

Detailed response to consultant's heritage statement. 280, Clifton Drive, St. Annes

Introduction

As a guide to the assessment of buildings and as to whether they have specific architectural or historic interest, which is generally applied, Historic England have suggested that four principles can be used. This guidance has to be interpreted and judgements made about how these factors apply and how they can be measured. These are known as Evidential, Historical, Communal and Aesthetic. In respect of this building, an assessment has been made on behalf of the site owner to address these issues. In essence, the objector has tabled the reasons why it is considered that the bulldog should not be locally listed, and officers have responded accordingly.

Evidential Value

Objector View

3.5 Historic England (2008) suggests that "Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity".

3.6 272-280 Clifton Drive South provide altered physical evidence of late C19th and early C20th development on the edge of St Annes town centre. The buildings are quite typical of the dwellings built in the town at this time. That said, they have been incorporated within the Hotel and therefore subject to alteration, extension and conversion, including loss of original plan forms and some blocking of original openings including the front entrances to 276-278 and blocking of one of the former entrances to 280. Owing to past change, the only elements of the buildings with any real evidential heritage value are the main facades (fronting Clifton Drive South). As the buildings possess nothing of any notable age or rarity, their evidential value is low.

3.7 The St Anne's Town Centre Conservation Area possesses diverse evidential values that are embodied in the supply of buildings dating from the formative years of the town. Although outside the Conservation Area, 272-280 Clifton Drive South makes a marginal contribution to the evidential values of the Area's setting.

Response

Whilst the building has been the subject of unsympathetic alterations both, internal and external to a large degree, the plan form is not a key issue since the main purpose of identifying significance in respect of heritage value is its townscape contribution. The building forms an important part of the grouping of development along Clifton Drive South which has a high public profile enhancing its significance. The building is evidential of the form and pattern of development of this part of the road frontage clustered together as a group as a result of social, cultural, technological and economic factors of the era. Its 'Edwardian' character is evocative of the development of the town during its formative years and its style and proportion are similarly important. Necessarily, the building form and its architectural composition are evidence of this style and an exemplar of this development of its era. The fact that the town centre conservation area contains other buildings which are considered important from an architectural and/or historic point of view should in no way diminish the value of this building. Previous extensions were, as the consultant's report says, inappropriate pointing to the lack of appreciation of that time as to the architectural and historic value of the building.

This building is viewed in the context of the conservation area and is a positive element of its setting since the boundary is somewhat of an abstract notion as far as general public recognition is concerned.

Historical Value

3.8 Historic England (2008) suggests that - "Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative".

Objector View

3.9 272-280 Clifton Drive South possess a degree of illustrative historic value through the manner in which they help depict lifestyles within the town during the late C19th and early C20th. Number 280 also has some associative value relating to its former use as a doctor's surgery. The past alteration, extension and conversion of the buildings has eroded their illustrative and associative historic value. The town has an abundance of buildings of a similar age and type that have not been converted, therefore these possess greater authenticity (and value) than 272-280 Clifton Drive South.

Response

272-280 Clifton Drive South possesses illustrative historic value through the manner in which the buildings help depict lifestyles within the town during the late C19th and early C20th. Number 280 also has associative value relating to its former use as a doctor's surgery.

The building does, in view of its style, patina of age, relationship with and position in its grouping of development evoke its sense of history and age illustrating its position in the developing history of the town.

The previous alterations, extension and conversion of the buildings are unfortunate, but have not disfigured its value in the street scene and townscape context to the extent that its historical form and appearance have been significantly diminished. The illustrative and associative historic value of the building is retained since the building, as viewed from public spaces, retains much of its visual appeal and its connections with its historical origins. It has significant authentic value to the historic environment

The architect, Arnold England was also responsible for designing many other local buildings including JR Taylors shop and St Anne's Post Office. The architect's designs remain in the town today and contribute the distinctive architectural style of the town.

This Edwardian building is part of a group of communal and private buildings that strongly reference the growth of the town at the turn of the 20th Century.

Communal Value

3.10 Historic England (2008) suggests that: "Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory".

Objector View

3.11 As private buildings, 272-280 Clifton Drive South are unlikely to possess notable communal heritage value, other than the value that can be attributed to the buildings' contribution to the historic fabric of the town. In this regard, it should be noted that St Anne's has three conservation areas - Town Centre, Porritt House/Ashton Gardens and St Anne's Road East - and these provide the primary focus for celebration of the town's built heritage and represent the town's primary source of communal heritage value (alongside the town's listed buildings). 272-280 Clifton Drive South lie outside the Town Centre Conservation Area

Response

The fact that this a private building should have no bearing on its significance and value contributing, as it does, as an important historical artefact into the communal public realm which is a shared social space. Its position in this location with a high public profile adds to its importance. It is suggested that the building has strong collective cognitive value in respect of the historic development of the town and its style, age, authenticity and previous initial use add to its value. It should be seen as having particular community value and its loss would be particularly detrimental.

The objector seems to suggest that the three-conservation area for St. Anne's should be the focus for celebrating and retaining the previous links to the town's development. This is disputed as there are many other individual and groups of buildings that are valued but lie outside formally designated areas. It is also quite conceivable that future reviews of conservation area boundaries could include the possibility of this property being contained within a conservation area.

Aesthetic Value

3.12 Historic England (2008) suggests that: "Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place".

3.13 272-280 Clifton Drive South adopt architectural styles that are very typical of their age and type, both within St Annes and across the country. Indeed, large detached and semi-detached brick-built Victorian and Edwardian era villas are a main characteristic of most early suburban developments (late C19th/early C20th), therefore, whereas the buildings possess a degree of aesthetic value – almost solely embodied in their main facades – this value is neither sufficiently rare, fine nor unusual to identify the buildings as having special architectural interest.

3.14 Number 280 has been identified as potential entry upon the local heritage list, as compiled by Fylde Borough Council. It is understood through discussion with the Council that the building's potential inclusion stems mainly from its past use (surgery) and architectural detail (it is not as old as its neighbours at 272-278). In regards to the latter, the building's style (façade) mixes brick and stone in a symmetrical composition with two storey canted bays and a central gable with some carved stone detailing, including an arched pediment over a central first floor window. These stonework details represent a very basic reference to the Baroque Revival, a style that became popular in the Edwardian era, along with other historic revivals such as 'Jacobethan' architecture (albeit this was more C19th). Influences such as these are very commonplace with the late C19th and early C20th buildings of St Anne's, as shown in the nearby examples (see below) whose architectural flourishes tend to exceed those of 280 Clifton Drive South.

Response

Local listing relates to the acknowledgement of buildings and features that are locally values. In that sense whilst national styles can influence such choices, this is not the sole criterion. Most period architectural styles are variations on a theme which is evidenced throughout the evolution of design form and elevational expression. This can be seen for example in St. Anne's where there is a variety of classical and gothic inspired buildings in the town centre evolving through neo baroque, arts and crafts and Queen Anne revival. All of these present a variety of architectural expression influenced by cultural factors.

It was considered by the Panel that this building has high aesthetic value embodied both in its stylistic references to a by-gone age but also its proportions, symmetry, materials, decoration and dressings and method of construction. It is a good example of 'variety within unity' whereby the details of the façade are controlled by its symmetry, solid to void relationships, careful and controlled modelling of the bays and roof capping. Such buildings of high decoration and probable visual stimulation are rare these days pointing to its particular value. The flamboyance of the building depicts the preferences of the client and architect and the value and meaning such elevations were to convey and as such its degree of decoration is well related to its original use

There are nearby examples of contemporaneous architectural style that are varied – whether these be public or private buildings and their status is often reflected in their intended use and public significance resulting in an historic building hierarchy.

Overall the building is considered to have significant aesthetic value and whilst there can always be a case made about its common place – no examples are given as direct comparators – the detailed design of this building in this location is worthy of its nomination for local listing on this ground.

Statement of Significance

Objectors Comments

3.15 Having assessed the heritage values associated with the site, it is possible to take a more informed approach to the assessment of site significance, giving specific consideration to conservation priorities in light of the proposals for change. In this context a statement of significance is given below.

3.16 Numbers 272-280 Clifton Drive South date from the late C19th and early C20th and are situated close to St Annes town centre, but outside the Town Centre Conservation Area. Originally built as domestic buildings - number 280 was also previously part house and part doctor's surgery – the properties are now owned by The Dalmeny Hotel and have become amalgamated with the Hotel by a series of connecting structures/extensions. The main frontage of the Hotel faces South Promenade, which runs parallel with Clifton Drive South, therefore nos. 272-280 Clifton Drive South effectively form the rear frontage of the Hotel complex.

3.17 Number 280 Clifton Drive South has been nominated as a potential entry upon the local heritage list (i.e. as a non-designated heritage asset) held by Fylde Council, due to its architectural and historic interest. The adjacent nos. 272-278 have not been nominated for the list.

3.18 An appraisal of heritage values has been explored to help determine the significance of 272-280 Clifton Drive South, mindful of proposals for redevelopment/revamping of the Dalmeny Hotel. This

appraisal has revealed the buildings possess a limited degree of heritage value, which stems from their typical late C19th/early C20th architectural style (aesthetic and evidential value), their illustrative historic value as features of St Annes' early development and their communal value as contributors to the supply of historic building fabric throughout the town.

3.19 Owing to past alteration and conversion and their general lack of age, rarity or notable quality, the buildings possess very limited heritage significance, and the significance they do possess is almost solely bound up in their main facades. In this regard, it is important to consider to what extent the buildings differentiate themselves from the large supply of other contemporaneous dwellings within the town, in a manner that could be deemed 'special'. For this both the 'expert' and 'lay-persons' views are of equal importance, mindful that heritage is conserved for its perceived benefits to all members of society.

3.20 In terms of the experts' view, it is important to appreciate that St Annes already has three conservation areas, which are protected by planning law because of their architectural and historic interest. 272-280 Clifton Drive South do not lie within any of these conservation areas, but they do lie close to the boundary of the St Annes Town Centre Conservation Area. It must therefore be inferred that the merits of the buildings have previously been considered when the Town Centre Conservation Area was designated (and later reviewed), and that the buildings were not, in the opinion of Fylde Council, considered of sufficient interest to extend the boundary around them.

3.21 In terms of the layperson, whereas a public consultation exercise has not been implemented, it seems highly likely that nos. 272-280 Clifton Drive South would be seen as 'typical' rather than 'special' buildings within the town. This is in part due to their very close resemblance to many other buildings and part due to the public's greater appreciation of more notable examples of architecture, such as some of those shown earlier in figures 9 -15

3.22 In summary, there is very good reason to assert that the significance of the former dwellings at 272-280 Clifton Drive South is very low. Their appearance is very typical of many others buildings in St Annes, and the town has an abundant supply of domestic buildings of a similar age and type, many of which, unlike 272-280 Clifton Drive South, retain their original function and have not been amalgamated into an adjacent and now adjoined hotel. With this in mind, there would appear little reason to resist any redevelopment of the buildings due to loss of significant heritage, mindful that the aesthetic value of the buildings could be readily replaced by new building(s) of equal quality that harmonise with the character of the locale and the neighbouring Town Centre Conservation Area.

Response

The consultant has made some valid points about the fact that alterations to the building has to some degree reduced the significance of the building. It also makes the point that there are several similar buildings that evoke the history and development of the town. The detailed points made under the four acknowledged means of assessing significance are discussed at length in the preceding section. The objection also assumes about the value of the building to the general public and opines that this it may be seen as ordinary. This assessment could be tested, sufficient to say that the proposal for local listing was considered in detail by a panel comprising of expert and lay opinion and the overwhelming view was that it was worthy of its status as a locally listed building.

It should, therefore, be added to the Local List of Buildings.