
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

AINSWORTH CARE HOME

APRIL 2022



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Townscape have been instructed to compile this heritage statement to support a planning application for a residential development and to assess the heritage interest of the building known formerly as Ainsworth care home, a large early 20th century site containing a number of existing buildings which has now closed, and been sold for residential uses.
- 1.2 Townscape are Chartered Town Planning and Heritage Consultants who serve public, private and community sector clients. We specialise in all aspects of our historic environment, heritage, planning and wider urban design. Townscape is led by myself, Mr Jason Kennedy. I have over 25 years' experience of working in town planning and have gained a detailed knowledge of the subject. I am a Full and Chartered member of the Royal Town planning Institute (MRTPI) and a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

2. Location and historical context of site

- 2.1 The former Ainsworth Isolation hospital is located in the village of Ainsworth, Bury and situated about 400m to the north of the village in a large semi isolated site. The site is generally self-contained with a clear curtilage and boundary and consists of a number of existing buildings, some of which have been converted for residential uses. The buildings, although altered in their appearance, have a degree of originality which is, in part due to its purpose-built nature, which has continued up until recent times. However, much change has occurred with recent residential conversions and extensions.



Fig 1, The main admin bloc approx. 1950, source Bury Archives.

- 2.2 The former hospital building was founded in 1906 and operated as a smallpox isolation unit under the name of Ainsworth Isolation hospital, more recently a nursing home before its closure. The hospital was erected for the Bury and District Joint Hospital Board for the treatment of smallpox cases. The former main pavilion block consists of two wards, each capable of accommodating six beds and with a duty room in the middle from which the wards can be overlooked. There is an isolation ward and an administrative block, a discharge building, a laundry, disinfecting rooms, mortuary and security gatehouse. The buildings have been erected to the designs of Mr H. Lord¹ of Salford, by Messrs Thompson and Brierley of Bury. They are designed in a simple Renaissance style and built of stock bricks, with a sparing use of terracotta ornamentation. With the exception of the administrative block at two storeys, all the buildings are one storeyed.



Fig 2 OS Map extract 25in 1908

- 2.3 Ainsworth Hospital first appears on the OS map 25in of 1908 (fig 2) and its age is commensurate with its appearance and is located in an isolated area. The spatial layout of the former hospital is as noted above with main ward building and separate administrative block, discharge building, mortuary, laundry and disinfectant building. The existing buildings are laid out in a semi regular form with two principal rows of development with access roads. More recent development including the conversion of buildings to residential has included upwards, side and rear extensions. The site has a generous tree line to its boundaries.

¹ <https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/architects/henry-lord>



Fig 3 general view of buildings



Fig 4 above and fig 5 below general view of buildings





Fig 6 above general view of building, fig 7 below existing gatehouse



3. Significance assessment and criteria as a non-designated heritage asset.

- 3.1 Due to the properties age, scale and architectural expression, it may be suggested that the buildings be considered as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) and therefore holds a degree of significance. Understanding significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets and is embedded within current government policy in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework, 2019). A key objective in the NPPF is ‘the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.’
- 3.2 The NPPF advises that the more significant the heritage asset, the greater weight should be given its conservation. English Heritage issued Conservation Principles in 2008 to explain the importance of understanding what is significant before making changes to a historic building. English Heritage set out four main aspects of significance: evidential (or archaeological), historical, aesthetic and communal. Measuring significance is not an exact science; it relies on a combination of comparative analysis, an understanding of the building’s development and

architectural history and the setting. Assessments depend on using judgment in relation to the quality of the original design and fabric and the level of alteration. There are four main categories of significance that can be measured:

Exceptional – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* Listed buildings and World Heritage Sites. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.

High – a designated asset important at a national level, including Grade II listed buildings and locally designated conservation areas. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.

Medium – an undesignated asset important at local to regional level, including buildings on a Local List (non-statutory) or those that make a positive contribution to a conservation area (may also include less significant parts of listed buildings). Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.

Low – structure or feature of very limited heritage value and not defined as a heritage asset. Includes buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area and also later additions to listed buildings of much less value.

Negative – structure or feature that harms the value of heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

In accordance with the NPPF guidance, the former hospital is considered to be of *medium interest*.

- 3.3 Significance of the former Ainsworth Hospital** - If a building is considered to be a building recognised as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA), it ordinarily should be contained within a local list held by the Council which provides an assessment of the building in accordance with good practice.
- 3.4 For a building to be considered or determined suitable as a NDHA, it is good practice to evaluate the building against agreed criteria. A list of criteria has been produced by Historic England; Advice note 7 as updated Local Heritage Listing². The criteria include 10 categories which identify the special qualities of heritage assets. It is necessary for a building/structure to meet some of the criteria to be considered a non-designated heritage asset. I have provided commentary on the suitability of site in meeting the objectives of the criteria. The criteria and my response are listed in the tables below.

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/heag018-local-heritage-listing/>

Criterion		Description
1.	Age	The age of an asset may be an important criterion and the age range can be adjusted to take into account distinctive local characteristics.
2.	Rarity	Judged against local characteristics
3.	Aesthetic Value	Intrinsic design value relating to local styles, materials or distinctiveness and local characteristics
4.	Group Value	Groupings of assets with a clear visual, design or historic relationship
5.	Evidential value	The significance of a local heritage asset of any kind may be enhanced by a significant contemporary or historic written record
6.	Historic Association	The significance of a local heritage asset of any kind may be enhanced by a significant historical association of local or national note, including links to important local figures
7.	Archaeological Interest	Archaeological interest if the evidence base is sufficiently compelling and if a distinct area can be identified
8.	Designed Landscape	Relating to the interest attached to locally important designed landscape, parks and gardens
9.	Landmark Status	An asset with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially striking aesthetic value. May be singled out as a landmark within the local scene.
10.	Social & Communal Value	Relating to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence often residing in tangible aspects of heritage contributing to the collective memory of a place.

My response to the suitability of the former hospital site being considered as a NDHA in accordance to in-force planning policy is as follows:

Criterion		Description
1.	Age	The building dates from the early part of the 20 th century and its age provides limited significance and historical merit.
2.	Rarity	The building type is not rare, neither nationally nor locally. Small cottage hospitals of a similar age are widespread. Some are still used for their original

		purpose therefore are of more interest, whilst others have been converted to new uses.
3.	Aesthetic Value	The aesthetic value is principally as an example of its type. There is no distinguishing or distinct architectural language within the building and its decorative form is limited to early 20 th century design and is in general of poor quality. Its aesthetic value is limited. The buildings provide low architectural interest by way of simple architectural forms. Remnants of the site, including the gatehouse, are of interest.
4.	Group Value	There is group value to the buildings rather than individual buildings on site.
5.	Evidential value	There is no evidential value to the building. It was constructed and used for a sole purpose.
6.	Historic Association	There are no publicly accessible records or evidence to suggest that the site has any direct historical associations with any local or national figures of note or key events. The original construction of the former hospital does relate to a past medical event such as smallpox.
7.	Archaeological Interest	There is no known, published records or evidence to support any archaeological interest.
8.	Designed Landscape	Not applicable. The building is not located within any formal or otherwise recognised landscape or formal designed garden.
9.	Landmark Status	The site and buildings by virtue of its setting, location, appearance and scale has no status as a landmark building. The buildings are not locally recognised as an architecturally accomplished buildings.
10.	Social & Communal Value	The buildings are architecturally, historically and aesthetically limited and examples are widespread. The buildings are not designed in any local style unique to Bury, therefore any local identity or social and communal value is negligible. There is no collective memory of a place due to its closure.

3.6 Summary of significance:

Whilst the existing buildings on the site as a whole are considered non designated heritage assets, this amounts to a level of significance considered to have medium interest. It is clear, however that some individual buildings are of more interest than others, for instance, the former gatehouse.

- All principal elevations to existing buildings – low/medium significance in line with NPPF
- Later additions and extensions – low/poor significance
- Internal plan form with no fixtures or fittings of note – low significance.
- Setting, no landscape or formal gardens of any note, although generous tree covering and pastoral outlook to boundaries. The setting of the site is in its spatial layout which is formed through a regular ‘grid like’ arrangement of buildings – Low/medium significance.

- 3.7 Taking account of the building's consideration as a NDHA, I conclude that on heritage grounds, the buildings as a group have a low to medium significance and does meet the minimum criteria to be considered as a NDHA.
- 4. Understanding of proposed development assessment of proposed works and their impact on the NDHA**
- 4.1 This impact assessment relies on the understanding of the site identified as the former Hospital site. A brief understanding to its significance has been discussed in the heritage statement.
- 4.2 This impact assessment is a judgment on the proposal for construction of no 1 dwelling and retention and refurbishment of the gatehouse to guest accommodation. In assessing the impact of a proposal which entails the impact on a non-designated heritage asset, this assessment draws on a number of key guiding documents where applicable; such as English Heritage Conservation Principles, 2008 and Historic England Guidance, Historic Environment - good practice advice in planning - Note 3, The Setting of Heritage Assets, March 2015, where required. However, the scope of the works doesn't fall into the category of impact upon the setting of individual heritage assets. Whilst the buildings as a group are considered to be heritage assets, the degree of their setting is straightforward and a full setting analysis, in my opinion, is not required for the level of proposed development.
- 4.3 I have also considered the impact of the proposal upon the heritage asset by relating directly to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Bury Council Planning Policies.
- 4.4 This report provides an appropriate level of assessment for this case. The NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposal 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. More weight is therefore given to assets of national importance such as listed buildings, than to local heritage; and more weight should be given to features and elements of high significance than those of lower importance. The proposed development doesn't directly impact the NDHA's themselves only their setting.
- 4.5 Additional development in a spatial form that respects the existing layout with a degree of uniformity and grid layout, respects the settings of the existing site and if additional buildings are set with generous separation distances, similar construction materials, new development can help to improve the setting of the existing site without causing harm to the basic significance of the site.
- 4.6 With respect to the level of harm in relation to this proposed development. I consider the buildings to be NDHA's and low/medium significance. The significance is modulated between building to building due to their degree of originality and alteration. The impact of the proposed development is generally upon the spatial layout of the site and given the new development is adding to the layout with a similar form of development and retaining and reusing the former gatehouse the overall level of harm of the works proposed are positive.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This report has provided a heritage assessment for the former Ainsworth care home. The significance of the building has been assessed and the resulting impact commented upon.
- 5.2 Government policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, requires that proposed changes to the historic environment are based on a clear understanding of the significance of any heritage asset and its setting, providing information so that the likely impact of proposals can be assessed.
- 5.3 The heritage assessment provided in this report is carried out in accordance with the historic environment policies in the NPPF and local planning policy and is intended to aid the assessment of any resulting planning application. I have briefly outlined the historical development of the building, its character and any significance. I have outlined the scope of the proposed works and commented on the likely impact upon the heritage asset and any mitigating factors.
- 5.4 The crucial test contained within the NPPF is whether there is any harm to a heritage asset that is outweighed by the public interest and benefits of a proposal. My conclusions have found that the proposed works will result in a positive impact in that new development, which is spatially correct and if constructed in similar materials to existing forms, will enhance the site in addition to retaining the existing gatehouse. It will put the building to a viable use without harming its modest aesthetic. I believe the proposals strike a balance between this gain and the very limited architectural and historic loss.
- 5.6 I conclude that the proposals, as set out, will not present any detrimental impact or harm upon the building in accordance with national planning policy.

Mr Jason A Kennedy MA, MRTPI, IHBC

Director

Townscape Chartered Town Planner & Heritage Consultant Ltd

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