

+ **Condition Statement in Support of Listed Building and
Conservation Area Consent
St Mary's (Old) Catholic Primary School, Batley**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following building condition statement has been prepared in support of applications for Listed Building and Conservation Area Consent.

Aedas Building Consultancy has been commissioned to produce a report on the condition of the buildings of the old St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Batley in relation to proposals to demolish and clear the site of all the former school and nunnery buildings. Part of the school is attached to the Church of St Mary of the Angels (listed, grade II) and its presbytery. The affected buildings are not included in the listing description of the church, but the original school building and extension are considered to be listed through attachment or through being within the curtilage of the listed building.

The Building Condition Report has been produced to inform the owner, their agents and the planning authority of the main areas of concern relating to the condition of the building fabric and its main services.

This statement has been prepared by Neil Ward of Aedas Building Consultancy.

A Heritage Impact Assessment has also been prepared to accompany this application, in which the significance and historical background of the buildings are covered in detail. The HIA confirms that although some of the subject buildings are unlisted they form part of a group associated with and possibly affecting the setting of the listed church.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The School was apparently built in three phases. The lower roadside section, closest to Upton Street, was constructed in 1868. This original section of the school was extended in 1898 to form the main hall and the larger range of buildings. The adjacent detached school building running at right angles to the aforementioned hall was constructed in 1934, as the Senior Boys' Department, which later became the Junior School around the 1960's.

Use of the school buildings reduced following the construction of the adjacent modern school in 1971. Parts were used as an after school club, with the buildings finally becoming redundant around 14 years ago.

The Nunnery, which faces onto Upton Street with gardens extending to North Bank Road, dates from 1876, but has been much altered and extended. The nunnery became vacant approximately two years ago.

3.0 BUILDING CONDITION

The following section of this report should be read in conjunction with the photographs contained in Appendix A.

3.1 Original School Building (1868) and Extension (1898)

Both the original section of the school and the subsequent extension are traditionally constructed with masonry loadbearing walls and a slate covered pitched roof supported by timber trusses. Coursed natural stone rubble walling forms the external face of the walls. Dressed stone heads and cills surround timber framed windows and doors. A few other stone features are present principally above the main entrances and to the rear gable end wall.

The majority of the building is single storey however there is a part basement towards the rear of the building above which a slightly raised mezzanine floor is formed. There is also an attached link through to the adjacent church however this is locked off at present.

Internal walls are a mixture of original plastered masonry walls and later constructed partitions. Original ceilings are lath and plaster although many have been underdrawn with more modern modular exposed grid and lay in tile type suspended ceilings. Floors are a

mixture of solid and suspended timber with a variety of finishes, including exposed timber block/strip flooring, carpet and vinyl.

The overall condition of this building is very poor. It is evident that the building has suffered from significant water ingress through many defective sections of the roof and walls. Damp staining to ceilings and deterioration of wall plaster is prevalent throughout the building however significant structural damage is evident in parts of the main hall and rear mezzanine area where substantial timber decay is evident to roof trusses, lintels, suspended floors and steps. The majority of internal joinery elements in these areas are similarly affected.

The external windows and doors have been boarded over to secure the building as best as possible while it has been unoccupied however it is clear it has periodically suffered from acts of vandalism and theft. Lead flashings at roof abutments and sheet lead coverings to dormer cheeks and roof ventilators have been ripped and removed in many areas leaving the roof vulnerable and leaking. Slipped, cracked and missing slates and loose ridge tiles are also evident. Eaves gutters are generally timber and these have rotted through in a number of areas and are blocked with vegetation in others. The original downpipes appear to have been cast iron. Where these remain they are in poor condition with cracks evident. Sections of replacement upvc rainwater pipes have been introduced in some places however these are now damaged or missing in some places. All these defects are all contributing to the water ingress and damp problems.

As expected for a building of this age the external stonework and pointing is weathered in many places, particularly at low and high level. There is evidence of previous structural movement however this may have been stabilised by the introduction of tie rods through the roof space which appear to connect to external plates which are visible high up on the rear gable end wall. Open joints in some of the gable coping stones are however evident which suggest some subsequent or on-going movement. Many dressed stone features particularly window heads, cills and some moulded details are in poor condition and exhibit signs of significant weathering and deterioration in the form of delaminating and cracking.

Although the majority of windows and doors are fully boarded it is apparent that their condition is poor with several areas of rotten and bare timberwork and broken glazing.

The inside of the building is in an equally poor condition and state of repair. Due to the aforementioned water ingress and damp issues there is significant decay to both structural timbers and general joinery elements throughout large sections of the building due to attacks by wood rotting fungi. A defective gutter towards the rear of the building has allowed the saturation of a suspended floor in a toilet area which has now partially collapsed and is unsafe. A virulent and active outbreak of dry rot is evident throughout the majority of the back half of this cluster of buildings. This has affected large sections of roof trusses, large lintels and a small flight of stairs which are now considered structurally compromised. In addition to attack to many window and door frames, timber panelling, pattresses and cupboards, there are also sections of timber block flooring which are similarly affected. There are also other large areas which, although seemingly not rotten at present, have been affected by the damp conditions and swollen to such a degree that the timber blocks have lifted from the main floor, by over 300 mm in several places.

Both the original lath & plaster ceilings and the later suspended ceilings are in poor condition with sections missing, partially collapsed or badly water stained. It is evident in other areas above the suspended ceilings that the original lath & plaster is in a very poor condition as wired mesh has been used to minimise the chance of loose plaster falling to the rooms below.

The majority of sanitaryware and toilet cubicles are in a very poor state having been vandalised and broken in many places. Where they remain intact they are very dated.

Although the building services are currently turned off and isolated their visual condition and appearance is poor and dated. There is evidence of corroded heating pipework and very old electric water heaters and convector heaters. The main electrical supply cabling and

distribution boards also appear very dated and although not tested it is anticipated that these will not be compliant with current safety standards. It is to be expected that all mechanical and electrical services will not be suitable for repair or upgrading and complete replacement will be required.

3.2 Senior Boys Department

A detached single storey building, typical of its era, originally consisting of a large framed and glazed elevation (facing the former playground area), rendered brick walls and piers with a slate covered pitched roof.

Felt covered flat roof extensions with walls constructed from facing brickwork have subsequently been added to the west along with another enclosed area covered with corrugated plastic sheeting which appears to have formed a conservatory area.

As with the main school the use of this building has declined since the construction of the new school in 1971. Since the building has been un-used its condition has deteriorated and it has again been the focus for vandalism. A relatively recent arson attack has exacerbated the situation and left a large proportion derelict and unsafe.

The overall condition of the building is very poor with large holes in the pitched slate roof coverings. From holes in the ceilings it appears as though sections of the flat roof deck to the extended areas have been replaced with plywood however there are areas where this appears to be older softwood boarding which is saturated and defective. There was consequently no safe access onto the roof but even without close inspection it appears the felt waterproofing layers are life expired and have missing flashings at abutment details. Rainwater goods are a mixture of cast iron and plastic and are generally either defective due to their old age or as a result of fire damage.

With the exception of a brick wall to the south elevation, which appears to be a more recent addition, the brickwork and render is in a poor condition, particularly to the eastern side where much cracked and spalled render is evident along with vegetation growth within the masonry.

Windows and doors are generally boarded up however it is possible to ascertain that the arson attack originated in the main rooms as there is significant charring to the external window frames on the east elevation. Other windows off the flat roof and north elevation are also badly damaged with many broken panes and rotten sections of timber.

Due to the arson attack the inside of this building is in a very poor condition with a large percentage of it being destroyed by the fire and smoke damage. Holes in the roof have no doubt lead to the current decay and collapse of the floor in some of the main rooms rendering many areas inaccessible and unsafe. There is evidence of an active attack by wood decaying fungi to other parts of the suspended timber floor which will continue to develop and spread.

Although other areas to the west of this derelict and dilapidated building are not in the same state the internal finishes, services and fixtures and fittings are still in very poor condition and considered to be beyond economical repair.

3.3 Nunnery

The original section of the Nunnery building fronts onto Upton Street and is traditionally constructed with a slate covered pitched roof over stone faced masonry walls. Dressed stone heads, cills and reveals surround both window and door openings. Other dressed stone features include quoins and bracket details to the front elevation. Less prominent elevations to the side and rear are constructed of brickwork with patches of render. The building has been extended a number of times with the latest additions being formed with brick and artificial stone walls. These have a slate covered lean to roof and a small felt covered flat roof. Windows to the building are timber framed and are generally of a sliding sash style and single glazed. The glazing is generally single pane however double glazed units are evident to some sashes. Casement windows are fitted to the later extensions.

A pre-fabricated concrete panel garage with corrugated roof sheeting and up and over door is situated to the right hand side of the building.

The internal accommodation is spread over three storeys, basement, ground and first floors and generally consists of separate bedroom, toilet and kitchen facilities, meeting rooms and storage space.

From both an external and internal inspection it is evident this building has suffered from considerable structural distress. Several cracks through and around external stone window heads and cills and along masonry units can be seen. Widespread internal cracking to wall and ceiling plaster and through cornices can be observed throughout the property.

While there were no satisfactory vantage points to view the roof it was possible to detect damp staining from inside some of the first floor rooms, particularly around some of the chimney breasts. One area of seemingly recent ingress is apparent over one of the first floor bathrooms where a section of plaster has been brought down from the ceiling's timber lathing. The condition of the main roof is consequently suspected to be poor.

A section of defective deck to the small flat roof to the most recent extension is evident along with defective upstands and verge detail where the felt waterproofing is missing.

While some sections of rainwater goods are clearly old and at the end of their serviceable life they generally appear to be functioning satisfactorily, except for a section near the left hand side entrance door where damp staining and mould growth is evident. A section facing the rear also appears to be blocked and overgrown with vegetation.

The older sections of stonework show signs of deterioration, particularly to some high level areas and to the more exposed quoin stones. These are delaminating and spalling in many places. Sections of render on the side elevation are also cracked and appear loose.

The internal accommodation is in a fair and functional condition however many of the bathroom and kitchen facilities are basic and very dated.

There is evidence that the electrical and heating installations have been modernised in the recent past. As the building has only been unoccupied for a couple of years and there are signs of recent testing work it is presumed that the mechanical and electrical systems are compliant and could be brought back into service. Physical testing of the building services and appliances would however be needed to verify this.

3.4 Site Features

With the exception of the garden to the Nunnery the site is generally very overgrown. The former tarmac surfaced playground areas are overrun with and broken up in many areas by vegetation which appears to include self-seeded trees and saplings, brambles, buddleia and Japanese knotweed.

4.0 THE NEED FOR THE PROPOSED WORKS

Most elements of the buildings and site are considered to be in very poor condition overall. With the buildings being unused the deterioration will continue, particularly in areas of active timber rot and where water ingress and damp problems are prevalent.

The buildings proposed for demolition have been unused for many years and their use is considered redundant. Their retention and repair is also not considered to be economic. A redevelopment and change of use would present logistical and safeguarding issues due to the site being accessed via Upton Road through both the existing school and church grounds.

The potential for the deterioration in the former original school building to spread or affect elements where it attaches to the listed church/presbytery causes particular concern. The proposed demolition would consequently minimise this possibility and aid access for future necessary repair and maintenance work to these retained buildings.

The buildings are clearly victim to general vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Unauthorised access to the site has led to one of the buildings suffering from a major arson attack. The buildings are generally unsafe if accessed and pose a further concern to the working primary school opposite.

The proposed demolition and site clearance will improve the external environment of the school and minimise the risks associated with trespass and unauthorised access.

5.0 IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED WORKS

As detailed in the Heritage Impact Assessment, which accompanies these applications, the subject buildings affect the setting of the Church of St Mary of All Angels (listed grade II). They aid the understanding of the historic development of the site but due to the many alterations and their present condition they are not considered remarkable or significant enough to justify retention.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The buildings which are subject to the proposed works are considered to have much less significance than that of the adjacent listed church. The removal of the buildings will greatly assist in the maintenance and long term preservation of the church and prevent the risks associated with retaining unoccupied and unsafe properties.

There is no viable use for these buildings with the constraints and characteristics of the site without compromising the use of the adjacent land and operational school buildings.

A cleared site will provide a more suitable and much safer environment for the existing school and the wider community.

**Appendix A
Photograph Schedule**

Original School (1868)



Photo 1
Front elevation



Photo 2
Defective roof and gutter. Missing lead flashings and sheeting to dormer cheek.



Photo 3
Typical internal view showing damp walls and floors



Photo 4
Defective lath and plaster ceiling