



MODE Architects Limited

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Two Sets of Doors from the Dining Room at
Woodhead Hall, Cheadle

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Job Reference: 21 012/HS/004/V03

Site Address:

Woodhead Hall, Cherry Lane, Cheadle ST10 4QS

Client:

Woodhead Hall Estates

Proposal:

Proposed Two Sets of Doors from the Dining Room at
Woodhead Hall, Cheadle

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1 DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSET

- 1.1 Woodhead Hall is built on the north-east quarter of an estate formerly known as Cheadle Grange, which had belonged to Croxden Abbey prior to the Dissolution of the Monasteries. It was partitioned between four owners in 1656, the present Grade 2* listed Hales Hall being built on another quarter of it in 1712. By 1693, the Woodhead Hall quarter was leased as two farms to Thomas Crompton and William Leigh.
- 1.2 The Leigh family was already living in Woodhead in 1650, when Gervase Leigh, Mercer of Cheadle, made his will. His house and farm at Woodhead were then known as 'Wall's tenement' and were leased from the Earl of Kent and Countess of Kent. After the death of Gervase, the lease was inherited by his son Edward and was still subsisting at the time Edward made his will in 1670.
- 1.3 The Leigh family built the early Georgian Woodhead Hall building, c1719-1720. The last owners of the building was William Allen (17-89 – 1871), who purchased the property in 1841 to retire there with his wife, Maria. After the Allen's death, their son William Shephard Allen decided to rebuild the house. It was demolished in the 1870's, so there is little information about the building. There is map evidence, which shows its site location.
- 1.4 The new building was built on a different site, just to the southern east of the old hall. The new house is said to have been designed by William Sugden & Son of Leek, however, there isn't strong evidence to confirm this.
- 1.5 Prior to the re-building of the Hall in 1873, the associated farm buildings were on the site of the present house. It appears that they were moved away as part of the rebuilding project and replaced by a new set of buildings at Woodhead Hall Farm, west of the site.
- 1.6 The house ceased to be a residence in the mid 1920's, when it began a short career as a school set up by the Misses Hunt. It presumably remained in the ownership of the Allen Family, as Mr. Allen sold the contents in 1937 upon the Hall being sold to the Air Ministry.
- 1.7 The Air Ministry purchased the Hall with 12 acres of land and set it up as RAF Cheadle under the command of William Green Swanborough. During the War, RAF Cheadle was the controlling station of the top-secrete "Y station" network, where code-breakers intercepted messages from German Luftwaffe bombers and the buildings on the site

were massively expanded. The property was transferred to GCHQ in 1964 and monitored Soviet communications during the Cold War. The station closed in 1995 and the Hall was sold back into civilian hands in 1997.

- 1.8 Evidence of the appearance of the Hall and grounds during its RAF/ GCHW occupation appears hard to come by, because of the secrecy that necessarily surrounded it. The Ordnance Survey 25" edition of 1957 denies its existence at all and shows the area as scrub, showing that even Ordnance Survey maps can be subjective records in exceptional circumstances.

- 1.9 Woodhead Hall became a Grade II listed building on 18/11/1994 and the list description is as follows:

Country house; used as Government Communications Establishment, CSOS Cheadle. Dated 1873, by William Sugden of Leek and built for William Allen, a Manchester merchant; late C20 extensions. Flemish bond red brick with stone dressings. Slate hipped roof with lead roll hips and ridge and moulded stone modillion cornice. Brick axial stacks with stone strings and caps. PLAN: Large double-depth plan house with central stairhall. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys and cellar. Symmetrical 2:2:2 bay south front, the centre with pediment breaks forward; pediment contains oval plaque inscribed WSA:1873:EPA. Ground floor 2-light sashes in slightly advance pilastered bays with colonnettes, moulded extrados and balustrades above. Steps up to similarly decorated central doorway with side lights and columns and large shaped stone brackets supporting balustraded balcony. First floor sashes with moulded stone eared architraves with cills on small brackets. All sashes without glazing bars. Stone weathering to plinth and four stringcourses continuing around the house. Rear north has wide pedimented centre bay with 3-light bay on the ground floor, canted above and flanked by narrow 2-storey square bays. The west side has three canted 2-storey bays. The elaborate twisted cast-iron drainpipes are C20 facsimiles of the originals. West and north elevations have C20 single-storey extensions. INTERIOR is largely intact and is richly decorated. Entrance vestibule has Ionic arcaded screen to large rectangular central stairhall with fine timber staircase with moulded balusters and string, panelled soffit and newels with ball finials; the balustrade continues around the landing which has an arcade at the east end with Jacobean style columns; moulded cornice, panelled coving and large rectangular lantern. The principal rooms have moulded plaster ceilings and pilastered window architraves with shutters, but most of the chimneypieces have been removed. Back staircase in east side of house has moulded balusters. NOTE: The house is said to be on the site of a house built in 1720, the cellar of which survives below the existing house.

- 1.10 As explained above, no part of the cellars can belong to the older house, because it stood on a different site. There were farm buildings where the present Hall stands, which are unlikely to have had cellars at all, let alone extensive ones.
- 1.11 Woodhead Hall is very solidly constructed of brick with stone dressings, all raised over a basement. There is a central staircase hall, top-lit, with reception rooms arranged around it, and a service wing on the east side, where the room heights are less, enabling a partial attic storey over them. A small detached outbuilding range has been demolished to make way for a new triple garage built about twenty years ago.
- 1.12 The entrance is to the south, where there is a carriage ring and a relatively short-range views. The west and north elevations are principal elevations too and it is only the east elevation that looks like a rear elevation.
- 1.13 There is some minor scarring where 20th century abutments from the RAAF/ GCHQ buildings met the main hall building, but the making-good was in general done very well and the historic disturbance to the elevations is barely noticeable.

2 ASSESSMENT OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE

- 2.1 The significance of a heritage asset can be artistic, architectural, archaeological or historic. The hall has both artistic and architectural importance and it also has regional significance as a work by a well-known local architect. The building also has high significance due to its Listed status.
- 2.2 There is also historical significance to the history of the site through its role in defending the country during the Second World War and through its former occupants the Allen family, who were notable and well-respected locally.
- 2.3 The house has survived well, both internally and externally, considering the period of institutional use, but the immediate setting is nearly all modern owing to its reclamation from the RAF/ GCHQ operations. A triple garage has been added on the site, where an outbuilding sat. The former coach house and stable building survives, though in a mutilated state, but the heart has been taken out of the immediate grounds by the total loss of the walled garden, which was older than the present house and related to the Old Hall.

- 2.4 The land surrounding the Hall serves as a buffer between the hall and the outside world, rather than the emphasise the architectural presence of the house specifically. Through historic plans, it seems as that there was a narrow gap in the trees to give a long view west from the house into the park, but the intervisibility between house and park appears always to have been limited.
- 2.5 After staying virtually, the same for well over a century, the parkland gradually deteriorated after the Hall ceased to be a private house. During the RAF/ GCHQ period, the shelter belts of trees gradually thinned and disappeared, ownership was divided, the lodge was demolished, and the former parkland became covered by a forest of masts, which are now all removed.
- 2.6 With loss of these features, there is no longer a sense of arrival at the site of the former lodge. Instead, the “arrival” point is now nearer the house, where the drive passes the pond on the right and makes an ascent to the modern gates and the trees surrounding the Hall on its hill.

3 THE DESIGN CONCEPT

- 3.1 For this Listed Building Consent application, the proposal is to only install two doors into two existing windows on the Rear Elevation in the dining room with steps down to the existing patio area.
- 3.2 The doors will be situated in the original window openings and therefore the size and proportionality of the existing openings won't change. The stonework detail will remain in place.
- 3.3 The new proposed steps from the floor level of the house down to the existing patio area will match the existing materials used on the external steps.

4 THE IMPACT

- 4.1 The Hall has a high level of historical and architectural significance and of course, the proposal would have an impact on the heritage asset as it would be making direct changes to the Western Elevation of a listed building. However, this impact would be minimal as the proportions and the size of the window would be the same as existing.

- 4.2 The two windows, which we propose to have the doors opening out onto the gardens have been chosen for symmetrical purposes. The symmetry in the North, South and West elevation is very strong and repetitive across the three elevations with the pilastered bays with colonnettes.
- 4.3 In certain areas, the Hall currently has modern installed windows, which contain double glazed units and therefore, shows the building has been adapted over its years. Therefore, the adaption from changing from a sliding sash to a door is minimal. In the area's chosen, internally you can see visible evidence of the skirting and architrave that have been spliced in in the past, which is provides further evidence that the harm in changing these windows to doors will not cause damage to important historic fabric.