

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER'S REPORT

at

37 Rochdale Road
Middleton
M24 2PT



for

Farzana Iqbal
18 Edgar Road
Chadwell Heath
Romford
RM6 4LX

Contract No: 12489
Dated: October 2024

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Issue	Description	Date	Originator	Approved
01	First draft issue	05/10/2024	JE	HM
02	Second issue	13/11/2025	JE	DC

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THOMASONS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Thomasons was instructed by Farzana Iqbal to visit 37 Rochdale Road, Middleton M24 2PT and to prepare a Structural Engineer's report on the structural condition of the property.
- 1.2 A representative of this practice visited the property on 22 August 2024 for inspection purposes. The weather at the time of our visit was overcast with intermittent light rain.
- 1.3 An initial meeting with the Conservation Officer took place on 15 October 2024 however proposals were not sufficiently developed following that meeting to allow completion of the Discussion and Recommendations sections of this report.
- 1.4 The building has suffered from extensive works which have not all been beneficial or sympathetic. This report does not comment on every change that has been made nor does it provide an exhaustive catalogue of its condition. However, sufficient information is included to provide a good description of its current condition and to discuss how future works may be undertaken.

2.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

3.0



37 Rochdale Road (lefthand property)

Source: Google StreetView

- 3.1 37 Rochdale Road is a lefthand semi-detached house with accommodation located on three levels and a partial basement at the rear of the house. The property and the adjoining building (No. 39), are Grade II listed; a copy of the Historic England listing is included in Appendix A of this report.
- 3.2 No.s 37 and 39 Rochdale Road (Hillcrest and Briarhill respectively) were built in 1892 to the design of Architect Edgar Wood. With their Art Nouveau features the houses were among the earliest such designs in the world. No. 37 was a family home until 1937 after which it became the White House Hotel. It underwent substantial renovation in the early C21 but then stood empty and more recent work to convert it into two dwellings has resulted in substantial loss of historic fabric to the property.
- 3.3 The Historic England listing is combined for No.s 37 and 39. It provides a detailed description for the properties, extracts of which are included below:
- 3.4 *“The front faces east to the road and comprises a central three-storey cross-wing, with a block of two storeys plus an attic to each side. The walling is in orange Ruabon brick and terracotta (some painted), the roofing in five different colours of Welsh and Westmorland slate, laid randomly and with blue clay crested ridging including occasional decorative finials.”*
- 3.5 *“The central block is gabled with a ball finial and kneelers, and has canted corners where it projects above the roofs to either side. Above this can be seen the front face of a chimney stack of Ruabon brick with a cornice and string course. The upper storey has a window in each canted face, each with two windows adjacent on the front face, with a terracotta sill-band. The first and ground floor each have two triple windows, each window having a single terracotta sill. The lintels are all slightly-projecting, splayed brick very shallow segmental arches, except for the front windows of the top floor which have flush, flat brick lintels. The central lintels of each window of the lower two floors have projecting brick ‘keystones’.”*
- 3.6 *“The central gable has three bands of square terracotta blocks, the lowest of which is aligned with a blind oculus with projecting keystones at the compass points. Below the oculus, a further band runs out on either side to form the top course of a parapet, which has the same terracotta coping as the gable. Below this solid course, the parapet comprises three bands of alternating square blocks and brick panels of equal size, each band slightly offset from the one below; in the central area they are offset to the right, but on the canted corners and the side returns, offset to the left of*

the band below. A string course matching the coping forms the base of the parapet. Each storey has two bands of square blocks running across the windows; the brickwork is all in stretcher bond."

- 3.7 *"Each side block comprises an entrance bay with a first-floor window, and a gabled bay with a two-storey bow front with a parapet partly concealing an attic window in the gable. The entrance bays are slightly recessed and have the same detailing as the central block. The bow fronts however are in header bond, and divided into three by slender brick pilasters between the windows and at the outer edges, where they are angled. The pilasters are enlivened by sloping terracotta blocks, flush at the top and projecting at the base, which are placed just below the lintels of each storey. The parapet is coped, with capitals to each pilaster. All the lintels are flush brick with projecting terracotta keystones, and terracotta sills match the coping. The attics have Diocletian windows...
... A low projecting plinth runs across the frontage. Pattress plates of three different designs are distributed symmetrically across the façade, those over the central ground-floor bow windows with characteristic Art Nouveau lines."*
- 3.8 *"... the rear is a simplified version of the front façade. At the left [No. 39] the common brickwork is visible, to the right [No. 37] it is concealed by white-painted render. The whole wall is flush, with no canted corners to the second floor, and sloping dormers to the attic. Each house has its own small oculus window in the gable, which has projecting purlins supporting overhanging verges; the oculi each have keystones at N, E and W compass points only. A very small square chimney stack projects from the left-hand eaves of the gable, and is truncated. At the left and right verges are the truncated rear chimney stacks, each with a recessed central channel which originally had an arched head. The west face of the rear stack of the central block is the same as its south face, with string course and cornice."*
- 3.9 *"INTERIOR: The interior to Hillcrest [No. 37] is largely devoid of historic features, but a small patch of decoratively-painted plaster survives, and a small area of Lincrusta wallpaper with a strapwork design incorporating fleurs-de-lys, together with some cornices (above later inserted ceiling frames), quarry-tile floors (some over-tiled), lath-and-plaster partitions and some window architraves."*

4.0 OBSERVATIONS

4.1 External Observations

- 4.1.1 The front elevation comprised a combination of brick and terracotta masonry. The two storey bay had been dismantled leaving the first floor joists at both floor and roof levels protruding. At the roof level a steel beam had been incorporated to support the joists; it could not be determined whether this was an original feature or whether there had originally been a timber bressummer beam as present at the first floor level. The steel beam showed extensive corrosion. There was no clear evidence of distress to the bay gable

4.1.2



Missing front bay

- 4.1.3 The central bay of the front elevation did not display any fundamental defects which would be indicative of foundation failure. Two pattress plates were noted to this elevation; these were located immediately above the brick arches over the central windows of the ground and first floors. The brickwork coursing above the first floor windows appeared to sag over the central window and displacement of the brick arch over the central window at that level was noted.
- 4.1.4 Localised distortion of the brickwork was noted at first floor window cill level above the righthand side of the front door.

4.1.5



Dropped lintel over first floor window



Distortion of brickwork above front door

4.1.6

Cracking and distortion of the brickwork was noted to the front lefthand corner of the central bay of the building. The brick arch lintel above the second floor window in the chamfered wall had rotated outwards at its head and opening of the masonry joints throughout the corner of the wall had occurred commensurate with outward movement of the high level parapet wall.

4.1.7



Rotated brick arch and cracking to parapet



Cracking to parapet wall above second floor windows

4.1.8

it was noted that holes had been drilled in a regular pattern across the front elevation. It appeared that these may have been for the installation of remedial wall ties, however this hypothesis was not confirmed.

4.1.9

A number of bricks were stockpiled in the front garden. Their provenance was not confirmed but it is anticipated that they will have previously formed the front bay.

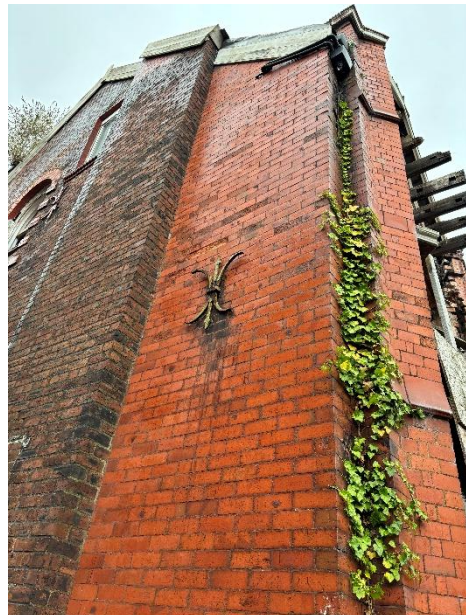
4.1.10 The front return on the gable wall was constructed of the same Ruabon brick as the front elevation; it appeared that this had also been drilled for the installation of remedial wall ties. A single pattress plate was noted at first floor level in this panel of wall; it appeared that there may previously have been another plate vertically aligned with this one at second floor level but it was no longer present at the time of our inspection. The coping to the parapet at the junction of the front elevation with the lefthand gable was displaced.

4.1.11 The remainder of the gable was constructed in common brick. This wall appeared to undulate but significant cracking defects were not noted, albeit that visibility of the wall was restricted due to access. Five pattress plates were noted; three at first floor level and two at second floor. The pattress plates were not fitted tight to the wall. It was apparent that the stair window used to extend from first floor up to second floor; an infill was noted at the half landing level to which tile hanging had been affixed.

4.1.12



Lefthand gable viewed from rear



Front return on lefthand gable

4.1.13 The rear elevation had been substantially reconstructed in blockwork and the entire elevation had been rendered leaving the shadow of the blockwork clearly visible through the render. It appeared that the panel of masonry over the party wall remained as brickwork with the blockwork commencing at the righthand (when viewed from the front) reveal of the first stack of windows and extending across to the righthand reveal of the lefthand windows. There were no major defects relating to the rendered blockwork however the lack of rainwater goods and incomplete detailing the roof edge had allowed water ingress and staining to affect the wall. All of the window frames

were missing to this elevation and the lack of head and cill detailing was exacerbating the effects of the water running down the face of the wall.

4.1.14



Water staining on rear wall

4.1.15

The purlins protruded through the rear gable. It could be seen that external end of the lowest purlin was rotten and there appeared to be a considerable loss of its cross section.

4.1.16



Rear elevation



Rotten purlin end

4.1.17

The chimney stack that remained at the rear lefthand corner of the building was in a relatively poor condition with missing and damage flashings together with vegetation growth.

4.1.18



Rear lefthand chimney stack

4.1.19

There was no visible evidence of pattress plates on the rear elevation which would correspond to those noted on the front elevation. Such a plate was evident at second floor level on the adjoining property. Cracking was noted above the first and second floor window of the adjoining property which was indicative of downward movement of the gable wall. A commensurate crack was noted above the righthand corner of the righthand second floor window of No. 37. Other commensurate cracks may have been dealt with by the reconstruction of the rear wall.

4.1.20



Cracking in rear wall of No.s 37 and 39

4.2 Internal Observations – Ground Floor

4.2.1 Alterations had commenced to the ground floor layout. At the time of our inspection a blockwork wall had been constructed through the length of the hallway and into the rear room; the wall was built to a height of approximately 1500mm above floor level; circulation gaps had been left at each end. The floor in the hallway was overlaid with board so the nature and condition of the floor could not be seen.

4.2.2



Front end of dividing wall in hallway



Rear end of dividing wall in rear room

4.2.3 The doorway into the front lefthand room had been extended to form a wide opening from the hallway; a softwood lintel had been installed above this opening. The bay window in the front elevation had been dismantled. A number of the bricks were stored on the floor but these did not appear to be sufficient for the extent of masonry taken down. A timber bressummer beam spanned over the bay window opening supporting the floor above; it was not possible to confirm the condition of the bearing ends of the beam.

4.2.4 The floor in this room had been removed over the front portion of the room; the joists spanned from side to side and it could be seen that a number of the floor joists towards the front of the room were suffering from wet rot at their bearing ends. The exposed over-site visible where the floor had been removed did not show any clear evidence of disturbance.

4.2.5



Opening into front lefthand room



Masonry from bay window stored on floor

4.2.6



Front elevation where bay has been dismantled



Undisturbed over-site

4.2.7

The stair was located to the rear of the front lefthand reception room. The stairs rose up to second floor level and would have also extended down to basement level. The stair appeared utilitarian but the evidence of where the carpet had run up the centre of the stair is indicative of the stairs being original. The balustrade was boarded over but may contain some hidden original features. The stairs appeared to generally be in a reasonable condition with just a few treads suffering from deterioration which will require their replacement.

4.2.8



Stair from ground up to half landing



Stair from first floor up to next half landing

4.2.9 The rear lefthand room extended across approximately two thirds of the rear elevation. The floor had been removed at the lefthand end of the room leaving the concrete hearth visible; it could be seen that this was supported on props and a permanent support will be required. The rear wall of this room had been rebuilt as a cavity wall using concrete blockwork; the wall comprised a 210mm inner leaf , a 140mm cavity and a 95mm outer leaf.

4.2.10 New floor joists had been installed for the first floor, these spanned from front to rear. But over the righthand end of the room the joists were trimmed short of the wall. The reason for this appeared to be to allow the historic tie rod to remain in place as it would have impinged on the new joists. A second tie rod was present adjacent to the front wall of the rear room; this was notched into the top of the new floor joists. The rod extended from the lefthand elevation of the building to its hooked end but the corresponding rod from the righthand party wall was missing.

4.2.11



Lefthand end of room



Open floor exposing hearth

4.2.12



End of tie rod from lefthand elevation, righthand rod missing

4.2.13

The division wall between the two rear rooms was the original brick construction. A short return of the original rear wall remained with the substantial portion of the rear wall having been reconstructed in blockwork.

4.2.14



Junction of original dividing wall and new rear wall

4.2.15

A major opening had been formed between the front and rear righthand rooms. The opening was in what appeared to have been the original dividing wall however, it could be seen that the wall above had been reconstructed in what appeared to be 90mm concrete block laid on its side, thus resulting in a 215 thick wall above the lintel level. A substantial opening had also been formed between the front righthand room and the hallway.

4.2.16

An opening had been formed within the floor above which is understood will accommodate a new staircase. A tie rod spans across this opening which will impinge on the proposed stair. Adjacent to the front elevation further tie rods spanned from side to side. A hook also protruded from the front elevation which would have been within the depth of the original floor construction (the new floor level having been raised); this corresponded with an external patress plate indicating that there had previously been a front to rear tie rod.

4.2.17



Opening in wall between hallway and front righthand room



Opening between righthand rooms

4.2.18



Hook connected to pattern plate

4.3 Internal Observations – First Floor

4.3.1 At first floor, significant areas of floor boarding were missing especially to the front righthand room and the area above the ground floor hallway; the lack of safe guardrails meant that our inspection had to proceed with great caution and some restrictions to access.

4.3.2



View from stairs towards front righthand corner



View from front righthand corner towards stairs

4.3.3 A wide opening had been formed in the division wall between the front righthand room and the landing area; the wall above was supported on a pair of steel beams. This appeared to date from a previous renovation of the building.

4.3.4 Diagonal cracking was noted below the front windows which was indicative of downward movement of the lintel over them.

4.3.5



Cracking below front righthand room windows



Cracking below front righthand room windows

4.3.6

Various holes could be seen in the underside of the floor above but the majority of these had been covered with plywood sheeting. A view of the underside of the second floor adjacent to the chimney breast in the front righthand room revealed that a timber trimmer beam which would have supported the floor joists had been cut through.

4.3.7



Holes in floor above



Trimmers cut in front of chimney breast

4.3.8

On the landing some open joints were noted below the righthand end of the window cill, but it could not be determined whether this had shown through the plaster as significant cracking prior to removal of the plaster.

4.3.9



Cracking below landing window

4.3.10

As at ground floor level, the front elevation of the front lefthand room was boarded over due to the bay having been dismantled. The masonry of the bay was stored on the floor of the room; the load has not be calculated but appears to be heavy for a domestic floor.

4.3.11



View towards left in front lefthand room

4.3.12

In the rear righthand room the rear wall had been rebuilt in blockwork; this appeared to be block laid on its side providing a 215mm inner leaf to the wall. The junction with the internal division wall with the rear wall indicated the external wall having been moved outwards by approximately 100mm relative to the brickwork of the original rear wall.

4.3.13



View towards stairwell from rear righthand room



Junction of rear and internal walls

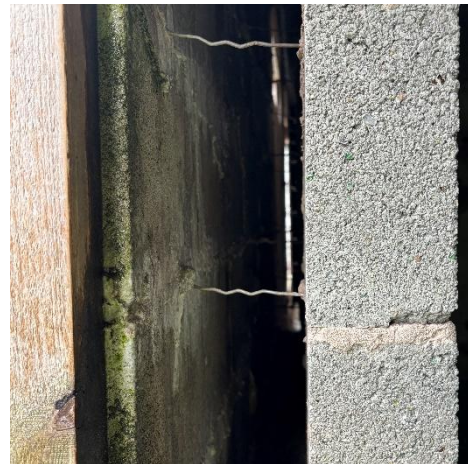
4.3.14

In the rear lefthand room it was noted that extensive water ingress was occurring along the line of the rear wall. This wall was reconstructed in blockwork. Looking into the cavity of the wall between the windows it was noted that whilst there were wall ties incorporated into the construction the cavity wall insulation had been omitted.

4.3.15



Water ingress along head of rear wall



View into cavity wall showing no insulation

4.4 Internal Observations – Second Floor

4.4.1

The second floor level was not in a good state of repair with missing floor boards, water ingress and pigeons.

4.4.2

Brickwork, presumably from the parapet of the dismantled bay, was stored in the front lefthand room next to the doorway into the righthand room. The floor in this area visibly sagged and the division wall next to where the masonry was stored was cracked indicating deflection of the lintel

over the first floor opening in this wall; whilst this may have been exacerbated by the loading it appeared to be more probable that inadequate support whilst installing the lintel will be the cause of this cracking.

4.4.3



Masonry stored at second floor



Cracking in wall between front rooms

4.4.4

The roof structure was generally exposed in this room. Modern roofing materials indicated that some work had been undertaken relatively recently but the quality of this could not be determined from our visual inspection. The lefthand timber valley member for the dormer above the bay window showed indications of wet rot at its foot and also in the vicinity of the purlin.

4.4.5



View into front lefthand corner



Rot in lefthand valley member of bay dormer

4.4.6

The rear wall of the front lefthand room had a roughly formed doorway out to the stairwell; cracking was noted in the brickwork above this doorway. The righthand end of the wall had been reconstructed in blockwork built on a steel beam

4.4.7



Cracking above doorway



Blockwork wall built on steel beam

4.4.8

In the front righthand room it was noted that a piece of board had been placed over the location described in 4.3.6 where a trimmer had been cut and the floor was not adequately supported. Cracking was noted to the masonry both above and below the windows in this room; the pattern was not clear but most probably related to some movement at first floor window head.

4.4.9



Boarding over cut floor trimmer



Cracking in front elevation

4.4.10

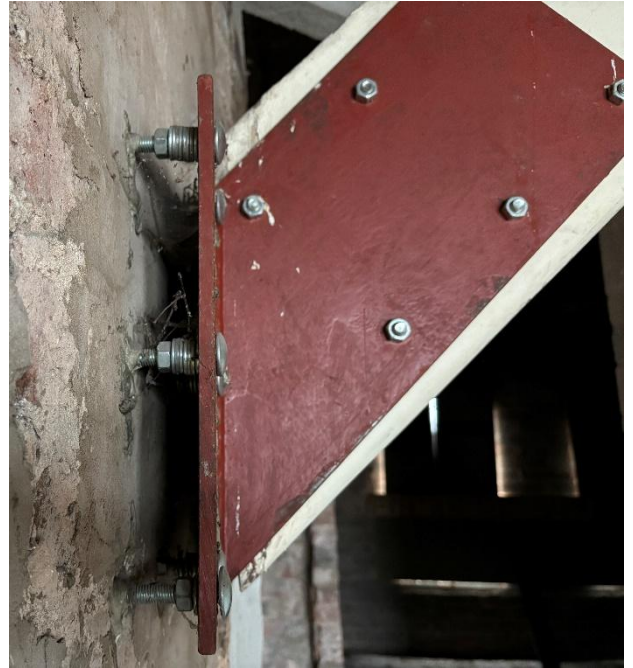
The lefthand valley member of the main front gable extended through this room terminating at the division wall with the front lefthand room. This member was supported into the wall via a steel bracket which was anchored into the wall using resin to hold the bolts in place. The valley did not strike the wall at a perpendicular angle, but the steel bracket had been manufactured for a perpendicular connection. As a result the front side of the bracket was proud of the wall by some 50mm; washers had been introduced to act as packers between the wall and the backplate of the

bracket but this was not to sufficient depth. There was no indication of the anchors having pulled out of the wall however, it is anticipated that the anchors have not been designed to for the bending stresses to which they will be subjected by the gap between the wall and the bracket. The adequacy of the support detail at the top end of the valley was not clearly visible.

4.4.11



Valley bracket connection to wall



Front of bracket showing gap between wall and steelwork

4.4.12

The upper purlin which extended from the front gable back to the valley member was very poorly supported with its bottom corner resting on a brick at its front end. The lower purlin also appeared to be supported on its corner but in this location to be resting on a short length of timber. Neither of the purlins were built in leaving them both prone to rotation.

4.4.13



Upper purlin bearing into front gable



Lower purlin bearing into front gable

4.4.14

In the rear righthand room more areas of missing floor boards were noted. The rear wall had been reconstructed in blockwork up to the window head level above which the pike of the gable was original brickwork. The coursing of the original brickwork sloped down towards the party wall. The rear ends of the purlins were built into the gable brickwork and restrained against rotation. The division wall with the rear lefthand room was original masonry which did not appear to have been bonded or tied into the new blockwork rear wall.

4.4.15



Rear wall constructed in blockwork up to window head.
Note, sloping bedjoints in original masonry above window



Lack of bonding between rear and internal walls

4.4.16

In the rear lefthand room the floor boards had been removed along the length of the rear elevation. The roof structure was exposed revealing a combination of original and replacement timbers. It appeared that principal rafters spanned from the stairwell wall down to eaves where they

connected with a primary floor beam effectively forming a truss to support purlins and hence the secondary rafters.

4.4.17 Areas of water ingress were noted particularly along the rear eaves and to the sides of the dormer window. To the righthand side of the dormer the connection between the principal rafter and floor beam was suffering from wet rot.

4.4.18



Rear lefthand room



Wet rot in connection between principal rafter and beam

4.4.19 The purlin at the head of the dormer window was distorted at the point at which it was penetrated by an inclined tie rod; it appeared likely that this was associated with rot in the purlin.

4.4.20 The opening between the stairwell and the rear lefthand room had been crudely enlarged towards the left, fortunately when the lintel had been propped to avoid collapse of the wall above.

4.4.21



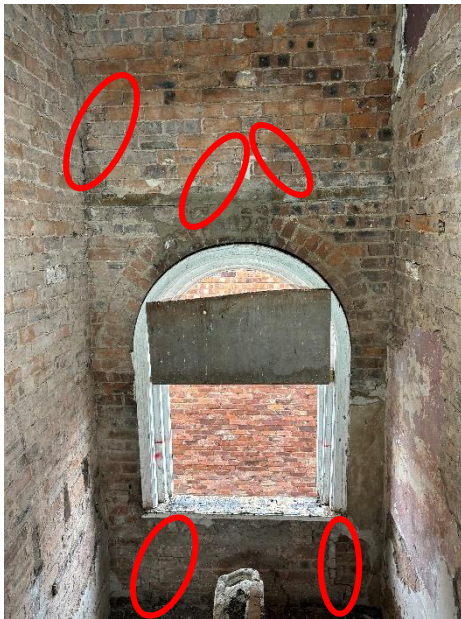
Distorted purlin



Opening between rear room and stairwell

- 4.4.22 Within the stairwell it was noted that the arched window frame did not sit neatly below the brickwork arch and minor cracking was evident in the panel of brickwork above the arch. Old cracking was also noted below the window, but this panel of masonry appeared to be an infill with the cracking occurring along the infill lines. The top two flights of the stair were in a very poor condition.

4.4.23



Cracking above and below stairwell window



Stairs in very poor condition

4.5 Internal Observations – Basement

- 4.6 The basement extended beneath the rear half of the house and was accessed via a door in the rear wall, the former stair having been removed. The space comprised two rear rooms and a front room which extended across the full width of the basement; this was located beneath the stairwell. A blockwork wall had been constructed to the righthand side of the basement; this extended the full depth of the basement and was located approximately 1m away from the party wall.
- 4.7 In the rear lefthand room temporary support was noted to the hearth above which was mentioned in the photographs in 4.2.11 of this report. There were no significant defects noted to the walls of this room. It was noted that the floor above had been replaced with new timber.

4.7.1



View towards front in rear lefthand room



View towards rear in rear lefthand room

4.7.2

The rear wall of the righthand room appeared to comprise plastered brickwork at low level with a blockwork infill above; the straight joint to the lefthand side of this was indicative of this having previously been a window opening. This room was reduced in width due to the blockwork wall to the right. There was considerable debris on the floor of this room some of which exhibited evidence of fungal growth. Viewing through a hole in the blockwork wall revealed the void between this wall and the party wall to contain a substantial quantity of building debris.

4.7.3



View towards rear in rear righthand room

4.7.4



Fungal growth on building debris



View into void behind block wall

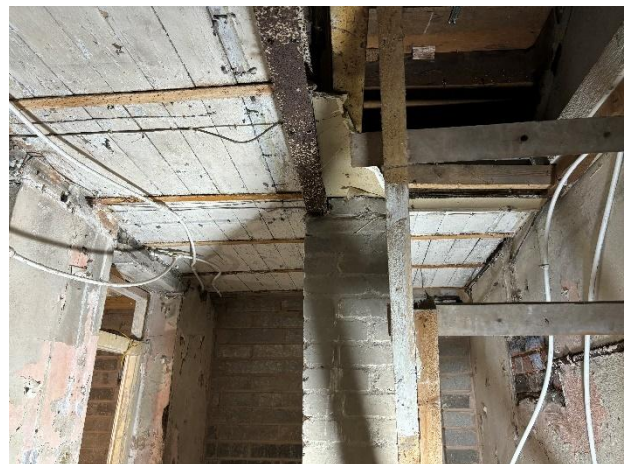
4.7.5

The room beneath the stairwell included two brickwork piers supporting a steel beam which trimmed the former stair opening. The floor over this room was unusual in that it comprised timber boards spanning from side to side supported on steel straps.

4.7.6



View towards left below stairwell



View towards right below stairwell

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Overall 37 Rochdale Road is in a sad condition relative to its former magnificence. It is clear from the Historic England listing that it suffered from extensive works in the early C21 which destroyed many of its internal historic features. Works undertaken by a later owner have now done considerable damage to external features including the front bay window and the rear elevation. Notwithstanding this the majority of the front elevation and lefthand gable remain without significant damage. Localised repairs are required to these parts, but these will not detrimentally change the character of the remaining building.
- 5.2 Part of a previous undated engineer's report, prepared by Marston and Grundy LLP (MG) has been provided for our information. This indicates that there was obvious movement to the bay at that time with cracking at high level to the top of the central front gable. They also recorded a bulge in the rear wall and recommended localised rebuilding to be undertaken. Two areas of minor cracking on the rear elevation were recommended to receive crack stitching.
- 5.3 It appears that MG probably undertook a trial pit investigation however we have not been provided with their findings from any trial holes undertaken. The location that they identified for the holes indicate that there may have been concerns regarding the ground across the rear half of the party wall, in the centre of the house and to the front lefthand side of the bay window. The investigation of the party wall foundations would be commensurate with the cracking that they recorded on the rear elevation and also that noted to the neighbouring property during our inspection. The investigation of the foundation of the bay was also logical as the bay was recorded to be inclining outwards.
- 5.4 The reason for the internal trial pit is no longer obvious however MG's notes indicate that various elements of work were required in the centre of the house. However, from our limited information of the defects that they found, and the nature of the repairs advised, the cause does not appear to be related to the foundation movement.
- 5.5 One of the sketches included in the MG document suggests that underpinning may be required to the front half of the building and to all of the party wall. From the evidence that we could see on site we do not think that such work was undertaken at the front of the property, nor do we consider that it is required. Notwithstanding this, it may be advisable to consider a new foundation when the bay is reconstructed.

- 5.6 There is no clear evidence of the rear section of the party wall having been underpinned however the introduction of the new blockwork wall set off from the party wall in the basement is a curious addition for which we see no reason. We consider that it will be advisable to remove a section of the new wall sufficient to undertake an exploration to determine whether any underpinning has been undertaken. If it is found that none was done then a trial hole should be undertaken to confirm the ground conditions and whether localised underpinning will be advisable.
- 5.7 It is apparent from our inspection that considerably greater works have been undertaken to the property than were being recommended by MG. These are summarised as follows:
- 5.8
 - Complete reconstruction of rear wall in rendered blockwork cavity construction as opposed to localised rebuilding.
 - 5.9
 - Formation of large opening between hallway and front righthand room at ground floor whilst not apparently rebuilding the pier of brickwork to the rear of this (now supporting pair of beams over opening).
 - 5.10
 - Formation of large opening into front righthand room at first floor level.
 - 5.11
 - Removal of wall to form larger room in rear lefthand corner at first floor level.
 - 5.12
 - Walls have been removed/altered in the centre of the building at second floor level.
 - 5.13 MG recommended strapping of all the floor/wall junctions at first floor. This would certainly assist in ensuring that the walls are adequately restrained and will have a beneficial effect of the behaviour of the building.
 - 5.14 There are locations in the building where alterations have been made to the span direction of floor joists and where trimming of joists has been undertaken. A more detailed consideration of these will be required to confirm the structural adequacy of these alterations. However, it is not expected that these will found to be in need of major intervention. At the same time consideration would be given to making good damage such as the trimmer that has been cut at second floor level.

- 5.15 The repair that has been undertaken to the bottom end of the valley member is crude and inaccurately detailed which has resulted in the bolts acting in bending as opposed to shear. This member will need to be propped and a new support detail devised to transfer the loads more appropriately.
- 5.16 Measures will also need to be detailed to ensure that the ends of the purlins are properly supported and restrained against rotation.
- 5.17 Careful detailing of the bay window will be required to ensure that it does not suffer from lack of restraint or other previous defects. It is currently anticipated that provision of adequate strapping at floor levels will be sufficient to provide the necessary restraint.
- 5.18 It is also hoped that careful review of the stored bricks will reveal the majority of the elements of the former bay and that few replacement elements will be required for its reconstruction.
- 5.19 The original tie rods and their associated pattress plates have been disturbed and in some locations removed. The introduction of strapping of floors to walls will make up for some of this loss but it will be preferable to reinstate the tie rods as fully as possible in the works.
- 5.20 The damage done to the rear wall is immense. Being cognisant of the damage inflicted by a previous owner, we suggest that it may be acceptable to remove the outer leaf of blockwork and to reinstate it using brickwork to match that of the rear elevation of No. 39. This approach will need to be discussed with the Conservation Officer.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Due to the time elapsed between our inspection of this property in August 2024 and the issue of version 02 of this report a further structural inspection should be undertaken to confirm the current condition of the property.
- 6.2 Recommendations for the final treatment of the property will be based on the observations of an up to date inspection together with the conclusions drawn above and on discussions which will be held on site with the Conservation Officer.

APPENDIX A

Heritage Listing

1st DRAFT

Hillcrest and Briarhill

Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Listed Building**

Grade: **II**

List Entry Number: **1447739**

Date first listed: **05-Sep-2017**

List Entry Name: **Hillcrest and Briarhill**

Statutory Address 1: **37 Rochdale Road, Middleton, Rochdale, M24 2PT**

Statutory Address 2: **39 Rochdale Road, Middleton, Rochdale, M24 2PT**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

[Understanding list entries](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/>)

[Corrections and minor amendments](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/>)

Location

Statutory Address: **37 Rochdale Road, Middleton, Rochdale, M24 2PT**

Statutory Address: **39 Rochdale Road, Middleton, Rochdale, M24 2PT**

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District: **Rochdale (Metropolitan Authority)**

Parish: **Non Civil Parish**

National Grid Reference: **SD8707606643**

Summary

A semi-detached pair of houses of 1892 by internationally-renowned architect Edgar Wood, in red brick with slate roofs and with highly individual and innovative design including elements found in the earliest Art Nouveau houses in the world.

Reasons for Designation

Hillcrest and Briarhill, a semi-detached pair of houses of 1892 by Edgar Wood, are listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest: * As an excellent example of innovative design for the period, sharing many characteristics with the most avant-garde designs of the time in continental Europe and anticipating elements of the architect's later pioneering Modernist design;

* For the good survival of the internal plan-form and retention of many interior decorative features, particularly at Briarhill;

* For the strong visual and historical relationship with the adjacent pair of Redcroft and Fencegate (NHLE no. 1162377) by the same designer (who lived in Redcroft until 1916), and close proximity and shared features with two of Wood's other listed buildings at 51-53 Rochdale Road (NHLE no. 1356254), and Arkholme (NHLE no. 1391983);

Historical interest: * For their attribution to the internationally-renowned architect Edgar Wood.

History

Hillcrest and Briarhill (Nos 37 and 39 Rochdale Road, respectively) were built in 1892, the year after the adjacent Redcroft and Fencegate (NHLE no. 1162377); the architect, Edgar Wood, lived in Redcroft until 1916. With their Art Nouveau features Hillcrest & Briarhill are among the earliest such designs in the world, fractionally predating Victor Horta's Hotel Tassel in Brussels (UNESCO World Heritage List). In 1893, Hillcrest and Briarhill were illustrated and described in architectural publications in Britain, the USA and Europe.

Hillcrest's first owner, Henry Simpson Batey, lived there until his death in 1937. In the late C20 it became the White House Hotel. In the early C21 it underwent substantial renovation. The hotel ceased trading early in the C21 and is presently (2017) unoccupied. After a short occupancy by Arthur Edwin Jones, Briarhill was lived in by Thomas Mills Chadwick, and later two of his daughters, from around 1900 until 1960. It is still a family home.

The first map on which the houses are marked is the 1909 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey map. This shows the L-shaped ancillary building in the rear garden of Briarhill, continuing (as a linear range only) in the garden of Hillcrest, where its southern end is aligned with a wall running from the rear of the house. A similar cross-wall divided the front garden into a small northern portion and a larger southern one. The northern boundary of Briarhill's garden lay further to the north than at present, with a second ancillary building in the north-west angle, linked to the north-west corner of the house by a short wall dividing the front garden from the rear. A small rear porch is shown to Briarhill only. The 1922 edition shows the same arrangement, with the addition of a wall at Hillcrest dividing front from rear gardens, just forward of halfway along the end wall. The 1955 1:1,250 map does not mark the rear porch or any of the garden dividing walls. Maps of 1960 and 1970 show the same.

Externally, both houses have had nearly all of their sash windows replaced with casements (in PVC at Hillcrest and timber at Briarhill). Sadly, at Briarhill, this removed the bulk of what might have been the first comprehensive Art Nouveau glazing scheme in the world, in which the upper sashes of the front windows had sinuous glazing bars and upper lights filled with leaded and coloured glass in a stylised representations of briars. Large timber gates have been replaced by slender modern metal versions, and the railings within the boundary wall cut-outs are not original. All of the rainwater goods and their ornamental fixings have been repainted in alternatives to their original white colour, and some replaced in PVC. The site has varying ground conditions, and measures to combat differential movement were integrated during the build, probably because movement began to occur almost immediately. Numerous ties run through the building, with decorative pattress plates on the elevations.

Hillcrest has had major internal works including some drylining and tiling, and has lost most, but not all, of its interior features. A small area of surviving painted plaster shows it originally had a sophisticated Art Nouveau painted scheme. A recess on the back wall of the dining room (probably originally with a serving hatch) is now

knocked through to the kitchen. Externally, the two tall end chimneys were lowered in 2008 to the level of the roof and slated over. The Hillcrest entrance Art Nouveau stone panel has been covered over, but remains intact. The rear wall of the house and the garden walls have been rendered.

Briarhill's chimneys are only partly lowered. Several original internal doors have been boarded with hardboard and some fireplaces have been removed. Interior pine woodwork, originally transparent-varnished, has been painted or stained in darker colours. In the morning/withdrawing room the chimney breast of the semi-inglenook fireplace has been removed, and as with Hillcrest, the recess on the back wall of the dining room is now knocked through to the kitchen. The original plaster at Briarhill appears to have survived beneath subsequent wallpaper, and it is believed that a similar painted colour scheme to that of Hillcrest survives much more intact here.

Edgar Wood (1860-1935) was born and educated in Middleton, Lancashire. After qualifying as an architect in 1885, he established a practice in Middleton and then subsequently at Oldham and Manchester. Pevsner described him as the most progressive of all Edwardian architects whose designs were at the cutting edge of European contemporary architecture, and he gained a considerable national and international reputation, notably in Germany. A highly individualistic architect, he is internationally recognised as a pioneer of Modernism, his style developing through the idiosyncratic application of vernacular features, Arts and Crafts design, and an Art Nouveau style largely independent of continental influence. He is noted for his use of broad surfaces making use of colour, texture and massing rather than applied ornament for visual interest, but this is the only known example of his work where this is achieved in bright red brick. His designs, with individualistic and efficient internal plans influencing the overall form of the building, were unconventional at the time. During his career, Wood designed many highly-regarded buildings; more than 45 are currently listed, seven at Grade II* and three at Grade I.

Details

A pair of semi-detached houses of 1892, by Edgar Wood.

MATERIALS: Ruabon brick and terracotta, red brick, stone, Welsh and Westmorland slate.

PLAN: a rectilinear range aligned roughly north-south, with central cross-wing.

EXTERIOR: standing to the west of Rochdale Road and immediately to the north of the pair 'Redcroft and Fencegate' (Nos. 33 and 35 Rochdale Road) and a short distance to the south of 'The Studio' and Nos. 51 and 53 Rochdale Road, all by the same architect and all listed.

The front faces east to the road and comprises a central three-storey cross-wing, with a block of two storeys plus an attic to each side. The walling is in orange Ruabon brick and terracotta (some painted), the roofing in five different colours of Welsh and Westmorland slate, laid randomly and with blue clay crested ridging including occasional decorative finials. Unless otherwise stated, windows are modern casements (in PVC at Hillcrest and timber at Briarhill).

The central block is gabled with a ball finial and kneelers, and has canted corners where it projects above the roofs to either side. Above this can be seen the front face of a chimney stack of Ruabon brick with a cornice and string course. The upper storey has a window in each canted face, each with two windows adjacent on the front face, with a terracotta sill-band. The first and ground floor each have two triple windows, each window having a single terracotta sill. The lintels are all slightly-projecting, splayed brick very shallow segmental arches, except for the front windows of the top floor which have flush, flat brick lintels. The central lintels of each window of the lower two floors have projecting brick 'keystones'.

The central gable has three bands of square terracotta blocks, the lowest of which is aligned with a blind oculus with projecting keystones at the compass points. Below the oculus, a further band runs out on either side to form the top course of a parapet, which has the same terracotta coping as the gable. Below this solid course, the parapet comprises three bands of alternating square blocks and brick panels of equal size, each band slightly offset from the one below; in the central area they are offset to the right, but on the canted corners and the side returns, offset to the left of the band below. A string course matching the coping forms the base of the parapet. Each storey has two bands of square blocks running across the windows; the brickwork is all in stretcher bond.

Each side block comprises an entrance bay with a first-floor window, and a gabled bay with a two-storey bow front with a parapet partly concealing an attic window in the gable. The entrance bays are slightly recessed and have the same detailing as the central block. The bow fronts however are in header bond, and divided into three by slender brick pilasters between the windows and at the outer edges, where they are angled. The pilasters are enlivened by sloping terracotta blocks, flush at the top and projecting at the base, which are placed just below the lintels of each storey. The parapet is coped, with capitals to each pilaster. All the lintels are flush brick with projecting terracotta keystones, and terracotta sills match the coping. The attics have Diocletian windows (original at Briarhill, with a six-light central casement). A low projecting plinth runs across the frontage. Pattress plates of three different designs are distributed symmetrically across the façade, those over the central ground-floor bow windows with characteristic Art Nouveau lines. Briarhill retains original cast-iron rainwater goods with hopper heads and some fixing plates in flowing Art Nouveau style.

The left entrance surround is concealed by white-painted render and has a projecting concrete doorcase. The right entrance (to Briarhill) retains its original Art Nouveau character, although the surround is faced in later tiles.

An exaggerated keystone is carved with lilies. Beneath this is an overlight of five lights, with a basket-arch head and flowing transom which is gently-arched in the centre. The overlight is leaded, and retains coloured tulips from the original glazing scheme. The door is part-glazed, with a three-light oval window in the upper section, three lights below this with concave heads following the curve of the window above, a transom with decorative letterbox retaining briar decoration, and three rectangular lights at the foot. Three-light sidelights reach down to transom level, where the surround steps in.

A short return at the left is in the same stretcher-bond Ruabon brickwork, changing to dark red common brick at the full height chimney breast, now slated over. Adjacent to the left of the chimney breast is an attic window. Slightly to the left of the ridge is the stair window, in a double-height opening with Ruabon brick round-arched lintel and projecting blocks in the manner of a Gibbs surround, and two lights divided by a central panel of hung slates. Below this at ground floor is an inserted window (over-boarded at the time of inspection) with a blocked basement window below, and to the left a side door inserted across a blocked former window, with concrete steps. The truncated rear chimney stack projects just inside the verge, at the left; its front (east) face has a recessed central channel, the remnant of what was originally a single tall blind arch. Four pattress plates of the same design are distributed evenly around the stair window, with one between the ground and first floor in the Ruabon section at the right, and another at the same height at the extreme left. Rising from the ridge of the central block are the south faces of two other eight-flue stacks; the right-hand (front) one of Ruabon brick and blind-arcaded with a cornice and a string course forming the imposts for the arches, and six crown pots; the left-hand one of common brick with a string course and cornice and six crown pots.

Returning at the left again, the rear is a simplified version of the front façade. At the left the common brickwork is visible, to the right it is concealed by white-painted render. The whole wall is flush, with no canted corners to the second floor, and sloping dormers to the attic. Each house has its own small oculus window in the gable, which has projecting purlins supporting overhanging verges; the oculi each have keystones at N, E and W compass points only. A very small square chimney stack projects from the left-hand eaves of the gable, and is truncated. At the left and right verges are the truncated rear chimney stacks, each with a recessed central channel which originally had an arched head. The west face of the rear stack of the central block is the same as its south face, with string course and cornice.

Within this rear face, Briarhill is divided into four bays, with a window at ground and first floor in bays (from the left) 1 and 2, a window at first floor and an entrance with side light in bay 3, and in bay 4, two windows at each of the three floors. Sills are plain stone, all with white paint*, and the lintels are all segmental arches of Ruabon headers. The entrance has an overlight of four lights and a four-panelled door with an upper vision-light of five fanned panes. Cast-iron rainwater goods remain in place. Cellar windows are found in bays 1 and 2, with small areas and both retaining original casement windows. The rear of Hillcrest originally mirrored that of Briarhill but

the ground-floor window in (from the right) bay 2 is blocked, the former entrance in bay 3 has been converted to a window, and in bay 4 one window has been lowered and the other converted to a doorway. There is also a cellar entrance in bay 1, accessed by steps from the south, and a window with an area in front of it in bay 2.

Returning to the left, the north wall of Briarhill is stylistically similar to the south wall of Hillcrest, but with some significant differences. At the left, the chimney breast is much wider and in Ruabon brick. A narrower stack rises from eaves level, also in Ruabon brick, and continues above the verge, although it is truncated above this. The chimney breast has a parapet with terracotta copings at eaves level, which steps up adjacent to the stack. A central pilaster is also coped at eaves level, giving these steps the appearance of merlons in a crenellated parapet. An attic window mirrors that of Hillcrest, with a stone lintel and terracotta sill. Adjacent to the chimney breast, the stair window is also double-height, but the projecting blocks of the surround are of white-painted stone and continue around the arched head, with moulded imposts. The upper window is an original, horned vertical sliding sash with four panes in the upper light and a single-pane lower light, and has a moulded stone sill. Between this and the first-floor window (a replacement casement) is a panel of fish-scale slates, now painted red. The lower window has a plain stone sill. Beneath this the brickwork above the side-entrance surround is rendered and painted. The entrance has a similar surround to the stair window, with moulded imposts to the basket arch with keystone. Like the front entrance, the surround steps in at sill-level of the sidelight, with imposts at this level. The fascia over the door has carved scrolls meeting in the centre. The door has two vertically-boarded horizontal panels and an eight-light oval vision panel, and original knocker. To the right of the doorway is a slender window with arched head matching the blocked window on Hillcrest's south face, and plain stone sill. Pattress plates match those of Hillcrest's south wall.

INTERIOR: The interior to Hillcrest is largely devoid of historic features, but a small patch of decoratively-painted plaster survives, and a small area of Lincrusta wallpaper with a strapwork design incorporating fleurs-de-lys, together with some cornices (above later inserted ceiling frames), quarry-tile floors (some over-tiled), lath-and-plaster partitions and some window architraves. The original internal plan-form, mirroring that of Briarhill, is however largely intact.

Briarhill's interior is relatively little-altered and retains several key elements of its original Art Nouveau decoration. As in Hillcrest the innovative and highly efficient plan-form remains largely intact, in which the entrance hall continues through to a rear access, crossing the foot of the stair that runs across the house. A side entrance under the stairs connects with the hall, and accesses service rooms arranged along the rear wall. Beyond the stair, the entrance hall forms a lobby which connects a secondary kitchen door to the rear entrance. The entrance hall in particular forms a set-piece in which Elizabethan and Jacobean influences are combined to create an Art Nouveau overall aesthetic. The arched ceiling matches the profile of the fanlight and is thickly decorated with plasterwork flowering plants, while the doorways have lintels with pointed upward-curving

heads. The cellar door is original, with three horizontal panels, the bottom one having the same upward-curving point as the door head. The morning/drawing room retains the projecting ceiling to its ingle nook, which is individually decorated with slender pilasters with capitals. The bow window, which gives maximum direct sunlight in the morning, has a double arch which springs from imposts which also have upward-curving chevron-type mouldings. The stair is original and overtly vernacular in character, with a heavy newel with a delicate turned centre and a turned cylindrical finial. The moulded handrail is supported by plain posts with a mid-rail, and unmoulded chunky scrolls run beneath the handrail to the posts. Pendants and embedded half-finials match the newel. Modern kitchen fittings have been inserted in the former rear lobby. The original kitchen retains its original cast-iron cooking range faced with rich ceramic tiles.

Elsewhere including the upper floors the interior retains many features of interest including the majority of the good-quality internal timber door and window surrounds, skirtings and ceilings, covings and mouldings, original doors (some with later over-boarding), and at least two original fireplaces. Archaeological survey indicates that the original plaster remains, and given the high likelihood that this house had a similar painted colour scheme to that of Hillcrest, this is likely to survive much more intact beneath the subsequent wallpaper. The cellar also retains some original flooring, fire surrounds and windows.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: the original boundary walls survive on the south and east and between the front gardens, along with the gate piers at Hillcrest. The eastern boundary wall has a stone plinth and bands separated by brickwork, and moulded terracotta coping. It is deeply scalloped, with non-original iron railings* in the concavities. The gate piers to Hillcrest have stone caps carved with lilies matching the entrance keystone, and terracotta finials. The gates* are modern replacements.

The original ancillary buildings in the rear gardens have been heavily altered. Modern gates and shutters* have been installed in the western boundary on modern piers*.

*Pursuant to s1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') it is declared that the aforementioned items are not of special architectural or historic interest.

Sources

Websites

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: 'Wood, Edgar', accessed 12/06/17 from

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61675> (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/61675>)

Other

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

The listed buildings are shown coloured blue on the attached map. Pursuant to s.1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'), structures attached to or within the curtilage of the listed buildings (save those coloured blue on the map) are not to be treated as part of the listed buildings for the purposes of the Act.



Map

This map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale.
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