

2438 | Folly Tower | Basford Hall | Basford | Staffordshire

Proposed Conversion to 'Annex' to Bath House



Conservation Design & Access Statement incorporating a 'Heritage Statement'

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1.0 HISTORY & STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

History and Background:

Folly Tower is a Grade II Listed Victorian folly built in 1841 on the Basford Hall estate which, along with the adjacent Bath House is thought to have been intended to form an impressive 'prospect' (an extensive view of landscape) that was never fully realised¹. It was listed in December 1986 and lies south-east of Basford Hall, near to the Fish Pond.



Fig.1 Folly Tower from the east, with Rock Cottage just visible in the background, 2015 (source: ctd architects)

The hamlet of Basford, which was one of the original nineteen townships which made up the medieval parish of Leek, and later one of the townships of the parish of Cheddleton created in the 16th-century, is situated approximately 3.5 miles south of Leek and 6 miles north of Cheadle, in the County of Staffordshire.

In the 1839 census Basford Hall was a property of 31 acres and 9 perches of land, owned by the Revd John Sneyd², who had taken the house over in a dilapidated state in 1824 then partially demolished and rebuilt and remodelled it between 1827 and 1830 under the direction of celebrated Staffordshire-born architect James Trubshaw Junior³.

¹ Historic England Statutory List Description

² Milner, p.125

³ Milner, p.135

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Fig.2 Basford Hall from the south towards the end of the 19th century (source: Milner, p.128)

The adjacent Bath House (*fig.3*) to the northeast (built 1841)⁴ once housed a heated swimming pool, water wheel and attendant service quarters and was used by guests of the Sneyd family⁵.

The adjacent Rock Cottage to the southwest of Folly Tower was built shortly before the 1839 census as part of the accommodation for Sneyd's employees⁶.

A pair of cottages formerly situated on the raised ground level between Folly Tower and the Bath House (*figs.4 & 5*) were demolished, along with a portion of the Bath House, it is believed sometime between 1937 and 1966 (as evidenced from historic maps) due to them being structurally unsound and redundant.

Today the estate is owned by the Scott-Moncrieff family (descendants of the Sneyd family) and, in addition to being their family home, it is also home to a number of families renting properties such as Bath House and Rock Cottage.

⁴ Milner, p.121

⁵ Historic England (Statutory List Description)

⁶ Milner, p.122

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Fig.3 The Bath House with Folly Tower beyond, looking west, 2015 (source: ctd architects)



Fig.4 (from left to right) Folly Tower; former cottages (now demolished) & the Bath House in the early 1900s (source: Milner, p.121)

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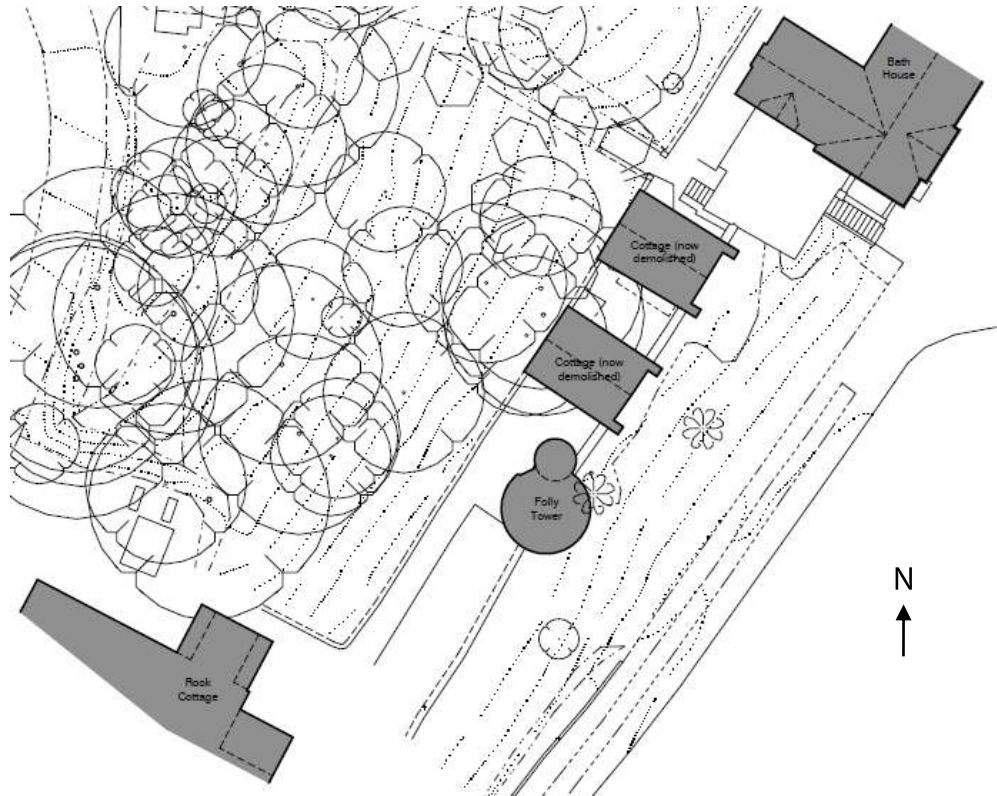


Fig.5 Indicative block plan, re-constructed from historic OS maps, showing the former cottages (source: ctd architects)

Historic Significance: Folly Tower forms part of the historic Basford Hall estate. Basford Hall is an architecturally important historic building, as reflected by its Grade II Listing. Folly Tower was built shortly after the Hall and was thought to be part of an ambition to form a 'prospect' view across the landscape that was never fully realised. The designation of Folly Tower as a Grade II Listed building reflects its '*significance*'⁷ in conservation terms.

The presence of Folly Tower contributes to the historic character of the Basford Hall estate where it has heritage value and '*significance*' through *historic association*, *aesthetic value* and *social/cultural value*⁸ locally.

Folly Tower: The building occupies a secluded and quiet part of the Basford Hall estate between the Bath House and Rock Cottage, near the Fish Pond. Today it is barely visible from the public highway but it is thought that at the time of its construction it was intended as part of the designed landscape setting of the estate. It is just visible from the Hall, but does not relate to an approach, nor affect its setting.

⁷ NPPF 2023, p.57

⁸ English Heritage Conservation Principles, 2008, p.27

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Fig.6 Folly Tower from the south, with Bath House in the background (source: ctd architects)

Folly Tower is a simple southeast facing building of rock-faced coursed local Hollington sandstone in the side of a steep bank, alongside the adjacent Rock Cottage and Bath House. It comprises two-storeys, each containing one room of circular plan and an attached three storey circular staircase tower, which links the two rooms with the roof. The two rooms are each lit by a single 2-light local sandstone-mullioned window whilst the tower contains three glazed 'balustrariae' staircase windows at varying heights. A simple 2-flue chimney serves the two rooms, terminating below the crenelated, corbelled, embattled upstand parapet wall and not visible from the ground.

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Fig.7 Existing roof and crenellated embattled parapet (source: ctd architects)

It appears that the tower has changed little since its original construction, but its uses over this time remains a mystery, although it is currently carpeted and served by mains electricity, which suggests it provided some form of accommodation in the recent past.

Summary:

The works proposed in this planning and Listed Building Consent application include conservation fabric repairs to the existing historic Folly Tower; the conversion - and planning 'change-of-use' - of the existing structure to become a one-bedroom, 'annex' to the adjacent Bath House; to provide additional accommodation to the existing dwelling and a suitable use to the existing vacant tower.

The tower was granted planning permission and Listed Building Consent in 2016 for an extension and the change of use into holiday let. This consent has now expired and the applicant would like to maintain the tower 'as existing' externally rather than the previously proposed extension.

The site is a *heritage asset*⁹ of national and local historic and architectural *significance*¹⁰. The proposed conservation repairs to the building will make a positive contribution to the historic Basford Hall estate, whilst the conversion to 'annex' accommodation will provide a sustainable use for Folly Tower improving the overall setting for other heritage assets situated on the estate.

⁹ NPPF 2023, p.52

¹⁰ NPPF 2023, p.57

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2.0 CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHY

Historic England define conservation as 'the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting, in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce these values for present and future generations'¹¹

'Conservation' in essence involves handing on to future generations what we value today. The process of conservation of a building must not stand in the way of change, but help to manage it in a positive and proactive way. The value, or 'significance' that we place on historic buildings distinguishes how important they are, and how they should be treated now and by future generations.¹²

Philosophy:

The general **conservation aim** of the proposed works to Folly Tower is to *preserve and enhance the historic fabric as much as possible, whilst facilitating and providing for its new use as 'annex' accommodation to Bath House as a means to find a sustainable re-use of the building.*

Contributing to this aim the **conservation principles** to be adopted are;

- to secure the preservation of architectural and historic building fabric;
- to maintain the historic and architectural integrity of the site and buildings;
- to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the historic fabric and its setting;
- to employ appropriate conservation techniques in the reinstatement (where appropriate), repair and maintenance of historic fabric and theory;
- to restore only the elements that can be evidenced by historic design and that can be authentically reproduced using traditional and appropriate quality materials and traditional craft skills;
- to 'complement not parody', ensuring 'new work expresses modern need in a modern language'¹³.

The conservation of a building is always best served by its original intended use and *it is desirable to sustain the significance of heritage assets by putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*¹⁴. The most appropriate use for Folly Tower is part of a Residence so that its up-keep can be properly maintained and its intended 'prospect' enjoyed.

¹¹ English Heritage Conservation Principles, 2008, p.71

¹² After Clarke, p.12

¹³ SPAB Principles

¹⁴ After NPPF, p.126

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Policies:

In line with Historic England's (formerly English Heritage) **conservation policies** and guidance the principal and specification and design of the proposed internal alterations have evolved from a policy of practical and 'informed conservation' - that is from an understanding and assessment of the history and importance of Folly Tower to establish its heritage values and '*significance*' as a '*heritage asset*' in conservation terms.

The impact of the proposed repairs and extension has in principal been considered so that it *preserves or enhances*, rather than detrimentally alters, the character and significance of the structure and its setting through;

- careful and considered design;
- where possible, the fitting of new work to existing/old finishes & details, so that destruction of original fabric is minimised;
- ensuring that the original layout of the buildings and site remains legible so that visitors and future generations can read and understand the property and the metamorphosis that has taken place;
- the use of appropriate and quality materials, techniques & workmanship

The proposed repairs and alterations illustrated in this application for Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent seek to follow these principles and policy guidance.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) have clear guidance on the specification of appropriate and traditional building materials and techniques for conservation repairs and promote widely accepted principles for the management of change in our built vernacular heritage.

The 'preservation' of the existing historic fabric does not equate to a presumption against any intervention whatsoever, but it is the impact of the intervention on the integrity of the existing historic character of the 'host' building that is fundamental.

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2.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS

Design Proposals:

The Full Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent Application comprises: conservation fabric repairs to the historic Folly Tower; the conversion - and 'change-of-use' - of the existing structure to become a one-bedroom annex to the adjacent Bath House, with bathroom and bedroom accommodation within the existing tower.

Folly Tower will contain a ground floor bathroom and first floor bedroom and its roof will become a terrace. An unobtrusive painted steel handrail will be fitted to the embattled parapet to comply with the Building Regulations.

Conservation fabric repairs to Folly Tower and the retaining walls will be carried out. The key repairs, including re-roofing, re-pointing and the installation of new windows are described below. A full schedule of repairs is included on the supporting drawings.

Generally Folly Tower is in a good state of repair, although the embattled parapets to the main tower and staircase tower are in need of re-pointing both sides and sections of the retaining wall needs re-pointing or possibly even taking down and re-building as indicated on the drawings.

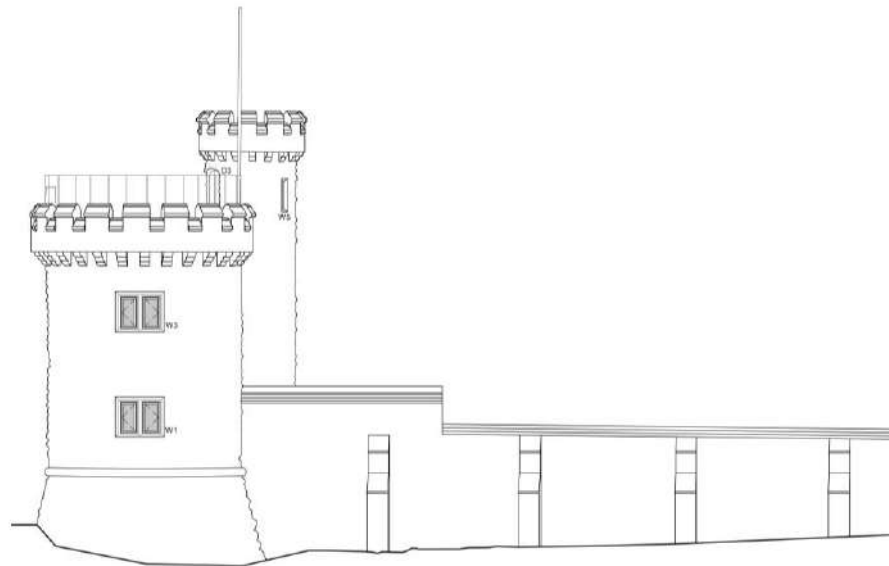


Fig.8 Proposed southeast elevation (source: ctd architects)

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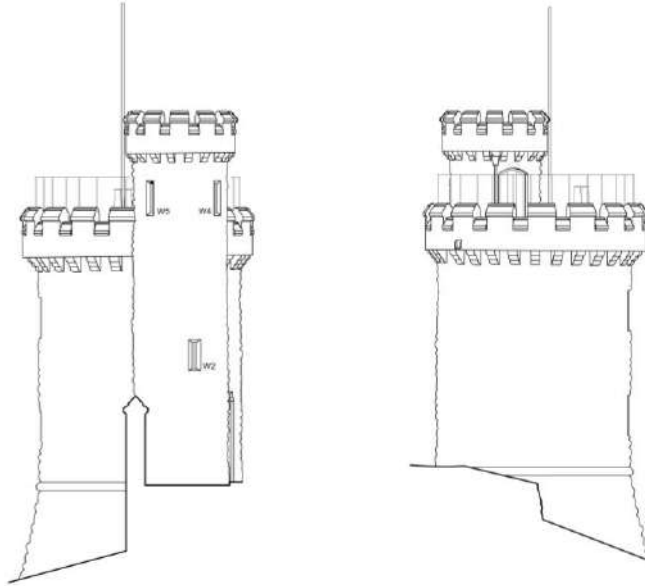


Fig.9 Proposed northeast and southwest elevations (source: ctd architects)

The existing modern timber windows to the southeast elevation are in a very poor state of repair and the casements are mostly rotten or missing so will be replaced by new slim double-glazed units in new traditional steel-section casements. The cracked glass to the staircase 'balustrariae' windows will be replaced with Slimline double glazing units.



Fig.10 (left) & Fig. 11 (right) Existing defective 'modern' timber windows to be replaced with new metal casements (left) and (right) location of proposed stone indent repair to the top of the stone spiral staircase central newel post (source: ctd architects)

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The defective modern built-up felt roof covering to the main tower will be replaced with a new single-ply membrane roof finish covered with Gritstone paving slabs to allow the space to be utilised as a roof terrace. The staircase tower roof will receive the same new single-ply membrane but not be paved.

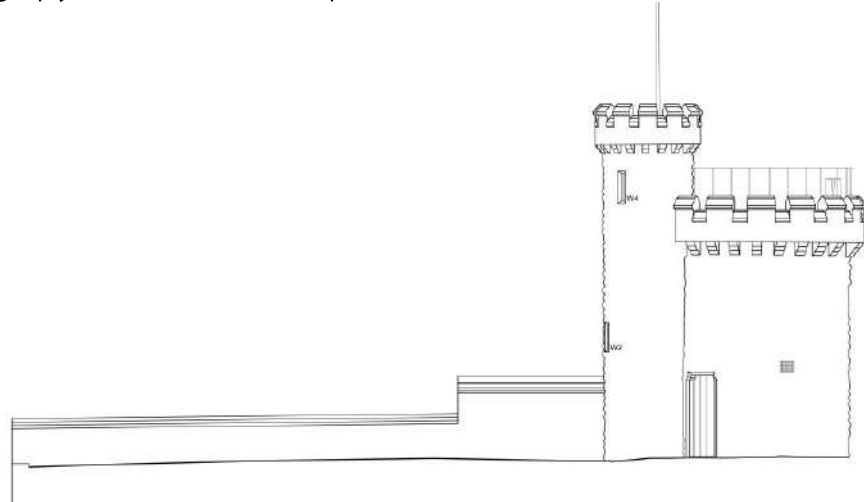


Fig.12 Proposed northwest elevation (source: ctd architects)

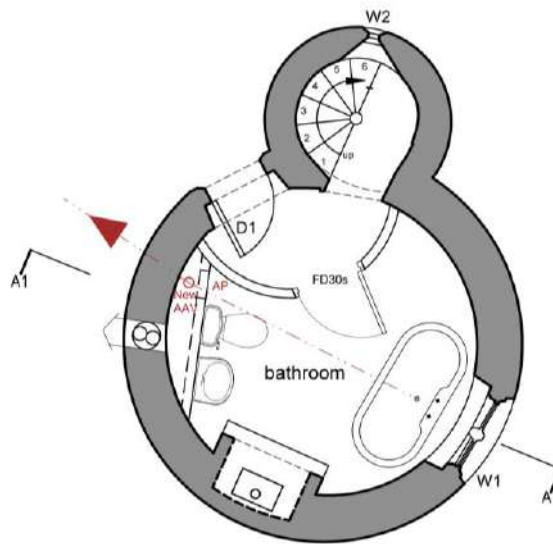


Fig.13 Proposed Ground Floor Plan (source: ctd architects)

The existing modern plywood first floor will be replaced with new timber floorboards (left exposed); the concrete ground floor screed will be dug-out and replaced with a breathable limecrete screed; and the ground and first floor ceilings will be underdrawn with new plasterboard. There is evidence that the internal walls were previously plastered in a traditional haired-lime mix.; this will be reinstated with a new two-coat haired lime plaster, patched around the small number of existing areas of plaster.

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The existing Folly Tower will be heated by two wood-burning stoves, one to each room/floor with a new flue-liner installed to the existing flue and new chimney pots to replace the existing coping stone at roof level.

Drainage from the ground floor bathroom accommodation will connect to an existing drainage run to the courtyard at Bath House.

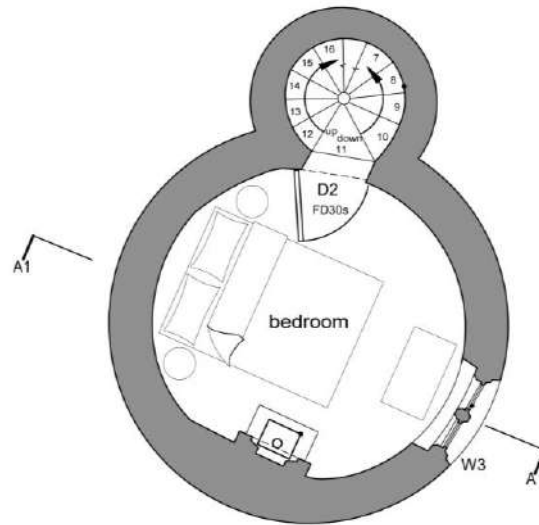


Fig.14 Proposed First Floor Plan (source: ctd architects)

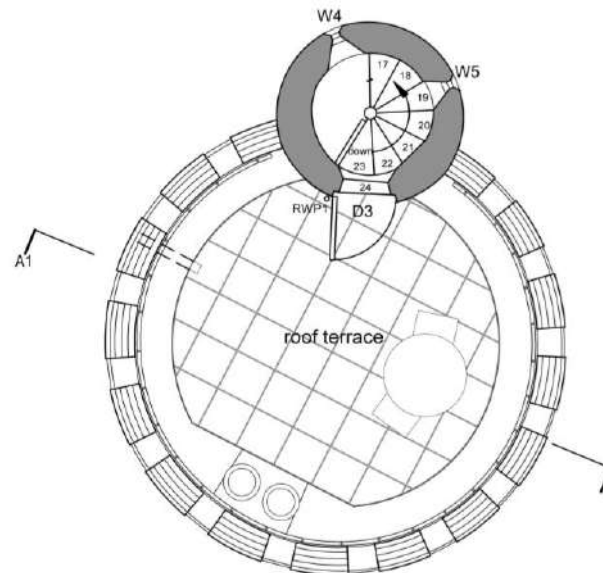


Fig.15 Proposed Roof Plan (source: ctd architects)

Flood Risk Assessment: The site boundary of Folly Tower and Bath House is located in flood risk zones 1 to 3. Folly Tower itself lies within flood risk zone 1 and the proposals will not alter the existing levels of the tower or the surrounding area.

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4.0 DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Use:	The application includes the change-of-use from a redundant Victorian architectural 'folly' building to a one-bedroom 'annex' to the dwelling, Bath House (Use Class C3).
Amount:	The footprint and internal floor area of the existing building will not change.
Layout:	The existing Folly Tower will contain a ground floor bathroom (accessed off a small internal lobby area and a first-floor bedroom (accessed via a spiral staircase). The spiral staircase continues to a roof terrace atop Folly Tower.
Scale:	The scale of the existing building will not change.
Landscaping:	An existing Gritstone cobbled footpath links Folly Tower with Bath House and will be uncovered and repaired as necessary to improve access for pedestrians. A shrub and climbing vegetation will be removed from the bank and retaining wall to the southeast, but the remainder of the surrounding landscape will remain as existing.
Appearance:	The overall appearance of Folly Tower will generally be enhanced and improved by this proposal. It is intended to carry out the necessary structural and fabric repairs to the external elements of the buildings including the replacement of the two existing modern timber windows. The addition of new steel handrail and balustrade at roof level is designed to not detract from the existing appearance of the tower.
Access:	As a proposed annex to the existing dwelling, parking and access will be via Bath House. Access to which is by a private access road to the northwest of the site as shown in the site plan drawing No. 2438 AL02. An existing Gritstone cobbled footpath linking Folly Tower and Bath House will be improved to allow access for pedestrians. It is understood that this footpath is mainly intact below the grass overgrowth, but it will be exposed and repaired where necessary. This existing footpath will not be suitable for wheelchair users due to the steep gradient of the site. The main access to the building will be through the existing door situated in the northwest elevation. Internally, there will be level access throughout the ground floor. However, due to the nature of the existing historic Tower structure access to the only bedroom and the roof terrace will be via a narrow spiral staircase only. The layout of the existing historic building and its proposed use means that it is not feasible to provide level access to all parts of the accommodation, nor to install a lift.

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Summary

This application seeks Full Planning and Listed Building Consent approval for the change of use of existing vacant Folly Tower into annex accommodation to Bath House, an existing dwelling. External conservation repairs are proposed to the existing tower including re-roofing, re-pointing and the installation of new windows.

Internally a new internal partition is proposed at ground floor level. Whilst this is a modern addition to the existing tower – this provides privacy for the user of the building and is removable in the future without significantly altering the historic fabric.

Folly Tower is an important *heritage asset*¹⁵ contributing to the historic character of the Basford Hall estate where it has heritage value and *significance* through historic association, aesthetic value and social/cultural value locally.

It is recommended that the impact of any new intervention to achieve modern goals, is considered and mitigated in a way that preserves the integrity of the existing historic character, whilst optimising the building's potential and sustainability for future generations.

¹⁵ NPPF 2023, p.70

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