



News and events

- The application to refurbish the north end of The Mill to create a shop or exhibition space has been refused. Councillor Gill Clark 'called in' the application which was discussed at a Plans North meeting on Monday night. Despite most of the councillors being supportive of the general concept, the application was refused again, mainly because of problems with the required documents.
- **Next meeting:** Our next meeting will be at 7.30 on Wednesday 21 November when Alan Thomson will give a talk '*From dung heaps to designer clothes: shopping in Hertford in the mid-17th century*'.

Notes and queries

A planning application to restore the Old Bakery has been submitted to St Albans District Council (ref: 5/2019/2209). The application includes an archaeological report about the building, produced by Archaeological Solutions Ltd. It is a long and detailed report (171 pages, of which 46 are main text) and makes fascinating reading.



The report shows that (a) the building has a complex history (b) the damage done in 2018 is not as great as had been feared.

The earliest part of this timber-framed building is the two sections at the back. The section that can be seen from in front of the Post Office is probably late 16th century, though some of the timbers in the frame have been re-used from an earlier medieval building. The section to the south (towards the river and invisible from the road) is roughly contemporary. Both have been much modified over the years. The smoke-blackened timbers in the roof are the result not of domestic use but something more functional, eg a bakery.

At the front, the right-hand gable end is 18th century and has been 'pushed out' from an original 17th century building. The section behind the left-hand gable end is early 18th century but, like the rest of the building, has been rebuilt and altered many times. The middle section and gable

end appear to have been added in the 19th century to fill the space between the two wings.

Much of the frontage was rebuilt after a car crashed into it in 1989. The pargetting is a 'crude approximation'; there is some original pargetting on the upper north wall.

Inside the building, as well as the timber framing, there is an enclosed staircase that may be 18th century and has probably been repositioned, some original floorboards, and parts of the original flint walls. The internal chimney stack is probably 18th century.

Of the 2018 work, the report concludes that, while it 'appears to have had a substantial and deleterious effect on the listed building ... giving the impression of wilful destruction', detailed analysis shows that most of the 'soft stripping' was confined to 'modern interventions' that had used poured concrete, plastic sheeting, gypsum plaster, modern bricks, and 'cementitious' rather than lime-based materials. The cast-iron oven that was removed dated from the mid-20th century and was 'of slight industrial interest'. Ironically, the removal of modern cladding, partitions and concrete floors has made the detailed historical research possible.

Some minor repairs and reinstatements are required but the only major reinstatement is of the ceiling and upper floor behind the right-hand gable end. This must be done with care, using the original materials wherever possible.