

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

REAR PATHS WIDENING & TIMBER REPAIRS WITH
LOCALISED RENDER REPLACEMENT TO FRONT
ELEVATION

at

LLEWELLYN ALMSHOUSES
LEONARD STREET
NEATH
SA11 3HW

Version 1
(Issued
31/08/2023 to
support LBC
Application)

ALWYN
JONES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared to support submission of a Listed Building Consent (LBC) Application to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) for proposed widening of rear paths, and timber repairs to the front elevation with associated localised replacement of existing render. Whilst the like-for-like timber repairs would not require listed building consent, they are included in this LBC application for completeness and because their condition highlights the need for the proposed render replacement.

Llewellyn Almshouses are Grade II listed by Cadw.

This HIS follows the principles and guidance contained within Cadw's Guide – Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales 2017 and also contains the information listed in The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment No.2) Regulations 2017 that is normally required for LBC applications.

This HIS should be read in conjunction with the following supporting information submitted with the Listed Building Consent (LBC) Application:

- Alwyn Jones Architects' LBC application drawing / document nos:
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/000 [LBC0] - Site Location Plan - As Existing
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/001 [LBC0] - Key Plan - As Existing
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/100 [LBC0] - Hard Landscaping to Eastern Half - As Existing
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/101 [LBC0] - Hard Landscaping to Western Half - As Existing
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/200 [LBC0] - Hard Landscaping to Eastern Half - As Proposed
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/201 [LBC0] - Hard Landscaping to Western Half - As Proposed
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/202 [LBC0] - Rear Path Sections - As Existing & As Proposed
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/300 [LBC0] - Central Range Key South Elevation & Partial Plan - As Existing (Showing Condition & Repair Locations)
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/301 [LBC0] - Central Range Jetty Bressummer & Stud Condition / Decay - As Existing
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/302 [LBC0] - Central Range Jetty Bressummer & Stud Typical Repair Details - As Proposed
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/303 [LBC0] - Central Range Detailed Sections A-A, B-B, C-C & D-D - As Existing & As Proposed
 - RPW&CRR 12/572/304 [LBC0] - Gablet Details - As Existing & As Proposed

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORKS INCLUDING DESIGN PRINCIPLES / CONCEPTS AND SCHEDULE OF WORKS

Description of Proposed Works

The Applicant's main proposals are:

- 1) Widening the existing paths running along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses;
- 2) Replacing the existing external render during timber repairs to the timber framed front elevation.

The scope of works includes:

Widening the existing paths running along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses

- Re-laying existing stone paving and kerbs and repairing existing concrete paths.
- Replacing minimal areas of grass with new Tarmacadam-type surface to widen paths.
- Localised improvements to modern path / steps arrangement adjacent to laundry.

Replacing the existing external render during timber repairs to the timber framed front elevation

- Like-for-like timber frame repairs to front elevation.
- Replacement of hard / impermeable existing render with new natural hydraulic lime-based render with breathable paint finish.

The proposed works are detailed on the submitted application drawings.

Design Principles / Concepts

1) Widening the existing paths running along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses

The design principles have been:

- To retain and re-use the existing stone paving and kerbs. This is principally to retain their evidential and aesthetic value.
- To repair the existing modern concrete paving like-for-like.
- To keep the width of the widened path to a minimum. This is principally for economy.
- To use a Tarmacadam-type surface for the extra path width. This is principally for economy, but also because this should be a hard-wearing, durable, minimal maintenance, easily levelled and an aesthetically acceptable / visually low-key surface finish matching the existing finish to the front driveway.
- To replace a defective length of concrete path and a single step with a new concrete ramp to make the laundry more accessible and to make the access safer.

2) Replacing the existing external render during timber repairs to the timber framed front elevation

The design principles have been:

- To carry out like-for-like conservative timber frame repairs to front elevation.
- To replace the hard / impermeable existing render that has encouraged the timber decay with new lime-based render with breathable paint finish to mitigate future timber decay.
- New lead trays within newly rendered panels and new hardwood drips to protect the vulnerable joints along the base of studs and posts will mitigate future timber decay.

Schedule of Works

Widening the existing paths running along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses

- 1) Record existing paving arrangement using sketches, measurements and photographs. Carefully lift existing stone paving (mostly to the Western half of the rear) and stone kerbs and clean and store them securely on site for re-use.
- 2) Remove existing concrete path to NW corner of Laundry in preparation for its replacement.
- 3) Excavate existing sub-base and ground alongside existing paths where they are to be widened, in preparation for new sub-base, taking care / hand-digging around any shallow drainage pipework and gulleys / grids.
- 4) Lay and compact new sub-base to create falls to drain to grassed areas and to form new ramp (with new timber kerb / edging)
- 5) Re-bed stone paving (mostly to the Western half of the rear) and stone kerbs, and point all joints.
- 6) Lay and compact new Tarmacadam-type (asphaltic concrete) finish where paths are widened and where new ramp installed.

Replacing the existing external render during timber repairs to the timber framed front elevation

- 1) Erect temporary partition within 1st floor flat and carefully remove internal finishes to inner face of central range's South elevation within 1st floor flat.
- 2) Carefully remove external render and install temporary external weather protection. Internal render to gablets will also be removed to aid drying out of their timbers and to enable inspection of the extent of any decay in the retained timbers.
- 3) Carry out localised conservative timber scarf (piecing-in) repairs to locally decayed timber frame using hardwood timber species (from sustainable sources) to match existing and re-finish timber frame.
- 4) Replace (anticipated decayed) timber laths and apply new external lime-based render with breathable external paint finish. The shaped face applied timber decoration to the square panels may need to be renewed, to match existing, before applying the finish render coat (if they are found to be beyond re-use / repair) although we hope this won't be necessary.
- 5) Renew internal finishes, remove external weather protection and remove internal temporary partition within 1st floor flat.

Whilst the top priority will be to replace the existing external render to the central gable, the aim will be, in time, to re-render all of the gablets and sides of the central range using the same lime-based render.

In addition, the hard original render / plaster applied internally to these areas will be removed to enable the timbers to dry out. None of this internal render finish are visible within the building, they are not decorated, and the gablet inner faces are only visible within the lofts. As such, their removal will not affect the character of the building, and so they are not the focus for this Listed Building Consent application. As the timber repairs this work is explained here for completeness.

3.0 OBJECTIVES AND WHY THE WORKS ARE NECESSARY

Introduction

Llewellyn Almshouses comprises a linear range of eight half-timbered, gabled cottages in reflected pairs with a two-storey central cross-range. The cross-range accommodates a ground floor common room, a ninth ground floor flat (originally a wash-house) and a first floor dwelling above (originally warden's flat). There is a relatively modern (likely mid-20th century) brick boiler/washing machine room addition to the rear.

Llewellyn Almshouses was originally built in 1897 to house single and widowed ladies of the Church. Whilst some of the original strict entry criteria have been relaxed, the Almshouses still provide housing for mature or older single ladies.

A 2018 quinquennial inspection (QQI) report, by Alwyn Jones Architects, on the condition of the building fabric identified that the existing paths running tight along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses are very narrow and that the (likely original) stone slabs and kerbs are locally uneven and in need of re-bedding and re-pointing. The introduction of wheelie bins for each flat within recent decades has further reduced the effective width, making access along the paths difficult for residents.

Furthermore, a modern concrete path at the NW corner of the likely mid-20th century laundry (and boiler room) extension is badly cracked and leads to a pair of single steps up into the laundry room.

The 2018 QQI report also identified significant decay to the central range's South Elevation timber frame. A subsequent specialist timber decay survey, by EBS in 2022 (available on request), revealed significant but localised decay (due to wet rot) within the tropical hardwood timber frame. The decay was concealed by the hard external render and was concentrated along the bottom of the intermediate posts. The hard and impermeable render (probably a cementitious render) has been contributing to this decay by holding dampness against the timbers. Understandably, the recommendation of the timber decay specialist has been to replace the external render with a more breathable external render.

Furthermore, occasionally, rainwater ingress has been reported within the 1st floor flat (Flat 10), through the south wall. This presumably led to the use of silicone mastic externally in an attempt to overcome this.

A similar timber decay survey by EBS in 2015 recommended the removal of the internal (hard) render from the gablets to aid their drying out. The timbers were being saturated by rainwater penetrating around the external render panels and the internal render finish was hindering drying out.

The proposed alterations and their objectives are as follows:

1) Widening the existing paths running along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses

The objectives are to make external access to the building and rear gardens safer and easier.

2) Replacing the existing external render during timber repairs to the timber framed front elevation

The objective is for the central range's South elevation timber frame to be repaired and to ensure that the future risk of decay there is mitigated.

4.0 STATEMENT OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Brief Description and History of the Building

Llewellyn Almshouses were designed by the Llandaff Diocesan Architect George E Halliday and built in 1897 to a very high standard. The building was erected in memory of Griffith Llewellyn of Baglan, by his widow.

The property was built of red 'Ruabon' brick with half-timbered jettied gables and red sandstone dressings to doors and windows. The upper storey of the cross-range is half-timbered and jettied, with modern clay tiles to the gable. Roofs are steeply pitched with plain-clay tiles and deep over-sailing eaves with exposed rafter-ends. The design is unusual for this part of Wales.

Externally, the original design is almost complete except for the addition of modern tile-hanging to the cross-range gables and the aluminium rainwater goods to the north (rear) elevation.

Internally, many original features are intact although some of the timber wall panelling and some of the built-in dressers were removed due to dry rot outbreaks in the 1970s.

A historic postcard shows the building as it was shortly after it was built.



Historic photograph of Llewellyn Almshouses shortly after it was built

Significant repairs and alterations, particularly to services, removal of many internal joinery features due to rot, and modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms, were carried out during the 1970s.

Photographs of context / building and areas of the proposed alterations

Context / General Views



View of Llewellyn Almshouses from SW (Gnoll Park Road)



View towards rear gardens from W (Gnoll Park Road)

Rear Paths



General view of rear gardens (W) from NW corner



General view of rear gardens (E) from SE corner



W rear path, viewed from W end



W rear path, far W end



W rear path, viewed from E end



W rear path, showing displaced kerb stones & narrow width



Laundry viewed from W, showing single step to be replaced



Defective concrete path and single step at NW corner of laundry



E rear path, viewed from E end



E rear path, viewed from W end

Central Range's South Elevation



General view of central range's S elevation, showing 1st floor's exposed jettied timber frame



Detail of 1st floor's exposed timber frame, showing screwdriver pushed 120mm into void at decayed joint



Decayed matching hardwood pegs (with shaped heads)



Cracked render & failed silicone mastic



Close-up of panel detail



Typical decay within posts where hard render hinders drying out



Interior of 1st floor room, showing all modern finishes



Interior of 1st floor room, showing all modern finishes



Interior of 1st floor room, showing all modern finishes

Statement of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and its Significance

The special architectural or historic importance of the Llewellyn Almshouses was recognised in Cadw's Grade II listing of the building in 1989.

Grade II listed buildings are considered by Cadw to be of special interest, which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.

Cadw's reasons for listing were not stated.

It seems to us that the architectural interest / significance of Llewellyn Almshouses lies in its:

- High quality design and detailing by a respected late 19th century Architect.
- High quality construction / materials used.
- Largely intact original details and many intact original internal details.
- Prominent siting.

It seems to us that the primary historic interest / significance of Llewellyn Almshouses lies in its:

- Historic dedication in memory of Griffith Llewellyn of Baglan and the patronage of his widow, Madeline Georgina Llewellyn.

Documentary evidence regarding Llewellyn Almshouses includes:

- Historic postcard held by Neath Public Library.
- Historic records of Madeline Georgina Llewellyn's estate 1900-1930 held by Glamorgan Records Office (Cardiff).
- Historic records relating to the 1970s repairs and alterations held by West Glamorgan Records Office (Swansea).

In line with Cadw guidance on HISs, the following assessment of significance focusses on the parts proposed to be altered.

Heritage Values	Assessment of Significance of Rear Paths & Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) ¹	Summary of Assessment of Significance
Evidential	<u>Rear Paths - Stone paving & stone kerbs</u> Most of these exist to the Western half of the rear of the building and these are likely to be original. <u>Rear Paths - Concrete</u> Most of these exist to the Eastern half of the rear of the building as well as around the (probably mid-20th century) laundry building. Most of these concrete paths probably date from the time of significant alterations to drainage carried out in 1970s. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Exposed timber frame</u> This is original, likely tropical / imported hardwood (possibly teak or mahogany). It was re-finished in 1970s with Sikken's THB 'teak' coloured varnish over a stain and lastly in 2005 using Sikken's Cetol Novatech ('walnut' colour) <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - External render</u> This seems likely to be original, although it is so hard and impermeable that it has contributed to the decay of the timber framing. It seems likely to have been a cementitious render. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - clay tile hanging to the upper extent of the gable</u> This is modern, possibly dating from the significant alterations in 1970s. Presumably it was helpfully applied to mitigate rainwater ingress being experienced in the 1st floor flat. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Internal finishes</u> The internal finishes are modern plasterboard (with gypsum plaster skim and paint finish) and modern timber skirtings, so these have no evidential significance. <u>Documentary evidence:</u> Historic postcard taken shortly after construction, held by Neath Public Library, shows the original appearance of the front elevation (including the central range's south elevation).	<u>Rear Paths - Stone paving & stone kerbs:</u> High <u>Rear Paths - Concrete:</u> Very low <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Exposed timber frame:</u> Very High <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - External render:</u> Some evidential value, although its effect on the evidential value of the exposed timber frame is negative / damaging. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - clay tile hanging to the upper extent of the gable:</u> Low, as evidence of likely mid-20th century alterations to mitigate loss of evidential value of historic building fabric. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Internal finishes:</u> None.

¹ This assessment focusses on the parts proposed to be altered.

		<u>Documentary evidence:</u> High.
Historical	<u>Rear Paths & Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor):</u> None.	None.
Aesthetic	<u>Rear Paths - Stone paving & stone kerbs</u> Some value because they have the aesthetic character, tooled finish to kerbs, patina and wear you would associate with historic paving. This matches the original paving running along the front elevation of the building. <u>Rear Paths - Concrete</u> As plain wood float finished insitu concrete laid in the 1970s these have no aesthetic heritage value. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor):</u> The central range's South elevation is visually important as the dominant central feature of the front elevation. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Exposed timber frame</u> The original timber frame design is of high aesthetic value although this aesthetic value has been lessened by the decay / losses of the shaped joint pegs and peeling of the varnished finish. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - External render</u> The design principal of the external rendered panels is of high aesthetic value set against the exposed timber frame, although there is nothing aesthetically significant about the appearance of the smooth / plain render finish itself. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Internal finishes</u> The internal finishes are plain plasterboard (with gypsum plaster skim and paint finish) and modern timber skirtings. These have no aesthetic value. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - clay tile hanging to the upper extent of the gable</u> Whilst the tile hanging has less aesthetic value than the original concealed timber framing it conceals, the tile hanging works well visually on the building and serves a useful purpose.	<u>Rear Paths - Stone paving & stone kerbs:</u> Some. <u>Rear Paths - Concrete:</u> None. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor):</u> Very high <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Exposed timber frame:</u> High. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - External render:</u> High. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - Internal finishes:</u> None. <u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor) - clay tile hanging to the upper extent of the gable:</u> Neutral.
Communal	<u>Rear Paths</u> The existing rear paths have communal value for the residents since the path forms a shared route to the semi-private, but undivided, rear gardens adjacent to each of the flats.	<u>Rear Paths:</u> Very high.

	<u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor)</u> Whilst the ground floor houses the shared Common Room, there is no communal heritage value to the 1st floor elevation even though visually it helps to pull the building together.	<u>Central Range's South Elevation (1st Floor):</u> None.
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5.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROPOSED WORKS ON THE SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST OF THE LISTED BUILDING AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Proposed Works	Assessment of Impact on the Special Architectural or Historic Interest of the Listed Building and its Significance
<u>Widening the existing paths running along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses</u>	<u>Evidential</u>: No impact. <u>Historical</u>: No impact. <u>Aesthetic</u>: Positive impact. <u>Communal</u>: Positive impact.
1) Record existing paving arrangement using sketches, measurements and photographs. Carefully lift existing stone paving (mostly to the Western half of the rear) and stone kerbs and clean and store them securely on site for re-use.	No long term impact. Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works) on Communal significance and evidential value
2) Remove existing concrete path to NW corner of Laundry in preparation for its replacement.	No long term impact. Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works) on Communal significance.
3) Excavate existing sub-base and ground alongside existing paths where they are to be widened, in preparation for new sub-base, taking care / hand-digging around any shallow drainage pipework and gulleys / grids.	No long term impact. Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works) on Communal significance.
4) Lay and compact new sub-base to create falls to drain to grassed areas and to form new ramp (with new timber kerb / edging).	No long term impact. Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works) on Communal significance.
5) Re-bed stone paving (mostly to the Western half of the rear) and stone kerbs, and point all joints.	<u>Evidential</u>: No impact. <u>Historical</u>: No impact. <u>Aesthetic</u>: Positive impact. <u>Communal</u>: Positive impact.
6) Lay and compact new Tarmacadam-type (asphaltic concrete) finish where paths are widened and where new ramp installed.	<u>Evidential</u>: No impact. <u>Historical</u>: No impact. <u>Aesthetic</u>: Positive impact. <u>Communal</u>: Positive impact.

<u>Replacing the existing external render during timber repairs to the timber framed front elevation</u>	<u>Evidential:</u> Whilst the impact on the original render will be great (since it will be removed / will not exist), the impact on the timber frame will be positive in the long run. <u>Historical:</u> No impact. <u>Aesthetic:</u> No impact. <u>Communal:</u> No impact.
1) Erect temporary partition within 1st floor flat and carefully remove internal finishes to inner face of central range's South elevation within 1st floor flat.	No long term impact. Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works) on Aesthetic significance for the resident.
2) Carefully remove external render and install temporary external weather protection.	<u>Evidential:</u> Whilst the impact on the original render will be great (since it will be removed / will not exist), the impact on the timber frame will be positive in the long run. <u>Historical:</u> No impact. <u>Aesthetic:</u> Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works). <u>Communal:</u> No impact.
3) Carry out localised conservative timber scarf (piecing-in) repairs to locally decayed timber frame using tropical hardwood timber species (from sustainable sources) to match existing and re-finish timber frame.	<u>Evidential:</u> Minimal short term impact since timber decay repairs will require removal of decayed timber back to sound to enable effective splice timber repairs. Ultimately the impact on evidential value will be positive since the timber framed structure will have been repaired and strengthened. <u>Historical:</u> No impact. <u>Aesthetic:</u> Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works). <u>Communal:</u> No impact.
4) Replace (anticipated decayed) timber laths and apply new external lime-based render and new breathable external paint finish. The shaped face applied timber decoration to the square panels may need to be renewed, to match existing, before applying the finish render coat (if they are found to be beyond re-use / repair) although we hope this won't be necessary.	<u>Evidential:</u> Whilst the impact on the original render will be great (since it will be removed / will not exist), the impact on the timber frame will be positive in the long run. <u>Historical:</u> No impact. <u>Aesthetic:</u> Temporary / short term impact (i.e. during the works). <u>Communal:</u> No impact.

5) Renew internal finishes, remove external weather protection and remove internal temporary partition within 1st floor flat.	No impact.

6.0 SUMMARY OF OPTIONS CONSIDERED & REASONS WHY PROPOSAL IS PREFERRED

1) Widening the existing paths running along the rear of Llewellyn Almshouses

Alternative options for the proposed widening of the existing rear path have been considered, including:

Option A – Do nothing

This is not the preferred option since the existing access difficulties would remain.

Option B – Replace all concrete paving (to rear) with new stone paving

Whilst this would have a very positive impact of the aesthetic significance of the building, this benefit would only be felt on the secondary / rear side of the building. This option was not preferred because:

- 1) stone paving slabs are not the ideal finish for a residential building where there are likely to be elderly users since slabs can have an uneven surface and they can present trip hazards if there is any differential movement between the slabs;
- 2) it could be prohibitively expensive for the Trust and the Trust's priority is safety and comfort of residents rather than restoration of missing elements.

Option C - Replace all paving (stone and concrete paving to rear) with new Tarmacadam-type (i.e. asphaltic concrete) finish

There would be a significant negative impact on the evidential and aesthetic values through loss of the existing stone paving. This option was not preferred for these reasons.

Preferred Option - Widen the existing paths with a new Tarmacadam-type (i.e. asphaltic concrete) finish, relay existing stone paving & repair existing concrete paving

The proposal is preferred because:

- 1) it retains as much of the sound original paving as possible;
- 2) it improves safety and access along the paths;
- 3) Tarmacadam-type (asphaltic concrete) finishes provide a relatively smooth / uninterrupted / homogenous and durable surface very suitable for potentially elderly users;
- 4) with Tarmacadam-type finishes already extensively used to the front of the building, probably since 1970s, this finish has already been adopted as a practical, aesthetically low-key finish on this site.

2) Replacing the existing external render during timber repairs to the timber framed front elevation

Alternative options for the proposed replacement of the existing external render have been considered, including:

Option A – Do nothing

This is not the preferred option since it will hinder or prevent conservative repairs to the timber frame and again encourage timber decay since the existing hard render holds moisture against the timbers.

Option B – Very locally replace the render to enable the timber repairs

This is not the preferred option since it may lead to a visual difference between the retained and new render, and, most-importantly it will leave areas of impervious render that would again encourage timber decay by holding moisture against the timbers.

Preferred Option - Replace existing external render using a lime-based render

The proposal is preferred because it will enable full conservative repairs to the timber frame elements we know are decayed and because it will mitigate the risk of future timber decay in the timber frame.

7.0 RESOLUTION OF ACCESS ISSUES

Issues relating to access arising in relation to the works have been considered and dealt with as follows:

Access / travel to / from the site

Unaffected.

Access into the building

Main (front) entrances: Unaffected.

Secondary (rear) entrances to flats and to laundry: Improved, by widening the path and removing at least 1no. step from access into laundry.

Access within the building

Unaffected.