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Ray Pearson
Dandara Ltd.
Eridge House
1 Linden Close
Tunbridge Wells
TN4 8HH

Date: 27th March 2018

Dear Ray,

Built Heritage Advice Note – Pest House, Claygate Road, Yalding, Kent, ME18 6BB

Having now visited Pest House, the purpose of this Built Heritage Advice Note is to provide some recommendations regarding the rehabilitation and restoration of the house.

Description of Pest House

Pest House is a Grade II listed timber-framed dwelling dating from the sixteenth century. It was historically used to provide shelter and isolation to those with the pestilence. However, since at least the late-nineteenth century, it has been used as a residential dwelling. In the last few years it has been left vacant and in a poor state of repair.

Pest House is a one and a half storey building, the first floor being partly within the roof space. It has a steeply-pitched roof, a prominent brick chimney and a large cat-slide roof over an outshot, which was added in the nineteenth century. The chimney was originally a lateral end stack but was enlarged when the cat-slide roof extension was added. At ground-floor level, the house has a main hall with a main entrance and a fireplace, a parlour to the east of this, and a service outshot to the west. A staircase, which was installed in the twentieth century, leads from the hall to the first floor landing. At first-floor level, the house has a bedroom, and small storage room. The attic is accessed from the landing space. To the rear, Pest House has a twentieth-century lean-to extension in brick and

render and with a shallow-pitched roof. This extension is of very poor architectural quality and is considered to detract from the architectural value of the listed building. On 12 June 2015, Maidstone Borough Council granted planning permission and listed building consent for its replacement with a more sympathetically-designed new extension.

Exterior

Externally, the house's ground floor is encased in a stretcher-bonded, machine-made, red-brick wall with cement mortar. The brick appears to be of an LBC Rustic Antique type, or similar. This facing was constructed during the twentieth century and is of poor quality. As such, it is considered to detract from the architectural value of the house. Moreover, because of the cement mortar, the wall is likely to be impairing the breathability of the structure and thus exacerbating damp and moisture problems internally. The first floor is clad in concrete hung tiles. These were also put in place during the twentieth century. Being far heavier than normal clay tiles, these concrete tiles are likely to be exerting unnecessary stresses on the fragile timber-frame structure. The entire roof is also tiled in concrete tiles. Likewise, these are also likely to be exerting significant stresses on the timber-frame structure and causing the common rafters in the roof to sag. Collectively, these materials, besides detracting from the architectural value of Pest House, are causing evident harm to the listed building. As such, it is advisable to seek their replacement with more sympathetic traditional materials.

Interior

Internally, the house's timber-framing is fully exposed and painted black. The walls comprise of a two-bay arrangement of typical oak stud framing which includes sill beams, wall posts, regularly spaced uprights (or studs), tie beams, wall and intermediate plates, and diagonal bracing. The roof structure comprises a traditionally-constructed close-couple roof with common rafters. Stop chamfers are found on the principle spine beam at first floor ceiling level within both rooms, suggesting that the House was always a double cell structure. This indicates that the house was built by the local gentry or the parish rather than by peasants.

The timber frame appears to be reasonably sound and it does not exhibit any particular indications of loss of structural integrity. However, some timber elements exhibit signs of common furniture beetle and death watch beetle infestations and there are signs of some dry rot around the east window at first

floor level where the gable is more exposed to the elements. This should be investigated further. As such, it is advisable to appoint a timber-framing specialist to survey and inspect the timber thoroughly. The specialist would identify the decayed, partially-decayed, and at-risk timber elements in the structure by visual inspection, fibre-optics, specialist decay detection drilling, and deep moisture probing. Partially-decayed and damaged timbers of structural significance can also be investigated in detail by specialist mini-bore drilling. The results of these investigations can then enable a conservation-accredited Structural Engineer to design the most suitable repair of the timber-framing.

Throughout the house, there is evidence of dry-lining. This is in the form of mixed materials, including plywood, hardboard, asbestos cement, polystyrene, and some lath and plaster work. Consequently, it is not quite clear what the infill panels consist of. These would have originally been in wattle and daub, but are now more likely to consist of brick or some other material. As such, it is advisable to investigate this further. This can be done by opening up pilot holes on the exterior. Two pilot holes are suggested at the locations shown in red in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Suggested locations for pilot holes to investigate the material used for the infill panels

Fenestration and Guttering

The existing windows, which are a varied assortment of painted softwood timber casements, are all of early and mid-twentieth century provenance. It is recommended that these be replaced by hardwood timber casements of

traditional configuration using slender double glazing (10-12mm) to improve the building's thermal efficiency.

There is also evidence of an additional window at first floor to the south elevation. This could be opened up and fitted with matching window joinery to improve the natural lighting level within the main bedroom.

The house has UPVC gutters and downpipes. These are considered to be inappropriate and are considered to detract from the architectural value of the listed house. It is advisable to replace these with iron (or possible aluminium) gutters and downpipes.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations above can be summarised as follows:

- First, it is advisable to establish what the house's infill panels consist of. This can be done by opening pilot holes through the external materials of no significance. Two pilot holes are suggested at the locations shown in red in Figure 1.
- At this point, it is advisable for a timber-framing specialist to survey and inspect the house's timber thoroughly, with a range of specialist means, to identify the extent and type of timber decay. The results of these investigations can then enable a conservation-accredited Structural Engineer to design the most suitable repair of the timber-framing. CgMs Heritage has already approached Hutton & Rostron, who have a long-standing experience in providing specialist building material condition investigations in historic structures, to provide an indicative scope of works and related costs to conduct such investigative works (attached with this letter). It would be advisable to bring on board the expertise of such a specialist company.
- During the restoration process, it is recommended to carefully remove the external brick facing, concrete hung tiles, and concrete roof tiles, whilst providing adequate temporary covering. Non-original dry-lying can also be removed. However, any original lath and plaster work and infill panels have to be retained and conserved in-situ. At this point, the structural timber can be further investigated and repaired in-situ.
- It is then recommended to reface Pest House with traditional handmade clay tile and brick facing. The brick walling should be in hydraulic lime and

adopt a load bearing bond and tie into the infill panels between the timber uprights to ensure a tighter fit and better protection of the timber frame. It is recommended to use handmade clay tiles (e.g. Rosemary) for the roof.

- It is recommended to replace the softwood timber casement windows with hardwood timber casements of traditional configuration using slender double glazing (10-12mm) to improve the house's thermal efficiency. It would also be appropriate to re-open the additional window within the first-floor bedroom to improve the natural-lighting levels in this room.
- It is also recommended to install iron (or possible aluminium) gutters and downpipes, as the existing UPVC gutters and downpipes are considered to be inappropriate and are considered to detract from the architectural value of the listed house.
- The proposed works that would enable further investigation of the house's infill panels and the condition of the timber framing by a timber-framing specialist is likely to require a listed building consent. A listed building consent would also be required for all the other proposed works. As such, it is recommended to start discussions with the local planning authority.

I hope the above is helpful at this stage. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss anything in further detail.

Yours Sincerely

Joachim W Abela BE&A (Hons), MSc
Built Heritage Consultant