

Ivy House 23 Friarn Street Bridgwater

Bridgwater & District Civic Society

Commentary and evidence for review

We submit the following for your consideration.

(1) *there is evidence that the original decision has been made wrongly.*

Examples would include:

- where there was a factual error, eg. the wrong building was listed; or - where there has been some irregularity in the process which has affected the outcome, eg. relevant considerations were not taken into account or irrelevant considerations were taken into account.

(a)

There are two references to Friarn Road (which does not exist): in the CONTEXT paragraph and in the ASSESSMENT paragraph: e.g. "Ivy House, 23 Friarn Road does not meet the criteria for designation".

(b)

In the CONTEXT paragraph, it is stated:

"Ivy House is excluded from the conservation area which runs along Friarn *Road* to either side of the house and the adjacent C20 building."

The attached map (taken from the SDC Local Plan) clearly shows Ivy House within the Conservation Area.

These two errors persuade us to consider therefore whether the property has been correctly identified.

(c)

In the Assessment section of the EH Report, it is stated that "Although located within the town centre, Ivy House is characteristic of suburban housing and more appropriately assessed as such." The Criteria from English Heritage's Selection Guide for Suburban and Country Houses (October 2011) are then applied to conclude that: "As such, it is considered that Ivy House, 23 Friarn *Road* does not meet the criteria for designation".

We suggest that this is perverse & irregular, when there are excellent criteria for Town Houses by which this house could have been judged.

We consider that Ivy House should be judged by the criteria given in the Designation Selection Guide Domestic 2:Town Houses. We have identified a number of features of Ivy House which fall within the Selection Criteria and Description for Town Houses and which are not mentioned in the Suburban Guide, such as:

(i) The early imposing house was built for a Gentleman grandee, on a large plot, close to the town centre in an ancient street consisting of fine houses, many of which are listed. Town streets in close proximity but on the other side of the parish church include Castle Street (Grade 1, DLSGD2 Fig. 10). The spire of St Mary's parish church may be seen to the north above the roof in the two photographs dating from ca. 1865 at

<http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/ivyhouse/ivyhouseold/index.html>

(ii) The remodelled house retained the existing curtilage but "outward restraint" conceals an "interior display of remarkable effect" (DLSGD2 p 4) as shown by our brief survey of the interior (*vide infra*).

(iii) "Housing of flair, innovation, character and intactness will warrant identification" (DLSGD2 Criteria p 9). We particularly stress the importance of the intactness of the whole in respect of Ivy House.

(iv) A significant number of features given within the Interior Criteria (DLSGD2 Criteria p 10) have been found.

(v) The importance of Alteration (DLSGD2 Criteria p 10/11) is emphasised as "adding to the special interest" which we consider to have happened with Ivy House.

(vi) The 1840 Threshold "needs to be treated thoughtfully - post-1840 buildings, particularly outside the great cities, may well warrant inclusion" (DLSGD2 Criteria p 11).

(2) there is significant evidence which was not previously considered, relating to the special architectural or historic interest of the building, as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The Report states:

"It is considered that Ivy House, 23 Friarn Road does not meet the criteria for designation for the following principal reasons:

* Lack of architectural interest: the style and execution of the building are typical for suburban development of this date, and though there is some neat detailing in the stone dressings and in the design of the veranda exterior carpentry, this does not outweigh the essential modesty and lack of architectural ambition of the house;

* Date: although it incorporates some fabric from the original late-C18 house the building dates substantially from the second half of the C19 and lacks distinctive quality in its design which is characteristic and representative of its type and date;

* Fixtures and fittings: the interior survival is unknown and so it is not possible to quantify its impact upon the assessment. In view of the exterior, however, it is unlikely to contain high-quality bespoke fixtures and fittings that would raise the special interest of the house to the threshold needed."

We comment:

- ◆ We do not agree that "the style and execution of the building is typical for a suburban development" as this is a significant Town House standing in its own grounds, with restrained architecture. In addition to the detailing mentioned, it shows a substantial Dutch gable (c.f. DLSGD2 Fig 18), and good ironwork detail in the veranda, mirrored by that in the interior.
- ◆ Three Queen Anne-style niches in the north curved garden wall have been found and photographed http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/ivyhouse/extra_exterior/ . The style of the niches, with oyster-shell canopies, reflect the oyster-shell hoods in the neighbouring 15 Friarn Street II* (also 11 Friarn Street, now missing, II) and Christ Church, Dampiet Street (II*). They are an important architectural feature which illustrate the significance of the formal layout of the grounds as illustrated in the 1865 photographs. We are not aware of other similar garden niches in Bridgwater; and they seem characteristic of the finer formal country houses nationally.

- ◆ Date: evidence has now been found to support our assertion of the extent of the older house, which comprises approximately 40% of the ground floor area of the whole, but extends upwards to three storeys, and downwards to a flagstoned cellar; thus its total floor area exceeds that of the later house. We consider that "the intrinsic qualities of a building may be more important than the exact date of construction" (DLSGD2 Criteria p 11). We do not agree that the building "lacks distinctive quality in its design", as architectural ingenuity has been used to great effect in adapting the existing property to produce a high quality unique building suitable for its new purpose, whilst preserving substantial elements of the older building intact, thus adding to the special interest of its setting within a large walled urban garden.
- ◆ Date: further information has been found concerning Robert Codrington and others connexion with Ivy House.
 - Robert Codrington¹ & anor leases land adjacent to the site of Ivy House to Friarn Chapel 8 December 1792²
 - Robert Codrington, of Bridgwater, Gentleman, 2nd April, 1800 is cited as Last Lessee of Plot 431³ (a half a burgage plot; part of the site of Ivy House) in the Second Report of the Committee etc 28th July 1836⁴; "now in the occupation of Mr John Harding"⁵.
 - Richard Reynolds Woodland JP Ivy House 1861⁶ was Mayor of Bridgwater 1822, 1834, 1838, & 1859
 - We consider this information adds to the historic importance of the house.
- ◆ Fixtures and Fittings: it has been possible to make a brief visit to inspect the interior of the property. This is reported separately as Additional Information at <http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/ivyhouse/>

The interior contains a number of very high quality & intact bespoke fixtures and fittings which contribute to the special interest of the house. These include a hallway with a portico, fireplaces or chimney-pieces, ornate cornices, encaustic tiled floor of considerable extent and in excellent condition, and a grand staircase in the newer building; curved arch doorways, cornices, a vaulted cellar with a well and wine racks in the older building.

The Society considers that the excellence of the architectural design and workmanship of the interior raises the special interest of the house to well above the threshold required for consideration of designation as a listed building.

Note: This information, and that presented on the website, have been discussed with Mr R A Croft, Somerset Historic Environment Service, and other members of his team, who support the application for Listing.

1 Mayor of Bridgwater 1795, 1797, 1801

2 Somerset Heritage Centre D:\N\bw.wur/1/1/2

3 <http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/victorian/resources/townplan1835.jpg> accessed 21 July 2012

4 Second Report of the Committee appointed by the Council of the Borough of Bridgwater "To examine into the Muniments, Books, Deeds, and other Documents of the Body Corporate and Report thereon comprising An Account of the Property and Revenues of the Corporation 28th July, 1836, p 30-31, *collection Dr P E Cattermole* See http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/ivyhouse/land_prop/

5 John Harding is described as a Victualler in the Electors' List of 1818 and a Gentleman in 1835: he is absent from lists for 1837 and thereafter. <http://www.bridgwatermuseum.info/archives/electors/index.htm> accessed 22 July 2012

6 <http://www.bridgwaterheritage.org.uk/ivyhouse/occupants.htm> accessed 21 July 2012