

Application for Financial Assistance (Historic Buildings Grants) from the Conservation and Heritage Fund for The Beehive, Main Road, Betley (Ref: 18/19004/HBG).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the following grant is approved:-

- 1. £5,000 Historic Building Grant to repair two gables on a timber framed cottage, including propping, new timber framing with joints/pegs, replacement brick infills with lime mortar, making good the internal walls, subject to the appropriate standard conditions**

Purpose of report

To enable members to consider the application for financial assistance.

The Beehive (Grade II) is a cottage originally of cruck construction, probably 15th Century with 17th additions. The timber framing has painted brick infill panels. The Listing description states the building is of T-shaped plan with a single cell baffle-entry plan hall range with cruck frame aligned north-south. It also has a 17th century two bay crosswing on the north side, aligned east west. The cruck framing is largely complete.



Following removal of some vegetation to the soleplate at the bottom of the cruck on the south gable and some movement of the brick panels the owners undertook some investigation of both the west and south gables by an appropriately qualified conservation builder. This work has cost in the region of £7,000 but they have covered the cost of this to enable the two full quotes to be received for the main repair work.

This initial work included erection of scaffolding and careful investigation which has revealed severe structural problems within both of the gables. The south cruck gable, has problems which have originated because the soleplate has rotted, compressed and many

of the joints have failed and caused movement in the framing and panels have started to loosen. Previous work on this gable, prior to the current owners purchasing the property, have been poorly carried out by not fixing the new repairs into the oak frame with mortice and tenons creating an unstable frame. The west gable has also been investigated and the soleplate has also completely failed and requires complete replacement and vertical studs also require sections of timber to be spliced in. The tie beam at eaves level is of most concern as it appears completely rotten and is moving out taking with it the upper section of wall and the lower gable. This gable also requires tying back to the return walls. The brick panels are also moving out and need to be removed and re-laid. Careful shoring and propping is required during this repair so ensure the load is appropriately dealt with.

It is unfortunate that the current owners are suffering the great cost of previous neglect and the typical inappropriate repair of such buildings by patching up, painting over the cracks and using cement mortar to repair joints and fill holes. The application of years of paint and applying bitumen to the timbers only traps moisture into these buildings and allows rot to set in.

This grant application is for repairs to the west gable, (gable 1) the worst affected by rot and movement and will be tackled within the next month and to the south gable, which will be targeted in the second phase although this is still relatively urgent and will be undertaken when gable 1 is complete.

The total cost of the works for gable 1 (west gable) is estimated at £90,973.00. The south gable repair is estimated to cost £73,388. The works are eligible for a grant of up to 20% or up to a maximum of £5,000.

The Conservation Advisory Working Party are fully supportive of the recommendation to give this grant. They comment that cruck framed buildings are rare within the Borough and of great significance and therefore the conservation of such buildings is important

Financial Implications

There is sufficient funding to meet the grant applications with £23,788 in the Fund allowing for commitments. This Fund will receive additional funding of £10,000 on 1 April 2019.