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# Structural Appraisal of the Church Inn, Castle Hill Road, Bury, BL9 6UH

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**STRUCTURAL | ENVIRONMENTAL | GEOTECHNICAL**



HME Civil Engineering Limited. Registered in England: **15684044**

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## Introduction

BDB Special Projects Ltd has appointed HME Civil Engineering to appraise the structural condition of 17th century Freehold inn located in the village of Birtle.

BDB Special Projects Ltd (Civil Engineering Company) propose to renovate and redevelop the existing building to provide suitable office and meeting space for between 25 to 30 members of office staff and visitors with car parking capacity for the same.

The site is within the boundary for Rochdale Council, it is also within the Greenbelt and although not a listed building, it is viewed as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.

This report outlines the findings from a visual inspection of the Church Inn.

The purpose of this inspection is to assess the structural integrity of the building, identify any potential risks, and provide recommendations for remedial work, if necessary.



**Figure 1:** Church Inn, Castle Hill Road, Bury, BL9 6UH Aerial map view.

## Limitations

The report is based on a visual inspection only with no opening up of the fabric of the building nor site investigation or intrusive survey. The inspection was visual only and was carried out during a 60 minute walkover during daylight hours at 08:00AM on Thursday the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025. No finishes were removed during this survey.

In addition to the standard limitations of a visual inspection, there were some specific limitations which are noted below;

The property was un-occupied however still fully furnished. Some floors and some walls were covered. Significant amounts of furniture present such as the dining booths, seating, kitchen and bar units containing backing panels. Bathroom fittings also impeded inspection to some areas. No carpets were lifted. The property has rendered external walls to the single storey extensions and it was not possible to inspect the underlying construction of these from a visual inspection and there may be defects that cannot be seen. These are limitations to the inspection.

This report is solely for the use of the named client (BDB Special Projects Ltd) and their professional advisers, no liability to other parties is accepted. Should the client not act upon specific, reasonable advice contained in the report, no responsibility is accepted for the consequences.

Judgement is used in the assessment of the structural condition of the property; to determine the age of any defects, the cause of the defects, and the risk of future defects. It is never possible to state with certainty that a property will not move in future, all buildings move under the influence of many factors, some cyclic and some progressive, some which are dormant for many years yet may be reactivated under certain conditions.

The general structural condition of the property is covered by this report, based on the date and time of the inspection. This report covers the condition of the structural elements of the property only and does not deal with other specialist elements (e.g. mechanical / electrical services; plumbing; drains; decorative finishes; etc.) unless they exhibit visible defects or are having an adverse effect on the structure.

HME shall only report on the structural defects that affect the stability or safety of the property, providing that these defects are detectable and visible during the visual inspection undertaken and not impacted by any limitations. Any woodwork, brickwork, steelwork or any other part of the structure which are covered, inaccessible or unexposed have not been inspected and are therefore not included within this report. These structural elements cannot be reported as free from defect without a more thorough intrusive survey.

In the presence of defects that indicate settlement or movement, is not possible to rule out ongoing settlement or movement at the property until a period of monitoring has been undertaken. Future settlement or movement due to external factors may also occur, and this cannot be ruled out by this report.

Assumptions have been made in this report for elements of the structure that are not visible. E.g. the foundations, floors and covered walls. Assumptions are made based on the properties age and type. They cannot be guaranteed without intrusive investigations.

## Site visit

A visual inspection was undertaken at the property by HME Civil Engineering Limited Structural Engineer, on the 03/04/2025 at 08:00AM. The weather at the time was clear and approximately 9 degrees.



**Figure 2:** South elevation

## Property description

A 17th century Freehold inn located in the village of Birtle surrounded by approximately 4 acres of grazing land, gardens and car parking, with panoramic southerly views towards the skyline of Manchester and the Cheshire plains beyond.

The Church Inn is one of the oldest pubs in the region and during 1970s was extended to provide approximately 100 cover restaurant, kitchen, preparation room and outside seating area.

The Inn and restaurant traded successfully over the last 5 decades but during the pandemic was forced to close and the current owners are now looking to retire. Access is via Castle Hill Road and all main services are connect.

The site is with the boundary for Rochdale Council, it is within the Greenbelt and although not a listed budling, it is viewed as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. The surrounding area is a mix of Farm buildings and agricultural fields, small residential hamlets and adjacent listed St. Johns Church, the area to the north of the site has a number of equestrian centres.



**Figure 3:** North elevation

## Structure description

### Foundations

- Shallow stone footings (assumed) set directly onto compacted ground—no concrete or modern DPC.
- Foundation may be stepped where ground is uneven or sloping.
- Minimal or no foundations beneath internal walls.

### External Walls (Original Inn)

- Coursed stone construction, typically local gritstone or sandstone.
- Thick solid walls (typically 450–600mm), providing the overall structural stability.
- Built with traditional lime mortar (assumed), which allows breathability and slight movement.
- External face lime-washed.

### External Walls (Single Storey Extensions)

- Assumed 2 skin concrete block with cavity and rendered external faces.
- Built with sand and cement mortar.
- Assumed DPC in place.

### Internal Walls

- Loadbearing stone or brick internal spine walls.
- Lighter timber stud partitions at upper levels.
- Lime and/or modern plastered throughout.

### Roof Structure

- Timber-framed, pitched roof, steeply sloped to shed heavy rain.
- Constructed with trusses, pegged and jointed, principal rafters with purlins.
- Rafters support battens and roof covering.
- Stone slate roof, laid in diminishing courses (larger slates at eaves).
- Lime torching may be applied to the underside of slates to help wind proofing.

### Floors

- Ground Floor:
  - Assumed flagstone on assumed compacted earth, or timber on sleeper walls or joists.
  - Sometimes directly on compacted rubble or limecrete.
- Upper Floors:
  - Assumed timber joists with timber floorboards.
  - Assumed Joists built into wall pockets or resting on wall plates.

### Windows and Doors

- Double glazed UPVC windows, with mullioned stone surrounds.
- External doors typically timber, set in heavy stone surrounds.

### Chimneys and Fireplaces

- Large masonry chimney stacks, one centrally located and one at West gable end.

- Constructed from stone, with internal open hearth.
- Flues built into wall thickness, rising to tall stone flues.

**Interior Finishes**

- Assumed Lime and/or modern plaster on walls and ceilings.
- Timber beams exposed, often chamfered and stopped.
- Carpet covering to most floors.
- Simple joinery with doors, panelling, and stairs.

## Summary

The Inn's existing walls and floors are generally in a good structural condition which would suggest it is suitable for the proposed renovation and upgrade works.

The roof timber structure is in a poor and potentially unstable structural condition. Visible sagging of the ridge line and purlins and evidence of water ingress throughout. Evidence of rot in principal trusses, rafters and wall plates were visible during the inspection.

The key structural risks evident at the property relate to the existing roof structure and are highlighted below.

- Progressive roof collapse if the structural repairs required to the roof are not undertaken soon.
- Ongoing water damage to structural elements due to water ingress, accelerating timber decay and masonry deterioration.
- Risk to occupant or public safety if structural movement of the roof worsens or debris falls from eaves or roof.

A structural engineer will need to be consulted further during the detailed design and construction phases to provide structural design, calculations, and further inspection of the existing structure once exposed.



**Figure 4:** Deteriorated, sagging roof structure

## Structural assessment summary

### Roof

The roof timber structure is in a poor and potentially unstable condition.

Signs of failure include:

- Visible sagging of ridge line and purlins
- Evidence of water ingress and rot in principal purlins, rafters and wall plates
- Possible insect infestation in exposed timbers
- Loose or missing slates/tiles, allowing further water penetration

The roof is currently not weathertight, accelerating deterioration of the internal structure and finishes.

### Ceilings and internal supports

- Areas of collapsed ceiling tiles and plaster due to water ingress from the failing roof.
- Timber beams may be subject to rot or overloading, particularly as ceiling joists and rafters have sagged.
- Internal walls generally in reasonable condition, though finishes are aged, poor and potentially concealing latent defects.
- Requires further investigation of internal load bearing elements for re-use following removal of finishes.
- Chimney stacks require further inspection once roof is secured and fixtures, fittings, furnishings and coverings removed.

### Floors and foundation

- Foundations could not be inspected due to being below ground level.
- No obvious signs of subsidence at time of inspection, but internal floors show signs of unevenness and deflection consistent with property age.
- Likely built on shallow stone foundations, consistent with the period.
- Requires further investigation once roof is secured and fixtures, fittings, furnishings and coverings removed.

### Load-bearing masonry walls

- Constructed of traditional coursed stone with assumed lime mortar.
- Generally stable and plumb.
- Pointing in a good condition.
- No immediate evidence of defects, however much is concealed. Following removal of finishes defects may be present related to roof movement or long term differential settlement.

## Photos

| Site Visit Photos – 03/04/25                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| North elevation single storey stone built extension. Rendered to gable. Bulging to North elevation this is can be generally considered to be consistent with a property of this age and type. | North elevation showing single storey flat roof 1970's extension. Generally in good structural condition. |
|                                                                                                             |                        |
| North elevation showing single storey flat roof 1970's extension. Generally in good structural condition.                                                                                     | North elevation showing sagging roof ridge on original structure.                                         |
|                                                                                                            |                       |

South elevation showing single storey porch extension (later than original structure). Generally in good structural condition.



East elevation showing single storey timber clad extension. Showing signs of deterioration. Demolished in proposed plans.



Outbuilding to the East. Demolished in proposed plans.



East elevation showing single storey timber clad extension. Demolished in proposed plans.



South elevation original window surround. Generally in good structural condition.



South elevation original porch entrance. Generally in good structural condition.



South elevation showing single storey stone built flat roof 1970's extension. Generally in good structural condition.



South elevation showing single storey stone built flat roof 1970's extension. Generally in good structural condition.



South/East elevation showing single storey stone built flat roof 1970's extension. Generally in good structural condition. Further inspection required following demolition of adjoining timber structure.



Ground floor internal, evidence of water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure.



Ground floor internal, evidence of water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure. Areas of collapsed ceiling tiles and plaster due to water ingress from the failing roof.



Ground floor internal, evidence of water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure. Areas of collapsed ceiling tiles and plaster due to water ingress from the failing roof.



First floor internal, evidence of water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure. Areas of collapsed ceiling tiles and plaster due to water ingress from the failing roof.



First floor internal ceiling line, evidence of damp and water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure.



First floor internal, evidence of water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure. Evidence of deformation and movement in roof structure.



First floor internal, evidence of water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure. Evidence of deformation and movement in roof structure.



First floor internal, evidence of water ingress causing damp and mould due to dilapidated roof structure.



First floor internal, evidence of water ingress causing damp and mould due to dilapidated roof structure.



First floor internal, evidence of water ingress causing damp and mould due to dilapidated roof structure.



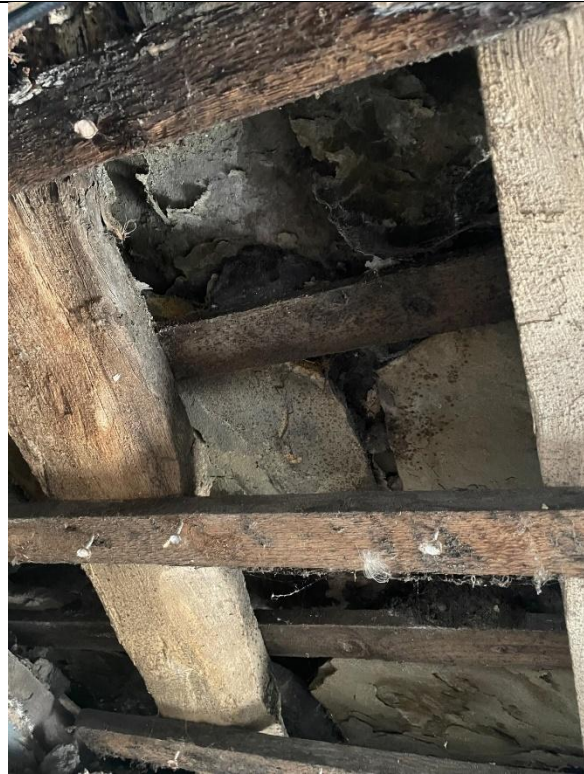
First floor internal, evidence of water ingress due to dilapidated roof structure. Areas of collapsed ceiling tiles and plaster due to water ingress from the failing roof.



First floor internal, exposed roof structure due to water ingress. Evidence of rot, timber decay and lack of membrane and insulation.



First floor internal, exposed roof structure due to water ingress. Evidence of rot, timber decay and lack of membrane and insulation.



First floor internal, exposed roof truss evidence of rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed timbers.



First floor internal, exposed roof truss evidence of rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed timbers.



First floor internal, exposed roof truss evidence of rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed timbers.



First floor internal, exposed roof purlin evidence of rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed timbers.



Loft space evidence of damp, rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed roof structure. Evidence of extensive failing historic repairs.



Loft space evidence of damp, rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed roof structure. Evidence of extensive failing historic repairs.



Loft space evidence of damp, rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed roof structure. Evidence of extensive failing historic repairs.



Loft space evidence of damp, rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed roof structure. Evidence of extensive failing historic repairs.



Loft space evidence of damp, rot, timber decay and possible insect infestation in exposed roof structure. Evidence of extensive failing historic repairs.



West elevation of South facing single storey stone built flat roof 1970's extension. Load bearing wall generally plumb and in good condition.



Original structure. Load bearing wall generally plumb and in good condition.



South facing single storey stone built flat roof 1970's extension. Load bearing wall generally plumb and in good condition.



## Conclusions

The subject property, a circa 1700 Lancashire country inn, retains a substantial and well-built traditional stone structure, characteristic of vernacular architecture of the period. The loadbearing external walls appear generally sound and exhibit no signs of active or significant structural movement. Internal walls and floor structures appear broadly stable where visible, with only minor age-related defects observed.

The building evidently requires a scheme of modernisation that introduces modern construction standards and materials, to ensure the longevity of the building.

The primary structural concern relates to the dilapidated condition of the roof structure, which has suffered from prolonged water ingress and deterioration of key timber elements. Several roof timbers show signs of rot, deflection, overloading and potential loss of structural integrity. In its current state, the roof poses a risk to both the structural fabric of the building and internal finishes and requires urgent intervention to prevent further degradation.

Subject to the comprehensive repair or replacement of the roof structure, preferably using traditional materials and techniques sympathetic to the building's historic character, the property is considered suitable for renovation. With appropriate conservation-led repairs and careful reinstatement of roofing elements, the building has strong potential to be brought back into sound, functional use, while retaining its architectural significance.

The existing building appears structurally suitable to accommodate the proposed 900mm increase in roof height at the eaves, based on current observations and the overall condition of the loadbearing masonry structure. However, the detailed design of the new roof arrangement, including assessment of load paths, bearing capacities, and connection details, must be undertaken by a suitably qualified Structural Engineer. Full structural calculations and design drawings will be required to define the construction type, materials, and method of connection to ensure compliance with current Building Regulations and structural safety standards.

A number of structural elements are currently concealed and these will require further inspection following removal of the extensive and fixtures, fittings, furnishings and coverings removed.