

The Society's Casework in 2006-7:

A Sample of Selected Cases

by

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Local authorities in England and Wales have been obliged to consult the Ancient Monuments Society (and the other National Amenity Societies) on all applications for listed building consent involving demolition, either partial or total, since 1972. In recent years the number of part demolition cases has settled to about 5,000 a year and those for complete demolition to around 120. The exact number of listed buildings threatened by application for total demolition in 2006 (the last full year) was 125, ten of them in Wales. This compares with 127 in 2005. A full list can be obtained from the Society's office and website. The cases discussed here are a selection of the most interesting, although in choosing them we are necessarily limited by the availability of illustrations suitable for reproduction. The drawings have been kindly supplied by the architects of the various schemes and have been reproduced with their permission. More regular reviews appear in the AMS newsletter.

OLD MARKET HALL, BACUP, LANCs

The Society, having been founded in Manchester, lays claim to particular strengths in the North West – not least through our active trustee in Rawtenstall, Kathy Fishwick. One of the cases we referred to her in the course of the year was the conversion plan for this fine Market Hall at Bacup of 1867 – an object lesson in how to articulate largely blind elevations. No blank plain walls here despite a structure that is almost wholly top-lit. The first meetings of the Town Council were held in the offices there. The people of Bacup never did get their own Town Hall. Figure 1 shows the large entrance beneath the pediment, subtly framed by a giant rusticated arch in turn set between two blind panels with a dentil course at the top. The only windows light the offices at the lower end. How intriguing that the plinth defies rather than follows the lie of the slope (which unusually retains the setts that help to maintain the historic character). Inside is a wide open hall, stone flagged with a mainly glazed lightweight roof supported on tall columns that double as rainwater pipes. Underneath, built into the fall of the land on the steep bank are eight individual fireproof shop units with semi-circular cast iron arch-heads above (Fig. 2).

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Fig. 1

Old Market Hall, Bacup, Lancs



Fig. 2

Old Market Hall, Bacup, Lancs: shops

The interior once held a motley collection of stalls which in the late nineteenth century spilled over into the surrounding streets and stayed open until late at night. It closed in 1956 and after an interim use by a firm of joiners and years of vacancy it is now proposed to convert the Hall from a warehouse to a healthcare and cultural centre – provided the applicant can raise the funds required. We felt able to welcome it in principle and commented only on matters of detail.

The next two cases share much in common – two fine but long disused nineteenth-century churches where drastic solutions may offer the last best hope to avoid demolition by the authorities or arson by vandals.

ST PETER'S CHURCH, ABERFORD ROAD, STANLEY, WEST YORKS

St Peter's, listed Grade II in 1961, is two distinct but complementary builds – the nave and two western towers by Peter Atkinson of 1821-4 and the chancel, powerful work of 1911-3 by W. D. Caröe. The previous chancel was lost to fire. The church was declared redundant in 1999, tipped into closure in part by movement in the chancel where two arches had to be braced as early as 1931. The interior was noted for its proportions and fittings which included superb carvings of *The Creation* of 1924 by H. P. Jackson of Northowram as misericords on the choir stalls. We are told that these still survive within.

The present 'solution' is drastic. WDA Properties, who have won the Urban Design Award for their residential conversion of the Grade II listed St Anne's Hindsford, now propose to do the same at Stanley using the architectural services of Studio Verna who have supplied these drawings (Fig. 3). The Carøe chancel is to be completely demolished and rebuilt. Beyond it, twelve new houses will serve as 'Enabling Development' with sixteen apartments placed within the church itself. The present arcades and timber vaulting would stay but subsumed and all fittings appear to be jettisoned. In essence only the exterior would be safeguarded, although there would be some changes here too, as in the three new windows on the east elevation.

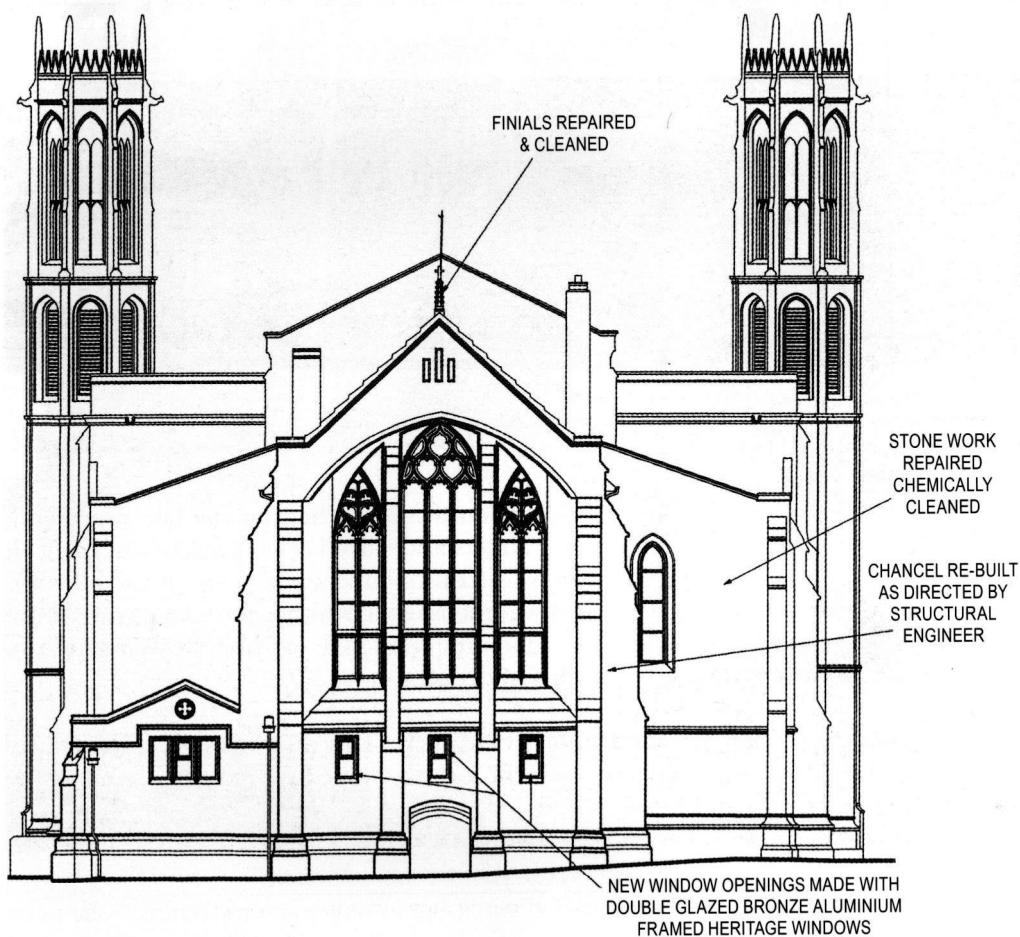


Fig. 3

St Peter's Church, Stanley, West Yorks, north-east elevation

There is a head of steam behind this proposal and it may be the best that can be hoped for. But the commercial and architectural arguments in favour have to be overwhelming for it to be countenanced and at the time of writing there is still no decision.

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, TRINITY STREET, BOLTON, GREATER MANCHESTER

Much the same sort of approach is manifest at Holy Trinity, an even more longstanding church under threat – but here there are clear signs of flair.

Holy Trinity was built 1823-5 to the designs of Philip Hardwick and is a classic Commissioners church although its Perpendicular Gothic is far better handled than in many, a reflection of a healthy budget of £14,000. The twentieth century has not been kind. A Zeppelin bomb fell through the roof in 1916, the tower was gutted by fire in 1920 and the whole building was closed in 1992. The years thereafter have been wretched. Most fittings were stripped out by authorities and vandals. The organ by Nicholson and Sons, moved there from Manchester Cathedral in 1874, was given to Portsmouth Cathedral.



Fig. 4

Holy Trinity Church, Bolton, Greater Manchester, current condition

The church was acquired by Seddon Silcocks on a lease in 1996 and they gained the freehold in 2003. Following the failure of earlier schemes, in 2005 Makin Architecture were brought in to progress matters. The invitation followed that company's much acclaimed conversions of two major churches at Hulme in Manchester – St Mary's by Crowther of 1856 (Figs 5 and 6) with its towering new pods of accomodation and

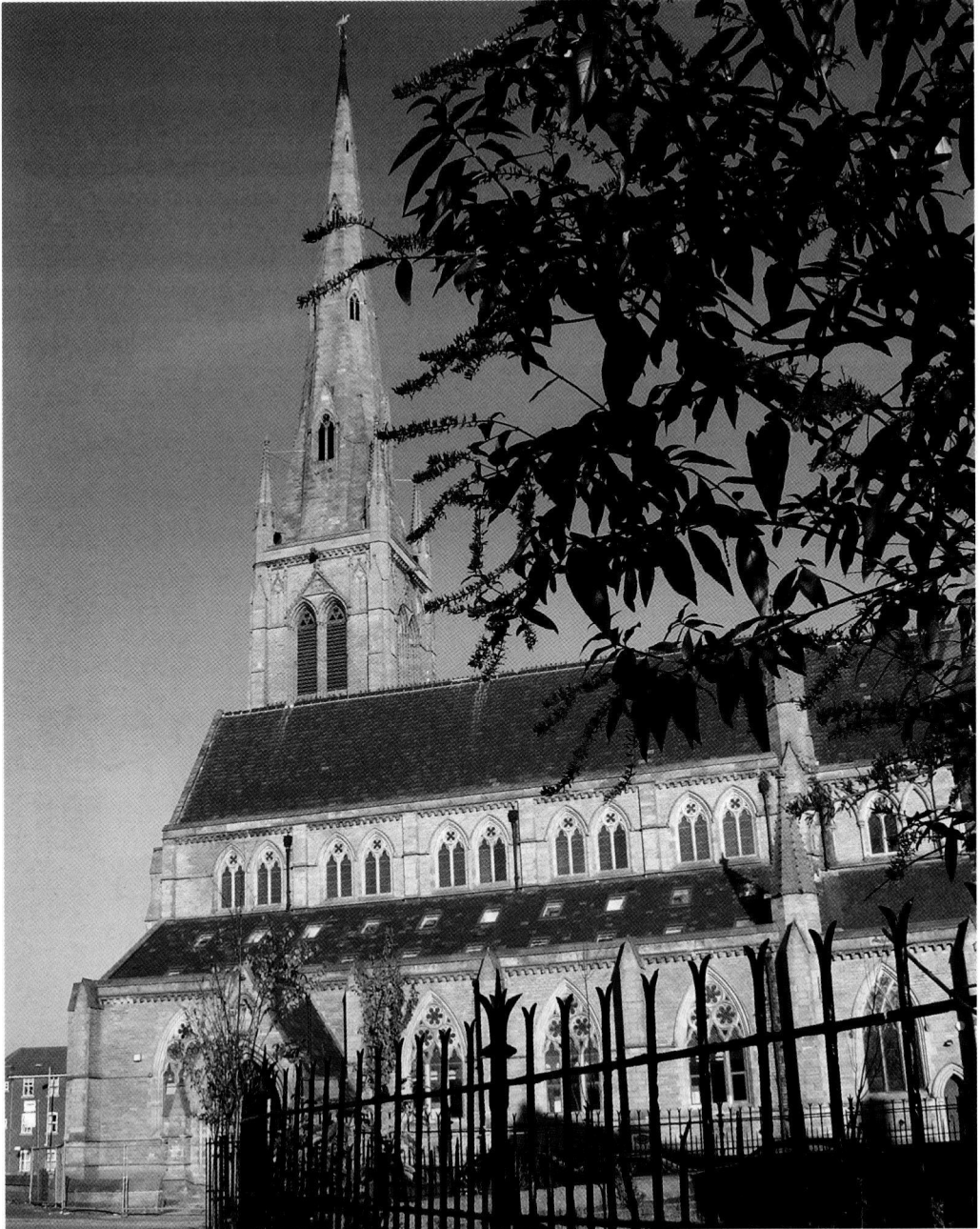


Fig. 5
St. Mary's Church, Hulme, Manchester

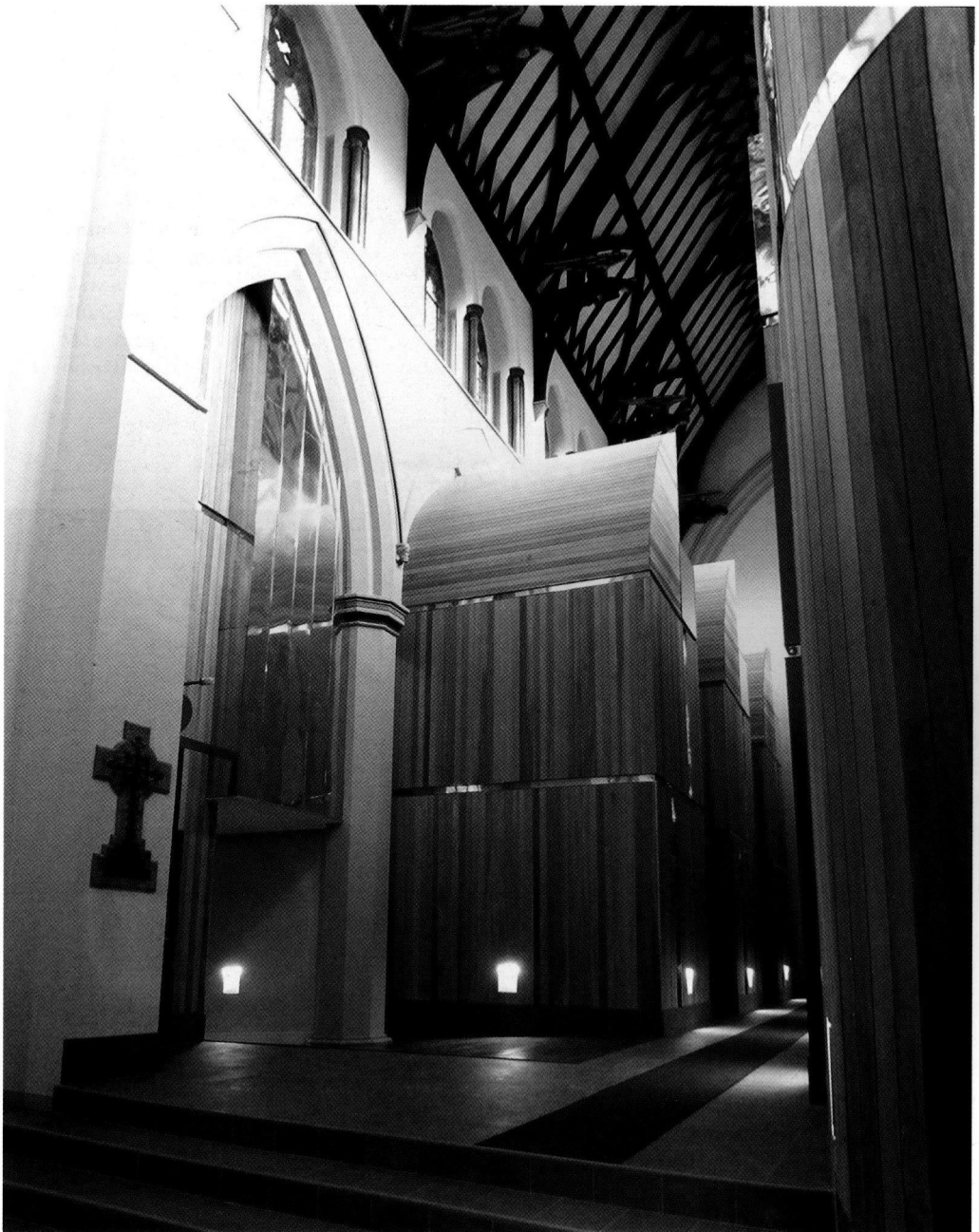


Fig. 6
St. Mary's Church, Hulme, Manchester

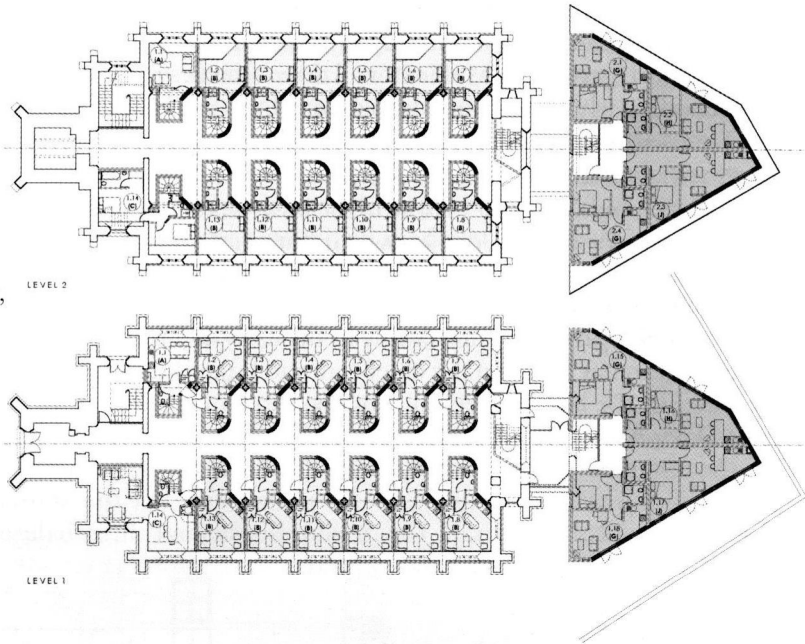


Fig. 7
St. George's Church,
Hulme, Manchester



Fig. 8
St. George's Church, Hulme, Manchester, communal space

Fig. 9
Holy Trinity Church,
Bolton, Greater
Manchester,
intended floor plan



St George's by Francis Goodwin of 1826 (Fig. 7). The former now has fourteen new apartments, the latter twenty-five, all inserted in a way that allows the internal volume of both to be readable (see Fig. 8). A similar approach is now proposed for Holy Trinity – with two critical exceptions. First, the narrower proportions and bay widths employed by Hardwick make it difficult to insert the equivalent amount of new square footage whilst the lack of a crypt has ruled out a complete new floor of accommodation. The conversion showed a loss of £334,000 and, in order to compensate for that, a new block of Space Age footprint is proposed for the site beyond the east end. Its style is uncompromising but it will not be especially prominent amid the trees. Figures 9 and 10 show the intended floor plan and the elevational view from the south east.

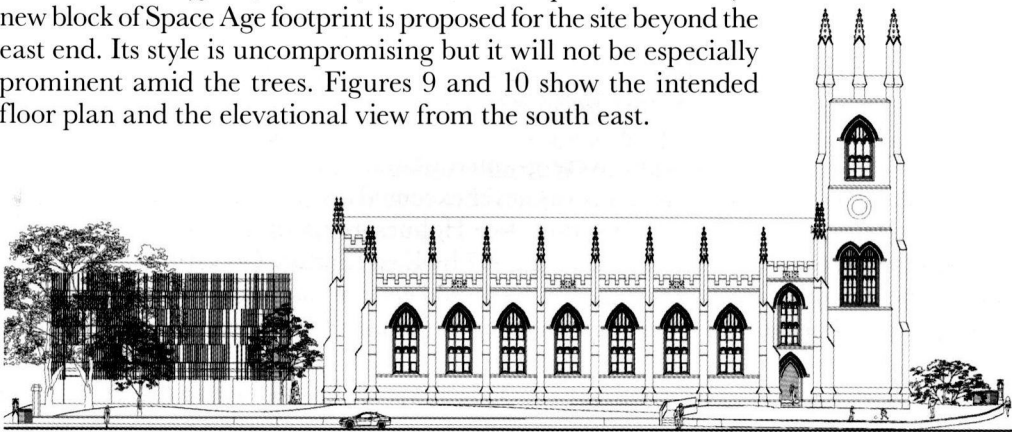


Fig. 10
Holy Trinity Church, Bolton, Greater Manchester, elevational view from the south-east

We agreed with English Heritage in feeling that this scheme offered the best long-term future for an important building presently under acute threat.

The project architect at Makins for all three schemes is Ashley Hunt (interior designer, Rosie Sitford) to whom we are indebted for all the images.

CADEBY HALL, CADEBY, LINCOLNSHIRE

Cadeby Hall, listed Grade II*, is one of the lesser known mansions of Lincolnshire made more mysterious by the lack of a known architect, a comparatively isolated location and several decades of dereliction – the latter sufficiently bad for it to have been declared a formal Building at Risk.

It was built by the Heneage family in the early eighteenth century as a dower house for their mansion at Hainton. Its chief claim to fame is the Baroque façade to the north (heightened in the late eighteenth century) shown here in a drawing by Alan Scoffin of Ross Davy Associates of Grimsby (Fig. 11). This is in South Lincolnshire limestone where the rest of the house is largely brick. The landscaped terraces and viewing mound emphasise its importance as an eyecatcher in the park. The fine staircase inside survives with moulded wreath handrail, fluted newel-posts and three balusters to each tread, alternately fluted, barley sugar and twisted.

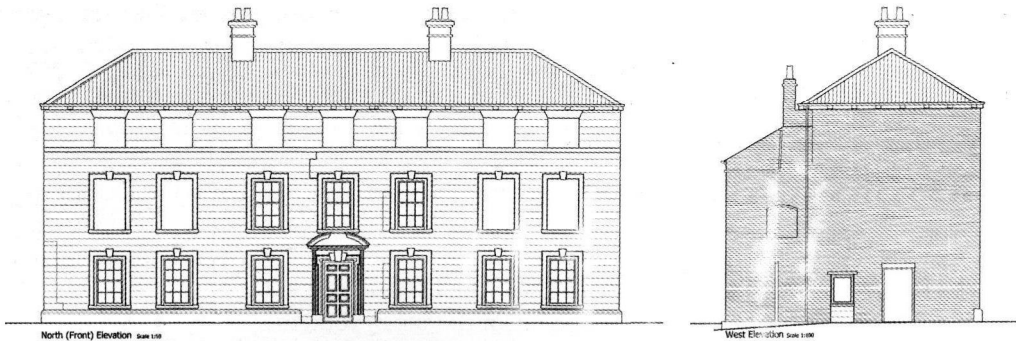


Fig. 11

Cadeby Hall, Cadeby, Lincolnshire

In 2005 Gelder and Kitchen were granted planning permission for a scheme of repair and extension to the rear. This was never executed and two years later Ross Davy, advised by Historic Buildings Consultant, Lee Holmes, revised the scheme. And it was on that revision that we were consulted in 2007 by East Lindsey Council. We were able to welcome the approach in principle but suggested certain modifications of detail. The expectation is that the scheme will go ahead if listed building consent is forthcoming.

FORMER SCHOOL AND ATTACHED SCHOOL HOUSE, MEERBROOK, LEEK, STAFFORDSHIRE

This is a minor case perhaps, but one which illustrates the importance of harmony and context. The old school at Meerbrook was erected in the early nineteenth century as a

single-storey school house with attached double-height but single-storey school room. It was enlarged in the mid-nineteenth century to include a further two-storey class room. It is built in red brick with an ashlar sandstone frontage, enlivened with rusticated quoins and voussoirs and a gabled bellcote (added to unite the new classroom with the old in the mid-nineteenth century). The single-storey school house retains its Gothic arched windows and lattice glazing to the front and rear. The building operated as a school until about forty years ago when it was sold to the Post Office, and in 1977 it was acquired by the Youth Hostel Association which made 'numerous' changes internally – including creating a first floor in the original schoolroom and adding an unsightly toilet/shower block and conservatory to the rear. The former school and school house is listed Grade II and forms an important part of the historic settlement and Conservation Area of Meerbrook.

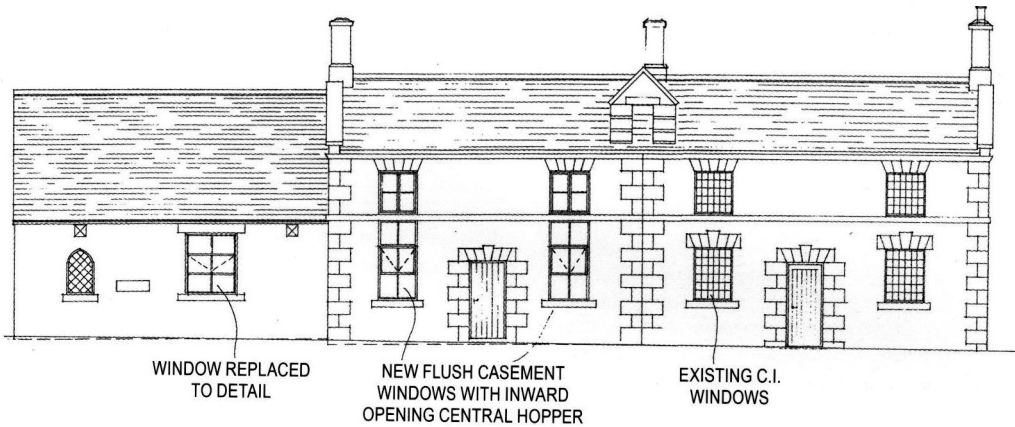


Fig. 12

Former School and School House, Meerbrook, Staffordshire, south elevation

The Youth Hostel closed in 2007 and the building was sold on the open market. The current proposal seeks to convert the building to residential use. The application recognises that conversion to one single dwelling, incorporating a home office/studio in the original school house (which is lit at its west end by a large nine-paned sash), is the solution with least impact on the fabric, character and setting. The need for affordable housing in Meerbrook is clearly also a concern for the local planning authority as the applicant reasoned that with the price paid for the building in 2007 given as 'upwards of £450,000', and repairs costing at £100,000, the project would not be viable for a registered social landlord. The scheme reverses some of the unsympathetic alterations – reinstating the original rear window and door openings, removing the staircase in the master's house and replacing modern roof lights to the rear with 'conservation' style lights. It does however retain the horizontal division of the original schoolroom to form one of three first-floor bedrooms.

Whilst we had no objections in principle to the conversion of the former school and school house to a single dwelling, we regretted the retention of the horizontal division

of the school room and expressed reservations about the replacement of the two rear additions with a 'minimally framed glass cube on a sawn sandstone plinth'. The applicant stated that 'this would not be a pastiche but an expression of the different construction technologies of different periods', and indeed the merits of the design may be that the original classroom can be 'read' through the new glazed structure. Overtly modern extensions are not something we would object to, or indeed insist upon, *per se* but, given the fact that this new conservatory would be visible both from the main and side roads is a matter for concern. It creates a third roof height which is neither in tandem with the wall-plate of the school house or the classroom proper. We expressed reservations to the planning authority and at the time of writing the application had yet to be decided.