

BAGULEY HALL CONSERVATION STATEMENT

SUMMARY

Baguley Hall is a mid-14th century timber-framed house, with later additions, standing on the site of an earlier aisled hall. Originally the home of the Baguley family, it passed by marriage to the Legh family, in whose hands it remained until 1688. After this date the status of the building declined. In 1931 it was sold to Manchester Corporation, which used it as a depot and warehouse until it was placed in Guardianship in 1969. Following detailed recording of the standing structure, and excavation within it, the building was extensively but incompletely repaired. It has never been open to the public.

STATUTORY CONTROLS

Scheduled ancient monument (SM 27709) and Grade I listed building.

Local authority: Manchester City Council.

Trees immediately to the east of the Guardianship boundary, in the area of Old Hall Gardens, are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order made by the City Council in 1999, although this does not directly affect the Guardianship site.

Nature conservation designations: none, although the site may support legally protected species – there is evidence that bats roost in the Hall.

HISTORY

The timber-framed hall which forms the centerpiece of the complex appears to have been constructed during the first half of the 14th century by either Sir William de Baguley or one of his sons, John or William, replacing an earlier aisled hall, evidence of which has been recovered in excavations. Both sons died without heirs, and in 1356 Baguley passed to the Legh family, a member of which had married Sir William's daughter Ellen. At some time in the 15th century a timber wing, of which elements survive behind later brick facing, was added to the north end of the hall, and a brick-built south wing was added in the later 17th century. In 1688 Edward Legh sold the Hall to Viscount Allen, and in 1749 a later Viscount Allen sold it to Joseph Jackson of Rostherne, who bequeathed it to his cousin, the Rev Millington Massey, in 1801. At the marriage of Massey's daughter and heiress Margaret in 1825 the Hall came into the possession of the Tatton family of nearby Wythenshawe Hall, who retained it until 1931, when it was sold to Manchester Corporation, which used it as a depot and warehouse before placing it in the Guardianship of the Ministry of Public Building and Works in 1969. An extensive programme of consolidation and repair, preceded by detailed recording and excavation, ended in the mid 1980s.

Although the Hall was originally the focus of the manor of Baguley, the status of the building steadily declined after 1688, becoming little different to that of the surrounding farms. In its later years the building was normally let to tenants, and may even have been abandoned for a period in the 1820s.

Baguley Hall was scheduled as an ancient monument in 1924. The scheduling was revised as part of the Monuments Protection Programme in 1996. It was listed in Grade I in 1952.

DESCRIPTION

Baguley Hall (OSGR SJ 817887) lies about 2km south of the River Mersey, close to the Baguley Brook, in an area which now forms part of the Wythenshawe district of Manchester. Historically, Baguley lay in Cheshire, close to the boundary with Lancashire.

The Hall now stands alone within landscaped grounds of 0.85 hectares (2.1 acres), but historically would have been at the centre of a complex of service and farm buildings, none of which now survive. The site of the post-medieval farm buildings is believed to have been to the south of the Hall, but this has not been positively identified. The wider setting for the Hall was once farmland, but this historical setting was been entirely altered by the development of council housing during the inter-war period. The Hall's grounds are now entirely surrounded by housing, with a local shopping centre on the main road immediately opposite the entrance.

The building comprises an open timber-framed hall of the first half of the 14th century, aligned approximately north-south, with brick wings at either end. The south wing, built entirely of brick, is late 17th century in date, but the north wing includes the remains of a timber wing of the 15th century. A porch on the west side was added in the 16th century, and partially rebuilt in the 19th century.

The open hall is constructed of massive timber planks. It has a standard plan, with a cross-passage at the lower (north) end separated from the body of the hall by a spere truss and formerly by a screen, now gone. The north wall of the hall has three doorways which once led through into a service wing. Excavation has shown that the hall has been shortened by approximately two metres at the upper (south) end, presumably when the south wing was constructed towards the end of the 17th century.

The north wing, although faced in brick, includes elements of a timber wing constructed in the 15th century which replaced the earlier service wing. Surviving elements include several uprights of the south wall, and the floor framing of the upper storey. This wing also includes some post-medieval fittings, including 18th century panelling to one of the rooms, a number of 19th century fireplaces and joinery. The south wing is almost devoid of period details, with the exception of the main staircase, which dates from c.1700.

SIGNIFICANCE

Baguley Hall is one of the oldest and finest medieval timber-framed halls in north west England. The timber framing is a rare example of plank construction rather than the post and beam construction normally employed in halls of a similar age and status elsewhere in the region. Understanding of the building and its development has been significantly enhanced by the programme of building recording and excavation carried out between 1976 and 1980. Archaeologically and architecturally the Hall is of national significance.

The Hall is also of considerable significance to the local community, which values it highly as a rare example of an historic entity amidst the inter-war and later housing. The Hall has the potential to be of local significance as an educational and tourist resource, but the potential to develop this further is constrained by its comparatively small size and fairly specific interest.

CONSERVATION ISSUES

Use

The building is currently unoccupied, and has been since the completion of repairs to the envelope in 1980. No viable use has yet been identified. For these reasons, it is included in the Buildings at Risk Register.

Condition

Although repairs to the envelope were completed in the mid 1980s, the interior of the building was left unfinished. Much work needs to be done to make the interior presentable – there is no floor to the hall, for example, whilst various walls remain as bare bricks, or have inappropriate gypsum plaster finishes. Timber panelling in an upper room of the north wing requires additional treatment due to damage sustained during the repair programme.

The building has effectively been mothballed since completion of repairs to the envelope in the mid 1980s, with only basic maintenance since. As a result, parts of the structure have deteriorated in recent years – the roof, in particular, appears to require attention. There is damage due to water ingress, and also from condensation – there is little ventilation, and the building is at present unheated.

Setting

The historical landscape setting of the Hall was irrevocably altered by the development of the Wythenshawe housing estate in the inter-war period. Within the last five years the development of a former school playing field to the east of the site has brought housing within a few metres of the Hall. Nevertheless, the survival of landscaped grounds forms an appropriate and attractive setting for the Hall when viewed from the main road to the west.

Security

The building is alarmed, and secured against intruders. There is a key-keeper, who checks the security of the building regularly. Nevertheless, the location of the

building and its unoccupied state give cause for concern – it is vulnerable to vandalism, unauthorized entry and arson.

Records

The building was extensively recorded before and during the repair works. Excavation was also carried out within and to the west of the hall, and in parts of both wings. The results of the recording programme were published in the *Archaeological Journal* for 1989. The archive of drawings of the standing building, the excavation archive and the photographic archive are held at the NMR in Swindon.

Collections

Finds from the 1976-80 excavations are held at the EH store at Helmsley, Yorkshire.

Access

There is currently no public access. Access for EH staff, contractors etc must be arranged with the key-keeper.

Presentation

There is currently no presentation on site, nor is information about the building readily available to the public. There is no guidebook.

Ownership

Ownership passed to the Minister of Public Building and Works through a deed of gift executed by the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Manchester dated 13 January 1969. The deed of gift contains a covenant, under which the building will revert to Manchester Corporation if it ceases to be included in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments.

POLICIES

Use

A viable and sustainable use needs to be found for the building, which will take full account of its significance and historic interest. This should by preference be within the existing envelope – proposals for extensions or other new-build will have to be fully justified in relation to English Heritage's policy on enabling development.

Conservation

Repairs to the interior of the building need to be completed, and additional work carried out to the envelope to counteract the effects of some 20 years of limited maintenance. Any new use identified for the building should aim to have no adverse impact on historic fabric through provision of necessary services, security measures etc.

Viability

As always in such cases, a balance will need to be struck between an economically viable end use which secures the future maintenance of the historic building, and any detrimental impacts which the introduction of such a use might have. If it is not possible to achieve an acceptable balance conservation principles must take priority.

Maintenance

A maintenance programme needs to be put in place to ensure that the envelope is maintained in future to an appropriate standard using methods suited to the age and construction of the building.

Setting

Any viable new use should protect or indeed enhance the setting of the Hall. Proposals for car parking, service access and landscaping need to take account of the sensitivity of the site and of its surviving setting.

Access

Any new use identified for the building should include provision for public access to the timber-framed hall. Public access to the north and south wings of the building is not an essential requirement. Options for disabled access will need to be carefully considered, taking account of the special interest of the building.

Interpretation

Provision for public access should also include provision of interpretive material.

SOURCES

Publications: Philip Dixon, Colin Hayfield and Bill Startin, "Baguley Hall, Manchester: the Structural Development of a Cheshire Manor House", *Archaeol J*, 146 (1989), 384-422.

Office reports: Baguley Hall Terrier File (ref: TER 100600)

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