elevation in currently in a poor state of repair, offers little weather protection to the interior and is seized shut. Furthermore, later security bars catch on the inner shutters and prevent them from closing properly.

6.0 Proposals

The proposals have been set out in the schedule of works, detailed drawings and marked-up plans showing the location of each measure or opening up item.

Fire Alarm System (FAS)

In the following LBC application, the proposed works to upgrade the Fire Alarm System and install passive fire protection measures will be undertaken in a sensitive and considered manner. Schematic drawings for the proposed Fire Alarm System have been prepared based on testing that has been able to be completed to date without the need for opening up works. It is anticipated that a full test of the existing installation including wiring performance will be undertaken to the remaining areas. There are some areas where there was not safe access, this will be provided for both testing, and to allow for installation and ongoing maintenace of the FAS. The proposed routes in the schematic drawings that have been drafted need to be confirmed whether possible without great intervention. It is proposed to lift some floor boards to confirm where the replacement FAS is to be installed.

Where floorboards are to be lifted, this will be done with the utmost care so as to avoid irreversible damage. The floor boards will be resecured following the investigation works with fixings that will allow repeatable access that does not damage the substrate - be these hidden button-fixings or visible brass threaded sockets - dependent on the existing board appearance. To be agreed in advance with Conservation Accredited Architect and Conservation Officer. The contractor will be briefed at commencement on the required conservation principles. Regular site inspections will be carried out to monitor the works and discuss any conservation issues that arise during the works. By undertaking this access and opening up works related to the installation of the FAS future installation process will be more streamlined, and allows for early engagement with the design team, Trust, Wrexham Borough Council and CADW.

To inform whether the FAS needs to be extended into loft voids, an opening is proposed above STG15.

Fire Doors

The installation of fire doors will be the most visually significant item of work being undertaken in the future application.

To inform the final design proposals and de-risk the on site works it is proposed to locally open up / remove elements.

Fire Curtain - In order to confirm whether fire stopping is required before the fire curtain is installed the boarding is proposed to be removed to expose whether there is a void behind.

Fanlight - by removing the modern boarding to the fanlight it will be aparent whether any repairs to the joinery is required.

T18 Doors - Remove architrave and existing doors to understand fire stopping that will be required when the new doors will be installed. The existing doors have been heavily altered, but provide security and some protection to the storage spaces beyond. In order to maintain this separation, the new temporary fire doors and frames will be installed, allowing for the new doors to be manufactured ahead of installation, therefore allowing for less time on site where separation could be compromised.

Door KG06 - Removal of a section of architrave will ensure that the proposals to install a new door in position will be possible, and inform whether any fire stopping is required behind the frame before installing the new door.

Trials

An example of approaching repairing the timber doors will be undertaken along with colour matching trials for finishes - be this graining or colour matching the current paint colour. This will allow for details to be confirmed ahead of the full LBC application.

7.0 Justification

All the works discussed in this statement and detailed in the application drawings are necessary to inform the broader application that seeks to improve the safety for the safety of the visiting public and members of staff / volunteers and the protection and long-term prosperity of the fabric of Erddig.

The existing situation is unsatisfactory, in regards to fire protection, the visual impact of later interventions and the subsequent impact on the historical, cultural and architectural significance of Erddig. The works will be pre-planned and proceed under the direction of a conservation professional.

While there will be some very minor damage caused to the historic fabric, this will be insignificant when compared to the resulting benefit to the wider community of maintaining Erddig open to the public and allowing the cultural impact of the estate to continue unabated. Therefore, on balance, the proposed works will have a significantly positive impact on the ongoing conservation of Erddig.

Appendix I

Erddig

A Grade I Listed Building
in Marchwiel, Carmarthenshire
Source ID: 1533
Location: Situated c3km W of Marchwiel, reached from a series of by-roads running E from the A483. Set within an extremely fine landscaped park of C17 and C18 character.

History

Plas Original house built for Joshua Edisbury by Thomas Webb, freemason of Middlewich, Cheshire in 1683. In 1716 the house was acquired by John Meller of London who extended it, probably in two close but separate building campaigns, by adding double wings to each side. In 1733 the house passed to the Yorke family and in the 1770s a major phase of alteration was undertaken. The brick W front was remodelled and faced in stone by local architects J & W Turner working to a design attributed to James Wyatt; some interior rooms were remodelled at the same time using craftsmen associated with Wyatt. The lay-out has not been substantially changed since then and the retention of many of the earlier features reflects the antiquarian and genealogical interests of the Yorke family. The house was acquired by the National Trust in 1973 and a major phase of restoration was carried out during the 1970s by Robert Heaton of the Anthony Clark Partnership.

Exterior

East front: Red brick with stone dressings and string courses, slate roof hipped to central block, stone chimneys. 2 storeys with basement and attic. Windows are generally 12-pane sashes with casements to the basement. Near-symmetrical elevation which consists of central 9 window block with central pedimented entrance with steps leading up to it, above is a window with a stone architrave, and stone balustrading in the parapet. There is a range of 7 dormer windows in the steeply pitched roof. This block is flanked by 2-window wings with stone quoins, stone plinth to these and central block. Outermost 3-window wings of brick of slightly different colour have sashes to first floor, ground floor left side has a range of 3 bullseye windows with 9-pane sashes below, right hand range ground floor relates to the chapel and has a single bullseye window with a square-headed window beneath it on each side of a tall central arched window. The window levels do not match the inner wings.

W front refaced in ashlar in severe late C18 Neoclassical style; ashlar plinth, 3 storeys. Upper 2 storeys have 12-pane sash windows, ground floor 9-pane sashes. Central projecting 9-window pedimented block flanked by 6-window ranges; the central block has central entrance with doorcase with attached Ionic columns. Perron stone stairs with cast-iron swept handrail. The left hand return side has an entrance with stone doorcase.

Interior

The present arrangements originated with the late C18 remodelling though many rooms, particularly those on the W side retain earlier panelling. Patent decorative tin ceilings were introduced to some rooms as a fire precaution in the early C20. The ground floor has a suite of rooms on the W side consisting of entrance hall and drawing room both decorated in late C18 Neoclassical style with plaster friezes by Joseph Rose & Co and chimneypieces by John Devall the younger. Library to the N. Entrance hall leads to main staircase on left and back stair to right. Rooms on the E side consist of an oak-panelled saloon; the dining room to S contains a decorative scheme by Thomas Hopper in 1826 containing Doric screens with scagliola columns and a severe Greek Revival coffered ceiling. 2 rooms to the N of the saloon are known as the Tapestry Room and Chinese Room. The latter has roundels of rare C18 Chinese handpainted wallpaper affixed to the walls. This room leads to the family pew in the chapel. Change of level down to the chapel which has furnishings of various C18 dates, some brought from elsewhere. The walls are decorated with a stencilled scheme of 1907-9. Of the windows two are C18 windows by Joshua Price incorporating medieval glass which were brought from Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire in the early C20. Upper floor consists of suites of bedrooms on each side of a central long gallery which runs EW giving views of the formal gardens to the E and landscape park to W. The state bedroom on the N side has hand-painted Chinese wallpaper of late C18 date. To the S nurseries now staff accommodation, to the N a suite of family rooms now used for storage and offices. One of these has a fragment of wallpaper designed by Walter Crane. The attic has servants bedrooms.

The basement level has rooms off a long corridor and preserves an axis with family rooms to the N and service rooms to the S. The entrance from the W forecourt leads to a former billiard room known as the Tribes Room which was decorated late C18 with coats of arms of noble Welsh families. Other rooms include the butler's pantry with C18 fittings and fixtures, and the servants hall. Rooms in the S wing include accommodation for the housekeeper and agent. The kitchen range is separately listed.
Topmost floor under oak trussed roof with morticed principals (for purlins of former roof with dormers); remarkable bedroom retains deep Georgian bed recess with wide, flattened and keyblocked arch.

Stone flagged basement retains vaulted cellars, strong room and slate shelving to wine store.

Donald Insall Associates