DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

including evaluation of Significance and Heritage Statement

FOR

REPAIRS TO ROOFS, WATER GOODS AND STRUCTURE OF ROWDEN HOUSE,
36 ROWDEN HILL, CHIPPENHAM, WILTSHIRE, SN15 2AG

3931-D&A

02.11.2023. – ISSUED PRELIMINARY FOR CLIENT'S COMMENT
Rev 1- 14.12.2023.- ISSUED FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

6 High St, Devizes, Wilts, SN10 1AT t: 01380 724 213 f: 01380 721 753 e: team@mlde.co.uk w: www.mlde.co.uk

Principal: Mark Lovell M.Sc. B.Sc (Hons) C.Eng. FIED FICE Associate: Sandra Lovell Dipl. Ing. Arch.

INTRODUCTION

Mark Lovell Design Engineers have been appointed by Mr. Nicholas Money-Kyrle on behalf of Fynamore Asset Management Ltd, the owners of the property to prepare documents required and submit an application for Listed Building Consent for repairs and refurbishment of Rowden House, 36 Rowden Hill, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 2AG.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUILDING and BACKGROUND

Rowden House is a Significant Grade II Listed Building listed under Historic England List Entry No:1267966 as St Margaret's Convent and Attached Walls, Rowden Hill on 22 June 1978.

The Listing entry states:

"House, now a convent. Dated 1765 with C19 and C20 additions. Rendered limestone ashlar, freestone rusticated quoins and dressings stone slate roof, mansard to the main block, pitched to the rear wing, moulded brick stacks to gable ends and centre slope of rear wing, that to the front left is large. Plan: 2-unit plan with C19 rear right wing and C20 chapel to the left. EXTERIOR: 2 storey; symmetrical 5-window range. Wide coped gables, cornice, parapet, platband and moulded architraves to plate-glass sash windows, that to the centre is semicircular-arched with a keystone, imposts and a datestone "1765". Attached to the left return is a C20 single-storey chapel with a roof hipped over a canted return to the left with flat-arched windows, paired to the front and single-light to the facets of the return. A C20 hipped stone-slated colonnaded porch extends approx 15m to the street. Interior: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FETURES: limestone ashlar walls approx 2m high flank the porch and extend approx 60m to the left and 50m to the right."

The convent use of the building has ceased since listing has taken place and the property is now mostly used as two private dwelling houses and an office, all in the same ownership. Therefore, the listing is somewhat misleading as far as the use of the property is concerned. The listing also refers to a C20 Chapel in single storey left return to the entrance elevation. The Chapel is today an ordinary domestic room and it does not appear like that it has ever had any ecclesiastical features. MLDE have not found any records that the ecclesiastical features ever existed and at the time of the listing the interior has not been inspected. Therefore, it is presumed that the C20 ground floor room was used as a chapel rather than designed or built as one.

The property was built in few stages:

1. The original 1765 phase, now referred to as South Wing, a private dwelling with porch, central hall and staircase and a room on each side of stairwell on the ground and first floor and a long attic room on the second floor under the Mansard roof. The original C18 staircase was on the back of the building where new C19 staircase now is, but was removed in C19 and smaller staircase was inserted to serve the original C18 part of the property.

   The South Wing has benefited from C20 extension to the West side of South Wing, referred to in listing as a Chapel and reflected upon above.

2. The adjoining dwelling occupies large C19 extensions to the original house, today referred to as East and West Wings. The C19 extension has been developed in two stages, the West Wing and the staircase part of the East Wing were developed first, forming an L shaped extension. The original C18 staircase serving the house was removed at the time to make way for the new staircase. Two separate roofs have been erected at the time one covering the staircase and the other covering the West Wing. Both roofs are running in parallel perpendicular on the Mansard roof they intersect. The roofs of East and West Wing meet in a valley gutter. The original C19 trussed roof structure is still visible on northern part of the West Wing. However, the roof structures over southern part of the West Wing and over staircase of the East Wing have been altered in mid C20 when it would appear that the property was re-roofed. Unfortunately one cannot say that the structure benefited from that intervention.

   The remaining part of the East Wing was added later in C19 and contains a kitchen on the ground floor and a bedroom and bathroom of the first floor. The trussed roof structure has been built as a continuation of the roof over the staircase and remains today in original late C19 form.

3. Three separate single storey extensions were added in first half of C20, one of which is the Chapel already described above. The second was a billiards room in newly formed North Wing which was connected to the house with a single storey, flat roof extension somewhat predating North Wing.

   The colonnaded extension to the porch in front of the main entrance was also built in early C20. The open colonnade is covered with a hipped roof with slate tiles.

4. After ceasing to be a convent the property at first remained as a large single dwelling. In 2011 the house was subdivided into two dwellings and some minor external alterations took place.

   In 2015 a change of use of part of Rowden House took place, adding a toilet and kitchenette to the billiards room resulting in mixed use for the building with primarily being C3 (two separate dwellings) and B1 (office in North Wing).

EXISTING SITUATION and PROPOSED REPAIRS

The property is in a degraded condition today, with many cracks and is in need of extensive repairs. A Visual Structural Survey was carried out in late April 2023 and is included as a supporting document with this application.

Structural movement is evident from cracks and it has been attributed to poor function and damaged state of below ground foul and surface water drainage system. Alpharod Report from October 2023 shows extensive damage to numerous runs. The main drainage run is shared with some other neighbouring properties and as such should be in ownership of Wessex Water.

The above ground rainwater goods and external pipework are also in typically degraded condition and in places not well resolved. The entire external above ground drainage system needs refurbishment and upgrading.

The North Wing roof needs attention, with the stone tiles heavily degraded and broken, the battens appear to be failing extensively and the roof has sarking boarding. It is suggested that this roof element will require re-roofing, with possibly as much as 40% of the stone tiles requiring replacement.

The roof coverings type and condition vary from slope to slope, some pitches having "stone tiles" on one slope and double Roman Clay tiles on the other.

The "stone tiles" vary between traditional natural hand made tiles, machine clipped natural tiles and modern cast concrete stone lookalike tiles. The modern cast lookalike stone tiles which probably date from the 1970's are suffering from significant frost damage with the surface shelling off from the tiles. It is recommended that if the roof coverings are lifted, subject to Listed Building Consent, that some rationalization of the type of tiles takes place replacing all of the concrete tiles with stone tiles.

The roof to the West Wing, southern portion is believed to be a 1950s replacement. In MLDE's opinion it is not fully structurally resolved. The roof also has a non-breathable bitumen felt membrane and it is recommended that a rationalization and some improvement of the existing structure should take place and a breathable membrane should be provided. Stripping of the roof to insert a new membrane would also provide an opportunity to form the steps in the gutter properly in accordance with lead association details and ensure that the lead runs adequately up the roof slope. Existing lead gutter does not have any sides in lead, only a flash band seal.

Access to the West Wing northern end roof is limited however, one could observe damaged and non-breathable membrane that needs replacing. There is a realistic chance that water penetrated the space and that some degradation of the structure might have taken place. The replacement of the membrane with a breathable type would permit closer inspection of the roof and like for like repairs on any degraded members.

The property would benefit from the thermal insulation being upgraded with Knauf Earthwool insulation, uniformly laid to a good standard which would over time reduce the energy consumption of the building.

The South Wing roof structure could only be reviewed locally. From what could be seen it is not clear how the roof is structurally resolved. However, it is understood that the conversion of the roof space was undertaken within the last 9 years, and should have been subject to Building Regulations Approval, the details of such works need to be reviewed in more detail. It is recommended that the loose bolts identified are attended to, and that the level of cross ventilation of the roof spaces is improved. The local mouldy patch of roof membrane needs to be investigated and repaired, and the source of the water ingress at the purlin bearings needs to be addressed by pointing the external open joints, and improving the lead details.

The cracked pier in the South Wing needs further careful investigation, as this could potentially be a fragile element as a result of earlier building alteration works. The external fire escape stairs are corroded, too steep and currently clash with a gas supply box. It is proposed that the staircase is removed and replaced with a stairs of similar appearance but fully Building Regulations compliant.

Some of the structural stone window lintels are fractured and require repair / replacement, in addition to further masonry repairs and repointing required around the elevations.

The external fabric of the building especially the roof coverings, chimneys and associated gutters & flashings are aged. In some places these have been worked upon in the last twenty years and in places quite extensively. However, water ingress is continuing and it is proposed that the weather protection elements within the building are significantly upgraded. If the lack of weather tightness of the envelope is not addressed in the near future, the ongoing ingress of water into the internal fabric will cause significant unnecessary decay and degrading within the building core.

HERITAGE STATEMENT AND CONCLUSION

Rowden House is a Significant Grade II Listed Building. The building was initially a Convent. After ceasing to be a convent the property at first remained as a large single dwelling. In 2011 the house was subdivided into two dwellings and 2015 a billiard room on the back has been converted into an office. All three parts are in same ownership, although some parts are let.

The property is in a degraded condition now and is in need of extensive repairs. It is considered that repairs here proposed would restore the listed fabric and preserve this Grade II Listed Building in line with guidance given in National Planning Policy Framework.

APPENDIX

6 High St, Devizes, Wilts, SN10 1AT t: 01380 724 213 f: 01380 721 753 e: team@mlde.co.uk w: www.mlde.co.uk

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