St. Filumena's Catholic Primary School, Caverswall, Staffordshire

Hall and Kitchen Extension

Heritage Statement

This heritage statement has been produced to accompany the planning application for an extension to St. Filumena's Catholic Primary School, increasing the size of the existing Hall and Kitchen. This application is submitted on behalf of St. Filumena's School and this assessment of the building and its setting has been undertaken using 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance' and 'The Setting of Heritage Assets', as produced by English Heritage. The assessment seeks to justify the proposal's impact on the historic building and on the wider context of the Caverswall Conservation Area, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Description of Heritage Value and Significance

The assessment of St. Filumena's and its wider context as the setting for the proposed works can be assessed on various levels using the criteria as outlined below and taken from English Heritage guidance as described in the introduction.

St. Filumena's School displays a small degree of **historical** value which is **Illustrative** in nature, though offers nothing in the way of **associative** historical value. The original school house building is barely perceptible, having been extended or modified on every one of its elevations. Although a recent entrance area extension seeks to continue the steeply pitched gabled roof form and fenestration proportions of the original building, the majority of the school has been developed around it in a modern flat roofed style with large expanses of glazing which take no architectural cues from the original openings. If the original building still existed unmodified then it may form a pleasant example of Victorian village schoolhouse architecture, but even then would certainly not be in anyway uncommon, remarkable or innovative, displaying few period features. Existing features remaining include a trio of lancet openings to the forward facing gable (the central one in a pointed gothic style, though now modified), corbelled blue brick projecting plinth and brickwork quoined window jambs. The impact of the building's setting is also relatively low in terms of illustrative value – the relationship between it and the Catholic church is illustrative of the practice of locating the schoolhouse in relative close proximity to the church of its respective denomination, however St. Filumena's protracted position down the long driveway makes this link less perceptible and tenuous

In terms of **evidentia**l value, St. Filumena's can offer some degree of value in terms of telling us about the Victorian sociological movement to formalise education practices in Britain, with the acceptance by government of responsibility for education of the masses, eventually resulting in the 1870 Education Act. During this period, school-houses were constructed in most villages, although the small size of these buildings is evidential of the fact not all the school-age population of the village would attend and that classes were mixed ages, village schools sometimes just consisting of one or two classrooms. The relationship of the school to its setting and particularly the proximity to the churches is also evidence of the practice during most of the 19th century of government granting funding to religious bodies to build schools, rather than building them directly itself.

There is very little **potential** for further evidential value to emerge, as the school has been heavily redeveloped since the original building was constructed, and much evidence has undoubtedly been lost.

St. Filumena's offers liitle **aesthetic** value as a heritage asset, largely due to its extensive modification and extension. As mentioned before, many of the building's period features have been lost and the character of the building has therefore changed significantly. Being surrounded by an altogether more modern collection of buildings means that the original asset has lost the aesthetic that many village schools throughout the UK still possess. The effect of the setting of the Caverswall conservation area on the asset is much diminished by the protracted private driveway leading to the school and the view from the public highway being heavily obscured by existing 3rd party owned buildings.

Impact of Proposals

Due to the position of the proposed extension, the heritage asset that is the original schoolhouse building will be relatively unaffected. The proposal is set back some distance from the principle entrance elevation of the school and in no way connects with any of the original historical fabric. It is felt appropriate that the new extension continues the architectural language of the vast majority of the school, so as not to imitate the original building and allow those viewing the school to easily differentiate between the existing and modern fabric of the school. As mentioned before, the value of the original historical fabric of the original schoolhouse is already so diminished by modern attachments and modifications, that there can be little argument to attempt to compliment or imitate this – there is a greater precedent set in the more modern style of the rest of the school.

As before, its impact on the wider setting that is the Caverswall conservation area is very limited due to its obscurity from public view. Even when approached along the school driveway, the proposed extension in no way seeks to compete or distract the eye away from the original pitched gable which presents itself to the visitor as the primary elevation, and leads to the main entrance of the school.