Assessment of significance

The majority of land in the Thornhill Conservation Area consists of the Thornhill Parish Church (St Michael's), the former Thornhill Hall (ruins of) and the rectory park. The Old School House is situated on the western edge of the conservation area. The conservation area was formally designated in July 1978 to protect the area's character and appearance.

The Old School House was founded as a grammar school in 1643 by the endowment of the Revd Charles Greenwood, a rector of neighbouring St Michael's church. As originally built, it had a T-shaped plan comprising a school room (east-west range) with a two storey wing (north-south) projecting from the north wall of the school room range. It is stone built with recessed, splayed, chamfered mullion and transom windows the building was greatly enlarged in 1884, at which time it acquired a C-shaped plan. It was still in use as Thornhill Church of England Primary school at the inception of the conservation area but fell into complete disrepair and dereliction following a fire.

The building was Grade II listed under the name "Former Thornhill Grammar School" in July 1985 - list entry number 1134730. The listing reads: Former grammar school, now disused. Dated 1643. Built with money bequeathed by Charles Greenwood a Rector of Thornhill. The rear part was built as a copy in 1884. Hammer dress stone (part rendered). Quoins and plinth. Stone slates removed at time of survey. Hollow chamfered Gable copings on moulded kneelers with finials. Hollow chamfered eaves on South side, later parapet to North. Each Gable end has a 10-light mullion and transom double chamfered window, that to East with inserted doorway, and a 2-light double chamfered window in each gable apex. Sides are 4 bays long with cross windows, two only on North side where a contemporary house formally adjoined, both blocked. On South side within the later addition, one window is blocked and there is the original doorway, blocked, with moulded surround, and deep lintel dated 1643. Wide low arched fireplace within, on North side, with moulded surround. Three C19 king-post trusses to roof, though tie beams may be original.

The derelict building was purchased in 1992 and sympathetically restored with the assistance of Historic England. None of the windows, which are proposed to be replaced, are original to the building and the plans put forward will not impact on the historic details listed above.

Heritage impact assessment

The proposed changes involve removal of timber single-glazed soft wood windows that were installed in the restoration carried out in the 1990s and installation of replacement double glazed, aluminium framed units. We have carefully selected window units that preserve the look and feel of the existing windows, but which benefit from the thermal efficiency and child-safety of double glazing. We envision minimal change to the external appearance of the property, and the changes will not alter the listed fabric of the building. Indeed, the units that have been selected will more

closely tie the appearance of the Old School House with that of St Michael's church, which is the focal point of the Conservation Area and a Grade I listed building in its own right.

Justification

The existing windows are not original to the house and are in poor condition. Thus, by replacing the windows we aim to preserve the listed features of the house and safeguard the future of this significant building, securing optimum viable use of the building in the interests of its long term conservation. We have selected windows that both match the style of the existing windows and which are similar in appearance to those used in St Michael's church – the focal point of the Conservation Area. In doing so we aim to enhance the visual narrative of the area to emphasise the links that the two buildings share.

Historic England are committed to reach carbon net zero by 2050, and there is a global focus on energy efficiency. This is not to be at the expense of our social and cultural heritage, but it is our suggestion that the existing windows are not original to the property and therefore the decision must lie in a general judgment of whether the replacement windows are 'in-keeping' with a building of this stature in this Conservation Area.