

From: [Rachel Broomfield](#)

Subject: FAO: Craig McHugh (Ivy Lodge, 75, Crowlees Road, Mirfield, WF14 9JE, application: 2021/92075), our ref 168985

Date: 02 September 2021 11:24:32

Re: Listed Building Consent for rebuilding of gable wall including removal of stone buttress.

Thank you for consulting the SPAB on the proposed works to the Grade II listed Ivy Lodge in Mirfield. We have now had an opportunity to look at the documentation provided, and we have asked one of our colleagues who is a CARE accredited structural engineer to give us a second opinion on the proposals. We include their comments below.

Planning, Statement and Heritage Assessment

- These documents are very poor and do not even contain the listing description, although it is in the Structural Report. There is little assessment of the historic fabric to be removed - its age and significance are not discussed nor are the windows which are to be replaced. There is only a passing reference to dove / pigeon boxes but no further details are provided (and these are not mentioned in the listing description so have they been correctly identified?). Would the intention be to reinstate these when rebuilding? Dismantling this wall would also result in changes internally on both floors, which are not discussed. The Heritage Assessment does not appear to recognise the importance or significance of the gable end, and there is no acknowledgement of the impact that rebuilding it, largely in new stone, would have on the property overall.

Structural Report

- This is helpful to a point and we note that the company that undertook it have two conservation (CARE) accredited engineers working for them, although the site visit was undertaken by someone else. However, there is very little assessment of the underlying causes of the problems and how these should be addressed. The recommendations seem to only be to dismantle and rebuild the gable end using new stone, but there is no detailed discussion regarding alternative and more sensitive options to repair and strengthen this wall in-situ? Has the wall been looked at by an experienced stonemason as well as a structural engineer?

Discussion

- Although the majority of this house dates from the mid-19th century it has earlier origins, and the various phases of its development can be seen in its fabric. The west wing is thought to be earlier in date (17th or early 18th century) and its gable end shows clear evidence of an earlier roof line where it was raised / rebuilt. There is also evidence of some early timberwork at the rear of house. A much earlier carved stone has also been found built into the southwest corner of the gable end wall (see Photo 4 in the Structural Report) and it would be helpful to have this assessed and dated by an archaeologist. The buttress is an interesting later addition, presumably to assist with historic movement.

These features and the historic leaning significantly add to the character of this Grade II listed house, and we are very concerned that the proposed works would result in these earlier phases of development being eradicated on this elevation by 'correcting'

the building - realigning the walls through rebuilding and the removal of the buttress. The aim must always be to retain as much of the historic fabric in-situ throughout the building as possible. Whilst we fully appreciate that the gable end has moved, the photos in the Structural Report do not indicate recent movement / cracks and we are unconvinced that any of the structural problems are so bad that rebuilding is now the only option.

Two Options are provided in Section 5.3 of the Structural Report, but both entail demolition and rebuilding of this gable wall. We are unable to support the proposals at present given the level of harm this would cause. We are not convinced that every option has been fully explored – demolition and rebuild should be the absolute last resort. Please see the comments from our own engineer for alternative suggestions.

Therefore, we wish to see more sympathetic and less damaging options fully explored, which will hopefully allow the historic stonework to be consolidated, tied and strengthened in-situ. However, we do appreciate that small areas where the stone is almost gone may need to be replaced. We would advise that this wall should be looked at by an experienced stonemason so that a detailed understanding of exactly what is possible can be agreed. We would only consider demolition and rebuilding if we are convinced that it is justified and there are no other options to avoid collapse.

Photo 3 in the Structural Statement shows cement ribbon / strap pointing. Being harder than the surrounding stone this will have prevented the evaporation of moisture through the joints (which should be lime mortar), so any moisture in the walls has probably forced itself out through the softer stonework causing it to de-laminate and crumble. This will have been exacerbated through cycles of freezing and thawing. We would therefore strongly recommend that all the cement pointing (not just on this elevation but across the whole property) is carefully removed by hand (not using an angle grinder as this will cause more damage), and that the walls are repointed with an appropriate lime mortar mix (to be agreed with the Conservation Officer).

We note that the Heritage Statement and drawings show the proposed replacement of both windows on this gable end. No justification has been provided for the removal and replacement of these windows. They do not appear to be in poor condition and simply require repairs from an experienced carpenter. If they are to be replaced, clear evidence needs to be provided to show that they are beyond repair.

Comments from SPAB's CARE accredited structural engineer

The engineer said that the gable end wall was a *'lovely quirky area of the building'* and that it would be a *'great shame to lose this'*. The engineer notes that there is the option of *'consolidating and monitoring'* the wall, although they suspect the client has already rejected this. However, they note that *'without the monitoring, it cannot be concluded that the gable is on the move'* and *'there is no mention of any cracking opening up to the outside or the inside of the gable wall'*. It can therefore be argued that no evidence has been provided to show that the movement is current or is getting worse.

The engineer wonders *'if there is a lack of ties between the wall and the first floor structure as the middle of the wall appears to be bellying out. Could stainless steel rods be used to tie the two together again? Another contributing factor to the bowing might be settlement of the internal rubble core - something that might well now be historic in nature. At 700mm thick this is a substantial wall to dismantle and rebuild.'* They also note that dismantling will cause damage to the internal historic fabric and surfaces. This does not appear to have been discussed, yet the internal face (and the core) will be of historical value. The engineer also notes that they *'like the incongruous stone buttress! Again, something worth keeping I would suggest'*.

Summary

Taking the information provided by the applicant alongside our structural engineer's

comments, we are **not able to support the current proposals**. We feel they are unnecessarily harmful to the gable end wall and the character and significance of the building overall. We would like to see the wall consolidated, possibly tied into the first floor if required and then monitored over a sensible (agreed) period of time to ascertain whether there is any ongoing movement. Only after this would we be able to consider whether further works are necessary. However, we would advise that the gable end is looked at by an experienced stonemason to see how best to consolidate the stone in-situ, and we strongly recommend that all the cement ribbon / strap pointing is removed by hand and replaced as soon as possible throughout the whole building. **We therefore recommend that this application is withdrawn or refused.**

We hope these comments are helpful to you, and we will be happy to look at this application again if required.

Best wishes,
Rachel

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