
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT - AINSWORTH HALL FARM - NOVEMBER 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Townscape have been instructed to compile this heritage statement to provide a heritage planning opinion to assess the heritage interest of the associated detached outbuildings' known formerly as Ainsworth Hall Farm. A former hall which has been replaced with a modern development (not part of this assessment), and former workers cottages which have been partly rebuilt/replaced and the heritage interest of the former farm complex buildings'.
- 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 Site is accessed off Ainsworth Hall Road which leads off Bury Old Road, the main road extending through the village of Ainsworth to the north. The vehicular track known as Ainsworth Hall Road stops at Ainsworth Hall Farm and then turns into a bridleway with no access to vehicles. There are several public rights of way nearby to The Site.
- 2.2 The site historically, centered around the former Ainsworth Hall which originally dated from the mid 17th century but was subsequently replaced with a modern dwelling or at least comprehensively altered in the 2000's. The original farmhouse being devastated by fire.
- 2.3 In addition to the farmhouse, the site also comprises of formers workers cottages, which currently exists as a partial rebuild to the original of which a small amount of original fabric is incorporated in to the build. The replacement build is partially complete.
- 2.4 The farm complex, comprises of a number of agricultural related buildings' all of which appear to be a serious state of disrepair but I don't believe that they are beyond capable redevelopment. The farm buildings number 7 in total with the main threshing barn forming the principle building with associated structures including, cow shed/housings, cart sheds, stores and open sided animal housing. The farm buildings are set out in plan form in a broadly

square plan with central courtyard with access to both the main access to the farm and to fields beyond. All buildings are constructed in brick. Most of the buildings would appear to be structurally compromised.



Fig. 1, OS Map extract 6in 1850



Fig. 2 OS Map extract 25in 1894



Fig. 3 OS Map extract 25in 1911

2.5 Historic Map regression as the above images indicate, clearly show the old hall and the former cottages. Fig. 1 is the first edition OS map of 1850. Historical sources in particular Ainsworth Historical Society, make reference to Ainsworth Hall in existence on the first wide plan map of John Speed and indeed Hennett's Map of 1829, Ainsworth Hall is clearly noted. The 2nd OS map in addition to the hall and workers cottages also show extensive pleasure grounds. These consist of formal gardens to the immediate front of the hall, with likely tree lined walkways and a fishpond. Prior to the industrial revolution such formality was of fashion. Interesting to note that no farm buildings are shown.

2.6 Fig. 2 dated 1894, clearly shows the development of the wider farm buildings mirroring in part what is currently exists on site today. The formal laid out pleasure grounds have gone and is probably the mature woodland we see today.

3 Significance assessment

3.1 Due to the properties age, scale and architectural expression the building's 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, Ainsworth Hall Farm is considered to be of *low/medium interest*.

3.3 **Summary of significance:**

Taking account of the building's significance, I conclude that on heritage grounds, the buildings as a group have a low to medium significance.

Ainsworth Hall Farm

Whilst the existing buildings on the site as a whole are considered to have a degree of interest in their group value, 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 farm buildings.

Ainsworth Farmhouse

For the most part, Ainsworth farmhouse itself is a modern building. The original farmhouse has been replaced with the existing building we see today. The farmhouse is of stone, constructed in an traditional manner and modern in appearance. Whilst the farmhouse has interest, its historic and architectural interest is limited due to its modern appearance. The farmhouse is afforded low/medium interest in accordance with the nppf.

The building has a degree of significance in its historical position and siting to that of the former farmhouse. The building and its setting is considered to be its association as group value for the wider collection of buildings as a whole.

Farm buildings

The farm buildings are all principally brick construction and some later additions are open sided animal housing. The principal building to the site features a threshing barn, attached 2 storeys stable and loft above, cow/animals housing which run parallel to the threshing barn. Other buildings appear to have been cart sheds, more stables and areas for storage. In all the buildings there are no fixtures or features of interest and are merely brick shells. A few timber trusses exist and there is evidence of remedial repair works having been undertaken. All of the farm buildings are derelict and appear structurally compromised. However, whilst the buildings appear to be largely defective, there is a recognition that some of the buildings can be repaired and reused if viable to do so. Including the threshing barn, stable with hayloft and the long former cow houses/animal shed.

A modern late 20th century open sided cow house is attached to the barn and stable and is of no interest.

- 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 and pastoral outlook to boundaries. The setting of the site is in its spatial layout which is formed through a farmstead courtyard arrangement – Low/medium significance

The Former Workers Cottage

The building appears as a partially complete 2 storey property constructed in stone. The current building replaced an earlier cottage which apparently had fallen into disrepair resulting from a fire.

Whilst the existing building is modern, the construction is well executed in stone with a degree of detail to finishes such as quoins, drip moulds and stone mullions. The building reflects the overall character of the area and its construction makes a positive contribution to the overall farm site. In addition, the existing cottage appears to reflect the site, position and size of the former demolished cottage, although I believe the ridge is slightly higher than the previous structure.

Other structures

In addition to the above structures I have assessed, there is a single storey detached outbuilding set between the farmhouse and the farm buildings. The building is of stone in appearance

similar to the farmhouse and workers cottage with well executed stone detailing. The building itself has no historical or architectural importance and doesn't form part of the grouping for the site as a whole.

4. Understanding of proposed development assessment of proposed works

- 4.1 This assessment relies on the understanding of the site identified as Ainsworth Hall Farm. A brief understanding to its significance has been discussed in the heritage statement.
- 4.2 This impact assessment is a judgment on the significance of the cottage and the detached outbuilding and if any impact arises from their construction. In assessing the impact of a proposal, 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.
- 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.
- 4.5 The construction of the cottage as noted earlier, respects the existing historical layout of the farm and therefore respects the setting of the existing site and farmhouse. The construction of the cottage is a similar construction and materials use to the farmhouse itself and therefore, I do not see any reason why the cottage doesn't continue to maintain the setting of the existing site. The cottage as built, does not cause harm to the basic significance of the site as a whole.
- 4.6 With respect to the level of harm in relation to detached outbuilding development. The detached outbuilding has no significance and its presence is neutral/benign in its impact. Any impact is directly to the farm buildings and that of the farmhouse and upon the historical spatial plan form of the site. The detached outbuilding is constructed in stone with detailing similar to the farmhouse and cottage, therefore the outbuilding does provide a limited amount of homogeneity and therefore the level of harm is neutral/benign

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This report has provided a heritage assessment for the former Ainsworth Hall Farm. The significance of the buildings have been assessed and the resulting impact from the replacement cottage and new build detached outbuilding 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 site and buildings, their character and any significance.
- 5.4 The crucial test contained within the NPPF is whether there is any harm that is outweighed by the public interest and benefits of a proposal for development. My conclusions have found that the proposed works in particular the replacement cottage will result in a slight positive impact in that the development does not harm the character of the site nor that of the wider farmstead. The replacement cottage is spatially and historically correct in its siting and constructed in similar materials to existing forms that provides an enhancement to the site.
- 5.5 The detached outbuilding has been constructed in a similar manner to both the farmhouse and the cottage using high quality stone with a degree of detailing. Whilst the siting of the outbuilding is between the farmhouse and outbuildings and outside the historical plan form of the site. The outbuilding has an complementary interest and its impact is neutral/benign.

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