

# DEVELOPMENT AT CRIMBLE HALL

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

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## METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDAKLE

### HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

JULY 2026

GARRY MILLER *HERITAGE CONSULTANCY*

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*Providing heritage planning advice since 2002*

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## GARRY MILLER HERITAGE CONSULTANCY

Garry Miller is a heritage consultant, architectural historian and published author who has spent more than 40 years studying and working with buildings of town and countryside, in particular those of North West England. His career as a consultant began in the mid-1980s with the Preston-based Nigel Morgan Historic Building Consultancy, of which he became a partner in 1992 upon its rebranding as Datestone. In 1997 he was commissioned by the Heritage Trust for the North West, a buildings preservation trust based at Barrowford, Lancashire, to produce an in-depth regional study of vernacular houses in southwest Lancashire: the result, *Historic Houses in Lancashire: The Douglas Valley, 1300-1770* was published in 2002. The book was described as ‘scholarship as its best’ by *Country Life* (June 2003), and ‘well analysed and presented’ in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* (Vol 48, 2004); and was widely cited in the 2006 Buildings of England volume on Liverpool and Southwest Lancashire. Extensive research on the houses of Georgian and Regency Liverpool has also been undertaken, with a view to future publication. Following the success of his Douglas Valley book, Garry Miller established his own consultancy, producing analytical and interpretive reports on historic buildings, in particular the heritage assessments required to support planning applications affecting the historic environment. His area of operation encompasses the North West, Midlands, North Wales and parts of Cumbria and North and West Yorkshire.

### THIS REPORT

**Date of issue:** July 2026

**Text:** Garry Miller

**Photographic survey:** Peter Miller

## 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This statement relates to the former Crimble Hall restaurant, Crimble Lane, Bamford, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is a much-altered gentry house of around 1814 and later, and is considered a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

Following its closure as a restaurant, permission for its conversion along with a new build of five detached dwellings in its grounds was granted in 2024 (21/00092/FUL).

A Section 73 application has been submitted for variation of the conditions relating to this permission. This report relates to condition seven, which requires a record of the building along with archaeological work.

Paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that conditions should be kept to a minimum, only imposed where necessary, relevant to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. This report contends that owing to extensive alteration of the building, the existence of a detailed 2022 Heritage Statement and successive phases of late 20<sup>th</sup> century ground disturbance on the site which would have affected its archaeeological potential, the condition does not satisfy this criteria.

It is therefore concluded that to proceed with condition seven would be unnecessary, disproportionate and unreasonable as it would burden the applicant with the considerable expense of what now appears to be a largely academic exercise that would add very little to our understanding of what is, after all, a non-listed building of low significance. In making the balanced judgement required under national planning policy relating to non-designated heritage assets, it is requested that this condition be removed, as in doing so the significance of the building would not be adversely affected.

## 2: THE SITE

The proposal relates to Crimble Hall, Crimble Lane, Bamford, in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester. The property is a much-altered gentry house of around 1814 and later, latterly used as a restaurant before its closure in 2019. Permission for its conversion along with a new build of five detached dwellings in its grounds, was granted by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council in 2024.



*Location of the application site*

### 3: THE PROPOSAL/SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

#### *Designation*

Crimble Hall is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale MBC.

#### *Existing consent*

Planning permission (reference 21/00092/FUL) was granted in July 2024 for *Partial demolition of former restaurant and bar and conversion and change of use to residential dwelling (C3), and the erection of 5 dwellings (C3), along with access, service routes, hard and soft landscaping and associated works.*

#### *Current proposal*

A Section 73 application has been submitted for variation of the conditions relating to the 2024 permission. This report relates to condition seven, which requires a record of the building along with archaeological work. It makes the case that:

- Sufficient understanding of the building has been presented already, and that no further recording work is necessary
- Archaeological potential has been reduced by successive phases of late 20<sup>th</sup> century ground disturbance.

#### *Scope and purpose of this report*

Paragraph 207 of Chapter 16 (*Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) the National Planning Policy Framework (as revised, December 2024), states local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance (heritage interest and value to present and future generations) of the heritage assets affected.

The scope and purpose of this report is therefore to identify the significance of the application property and assess whether the proposed variation of condition will affect it.

**It is considered the level of detail is proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset, in accordance with paragraph 207, and no more than is sufficient to understand the proposal's impact.**

This report is to be read in conjunction with other documentation supporting the current application.

### *Report structure*

This is as follows:

1. A concise, proportionate description of the application property and summary of its heritage significance (Section 4)
2. A summary of the relevant planning policies by which the proposal will be assessed (Section 5)
3. Evaluation within this context of the effect of the proposed variation of the recording/archaeology condition (Section 6).

## 4: THE APPLICATION PROPERTY

### *Overview*

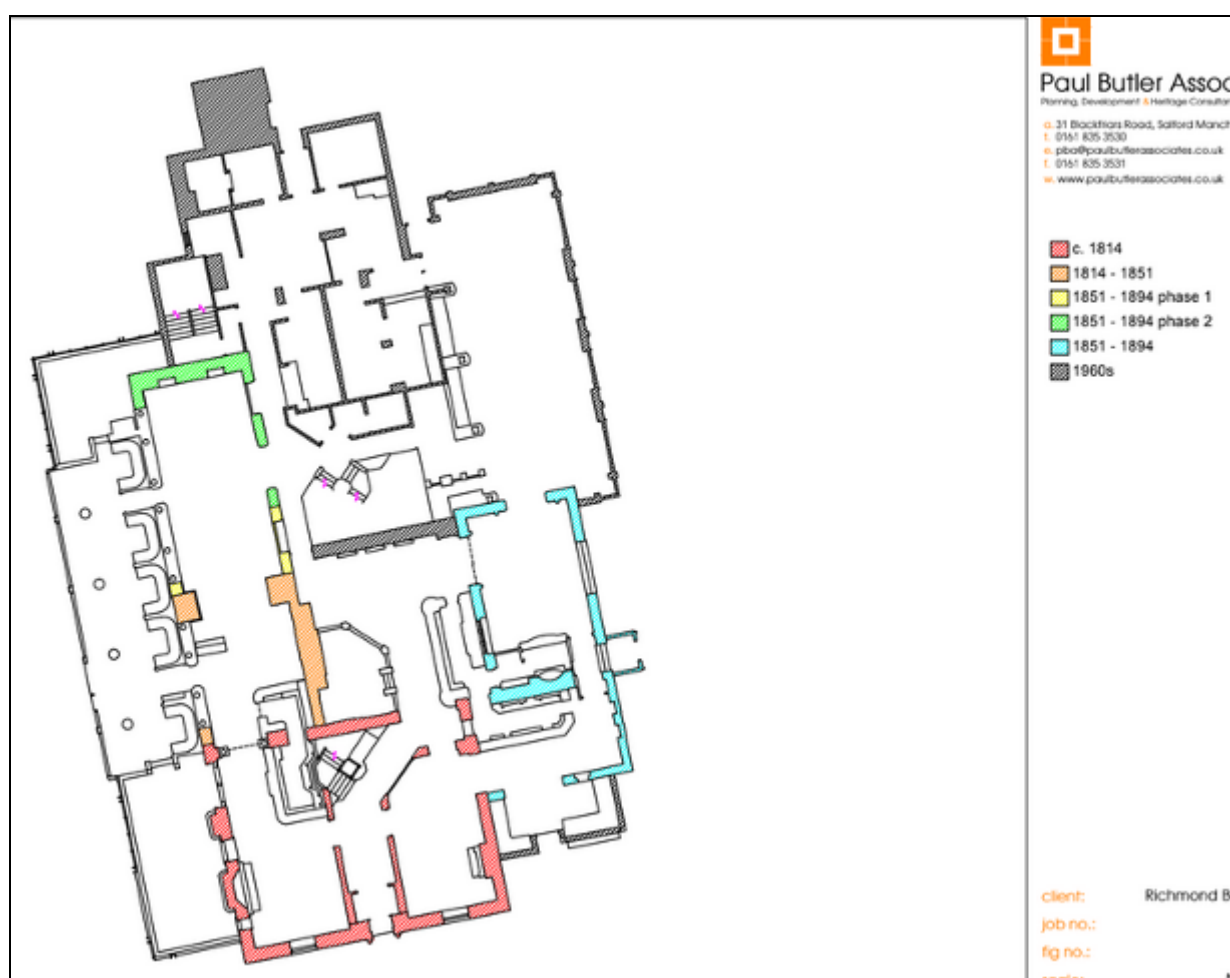
A thorough description of the application property was contained in the May 2022 Heritage Statement produced by Paul Butler Associates in support of the consented application 21/00092/FUL. Given the comprehensiveness of this document and that fact that it remains on record, a concise summary is therefore sufficient for the purposes of the present report.

The property was originally named Crimble Cottage and was part of the Crimble Hall estate owned by the Fenton family in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is thought to date from around 1814. The Cottage was ancillary to Crimble Hall, which lay to the southeast and was demolished in the mid-later 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Cottage became a restaurant in the 1960s and adopted the name Crimble Hall.

The building itself comprises what was originally a modest, south-facing double-pile house of two storeys plus attic and basement. It was thereafter extended in at least four phases during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its change of use in the 1960s resulted in major alteration and extension from the 1960s to the late 1990s. Surviving architects' drawings (examples shown on following pages) record they involved not only substantial additions to the sides and rear but also a virtually-entire interior makeover in a pastiche country house style. The extent of these alterations is detailed in the 2022 Heritage Statement, including a phased plan which demonstrates how the original building became dwarfed by its later 20<sup>th</sup> century additions (reproduced on following page).



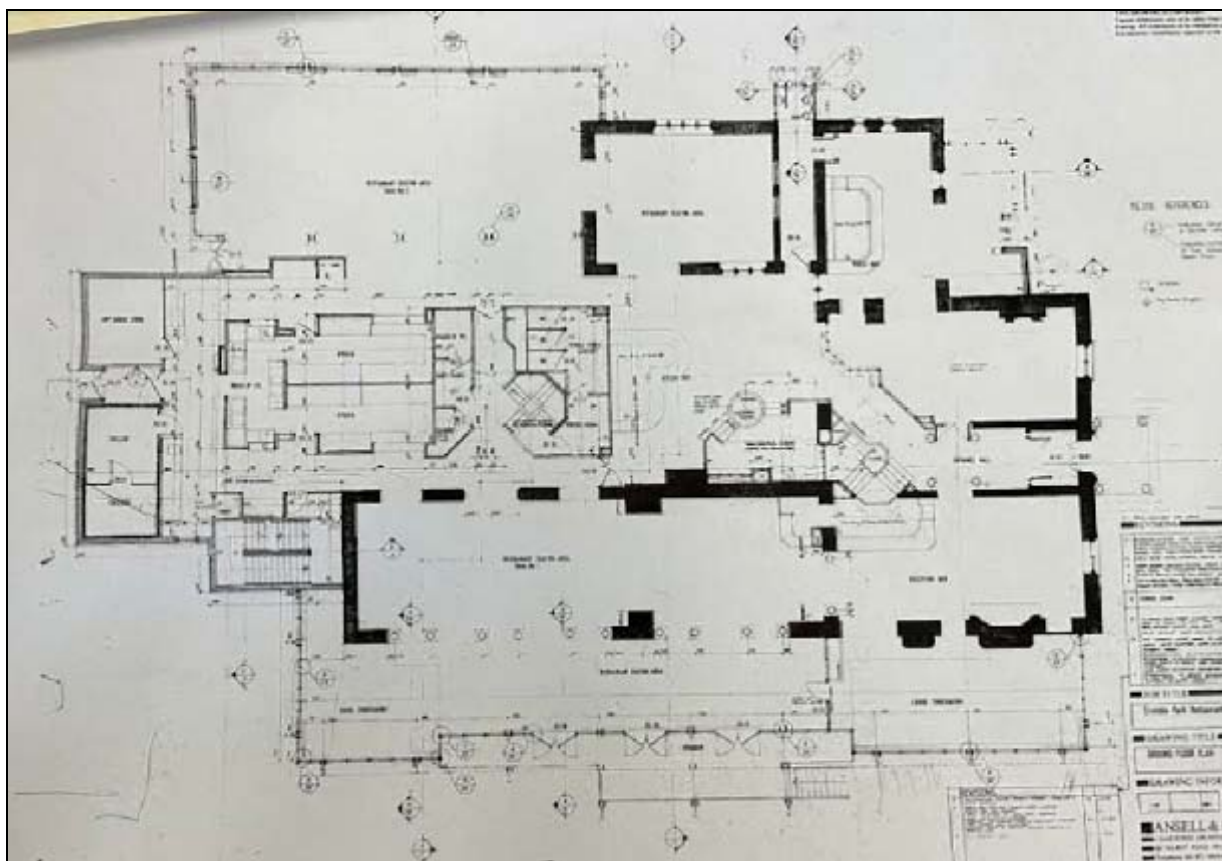
*Crimble Cottage (now the application property) and the now-vanished Crimble Hall, shown on the six-inch OS edition of 1844-1847*



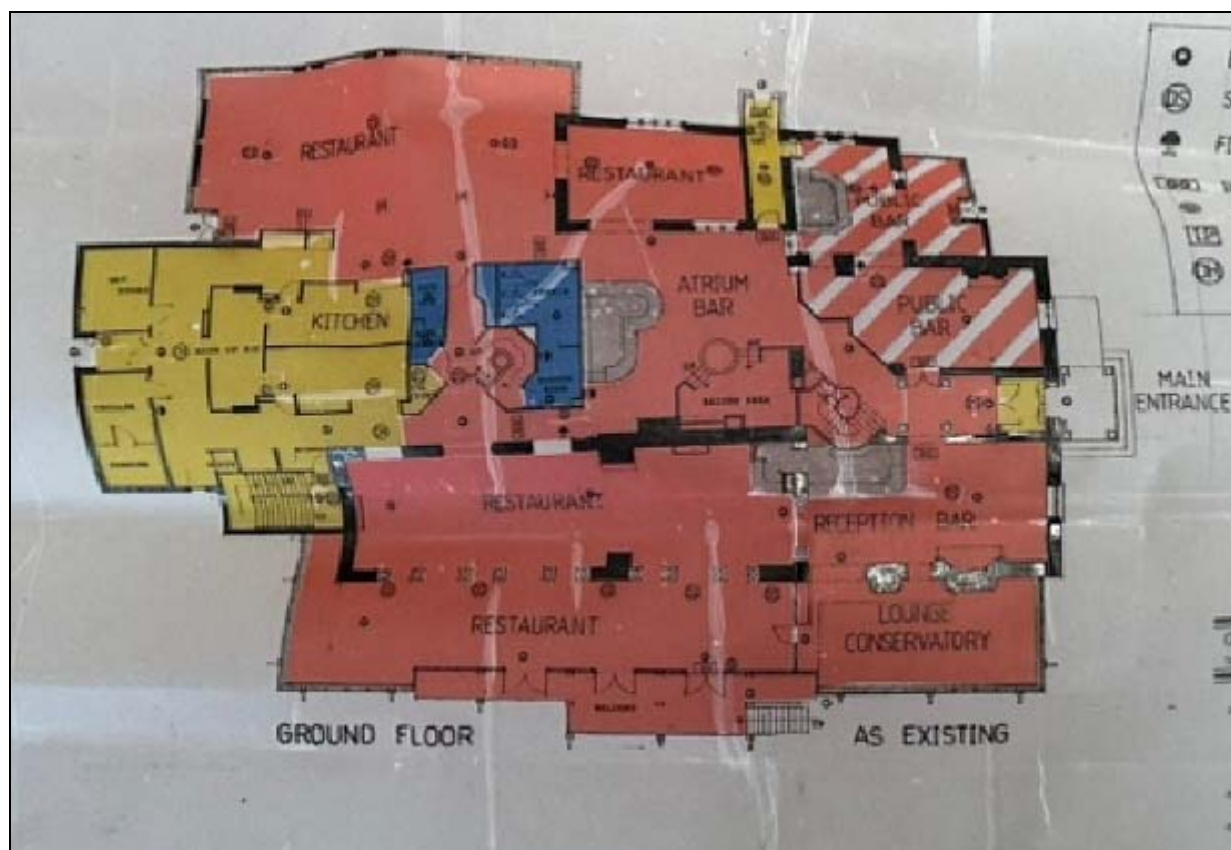
*Building phases as detailed in the May 2022 Paul Butler Associates Heritage Statement*



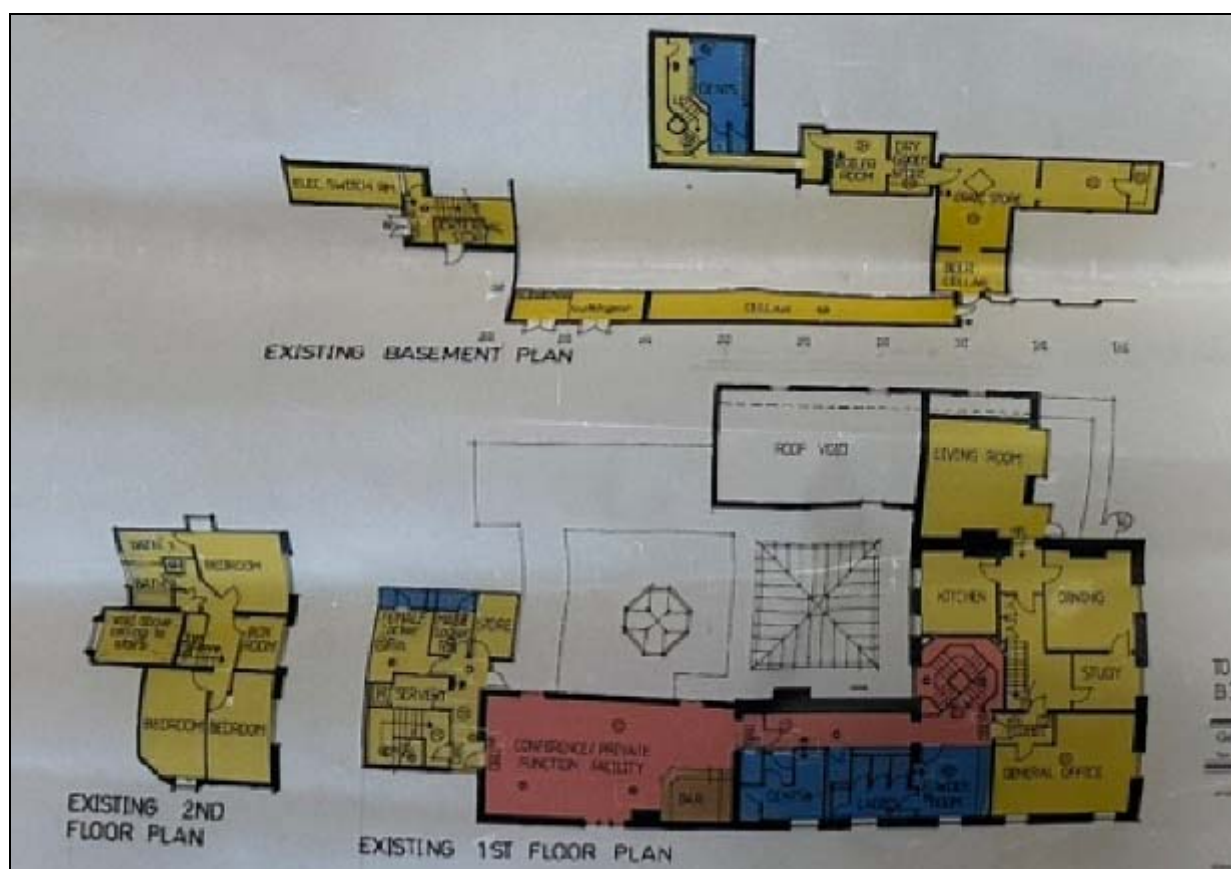
*Aerial image from 2022 Heritage Statement showing the extent of the later additions, with the original circa 1814 building indicated*



*1987 plan of ground floor*



*Ground floor as it appeared in 1996*



*First, second and basement plans from 1996*





*The building as it now appears*



*West elevation, where jettied-out conservatory has now been removed*

## *Significance of the building*

Paragraph 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2025) states local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, and take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

As a greatly-altered non-designated heritage asset, the significance of the application property resides in the local context only and in relative terms is low. The 2022 Heritage Statement concluded that the building was unlikely to qualify for national listing. This is certainly the case, given that the late 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations and extensions erased or subsumed the majority of the building's historic form and features.

As to the nature of the property's significance, the 2022 Heritage Statement also concluded that its heritage value derives '*... mainly from its historic significance, which has been rated as high. The evidential, aesthetic and communal significance have been rated as low – medium, the building having been extensively modernised and extended.*' It concluded that the majority of its built volume was of no historic significance.

There is no reason to disagree with this assessment. Expressed simply, it means that the interest of the building's fabric is secondary to its historical associations, i.e. its role on the former Crimble Hall estate, links with the Fenton family and other subsequent owners are the core reasons for its local importance. These historical associations will remain on record in perpetuity, and unaffected by any physical works to the building itself.

## 5: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework provides the guidance on how applications affecting the historic environment are to be determined. Paragraph 210 states that local planning authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*

In the case of non-designated heritage assets, paragraph 216 requires simply a balanced planning judgment that weighs any harm or loss against the significance of the application property.

The relevant local planning policy is JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022-2029, adopted March 21, 2024, which requires (*inter alia*) that the heritage significance of a site or area is considered in accordance with national policy in the planning and design process; and integrating the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings, with creative contextual architectural responses that contribute to their significance and sense of place.

## 6: EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL

### *Recording condition*

The heritage matter arising from the current application relates to condition 7 of the 21/00092/FUL consent, which required both a record of the building and archaeological work. The full wording of the condition reads:

*No demolition (excluding a 'soft strip') or development works shall take place until a Written Scheme of Investigation [WSI] has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.*

*The WSI shall cover the following:*

- *A phased programme and methodology to include:
  - a) a historic building survey (Historic England Level 2/3);
  - b) an archaeological evaluation through trial trenching;
  - c) pending results of the above, targeted open-area excavation and recording.*
- *A programme for post-investigation assessment to include:
  - a) analysis of the site investigation records and finds;
  - b) production of a final report on the significance of the heritage interest recorded.*
- *Deposition of the final report with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.*
- *Dissemination of the results of the site investigations commensurate with their significance.*
- *Provision for archive deposition of the report, finds and records of the site investigation.*
- *Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the approved WSI.*

*The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved WSI.*

*Reason: In accordance with NPPF policy 16, paragraph 205: to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.*

The condition appears to be based on a recommendation for a Level 2/3 building recording, along with archaeological work, that was contained in a December 2020 Archaeological Desk Based Assessment undertaken by Paul Butler Associates. It is noted that this report pre-dates their subsequent Heritage Statement (May 2022) which concluded the majority of the building was of no heritage significance.

The development has however gone ahead without the WSI or any recording/archaeological work having taken place. However, as discussed below, it is argued that the condition is unnecessary and should be removed, as sufficient understanding of the significance of the non-designated building has already been presented and that further work would not materially add to our understanding of the property given its wholesale alteration; and that extensive late 20<sup>th</sup> century ground disturbance has compromised the site's archaeological potential.

### *Building recording*

In the first instance, it is considered that the stipulated level of recording, at Level 2/3, is disproportionate given that this is a non-designated building whose significance is ultimately low and resides in its historical associations (which will always remain on record) rather than the interest and value of its fabric. As the 21/00092/FUL Heritage Statement made clear, the majority of the built volume was of no historic significance, and therefore it is difficult to see what could be gained by intensive further survey.

The phased drawing included in the Statement (reproduced on Page nine of the present report) clearly shows how late 20<sup>th</sup> century work had overwhelmed any remaining historic fabric. The architect's drawings also reproduced in the present report reaffirm this, indicating extensive alteration in the 1980s and 1990s in which a pastiche interior gentrification erased whatever historic features may have remained.

This has in fact been corroborated by the works that have taken place so far, in which all non-original fittings have been removed and the building stripped down to its bare walls (see images on following pages). An inspection undertaken for the purposes of the present report showed that the only historic features to be uncovered were roof trusses on the first floor of the rear wing (dated as 1851-1894 in the 21/00092/FUL Heritage Statement) and machine cut purlins over the circa 1814 main block, which may be replacements, along with later (machine-cut, laid on edge) ground floor joists. Original fireplaces on the ground floor have been retained in situ. The amount of historic fabric that has come to light is therefore minimal. In practical terms, little would therefore be gained by further recording of a non-designated structure whose fabric interest was devalued decades ago. The significance of the building has already been established, and the features now exposed make no material change to our understanding of it.

Consideration needs also to be given to the fact that a highly-detailed heritage statement was submitted for the consented application, one which went into considerable depth on the historical background of the site and also contained a descriptive and analytical assessment of the building. The approach of the report was very akin to that of a recording programme, and in overall terms its contents are, at the very least, similar to a Level 2 record. This report therefore constitutes a record to which very little could be added.

A practical approach therefore would be to consider that recording has already been achieved by virtue of this report, and that no further work is necessary.



*Entrance hall as it now appears, showing replacement for non-original staircase*



*Ground floor front left room, with existing fireplace protected*



*View into rear wing showing late 20<sup>th</sup> century steel beam and replacement joists*



*Ground floor front right room showing chimneybreast*



*Exposed probably replaced purlins on first floor of circa 1814 main block*



*Kingpost roof trusses in rear wing*



*Trusses in room at far end of rear wing*

### *Archaeological work*

As noted above, the December 2020 Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment by Paul Butler Associates recommended further archaeological work, concluding:

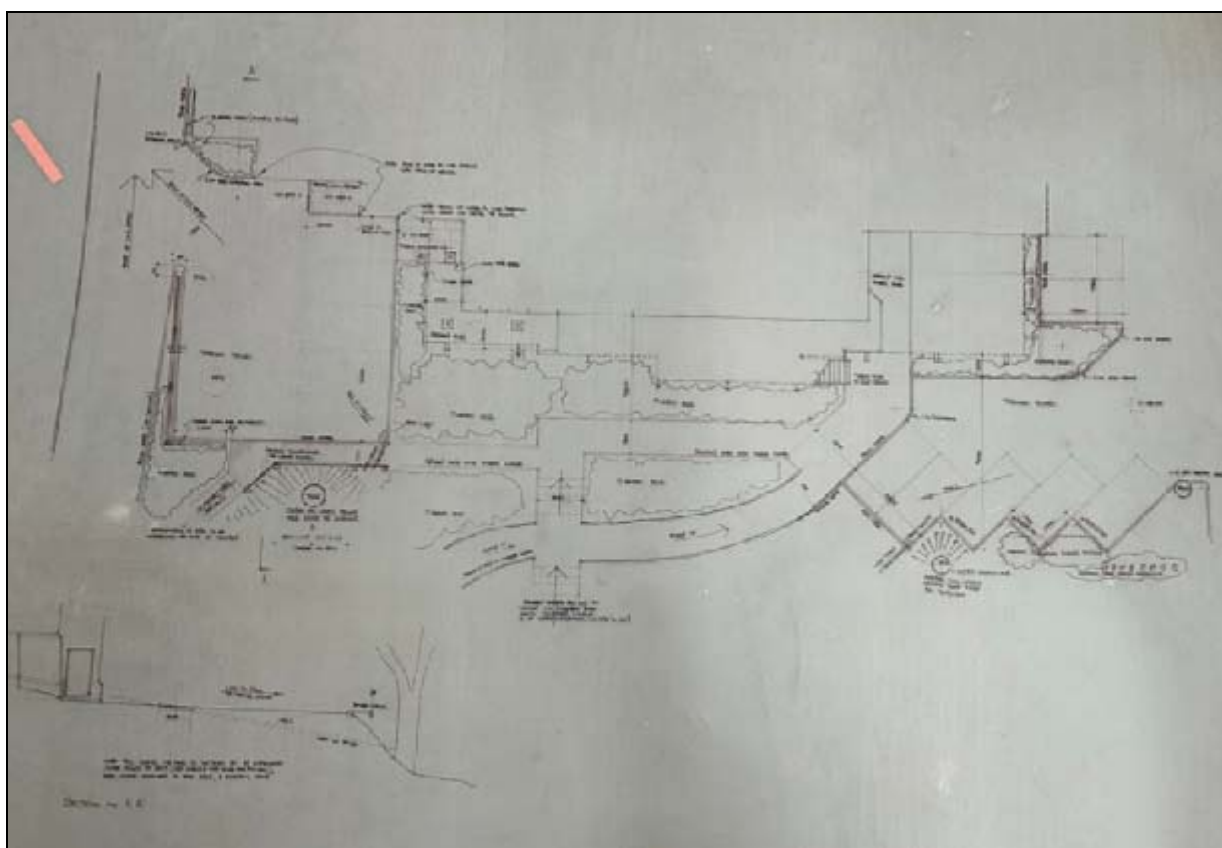
*7.1 There is a low – medium potential for artefacts from the Bronze Age to be found on the site. The surrounding area shows activity from the period such as the axe head and the possible Bronze Age barrow close to the site. There is also the high potential for 18th and early 19th century building foundations on the site. The present building is believed to replace an 18th century cottage, the foundations of which may still be present. Mapping and census returns also show that other houses were located to the east of the main house, which may also be present.*

*7.2 Mitigation recommendations are for trial trenching prior to works to ascertain the scope of any below ground archaeology. This should be focused to the east of the site in order to locate the earlier housing, as well as the south to ascertain whether remains of the earlier cottage remain. The ground to the northwest, close to the location of the possible barrow may have the best potential for revealing Bronze Age activity. A level 2/3 historic building survey is also recommended prior to development, to record the structure of the building and its development.*

As also noted, this report was produced some time before the 2022 Heritage Statement, which in turn fully revealed the extent of 20<sup>th</sup> century works that have taken place on the site. Having said that, the 2020 Archaeological Assessment did acknowledge that the building had been ‘... *substantially modernised internally, and many extension (sic) built around the original fabric. The ground sloped down to the west, and hand (sic) been flattened for a tennis court, now a car park, with car parking also to the east*’. These car parks were in place by the 1980s as confirmed by the architect’s drawing below. There is therefore a long history of ground disturbance in the vicinity of the building, beginning in the 1960s when substantial side and rear extensions were made and followed by further phases in the 1980s and 1990s. Each of these successive waves of development is likely to have disturbed any remains that may have existed and therefore reduced the archaeological potential of the site.

It is unclear whether, in imposing the archaeological condition, this disturbance was taken into consideration. If therefore the potential of the site was identified as low to medium without factoring it in, then surely its potential would be even lower given the level of building activity that has taken place over the past 50 years or so.

It is therefore considered that any potential must now be low and a pragmatic view would be that to continue with the any archaeological work would be disproportionate.



*Evidence of late 20<sup>th</sup> century alteration: 1987 drawing of proposed car park and landscaping works*

## Conclusion

The effect of the 2022 approval has been entirely beneficial in heritage terms. It has secured the future of the building after a long period of disuse and has better-revealed its legibility and significance by stripping away unsympathetic late 20<sup>th</sup> century extensions that had overwhelmed its historic core. The proposal has furthermore delivered the significant public benefits of new housing in a desirable location along with the economic gains resulting from the construction phase and subsequent occupation.

As regards conditions, paragraph 56 of the NPPF states that they should be kept to a minimum, only imposed where necessary, relevant to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects. Considering what has been demonstrated in this report, it is contended that condition seven does not fully satisfy this criteria in that:

- Further building recording is unnecessary given that the 2022 Heritage Statement made it clear that the fabric of the undesignated building was of low value
- The stripping out which has taken place has served to confirm this
- The 2022 Statement itself constitutes a detailed record, with more than 40 pages of historical background and description, a phased floor plan and more than 120 photographs
- At least three phases of development from the 1960s to the 1990s will have resulted in successive waves of ground disturbance which would have reduced the site's archaeological potential
- This potential was been identified in 2020 as low-medium, prior to submission of the Heritage Statement. If this disturbance was not factored in when stipulating the condition, then this potential would therefore be lower

On the basis of the above it is concluded that to proceed with condition seven would be unnecessary, disproportionate and unreasonable as it would burden the applicant with the considerable expense of what now appears to be a largely academic exercise that would add very little to our understanding of what is, after all, a non-listed building of low significance. In making the balanced judgement required under national planning policy relating to non-designated heritage assets, it is requested that this condition be removed, as in doing so the significance of the building would not be adversely affected.