HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Penley Old Hall
Overton Road, Penley
Wrexham
LL13 0LS

Application for Listed Building Consent for the conversion of a downstairs living room to an accessible bedroom with new ensuite bathroom.



Revision A

September 2026

PURPOSE + SCOPE

This Heritage Impact Statement accompanies the application for listed building consent. It assesses the effect of the proposed internal alterations, insulation and associated drainage works on the special architectural and historic interest of Old Hall, Penley. The assessment is proportionate to the limited scale of intervention and has been informed by the Cadw list description, the Royal Commission record, drawing PL.1 and the photographs included on that drawing.

OBJECTIVE + PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

The objective is to allow for the owners of the house to remain in their long-established home into [redacted]. An existing ground-floor living room would become a bedroom with [redacted] ensuite, [redacted]

The proposal converts the existing living room into a bedroom with dressing/reading area and an [redacted] ensuite. The works comprise:

- New lightweight stud partitions forming an [redacted] ensuite, suitably sized to allow for [redacted] space of approximately 1.5m
- Installation of an [redacted] shower, WC and wash basin, including new drainage connecting the sanitary fittings to the existing drainage system, and new bathroom extraction.
- The external walls are to receive internal wall insulation using breathable wood-fibre insulation and lime plaster
- Redecoration following completion of the works.

The existing windows, fireplace wall, closet, corridor, hall and adjoining orangery remain unaltered. No extension or change to the roof, fenestration or principal external elevations is proposed.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Designation and development

Old Hall Farmhouse was designated at Grade II on 16 November 1962 (Cadw reference 1696). Cadw describes a late-medieval house containing a two-bay open hall. It became storeyed and was extended in the seventeenth century, with the earlier house becoming a cross wing. Originally timber-framed, much of the building was rebuilt in brick around 1785. A rear wing was added in the nineteenth century and subsequently extended. Major restoration took place in 1992.

The building is listed for its definite architectural character, its legible sequence of additions and alterations from the late-medieval period to the nineteenth century, and its surviving interior detail. The Cadw entry identifies the lobby-entry plan, back-to-back fireplaces, panelled doors, ovolo-moulded cross beams, chamfered beams and joists, a reset dog-leg stair and evidence of decorative painting on original trusses.

The adjoining orangery/garden room was the subject of an earlier planning and listed building consent application in 2021 and remains unaltered by this proposal.

CADW Listing Entry (refer in conjunction with diagrams on following page)

https://cadwpublic-api.azurewebsites.net/reports/listedbuilding/FullReport?id=1696&lang=en

HISTORY

A late medieval house with 2-bay open hall, which became a storeyed house in the C17, at which time the original house became the cross wing of the extended house. Originally timber-framed, it was rebuilt in brick c1785, and the present fenestration dates from that phase of rebuilding. A rear wing was added behind the cross wing in the C19, which is shown on the 1837 Tithe map, and was later extended with a dairy and cheese room, which is shown on the 1873 Ordnance Survey. The house underwent major restoration in 1992.

EXTERIOR

A 2½-storey house of brick with slate roof and brick stack R of centre. It comprises a S-facing main range with cross wing on the R (the rebuilt original house), which has a coped gable. The 3-window main range, incorporating a lower gabled bay on the L side in imitation of a cross wing and also with a coped gable, has cross windows in earlier segmental-headed openings. The R-hand window in the lower storey was originally a doorway, the main entrance to the C17 house. The cross wing on the R has similar windows and a blocked attic window.

In the L gable end is a 2-light window in the lower storey and 2 similar windows in the upper storey. The rear has a C19 inserted doorway with boarded door, and 2-light window to its R. In the upper storey is a 2-light window on the L side in a former blocked doorway, and inserted casement window in the centre.

The R side wall of the cross wing has three 2-light windows and a gabled porch on the R side, added in 1992. In the upper storey is a central casement and 2-light window on the R side. Further R is the slightly lower rear wing, also of brick with slate roof. It has two 2-light casement windows in the lower storey, and two 2-light and a 1-light casement window in the upper storey. At the end is a 1-storey dairy and cheese room at R angles, which has three 2-light windows. The rear (W) side of the rear wing has 2-light and 1-light windows, and a gabled projection at the L end added in 1992.

INTERIOR

The house retains a lobby-entry plan with back-to-back fireplaces (the details now altered), although the C17 entrance has now been blocked. From this entrance double panelled doors with glazing bars (the glass has been removed) lead L into the former C17 hall. This has 2 ovolo-moulded cross beams. The 2-unit cross wing on the R of the entrance has plainer chamfered beams and chamfered joists to the rear room. Behind the fireplaces is a reset dog-leg stair, which has turned balusters and square newel.

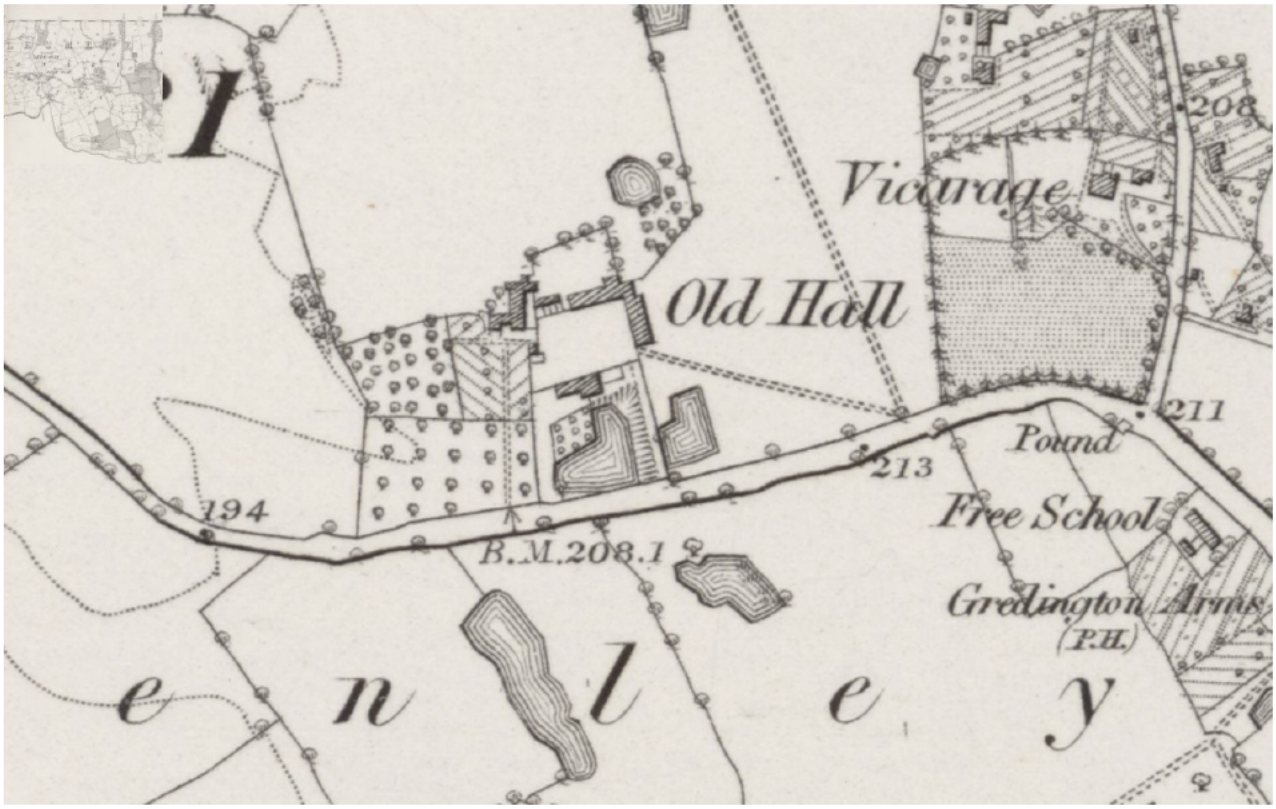
In the cross wing evidence of painting on the original trusses was revealed during restoration work.

REASON FOR DESIGNATION

Listed for its special architectural interest as a house of definite architectural character, showing many additions and alterations from the late medieval period to the C19, and retaining good interior detail.

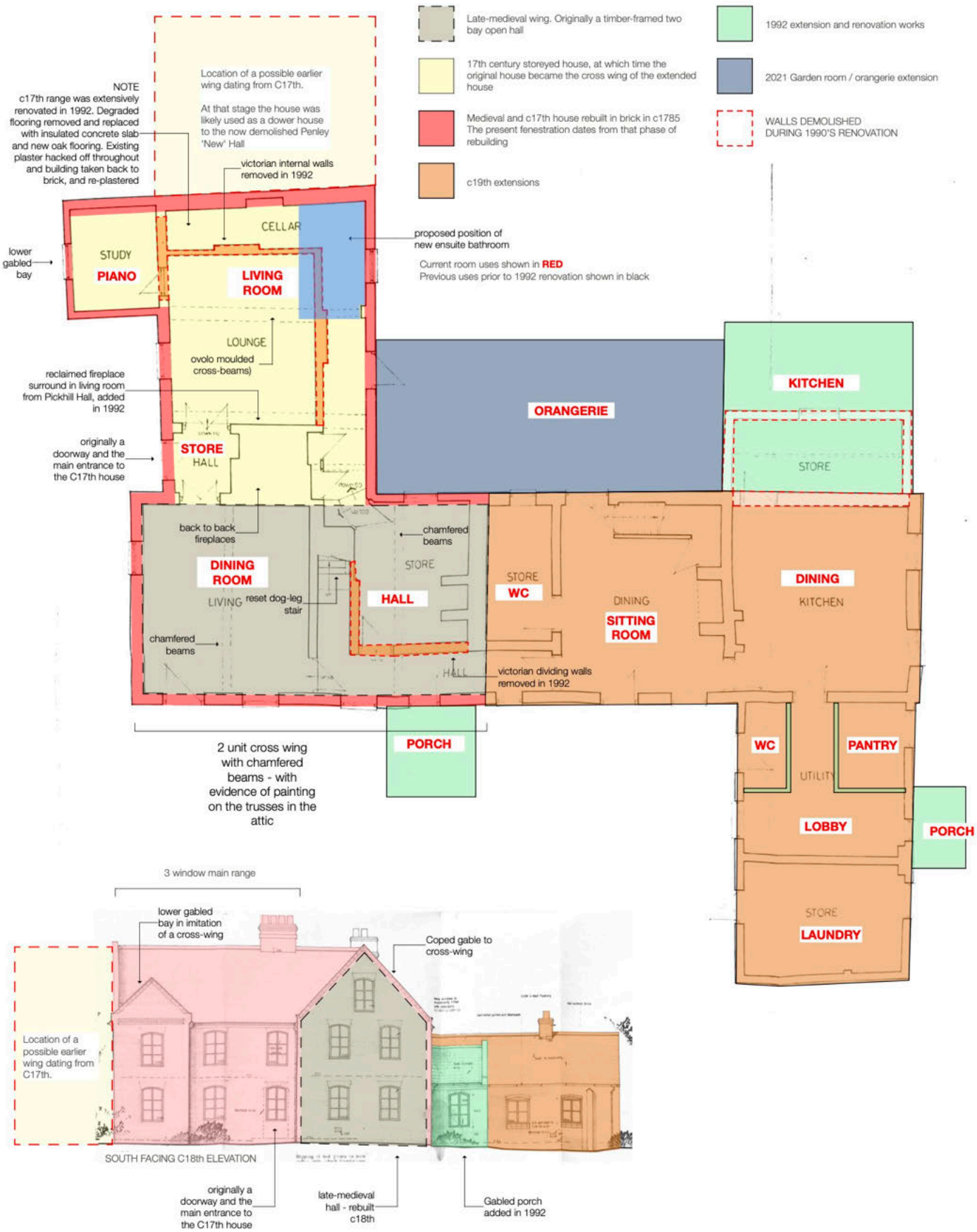


1838 Tithe map



OS Map of 1873, published 1878

HISTORICAL DIAGRAMS



PHOTOGRAPHS



Existing living looking south showing piano room



Existing living room showing north-west corner location of proposed ensuite



Existing west elevation



Existing living room showing east wall with c19th reclaimed fire surround



Existing north-west corner of living room from outside and orangerie

Significance of the affected room

The living room contributes to significance as part of the evolved domestic plan. This part of the house dates from the c17th storeyed extension to the original medieval open hall, rebuilt in c1785. There are two visible ovolo moulded cross-beams and the back-to-back fireplace would have dated from the c17th, although the fire surround is a reclaimed victorian piece installed in the 1990s.

The room does not contain the painted trusses or partition recorded within the historic cross wing. Its principal heritage value derives from its relationship with the wider plan, retained visible structure and joinery, and traditional domestic character.

Prior to 1992 the room was subdivided by a brick internal victorian partition wall creating a narrow 'cheese cellar' on the northern and western sides and smaller living room. This is shown on the existing 1990's plans supplied by the owner, and was removed in 1992, when the room was extensively renovated. As part of these works the original degraded flooring was removed and replaced with an insulated concrete slab with modern oak floor finishes, the internal wall plaster was removed back to brickwork and the room entirely re-plastered.

OPTIONS APPRAISAL

A number of different options have been considered in response to the brief to create an accessible downstairs bedroom and ensuite accommodation. Firstly, to continue using the first floor accommodation is not practical [redacted] and the installation of a lift has been investigated and [redacted], and the level of disturbance that would be required to the historic fabric of the building.

The south-facing living room is considered to be the optimal position for a downstairs bedroom due to its size, proximity to the main living areas of the house and south-facing garden outlook. Locating the bedroom downstairs would enable the elderly occupants to continue living independently in their established home, avoiding an extension, lift or alteration to the historic staircase.

A number of options were considered for the position of the ensuite bathroom and [redacted] for various reasons;

1. A conversion of the piano room, although a suitable size would block the valuable light from the south into the bedroom. It would also require more significant work to connect to the existing drainage
2. The small store room is not large enough for [redacted] and [redacted]
3. Converting the existing downstairs WC to a shower room would be possible, but it is too far from the bedroom to be practical, and leaves only the small WC in the western wing for use as a guest bathroom.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

The position in the north corner of the bedroom does alter the proportions of the room, but allows for the new drainage to be connected to the existing stack resulting in lesser disturbance to the historic fabric of the building, and will not block the south light to the bedroom.

The variation involving partial use of the piano room with a small projection into the bedroom was also considered as per option 1 on the previous page; but would retain the longer and more disruptive drainage route, reduce light from the principal south-facing window and still introduce a projecting enclosure into the main room.

Although the immediate [redacted] benefit relates to the present occupants, the proposal also provides heritage benefits by sustaining the continued beneficial residential use and active stewardship of the listed building, avoiding more extensive alterations such as a lift or extension, improving thermal performance using compatible materials, and providing adaptable accommodation capable of continued use by future occupants.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

Partitions and ensuite

The ensuite is positioned discreetly at one end of the room and occupies a limited area. Its introduction will alter the present open plan locally and the proportion of the room; but the principal bedroom area remains generous and the fireplace wall and visible character of the main space remain legible, and it is considered that this will result in a low level of harm to the significance of the listed building.

Furthermore, lightweight construction with a stud frame wall will cause minimal disturbance and allows the partitions to be treated as a reversible insertion, especially considering that the flooring and wall plastering are both modern dating from 1992. Please refer to the method statements for the construction and removal of the walls included in the revised plans.

Drainage and services

New water, waste and soil connections can be connected to the existing waste stack in the corner of the room, minimising disturbance to floors and walls. This will follow the shortest practicable route to the existing system. There is an existing modern concrete slab floor, with modern oak flooring dating from the 1992 renovation.

A new mechanical extraction fan will be required at the position shown on the drawing, and this will necessitate the removal of some brickwork. Penetrations through historic structural timbers are not required, and disturbed brickwork finishes and external surfaces will be carefully reinstated. The brickwork in this area appears to have been re-pointed with cement mortar, likely during the 1992 renovation.

Internal insulation and finishes

Wood-fibre insulation and lime plaster are vapour-open materials compatible in principle with traditional solid-wall construction. The existing modern plaster will be investigated and removed if required, and the external walls re-plastered with a vapour-open lime based parge coat before adding wood fibre insulation and lime plaster finishes. This will help reduce the condensation risks associated with impermeable dry-lining and improves comfort. Existing windows remain unchanged. Junctions at openings and joinery should retain visible historic features and avoid unnecessary loss of fabric. Redecoration is low-impact and reversible.

External appearance and setting

There is no alteration to the building's external form, roof or fenestration. Utilising the existing drainage trench, the proposal will have no material effect on the external appearance or setting of the listed building apart from a single extract fan vent.

MITIGATION

Please refer in conjunction with the methodology and detailed sections included in the proposed plans;

- Retain the fireplace, windows, visible historic beams, closet and principal joinery;
- Scribe new work around significant fabric and do not cut or chase historic cross beams
- All fixings will be through the 1992 plastered walls into brickwork, and modern flooring and slab. There will be minimal permanent fixings into historic fabric. Where fixings are into existing ceiling joists these will be kept to a minimum
- Use a vapour-open wood-fibre and lime-plaster insulation build-up; replacing existing modern plaster to improve the vapour permeability of the walls. It is considered that this will be a significant improvement on the current build-up with modern plastering
- Route services above ground with a raised floor deck to avoid damage to the modern floor finishes
- Make good disturbed fabric and finishes using compatible materials and matching workmanship.

As mentioned above, this room was renovated in 1992 and the flooring, structural floor slab and internal plaster are all modern. It is therefore very unlikely that any historic fabric will be encountered during the course of the works. However, any historic fabric that is exposed will be carefully recorded and conservation advice sought before carrying out any alteration.

POLICY AND GUIDANCE

The proposal has been considered in the context of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023, Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment, Cadw's Conservation Principles and Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales. These require change to be founded on an understanding of significance, proportionate, and designed to minimise harm while supporting the sustainable management and continued beneficial use of historic assets.

CONCLUSION

The proposal causes a modest and localised change to the plan and appearance of one ground-floor room. It retains the features making the principal contribution to significance and does not alter the building's exterior, apart from the addition of a small extraction vent. Locating the bedroom downstairs enables the elderly occupants to continue living independently in their established home, avoiding an extension, lift or alteration to the historic staircase. It maintains the building in an active and viable residential use, retaining the fireplace, windows, beams and flooring (although modern). It also ensures that the intervention is physically reversible.

The bathroom enclosure does result in some harm to the room through the partial sub-division of the space and alteration of its perceived proportions. However it is considered that this is at the lower end of the scale and with the mitigation identified above, the partitions, services and compatible insulation can be introduced with minimal harm to the special architectural or historic interest of Old Hall.

The limited impact is outweighed by the clear benefit of enabling the [redacted] occupants to remain in their home, and the thermal improvement that will be made to the external wall structure using appropriate materials. The proposal therefore represents a proportionate management of change to the Grade II listed building.

SOURCES

Cadw, Old Hall Farmhouse - Full Report, reference 1696

Cadw, Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales

Royal Commission, Penley Old Hall, NPRN 36109

Wrexham County Borough Council, Listed Buildings

https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/756756 - Tithe maps 1838