
Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement
Rebuild of boundary wall and construction of new
supporting outbuilding
at
Sandfield Natural Play Centre,
Lickers Lane, Whiston, L35 3SR

Revisions

A: 11.07.22 Revisions to Section 4 to clarify treatment of still-standing sections of wall

1.0 Introduction

This Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement provides supporting information on the proposed works at Sandfield Natural Play Centre, Lickers Lane, Whiston, L35 3SR. The information contained in this report aims to explain the reasoning between the proposal, details of the proposed works, and the impact upon the historical character of the Grade II Listed Sandfield House.

This statement has been prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Knowsley Council's planning policy and guidance.

2.0 Assessment of Heritage Significance

- 2.1 Sandfield House, formerly known as Sandfield Cottage, is an 18th Century brick building fronting Lickers Lane on the southern edge of Whiston. It is double-fronted and of two stories, with a distinctive Tuscan style porch. Two later wings, one either side, are in the same style and almost double the width of the façade (Figure 1).
- 2.2 The building was **Grade II Listed** in 1971. The full Listing citation can be found in Appendix 1. Neither the grounds, the boundary walls nor any ancillary structures, including the Coach House, are cited in the official Listing. However, they can be considered to contribute to the setting of the house and its historic character.
- 2.3 The house has extensive grounds to the rear including mature woodland and ponds. The site is fronted along Lickers Lane by a 3.6m-high brick wall to the west (right) of

the building. To the east (left) is a sandstone wall, part of which has had to be taken down for safety reasons, and the rebuilding of which is the focus of the proposed works (see Section 3, below).

- 2.4 Sandfield House is presently occupied by a children's nursery. Sandfield Natural Play Centre makes use of the grounds to specialise in outdoor activities as an alternative to more conventional nursery providers. The nursery is very popular with local families and has won multiple awards for the quality of the experience that it provides.



Figure 1: Front elevation from Lickers Lane

- 2.5 In summary, the site is Grade II Listed and the building and its setting are therefore considered to be of **High** heritage significance.

3.0 Context to Proposed Works

- 3.1 A section of the sandstone boundary wall fronting Lickers Lane has previously been taken down for safety reasons following the advice of a structural engineer and communication with Knowsley Council. It consisted of two leaves of sandstone blocks with rubble infill, totalling approximately 400mm wide. The site owners were notified by staff from Planning Enforcement and the Heritage and Conservation Department at Knowsley Council that the rebuilding of this wall was required.
- 3.2 Planning permission and Listed Building Consent was granted by Knowsley Council in November 2020 for the rebuilding of the dismantled section.
- 3.3 Subsequent attempts to engage contractors to rebuild the wall to the specification agreed have been unsuccessful. Furthermore, recent signs of instability in the still-

standing portion of the wall indicate that a more extensive programme of works is required to ensure that the causes of movement and degradation across the entire wall are successfully remediated. Following further consultation with a structural engineer and Knowsley Council's representatives, it has therefore been agreed to submit a new proposal.

4.0 Assessment of Impact

The new proposal would be carried out as a single project, but incorporates three distinct sub-elements:

- Dismantling of part of the still-standing sandstone boundary wall;
- Rebuilding of the sandstone boundary wall, and;
- Erection of a new garden room, WC and outdoor store immediately behind the wall. Through its design and positioning, the new outbuilding would provide perpendicular bracing to the boundary wall and valuable additional space for the effective operation of the nursery business.

Dismantling of part of still-standing sandstone boundary wall

- 4.1 The remaining section of the front boundary wall abuts a perpendicular length of wall extending onto the nursery grounds, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, and on Drawing 5558-1. Each of these sections of wall is displaying signs of serious structural movement and weather-related damage. The remaining boundary wall appears to be leaning onto the telegraph pole seen in Figure 2c. There is a risk of serious collapse unless remedial work is undertaken promptly.
- 4.2 The structural movement almost certainly has its causes in movement of the ground beneath the wall over the passage of time. The foundation is shallower and comprised of weaker material than required by modern standards. The condition of the foundation below the still-standing portions of the wall is unknown.
- 4.3 The extent of the dismantling required varies along different parts of the wall. Facing Lickers Lane, the wall exhibits a marked lean outwards (Figure 2c) which requires correction, with the wall needing to be taken down to close to ground level. Further into the site, the perpendicular wall is in better condition but dismantling is required close to the abutment with the new boundary wall where a large crack has developed (Figure 2a). The stability of the remaining wall is paramount and it may be necessary to remove parts that appear in good condition in order to access damaged sections or to ensure that narrow lengths are not left unsupported.
- 4.4 On the advice of a structural engineer, the rebuilt sections of wall require a new foundation. Retaining some sections of the existing wall on the existing foundation

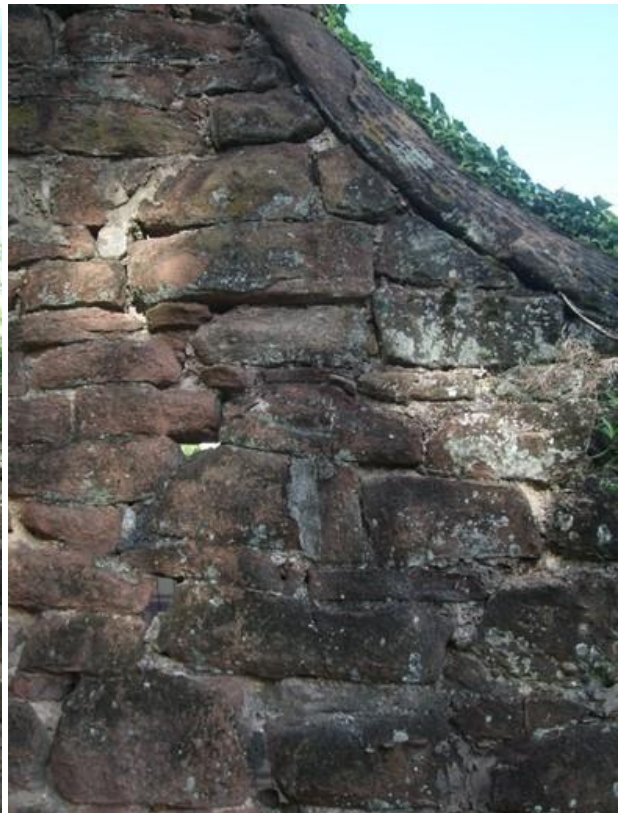
which may reasonably be expected to continue to deteriorate, tied in to newly rebuilt sections on a modern foundation, risks creating lines of stress due to differential settlement and the opening up of new structural cracks. Every effort would be made to retain undamaged sections of wall on sound foundations, subject to on-site inspection at the start of the works. However, it may be necessary to take down the entirety of the remaining sections of the boundary and perpendicular walls to ground level, and remove the existing foundation structures in order to achieve a structurally robust replacement. The remainder of this statement will assume this will be the case and the application therefore requests consent for this greatest level of temporary disruption.

- 4.5 The walls would be carefully dismantled as required, with particular attention paid to the large coping stones. Scaffolding would be used to bridge across the wall and enable blocks to be lifted from above. Appropriate lifting equipment would be used if required. All blocks and coping stones would be stored on site for re-use.
- 4.6 By its nature, the dismantling of the wall would have a temporarily **negative** impact upon the setting of the heritage asset, however this is unavoidable and would be more than compensated for by the improvements detailed below.

a



b



c



d



Figure 2a-d: Evidence of deterioration in still-standing sandstone boundary wall

Rebuilding of sandstone boundary wall

- 4.7 The boundary wall would be rebuilt in its original form – with two leaves of sandstone blocks bound together with header stones visible from both faces and infilled with a rubble core. The sandstone blocks and coping from the dismantled wall have been retained on site (see Figure 3) but some would need to be replaced and/or new stone needed as part of the reconstruction. Ideally, locally reclaimed stone would be sourced but, following heritage advice, St Bees or Corsehill sandstones would be used should this be unavailable. The rebuilt wall would be 450mm thick, the same as the original, ensuring that the original coping stones can be reinstated.
- 4.8 The front-facing elevation of the boundary wall was formerly laid in a semi-regular pattern of sandstone blocks arranged in 16 rows (Figure 4), and this can still be seen on the eastward face of the perpendicular wall (Figure 2a). The rear-facing elevation was more randomised, and was similar to that shown in Figure 3. The two faces of the rebuilt wall would match the appearance of the originals.



Figure 3: Still-standing portion of original wall, perpendicular to section requiring reconstruction (at left)

- 4.9 NHL 2 mortar would be used in the wall rebuild. This is a soft and slow-setting lime mortar suited to conservation applications where stonework is soft or deteriorating. It can be colour matched by the manufacturer upon receipt of a sample of existing mortar, and this would enable each face of the reconstructed wall to match the appearance of Figures 3 and 4. Pointing would be flush or slightly recessed.



Figure 4: Original appearance of front elevation of currently dismantled boundary wall (image: Google Streetview)

- 4.10 The rebuilt wall would be constructed as a single project and therefore the sandstone blocks would be well tied into one another and any retained sections of the wall as the construction progressed upwards. Having reached the required height, the coping stones would be replaced.
- 4.11 The wall would be built on an asymmetrical foundation to enable its outer face to lie on the site boundary without encroachment of wall or foundation onto the public highway. The foundation design is specified on Drawing 21-2227-100.
- 4.12 The reconstruction of the boundary wall would help to restore the external appearance of the site. It would be rebuilt using a structurally safe design but in outward appearance would mirror the original. This element of the proposal is therefore considered to have a **positive** impact upon the setting of the Grade II Listed building.

Erection of new garden room, WC and outdoor store

- 4.13 The primary purpose of the proposed outbuilding is to act as a support for the rebuilt boundary wall, and the manner in which this would be achieved is detailed below. However, the new structure has been designed so as to echo the footprint and appearance of a former outdoor store, and thus provides an opportunity to enhance the historic character of the site.



Figure 5: Aerial photograph of Sandfield House and former outdoor store to the immediate NE, prior to its removal (image: Google Maps)

- 4.14 The outdoor store was an L-shaped single-storey lean-to structure built against the boundary and perpendicular walls (Figure 5). It had lain redundant for many years prior to a survey carried out in July 2010 by Interim Consultancy Solutions Ltd, which identified defects to its walls and roof. It was subsequently taken down and the site has remained unoccupied since.
- 4.15 The proposed outbuilding is shown in drawings 5558-2 (Site Plan), 5558-3a (Elevations) and 5558-4a (Specification). It would occupy a slightly smaller footprint than the former outdoor store, to create space for the nursery's bin storage. There would be a WC, store room and an open-sided garden room for use by the staff on breaks. Nursery children or members of the public would have no access to the building.
- 4.16 Two of the walls - the exterior wall to the WC and store/garden room wall would be constructed in 9" brick and perform a buttressing function for the rebuilt boundary wall. The brickwork would be tied in with the irregular coursing pattern of the sandstone blocks on the inner face. Flexible masonry wall ties would form part of the buttressing walls' construction and their junction with the sandstone wall.
- 4.17 The external walls of the building would be built from facing brick, matched to those used for the rebuild of an adjacent wall separating the bin storage area from the front car park. Internal-faces and the non-buttressing WC/storeroom wall would be built with common brick. Walls would be left unlined and uninsulated in keeping with the former outdoor store's role as a functional space rather than a habitable one.
- 4.18 The roof would be a conventional softwood rafter roof laid with slates to closely match the main Sandfield House building. A wallplate would be required to be bolted to the sandstone walls to the rear, with the tie of the roof structure providing additional stability for these walls. The guttering would be a half-round Victorian cast aluminium system, approx. 125mm in diameter. The downpipes would be approx. 76mm diameter round cast collared aluminium in design. Both are styled to give the appearance of cast iron.



Figure 6: Sample rainwater goods

- 4.19 The floor of the new structure would consist of stone flags, running out into the courtyard. A slight fall away from the building would ensure that surface water would not pool around the structure. The courtyard area is currently rough ground but contains areas of the original cobbles. These would be retained and incorporated into the hard landscaping. Opportunities to create beds of soft landscaping in this area would be taken, subject to the presently unknown ground conditions and the extent of the original cobbles, none of which would be removed unnecessarily. Wastewater drainage from the WC and surface water from the new roof would be connected to the drains known to exist in the courtyard area.
- 4.20 The construction of the new outbuilding would echo the size, position and appearance of the former outdoor store and be constructed in similar materials, only to modern standards. By buttressing the adjoining sandstone walls, it would aid in their structurally safe reinstatement. The new outbuilding is therefore deemed to have a **positive** impact upon the setting of the Grade II Listed building.

5.0 Mitigation

- 5.1 The site owners are very conscious of the need to preserve and protect the heritage value of the Listed building and its setting. They have consulted a number of relevant departments at Knowsley Council for advice over the various elements of the proposal outlined above, employed a structural engineer, competent contractors and planning agents.
- 5.2 Rebuilding of the boundary wall would be carried out in such a way that the wall's outward appearance would be as close as possible to the original, notwithstanding the need to improve its structural stability.
- 5.3 The option to construct the adjoining outbuilding on a similar footprint to the former outdoor store has been taken not only to support the boundary wall, but also in recognition of the benefit that this would bring to partially restoring the appearance of this corner of the site. The footprint, roof style and materials all echo those features of the former building.

6.0 Design and Access Statement

- 6.1 Context – the facts of the proposals are discussed in detail in Section 4 above. The site is a Grade II Listed building with extensive grounds, presently used as a children's nursery. The proposal consists of three inter-related elements – the dismantling of a seriously damaged original sandstone wall, its rebuilding, and the construction of a new adjoining outbuilding.

- 6.2 Amount/Layout – the proposals would add a built footprint of 23.3m² to the site. All of this additional building would be on the site of a previously demolished structure.
- 6.3 Scale – the rebuilding of the front boundary wall would restore the original appearance of the site from Lickers Lane, resulting in a more substantial built form than at present. The new single-storey outbuilding would be hidden from Lickers Lane by the sandstone wall and only visible from the inner courtyard of the site.
- 6.4 Landscaping – the proposed open bin storage area and courtyard beyond, currently just rough ground, would be hard landscaped with stone flags and the retained original cobbles, where present. Areas of soft landscaping, likely consisting of borders with low shrubs, would be introduced subject to the ground conditions and the positions of the original cobbles.
- 6.5 Use – the site would remain as a children’s nursery. The new outbuilding would be ancillary to this use, providing facilities for staff and contractors.
- 6.6 Access – no access changes are proposed to the site as a whole. The courtyard area and new outbuilding would only be accessible to staff and approved contractors who may be present on site from time to time. There would be no access for children or members of the public.
- 6.7 Appearance – rebuilding of the damaged boundary wall would return it to its former appearance. Through its design and choice of materials, the new outbuilding would be constructed so as to blend with the main building and the former outdoor store that occupied the site.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The works as proposed comprise the dismantling of a seriously damaged original sandstone wall, its rebuilding, and the construction of a new adjoining outbuilding. The proposal effectively seeks to modify a previous grant of planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the rebuilding of part of the sandstone boundary wall only. The works would have an impact upon the character and setting of the Grade II Listed Sandfield House.
- 7.2 The proposals outlined above have been designed so as to demonstrate a strong willingness to safeguard the heritage assets at the site, whilst also acknowledging that the ability of the site owners to operate their business without excessive and unreasonable costs is essential to the ongoing wellbeing of the Grade II Listed building and its ancillary structures.
- 7.3 The work would be carried out by competent contractors.

- 7.4 Whilst there may be some short-term disruption, the overall impact of the proposed works on the heritage asset is considered to be **positive** and consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, local planning policies and the preservation of the special character of the Grade II Listed building.

24.12.21

Appendix 1: Listed Building Citation

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1253251>

SANDFIELD HOUSE

Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1253251

Date first listed: 28-Jan-1971

Statutory Address: SANDFIELD HOUSE, LICKERS LANE, WHISTON, L35 3SR

Location

Statutory Address: SANDFIELD HOUSE, LICKERS LANE, WHISTON, L35 3SR

District: Knowsley (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Whiston

National Grid Reference: SJ 47663 90515

Details

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 09/03/2017

SJ 49 SE 7/59

WHISTON Lickers Lane Sandfield House

(Formerly listed as Sandfield Cottage)

II C18. Brick, with stone roof and moulded eaves, two storeys. Centre panelled door and fanlight, and Tuscan porch with cornice. Two sash windows on ground floor and three above, with flat brick arches, but most glazing bars removed. Flanking wings with hipped roofs, two sash windows each floor.

Listing NGR: SJ4766390515