

Heritage Impact Assessment



Proposed Redevelopment of The Red House, Gomersal

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Storah Architecture Ltd
Chartered Architects : Historic Building Consultants

46 Halifax Road
Todmorden
OL14 5QG

T 01706 813214
mail@storah.com
www.storah.com

Directors:
J. David Storah Arch. Tech. Cert.
Richard A. Storah Dip. Arch. MA Cons. RIBA AABC SCA IHBC



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England. No: 9547619

1.0 Introduction

The assessment relates to the proposed alterations to the proposed redevelopment of The Red House, Gomersal. The proposed development is detailed in drawings no's. 5198130/001, 5198130/002, 5198130/003, 5198130/004, 5198130/005B, 5198130/006B, B, 5198130/007B, 5198130/008B, 5198130/009B, 5198130/010B, 5198130/011, 5198130/012B, 5198130/013B, 5198130/014B, 5198130/015B and 5198130/016B.

The Heritage Impact Assessment has been produced for the client to meet the requirements of paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) and inform them, their agents and the planning authority of the historical significance of the site, together with the impact of proposals on it's heritage value and significance.

This statement has been prepared by Richard Storah of Storah Architecture.

The Red House is listed, grade II*.

2.0 History & Significance

2.1 Description

The Red House is reputed to date from 1660, when William Taylor built a new red brick house next to an existing 'old' house. The Taylor family were present in Gomersal for more than a century before, originally small farmers and clothiers, later successful cloth finishers and merchants.

Inventories of 1689 and 1713 show both an old and a new house, with workshops and items associated with cloth manufacture. Both had their own fold stead, a cross between a true farmyard and a cloth working complex, with a barn. The old house was occupied by another branch of the Taylor family. The 1713 inventory is related to the will of John Taylor whose youngest son Joshua would develop the family business. Counce notes that Joshua Taylor may have sought 'a conscious transition to merchant status'. This manifested itself in the 'gentrification' of the Red House rebuilt 'with a symmetrical façade with five windows upstairs and four and a central door downstairs...Sash windows may have been installed. The ridge poles of the gables were cut back and a continuous, front-facing slope of slates leaned against them as if there was a hipped roof. This fashionable new front contrasted sharply with the traditional, gabled rear. The construction of a new cell as an extension over part of the demolished old house 'added an extra gable. The house as we see it today was largely created in this exercise'.

With the demolition of the old house the hold stead could be redeveloped. A later John Taylor added a new barn, 'described as 'lately erected' in 1773, ... combining a cow house and stable on the ground floor in typical local style with a cloth inspection and packing area upstairs, while various mortgages...show the existence of a smoothing shop, a warehouse, a pressing shop and a drying room. John and Charles Wesley, the Methodist preachers were friends of John Taylor and visited the house By the early 19th Century, the Taylors had branched into private banking with the warehouse in the foldyard possibly also serving as counting house and bank. By the mid-nineteenth century it appears farming had ceased, and the foldyard was laid out as formal gardens.

The house came to prominence as the inspiration 'Briarmains' in Charlotte Brontë's novel 'Shirley'. Mary Taylor was a close friend of Charlotte Brontë, the two had been pupils together at Miss Wooler's private boarding school for young ladies at Roe Head, near Mirfield. In the novel, The Red House is set out as a prosperous 1830s middle class home. Mary Taylor wrote to Charlotte Bronte about her novel in August, 1850 noting 'There is a strange feeling in reading it of hearing us all talking.' An illustration of Red House attributed to 1878 was used to illustrate an edition of Shirley.

By 1871 the Taylor family were living at Hill Top, Gomersal. The house was retained in the family till 1920, when Dr Richard Waring Taylor sold the property to Mr John Clifford Sykes. In 1938 the house was sold to the council. It has since been used as a museum.

The house and its significance are described in greater detail in the statement of significance prepared by Storah Architecture, dated July 2021, which forms an appendix to this report.

2.2 Significance

2.2.1 Significance of The Red House

The Red house has historical significance due to several factors:

- Evidential value: The Red House was developed over a long period of time by the Taylor family, a family of clothiers who were active in the local woollen industry has it evolved from a domestic-based activity, supplemented by agriculture, to a factory-based one. This is evidenced by the survival of the barn and the largely mid-18th century house including an earlier core. It has, therefore, **High evidential value.**
- Historical value: The house is associated with the important regional woollen industry. The Taylors were prominent local residents who were portrayed in an important social and economic historical novel of the Victorian period, Shirley, by Charlotte Bronte. The house itself figures extensively in the book. One of the family members, Mary Taylor, is regarded as an early radical feminist, an interesting person in her own right, but also a close friend of Charlotte Bronte, who often stayed at the Red House, which is considered to have **High historical value.**
- Aesthetic value: the building is its architectural character executed in red brick as opposed to the local stone and thus making a statement about the social and economic intentions of the family. The building still largely retains its gentrified mid-18th century appearance and some details of the period. The probable mid-19th century alterations, including bay windows and a stone extension with Italianate features, hold architectural evidence of that later period. The 1920s extension does not detract from the gradually evolving form of the building, which is considered to have **High aesthetic value.**
- Communal value: The long association of the Red House with local families, and local employers, established community links that were considerably strengthened when the House was adopted as a museum, which reflects its **High communal value.**

In January 1967, the Red House was listed at Grade II. In 2012 following a consultation report Red House was upgraded to Grade II* for its special architectural or historical interest. It is considered of **High Significance.**

2.2.2 The Coach House

The Coach House has historical significance through association with the Red House, It is considered to have evidential and historic value associated with the development of the house and through its contribution to its setting. Its exterior form is considered of **High significance**, though doors have been added and the interior remodelled significantly detracting from its evidential value. The interior is considered to have **Medium Heritage significance**. The coach house doors and the partition behind are modern additions. The doors are of **no significance**. The internal partitions behind the doors **detract from the significance**.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 The Need for the Works

Red House Museum closed to the public at the end of 2016. Since this time the house has been vacant with only caretaking staff living in the house to ensure its security. This is not a viable long term solution. There is a need to provide a viable, long term use for the site to protect the historic asset for the future.

3.2 Proposals

In order to safeguard the property for the future and retain public access, it is proposed to reorder and refurbish parts of the house and to alter the coach house to provide short-term lettable accommodation. This will provide a viable, long term use for the site, whilst retaining Council ownership and protecting the property for the future. This is considered it's optimum viable use.

3.3 Works to The Red House

It is proposed to restore the house for use as a dwelling, which can be let on a short term basis, but which also can be used for weddings or events. The following works are proposed:

- Repair and renewal of external doors, including the replacement of panic bar escape fittings with more traditional door furniture.
- Relocation of a rainwater pipe to the West (garden gable) elevation and the installation of a soil pipe in this location.
- Repair and renewal of internal doors.
- A sump and pump, together with ventilation of the basement to allow drying out.
- Replacement of secondary glazing to allow for improved appearance, sound reduction (traffic noise) and improved environmental performance,
- A kitchen is to be reintroduced to room 006 for domestic use.
- A receiver kitchen (for outside catering) will be formed in room 003, this will involve the lifting of the flag floor (a modern replacement), removal of a stone sink (unplumbed museum fixture), and the formation of a solid catering floor and wall linings. Extract will be via a new vent to the gable.
- An outside store will be refurbished for use as an accessible ground floor WC.
- Three windows to the rear and side at first floor level will be replaced with new escape windows of a matching pattern but with larger opening lights.
- Blocking of a secondary access door (presumably added for museum circulation) to room 102.

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- Formation of a new doorway from 102 to 103, and the blocking of a doorway to the corridor.
- Fitting out rooms as bathrooms and an ensuite.

3.4 Works to The Coach House

It is proposed to remodel the coach house for use as four small studio flats, which can be let on a short term basis, but which also can be used as additional guest accommodation for weddings or events. The following works are proposed:

- Repair and renewal of the external doors and windows.
- Formation of new windows to rear of the Flats 1 and 2.
- Subdivision of the coachhouse and fitting out as living accommodation, this will include new partitions and fit out, retaining the existing floors, roof timbers and wall finishes.

3.5 Landscape Works within the Curtilage

It is proposed to clear off the approach drive to the coach house and barn and resurface this in reinforced gravel. The access drive will be edged and narrowed by the garden access to leave a soft margin to the garden of red house and continued to form a parking area recessed between the coach house gable and the garden wall. One of the three self seeded trees in this area will be removed. The stone sett hard standing in front of the coachhouse will be cleaned of weeds and restored.

New automatic gated will be provided at the access from the highway.

4.0 The Impacts of the works

4.1 Impact of Works to The Red House

The proposals respect the significance of the existing building, its setting, and its historic features. The joinery affected by the works is typically modern. The intention is to renew this in a matching style, respecting the original patterns. The circulation within the house is unchanged, other than the alteration to provide a for for the en-suite. This is a reversible change, which does not impact on the understanding of the building.

The new soil pipe gable of the house is a minor alteration, which will not impact significantly on the appearance of the building. The visual impact is lessened by the relocation of the rainwater pipe to a more discrete location on the rear gable. This leaves the soil pipe as a single stack in the position of the earlier pipe, with little visual change.

The fitting out of the kitchen, receiver kitchen and bathrooms are reversible and do not impact on the original fabric.

The plasterwork internally appears typically to be finished in a modern gypsum skim, presumably from the time the rear of the house was rebuilt. Chasing of walls for new and altered services, though they should be kept to a minimum, are not considered likely to impact on significance.

Redecoration is typically outside the requirement for listed building consent. Paintwork dates from the late C.20 rebuilding. Redecoration is not considered reversible and unlikely to impact on significance.

The success of the interventions within the house will depend on the quality of fittings, particularly the detailing of external joinery and the appropriate consideration of services.

4.2 Impact of Works to The Coach House

The proposals respect the significance of the existing building, its setting, and its historic features. The doors to the exterior are a later addition, being set in a modern steel frame inside the open cart openings. It is proposed to replace these with glazed doors, which will be in dark frames to reduce their visual impact and restore the appearance of the dark openings.

4.3 Impact of Works within the Curtilage

The proposals respect the significance of the setting, buildings, service zones and their historic features. The access to the barn and stables will be restored.

The success of the intervention will depend on the quality of fittings, particularly the gates and any external lighting.

5.0 Conclusion

The Red House was built as a residence. Despite recent use as a museum, the internal layout remains largely a domestic one. The conversion back to residential use will ensure its continued use and therefore, allow the preservation of features of architectural, archaeological, and historic interest of the Listed Building and its setting. This is considered to meet the requirements for its optimum viable use. It will also contribute significantly to public benefit, retaining the building as a short term let will both provide resource for its upkeep but will also allow periods of public access.

The Coach House was built as an ancillary building to The Red House. It has been altered in the past and converted to stores, with doors added and the layout revised. The conversion to residential use, ancillary to the main house will ensure its continued lower key use and allow the preservation of features of architectural, archaeological, and historic interest of the Listed Building and its setting. This is considered to meet the requirements for its optimum viable use. Removal of the timber doors and the replacement with dark framed glazing will in part restore the appearance of the coachhouse. The interior is considered of lesser significance, but historic elements, surfaces and the roof structure will remain evident. The circulation, with entry to each bay is also largely respected, though in a different form. The creation of short let accommodation in the coach house will also contribute significantly to public benefit, both provide resource for its upkeep but will also allowing periods of public access to the site.

The landscaping works will contribute to the setting by restoring the access way to the house.

The proposals should be considered in the context of national guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Para. 202 of the NPPF states 'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be

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weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. The slight harm created by the development in the rerouting of the RWP and SP and minor internal alterations is more than offset by the improvements to basement ventilation and the benefits of keeping the buildings in an optimum viable use with the opportunity for public access.

The impact on the heritage asset (the listed building and curtilage) are negligible as has been demonstrated. There is no negative impact on the significance of the heritage assets (listed building and its curtilage).

The proposals respect the significance of the existing building, its setting, and its historic features. It is considered the proposals meet the requirements of the NPPF and Local Plan Policies.

Report prepared by

Richard Storah
for Storah Architecture