



# Old Post Office

## Heritage Statement

# INTRODUCTION

The Old Post Office in Shorne is a grade II listed building. However currently the front elevation is in a poor condition and urgent repairs are required to ensure the longevity of this building.

The Historic England listing description for the building reads:

*TQ 67 SE SHORNE THE STREET 2/145 21.11.66 Nos 2 and 4 (Harmony Hill and The Post Office)*

*II*

*C18. Timber-framed, all elevations cement rendered, clay roofing tiles. Rectangular with roof hipped at both ends. Front of 2 storeys with attic storey above. Double shop front to Post Office with glazing bars intact. One door and one window to Harmony Hill. Three casement windows to first floor. Two dormer windows with hipped tiled roofs. Painted moulded timber eaves cornice. String course on first floor level.*

*Original timber structure substantially exposed on Post Office.*

*Traditionally the Post Office used by Dickens to post his manuscripts. Formerly one house.*

At present, externally you can see large amounts of cracking to the cement render and bowing of the front elevation towards the road. Internally under the carpet at first floor it can be seen that the front wall has moved out entirely. A piece of plywood was scribed in to the floor to make up where the floorboards no longer covered. However there has been further movement since this was pieced in. In addition, the ground floor walls have been studded out, however some areas of boarding have fallen and it is possible to see the brick skin externally which has moved out.

Therefore we can understand that there is lateral movement within this front elevation, likely caused by lack of restraint. However, although we understand what the movement is, the extent and remedy cannot be fully detailed until intrusive investigative work has been carried out.

A number of structural engineers have reviewed the project and the following is quoted from a report by William Bray of AKS Ward, Lister Beare, Construction Consultants report in 2015. Justin McAteer from MOYO & McATEER consulting engineers is in agreement and notes that the movement has increased since this time:

*3.1 There had clearly been some movement of the front wall relative to the timber framed structure ie the internal timber posts. Movement appeared to have occurred in the area from ground to first floor level between the window to the right (viewed from the outside) of the front door and the internal wall between sitting room and lounge.*

*3.2 Looking through the gaps between wall and timber posts it appeared that there had also been movement of the brickwork of the front wall relative to the inside wall face. The distances between the back of the brickwork and the internal elements appeared to be excessive and beyond what is likely to have been the original construction.*

*3.3 This outward movement appeared to have started some time ago but the evidence suggests that movement may have increased in recent years.*

*3.4 There could be a number of reasons for the movement but the most likely is separation between brickwork and the timber frame. The original timber framed building would have been rendered. At a later date the building has been faced with brickwork following the current fashion. This is a fairly common phenomena. Unfortunately this new brick facing was often not very well tied back to the timber frame. Over the years under the effects of weathering, temperature and general decay the brickwork can move away from the frame and become relatively unstable.*

*3.5 The exterior may have been rendered subsequently for reasons of fashion or taste but it may also have been rendered to cover up and improve the weather resistance of deteriorating brickwork. The addition of a hard cementitious render to replace, repair or as an over coating to the original render has possibly exacerbated a bad situation.*

*3.6 The situation is now such that we consider repair and remedial works should be undertaken within the next twelve months before more serious deterioration occurs to the structure in this area.*

# INTRODUCTION

3.7 It is difficult to determine the exact nature and extent of work required until the render is removed and the underlying brickwork is exposed. The remedial work is likely to consist of strapping the wall into the first floor structure by means of metal straps fixed to the floor joists and brickwork together with some rebuilding of the affected brickwork.

3.8 The first step is to remove the render so that the state of the brickwork can be assessed.

## RENDER

3.9 The pattern of cracking in the render is typical of a hard cementitious material. The vertical cracks are caused by tensile stresses in the plane of the render set up as a result of changes in temperature.

3.10 The steps across the lines of cracking could be due to several factors possibly related to the render itself or to the lateral movement of the brickwork behind.

3.11 Because the render is so hard it tends to form sheets that may not be fully bonded to the backing brickwork forming a cavity. As a consequence of thermal and moisture movement debris can fall into the cavity resulting in 'steps' in the surface. Alternatively the differential lateral movement may be a more direct consequence of the movement in the brickwork beneath the render.

3.12 We recommend that all of the external render and definitely that to the front elevation should be removed. Once any necessary repairs have been undertaken to the underlying brickwork the elevations should be re-rendered with a lime based render that will also allow the building to breathe and be more 'flexible' ie tolerant of any thermal and moisture movement.

Therefore based on the above and what can be seen on-site we have developed a strategy. It is understood from conversations with the Conservation officer that Listed Building Consent is required for the intrusive investigative works.

# PROPOSAL

Therefore below in bullet points a proposed strategy is detailed with additional comments on reasoning:

- The first stage is to remove the cement render to the front elevation, care will be taken to ensure minimal damage to the brickwork behind- area as shown on marked up photograph.

*The cement render should be removed in full as it is in sheets and will be difficult to remove only patches of the render safely. In addition, it is known that the cement render is not a suitable finish for a historic timber frame building. Furthermore in removing all render to the main brickwork front elevation of the Old Post Office this will enable a full assessment to be carried out and repairs can then be carried out immediately.*

- The brickwork will then be inspected by a Structural Engineer and proposed repairs will be detailed.

*The building is at risk whilst the render is off and the brickwork exposed, therefore it will be essential to act quickly in relation to the repairs required. If we are required to make a further Listed Building Consent application this will significantly delay the works. Therefore we wonder if it is possible for a condition to be applied in relation to the repairs and to discuss the repairs with the conservation officer to ensure they can be carried out swiftly once identified.*

- Assume the repairs is to add metal lateral restraint straps between the brickwork and the timber frame. In isolated locations rebuild brickwork, where possible retaining the original bricks.

*Although this is anticipated as the repair required, if possible it would be good to have a condition which allows this to vary as until the removal of the cementious render full understanding of the issue is not possible.*

- Once repairs have been carried out to the satisfaction of the Structural Engineer the brickwork should be re-pointed where required using a lime mortar, matching any historic mortar present.

*It is important to ensure that the brickwork is in a good condition before applying the render, as the finish is only as good as the substrate it is keying onto.*

- Apply a lime render to the brickwork.

*Render will then be applied to the brickwork, as it is anticipated the condition of the bricks behind the cementious render is poor. It is also part of the history of this building that it was rendered, however the specification of the render, habing a high free lime content, is essential to ensure the longevity of the building and maximise the benefits of using lime.*

- Lime wash the lime render.

*The application of lime wash over the render is essential to ensure that the render remains in a good condition for the foreseeable future.*

# HERITAGE STATEMENT

This is a grade II listed building and therefore it is important to ensure that no harm to the historic building is caused due to the works. These should be noted as urgent repair works to the historic building and tried and tested methods of repair are proposed to be used.

In terms of the affect on the historic building and its significance, it should be noted that without these remedial works the historic building is at risk of further damage and eventual collapse of the front elevation. A number of engineers have reviewed the building and the thoughts on the requirements are in-line with each other.

The key significance of this building is its history as a post office, with its shop window details and its timber frame structure. The repair works aim to retain the timber frame structure and its later brick facing as well as the now rendered aesthetic of the building. The render, was added sometime between 1910 and 1955 according to historic photos, however whether this was lime or cement is not known. However the current cement render is causing substantial damage to the building and is not aesthetically pleasing therefore the replacement of this with a suitable lime render should be welcomed.

# HISTORICAL IMAGES



# HISTORICAL IMAGES



## CURRENT IMAGES



## CURRENT IMAGES

