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HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL
- 4 OCT 2011
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01 September 2011

Dear Mr Ross,

Site Address: 10 Southleigh Road, Havant
Proposed Development: Proposed re-build of Grade II listed cottage following fire destruction.

I am writing following the site meeting on 26 August 2011 at which the owners, a representative from Phillip Reeves, Keith Weston (English Heritage) and ourselves were present. I am generally encouraged by the direction in which the proposals are shaping up with total demolition no longer being pursued. It is imperative that the remaining structure is urgently protected from the elements. The current situation is untenable as it is causing unnecessary and avoidable deterioration of the fabric. You indicated you would give immediate instructions for the provision of a temporary roof.

The intended repairs and alterations will require planning permission, listed building consent and I would have thought building regulations approval. A joint listed building and planning application should be made.

The meeting was most useful in ascertaining a better understanding of the condition of the building and your clients aspirations. I have taken these on board in conjunction with the structural issues discussed and have attempted to set out below the key points with advice on the way forward.

1. The building, once two cottages, has sustained significant fire damage to the extent that the original roof structure for all intents and purposes is destroyed. The fire damage to the northern half of the building is the more significant. The structure is generally intact from and including the wallplate on the southern half. The rear wallplate and upper timber partition on the northern half of the building has sustained more significant damage. The majority is beyond repair and would require replacement.
2. What remains of the roof structure is really limited to the modern softwood rafters over the outshot at the southern end of the building. It is understood the roof in this area was replaced when the building was rethatched approx 10-12 years ago, prior to your clients ownership. It is also apparent that around this time the building underwent further alterations including the addition of buttresses in an attempt to restrain the rear wall, tanking of the walls and main floors and repointing. Whatever problems these solutions were designed to address they are likely to have exacerbated the situation. Your client identified a problem of damp in the central chimney stack. This is hardly surprising when the walls and floor are sealed. The chimney acts as a wick for the

release of moisture which has no where else to go. The extensive repair and renovation of the building following the fire offers the opportunity to remedy these past mistakes.

3. You will need to submit a fully detailed application. It must clearly distinguish what is to be retained and what is to be removed. The present drawings will need to be enhanced and supplemented to include this information. Section drawings will be required to show the intended roof design existing and proposed floor and ceiling levels, eaves details etc. The application will also need to be supported by a Heritage and Design & Access Statements. These can be combined. They will need to address how the design has been developed to take account of the building's architectural and historic significance. Reference should be made to PPS.5 and the accompanying practice guide for further guidance.
4. Initial comments on proposals.
    a. First Floor.
    In my opinion little of significance exists in terms of partitioning etc. Although currently served by two stairs, it is not my view that these elements are of such significance as to require retention. The revised partitioning is hence acceptable. Given the major intervention arising from the fire, rationalisation with the provision of a single stair appears reasonable. Once a temporary roof covering has been provided the ply decking should be removed to give a chance for the floor structure to dry out. I wish to retain the floor joists in the southern section of the cottage. This needs further evaluation and should be addressed in the Heritage Statement.

    b. Ground Floor.
    With the loss resulting from the fire the surviving components have more significance. I see no justification for the removal of the entire masonry dividing wall between the main body of the house and outshot with the knock on effect this has on other parts of the fabric. In the southern section of the building the dividing wall is replaced by a lightweight stud partition in a similar position. This wall must be retained. I am more amenable to the loss of a section of this wall in the northern half of the property. The implications on the remaining fabric is less and it offers the opportunity to functionally improve this part of the property. The entire removal of the wall as indicated is not acceptable or practical. It will be necessary to maintain a reasonable nib at either end to provide a bearing for the new cross beam. You will need to demonstrate this in your application.

    The present floor is of no interest and is causing damage to the building. Its removal and replacement with a more appropriate design solution is acceptable. It will be necessary to ascertain the depth of the present foundations and extent of excavation possible to provide the new floor. You need to work within the confines of the present floor depth. The need to underpin the foundations should be provided. Details of the new floor will need to be covered in the application.

    In developing proposals for the repair of the building the objective should be to create a situation where the structure can breathe. The approach should be reversion to the use of traditional building materials in place of the ill-advised tanking. Details of internal finishes need to be provided in your application.

    c. Exterior
    We discussed at some length the treatment of the roof. The long uninterrupted rear catslide is a strong part of the buildings character. To raise the wallplate in the manner shown would detract from this. Having debated the various merits including the need to tie back the roof to prevent a continuing problem of roof spread, the following was felt to offer a suitable way forward:-

- Rebuild the rear wall in its entirety. The wall has suffered movement in the past. Butresses have been added but have not dealt with the problem. The wall has been poorly patched up and is visually unattractive. Rebuilding on suitable foundations without over stressing other elements of the building offers the opportunity to address these deficiencies.
- Raising the existing wall plate by 7 brick courses c 0.54m (21") would help with headroom and more significantly structurally. Internally it would result in an area of skelling. However, bearing in mind the location of wall units this would not interfere with headroom.
- Being an organic material, thatch requires a steep roof pitch normally around 50 degrees and an uninterrupted roofslope to maximise longevity. The shallower pitches shown on your proposed drawing are technically deficient. As a guide I would look to maintain the previous ridge height and to pitch the rafters straight to the wallplate. I suspect given the limited change now suggested this will provide an adequate pitch. This can only be assessed by drawing up accurately. My initial judgement is that by employing a deep eaves overhang the change in eaves height could be accommodated without significantly impacting on the building's character.
- I would advise against the inclusion of eyebrow dormers. The flatter roof pitch and channelling of water will result in premature decay of the thatch. If you are intent on pursuing, we would require large scale details of the dormer design as in our experience besides the problems identified it results in a chunkier solution than shown.
- From our discussions prior to the last rethatch the building had a multilayered thatch roof, most likely of historic interest. Sadly now lost. This is likely to have been a long straw roof possibly with a later combed wheat read overcoat. I would expect the replacement thatch covering to be in wheat straw with a flush wrapover ridge.
- It is intended to replace the end weatherboarded outshots in a similar form but upgraded to provide habitable accommodation. The brickwork is currently unstable. It is your desire to enlarge both by extending rearwards the depth of the building. I feel there is some scope to enlarge but consider it needs to be inset slightly to provide some visual differentiation. The rear door will need to be relocated to the side to accommodate the lower headroom.
- The front elevation has been poorly patched up in the past. It is your intention to address this. You have been in contact with the Lime Centre. Addressing the inappropriate cement pointing will help the building to breathe. A full repair schedule for addressing the inappropriate repairs needs to accompany the application. This is best drawn up in consultation with the Lime Centre or similar specialist.
- Details will be required of any replacement doors or windows.
- Unless there is a compelling reason to the contrary I would expect the chimney stack to remain in its current form.

This is not necessarily an exhaustive list but should hopefully guide you in the preparation of a listed building/planning application. The advice is offered in good faith but without prejudice to the formal determination of any future application.

Yours Sincerely

John Townsend
Conservation Consultant

Cc: David Brock, English Heritage & Keith Weston English Heritage