



STICKLEYS HOUSE SIBFORD GOWER

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT
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WORLLEDGE ASSOCIATES

Worlledge Associates is an Oxford-based heritage consultancy, committed to the effective management of the historic environment. Established in 2014 by Nicholas and Alison Worlledge, Nicholas came to private practice with over 35 years' experience working in heritage management for local authorities. This intimate knowledge and understanding of council processes, and planning policy and practice, helps us to work collaboratively with owners and decision-makers to manage change to the historic environment.

Our team of dedicated researchers and specialists believe in the capacity of the historic environment to contribute to society's collective economic, social, and cultural well-being. We aim to identify what is significant about places and spaces in order to support their effective management and sustain their heritage value. We have worked with a wide range of property-owners and developers including universities and colleges, museums and libraries, large country estates, manor house, farmsteads, cottages, town houses and new housing sites.



INTRODUCTION

The intelligent management of change is a key principle to sustaining and conserving the historic environment. Historic England and successive government agencies have published policy and advice that extends our understanding of the historic environment and develops our competency in making decisions about its management.

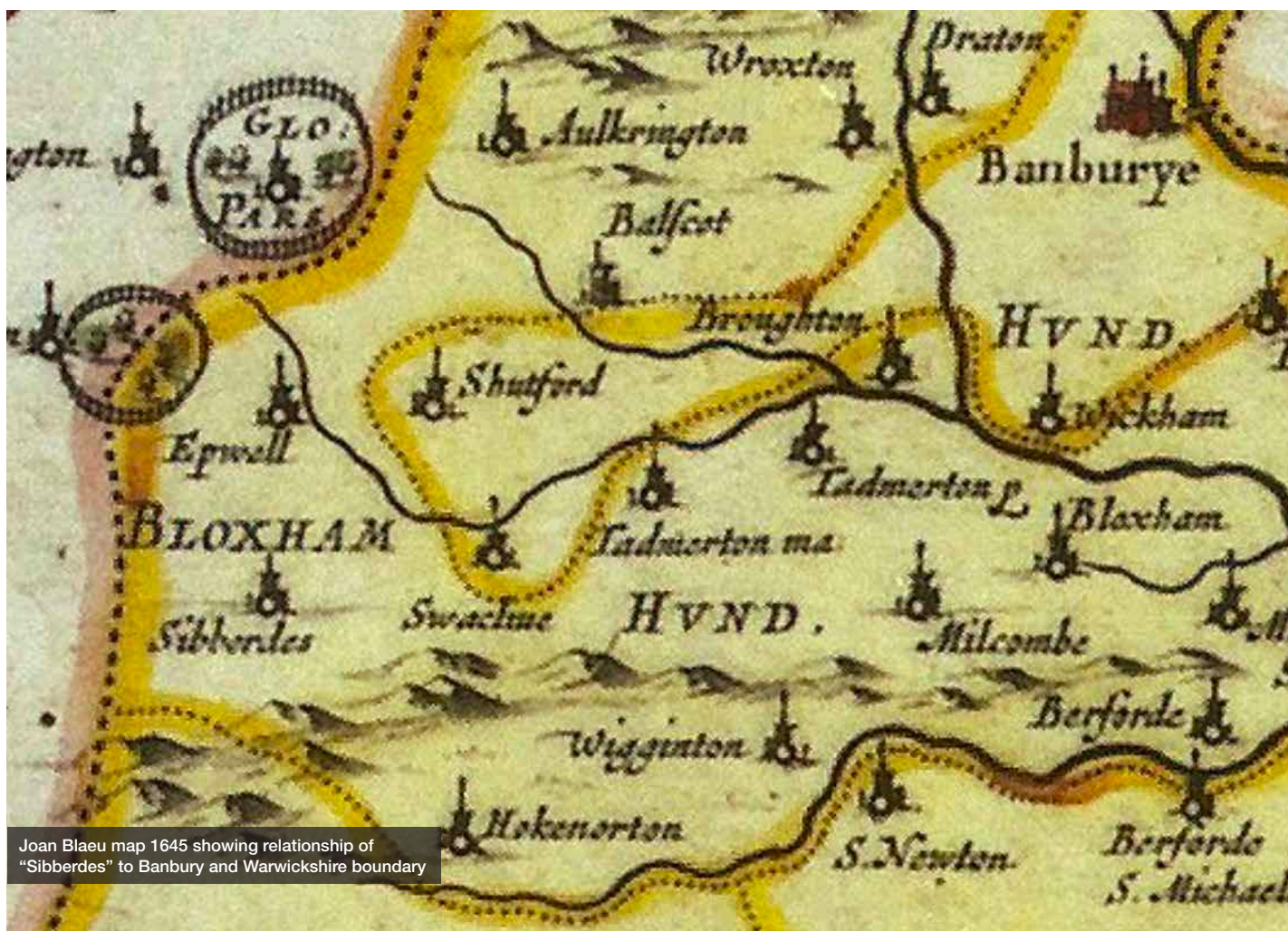
Paragraphs 4-10 of Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 2 (Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment) explains that applications (for planning permission and listed building consent) have a greater likelihood of success and better decisions will be made when applicants and local planning authorities assess and understand the particular significance of an asset, the extent of the asset's fabric to which the significance relates, and the relative importance of that significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework, in paragraphs 189 and 190, expects that both applicant and local planning authority take responsibility for understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the impact of a development proposal. Local authorities should, the NPPF explains, consider the significance of the asset in order to 'minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'.

It has never been the intention of government to prevent change or freeze-frame local communities. Current policy and good practice show that change, if managed intelligently, can be successfully accommodated within the historic environment. This not only sustains significance but can add to the way we experience and understand historic places.

This report has been prepared to assess the impact on the heritage significance of Stickleys House, a grade II listed building in the village of Sibford Gower, Oxfordshire. It provides a brief history of the village, and of Stickleys House, also known from the late 19th century as The Gables. Following a description of the house and based on the history and fabric a summary is given of its heritage significance, in accordance with Historic England's guidelines.

The relevant National Heritage Policy, Guidelines and advice for managing change to heritage assets is set out, against which the impact, or otherwise, of the proposed development of the heritage significance will be assessed.



BRIEF HISTORY OF SIBFORD GOWER

Sibford Gower lies in part of the Hundred of Bloxham, in the ancient Parish of Swalcliffe. This covered an area of 6,946 a. on the high ground of north-west Oxfordshire, about 5½ miles south-west of Banbury, its western boundary forming the county boundary between Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. The parish contained the townships of Swalcliffe (1,679 a.), Epwell (1,140 a.), Shutford East (409 a.) and West (952 a.), Sibford Ferris (1,008 a.), and Sibford Gower (1,758 a.). In 1841 the ancient parish was divided by the creation of the ecclesiastical parish of Sibford Gower, which included Sibford Ferris and Burdrop.

Place name evidence suggests that Saxon settlement of all the principal hamlets was comparatively early. Sibford Gower has always been the largest of the three settlements; in the 13th century it was called Great Sibford; Gower was the name of the lords of the manor in the 13th century. The site of the village was probably chosen because of the springs and the near-by ford. In 1327 27 people were assessed for tax in Sibford Gower, and in 1523 as many as 39. For the hearth tax of 1665 27 people including 7 'paupers' were assessed, 7 of them on 3 or 4 hearths, the remainder on 1 or 2. In 1774 it was said to contain 45 houses.



AGRICULTURE

At Sibford there is early evidence of a two-field system of crop rotation. As in other north Oxfordshire parishes a four-field system had been generally adopted by the early 17th century. Quarters occur at Swalcliffe in 1716, at Sibford Gower in 1750, and Sibford Ferris in 1784. At the end of the 18th century the whole parish was inclosed in stages. At the time of inclosure in 1773 Sibford Gower consisted of one large open field called Broad Sibford field of 80 yardlands. The award of 1774 divided 1,666 a. between 48 proprietors. The Sibfords were characterized by the number of small owner-occupiers. In 1785 there were 35 proprietors in Sibford Ferris and 44 in Sibford Gower.

In 1851 there were some 53 farmers in the whole former parish. In Sibford Gower, apart from one 300 a. farm, which employed 15 labourers, the 18 farms in the hamlet were all less than 200 a. in extent, and the average size of a holding was 65 acres.

OTHER TRADES

The inhabitants of Swalcliffe were not, and indeed had never been, totally dependent on agricultural employment. Carpenters occur frequently in the documents from the 16th century, Blacksmiths often combined their work as smiths with farming. There was also references in 17th through to the 19th century of trade in cloth. Several probate inventories contain references to comparatively large amounts of hemp and linen yarn, as well as to made up woollen and linen cloth. A dyer of Sibford Ferris occurs in 1754, and a wool-

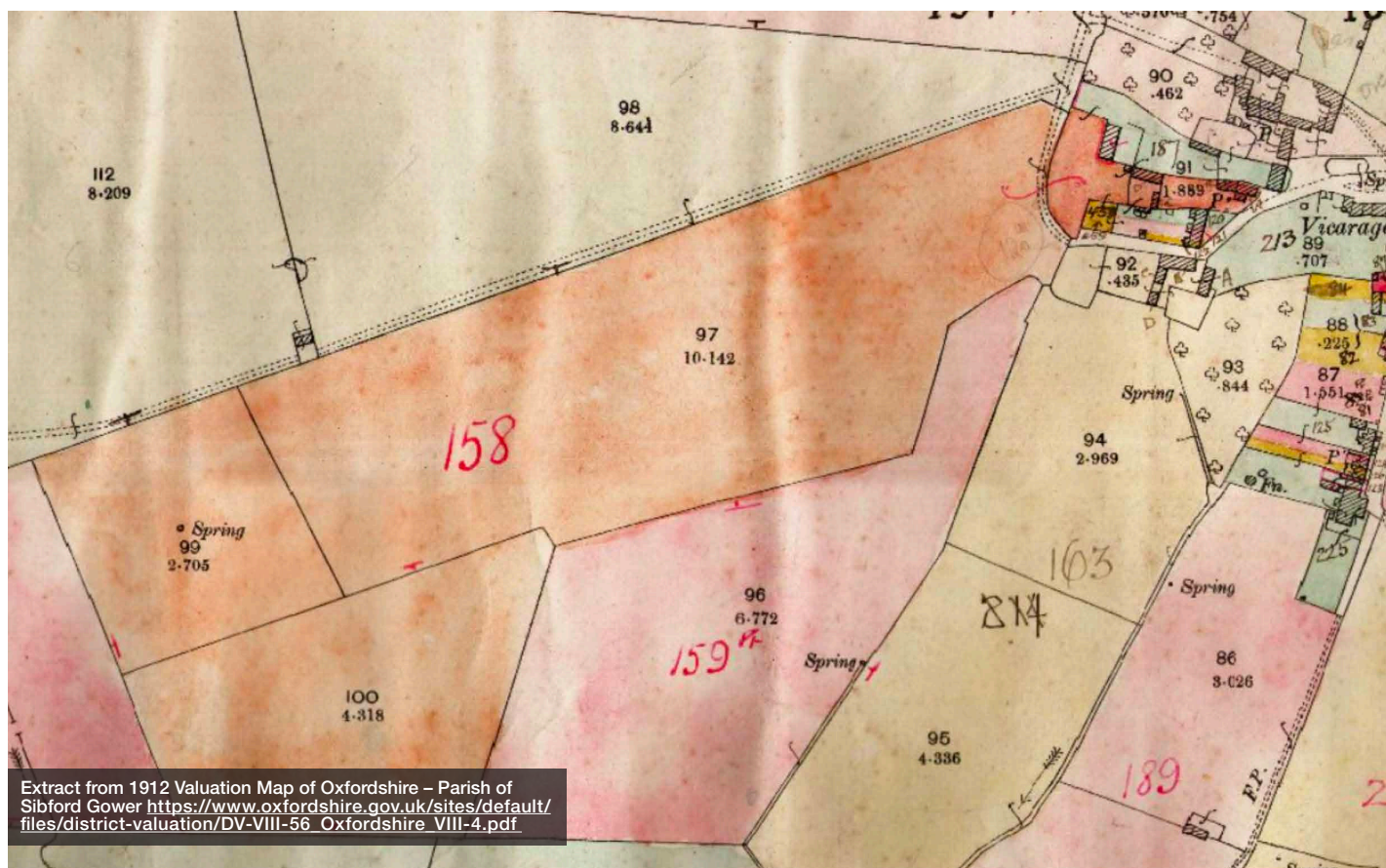
comber and a weaver died in the same village in 1761 and 1779. Home-weaving continued into the 19th century. Plush or shag-weaving was an established industry in the parish by 1747.

There was a long tradition of clock and watchmaking among the Quaker families of Sibford. Thomas Gilkes (c1665–1743) was a pioneer of the clock-making industry in north Oxfordshire. Another Quaker clockmaker, John Wells, was probably trained under Gilkes, for he had early connexions with Sibford. A Richard Gilkes (b. 1767) was making clocks in Sibford in 1800.

NON-CONFORMITY

The parish had a relatively high number of non-conformists. Anabaptist and Quaker groups were established in the parish during the 1660s. By 1669 Quakers were meeting regularly in a house in Sibford, and by 1682 they had a meetinghouse and burial ground. The size of the community can be gained from the Quaker register which records at least 17 Sibford family names in the 17th century, over two-thirds of them from Sibford Gower. In the 18th century as many as 47 different family names are recorded and in 1808 the two Sibfords had 24 Quaker families with over 100 members

The population of the parish in 1881 was 431, a fall from 449 in 1871. The population of the parish continued to decline to 320 in 1901 and 301 in 1931, but post WWII has grown.



Extract from 1912 Valuation Map of Oxfordshire – Parish of Sibford Gower https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/district-valuation/DV-VIII-56_Oxfordshire_VIII-4.pdf

BRIEF HISTORY OF STICKLEYS HOUSE

Stickleys House was included in the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (now the National Heritage List for England) in 1998. The entry reads:

House. 3 builds. C17 with later additions and alterations. Squared coursed ironstone. Steeply pitched stone slate roof laid to diminishing courses. Stone end and brick ridge stacks. Stone coped gables with moulded kneelers. Situated gable end to road. 3-unit plan with addition forming roughly L-plan. 2 storeys plus attic. Entrance has C20 porch and plank door. Right end has 3-light metal casements in wood frames to ground and first floor. 2-light similar attic window. Wrought-iron casement fasteners, springs, lead comes and wood lintels. Left part has C20 windows and 2 half-dormers. **Interior not inspected.** [emphasis added]

Documentary research suggest that the first use of the name of 'Stickleys' to identify the property was in the 1912 District Valuation Records. It is identified as portion 158 on the valuation map. Henry Wilks was identified as the owner with John Fowler the tenant. It included the house with outbuildings and three fields to the south west. It comprised 16 acres 1 rod 7 perches.

A search of Newspapers has not found the use of this name prior to this date, but it does appear in 1952, when there is an announcement of the wedding of a daughter of Mr M R Lamb (Major name not rank) Richard) of Stickleys Farm, Sibford Gower. (Banbury Advertiser, 24 September 1952 page 5).

In 1954, however, when Mr M R Lamb's son gets married, the announcement refers to his address as The Gables. (Banbury Guardian, 16 December 1954 page 10). This appears to suggest a move, but in March 1967 Mr M R Lamb placed an advertisement for the sale of the "dead and live farming stock and equipment" at 'The Gables & Stickleys Farm, Sibford Gower'. (The Tewkesbury Register, and Agricultural Gazette 17 March 1967). A photographic image held by the Oxfordshire History Centre has a picture of the house taken 1987-89 with the name 'Gables', clearly confirming this as a former and/or joint name. (POX0410548)

On searching records under 'The Gables', the 1891 census identifies a Mr Lamb, 28 as living at 'The Gables' with Mary his wife and Arthur a son. He describes himself as a 'farmer'. In 1901 William and Mary and now a family of eight children are living at the property. William describes himself as a farmer and assistant overseer.

Unlike earlier census returns neither the 1891 nor the 1901 census enumeration provides acreages for farms. In 1907 it appears that William Lamb, who described himself as a farmer and fruit grower, ran into financial difficulties, with a notice posted in March 1907 to his creditors, requesting they sent details of the debts and claims to an appointed trustee. (Banbury Guardian, March 1907 page 5) He subsequently migrated to Canada with his family, but unfortunately died the following year.

William Lamb was the eldest son of Arthur John Lamb, who in the 1871 census is listed as a farmer of 104 acres employing 5 men and 3 boys. In 1881 he is listed as a farmer of 104 acres. In neither case is the farm named. There is, however, some evidence to suggest that it may have been Stickleys, and that on Arthur's death in 1889 the holding passed to William, his eldest son, which was quite typical.

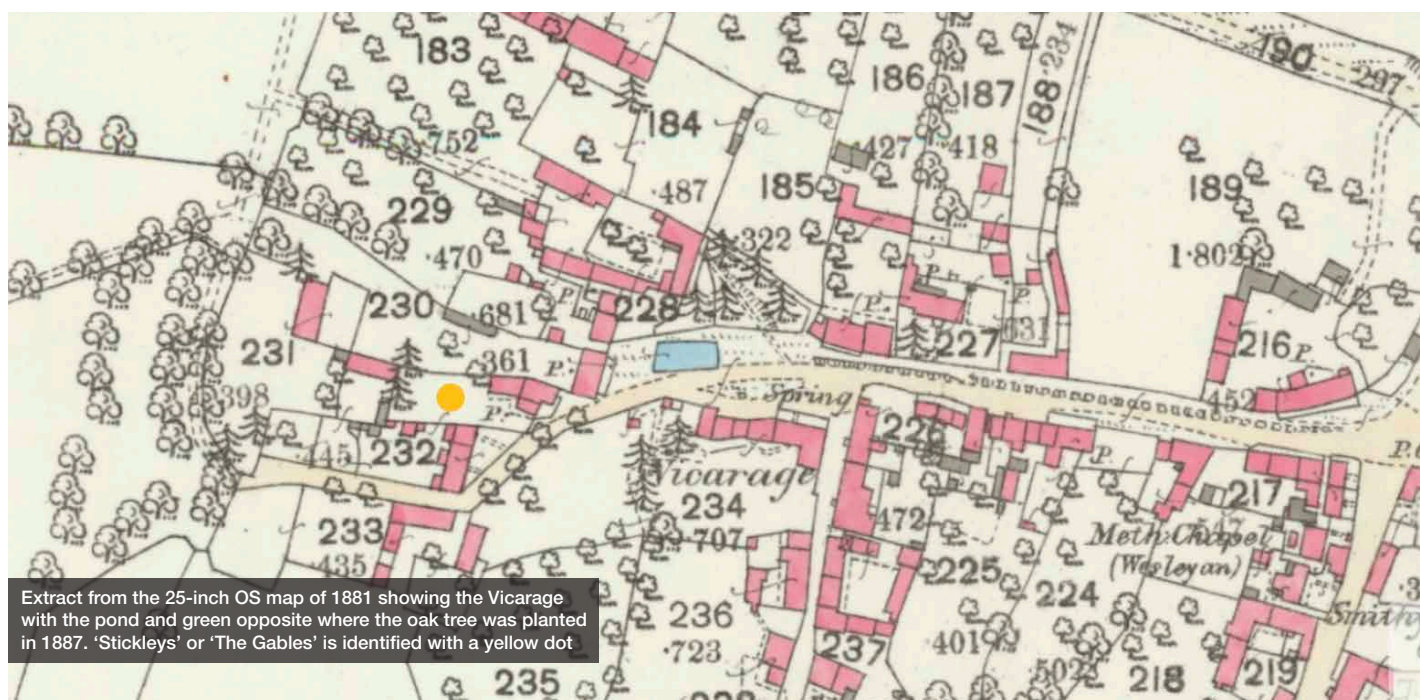
Evidence that it might have been the same farm is found in a newspaper report in 1887 of the planting of a Jubilee Oak in Sibford Gower in November 1887. (Banbury Advertiser 17 Nov 1887 page 5)

"the Jubilee Committee of this village completed the work entrusted to them by their fellow parishioners in June last by planting a handsome young oak, some fifteen feet in height, on the small green opposite the Vicarage House. The tree was raised from an acorn sown almost fifteen years ago on the adjoining farm of Mr Arthur Lamb"

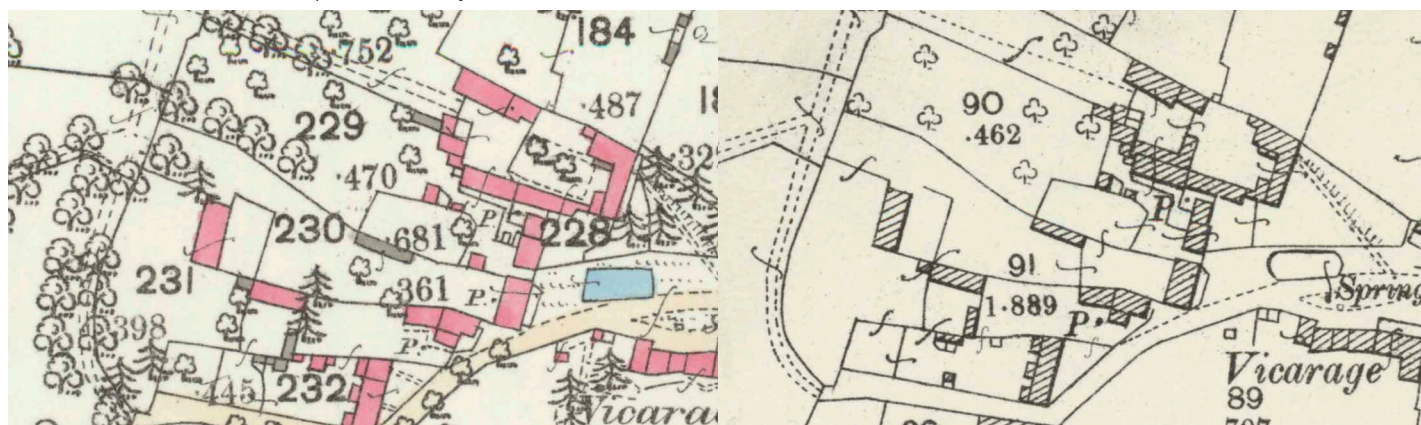
That the holding in 1881 of 125 acres was reduced to just over 16 acres in 1912, may relate to the financial difficulties faced by William Lamb in 1907, but this is speculation. It has not been possible to identify who occupied the property in the 1911 census.

Newspapers identify 'The Gables' in a 1935 advertisement for selling eggs and day-old chicks, with a Mr M R Lamb the contact. He is not a direct relative of William Lamb who occupied the house 1890-1907, but a member, of the extended Lamb family that had been living and farming in the parish for 300 years. Many of the family in the 18th and 19th century were Quakers.

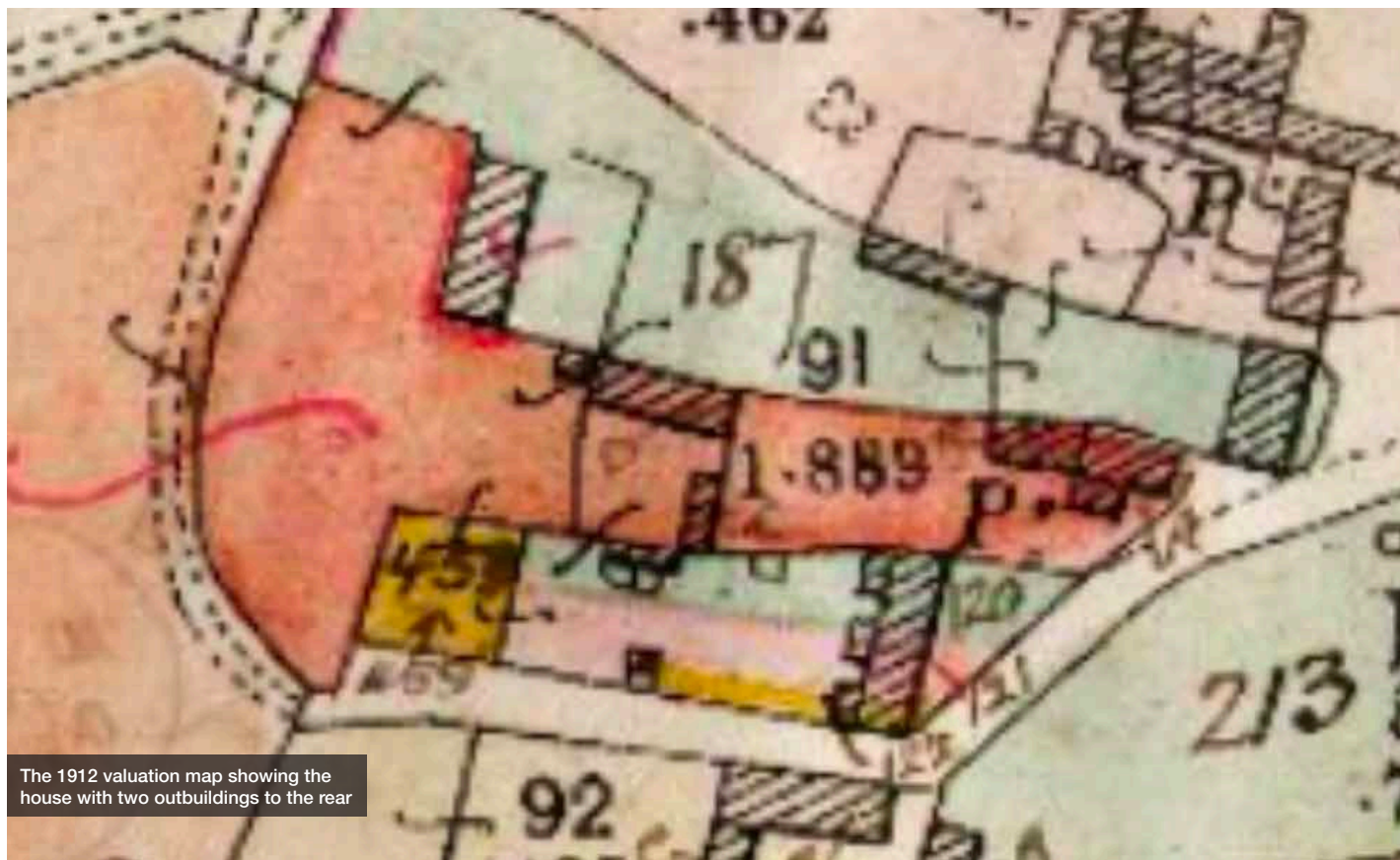
As noted earlier, post WWII the name 'Stickley' and 'The Gables' appear to be intertwined. It is not thought the holding was any bigger than the 1912 valuation. The 1967 sale only included 9 cows, 20 hens, 2 tractors, pick-up baler, a milker and farm tools, suggesting a small holding rather than a farm.



The 1881, and later 25-inch maps show the layout of the site.



1881 25-inch OS map (portion 231) and 1899 25-inch OS Map (part portion 91 with P). The pink colouring on the 1881 plan denotes stone construction grey timber



The 1912 valuation map showing the house with two outbuildings to the rear

Benjamin son of John Soden of Sibford Gower buried there 12/1
 William Stickley of Sibford Gower buried there 12/11
 John Burlingam of Shutford buried there - - - 12/

Extract from the Quaker Register for Sibford Gower 1765 showing he was buried on 12 November

The 1898 plan interestingly shows portion 91 as extending to 1.889 acres suggesting that the range of cottages to the north and south formed part of the holding. The 1912 valuation plan shows that by this date portion 91 was in multiple ownerships.

THE NAME "STICKLEYS"

The use of a personal name for a property, suggests that a person or family either owned, or built it, or occupied it for a considerable period such that the name passes into common usage. As noted in the history of the village 'Gower' comes from a 13th century manorial owner, and similarly 'Ferris' from the owner. The attachment of a family name frequently applied to farms and houses.

An online search has established that in the 18th century a Stickley family lived in Sibford Gower. The Poll of the Freeholders of Oxfordshire, 1754, lists a William Stickley in Sibford, indicating he owned a property in the parish. He was a Quaker, and the Quaker records show that he was married to an Elizabeth, who was buried in Sibford in 1754, and described as the spouse of Wm Stickley. William died in 1765 and was buried at Sibford Gower.

It appears that a male offspring of this William Stickley resided in the parish for in 1781 a Martha Stickley was born, followed by a sister Ann in 1784.

In 1794 a William Stickley and a Martha Stickley are witness to a will of a Dorcas Ryman. http://wills.oxfordshirefhs.org.uk/az/wtext/ryman_009.html It is thought likely this was a father and daughter. Interestingly, the Trustee Witness was a Joseph Lamb, a major farmer and elder of the Quaker meeting house in Sibford. As noted above the Lamb family are recorded as occupying Stickleys.

Martha married in 1820 and moved out of Sibford Gower. There are no Stickley family members in the village in the 1841 or a subsequent census. Ann, Martha's unmarried sister is noted as living in Martha's household in the 1851 census outside Oxfordshire.

It is assumed that William Stickley, and potentially his forebears were farmers, with the name being associated in the 1912 valuation to the holding. It is also noted, however, that many Quakers in Sibford Gower, and in the broader Swalcliffe Parish had other occupations.



Postcard of Stickleys s 1910-20

20TH CENTURY HISTORY

There is a post card view of Sibford Gower which shows Stickleys. It is undated but c 1910-20. The roofs are covered in thatch with no dormers to the roofs.

An aerial photograph dated 1960, while grainy clearly shows the roof as still thatched and no dormer windows.



Extract from a 1960 aerial image showing Stickleys or The Gables with a thatched roof located between two straight ranges of cottages



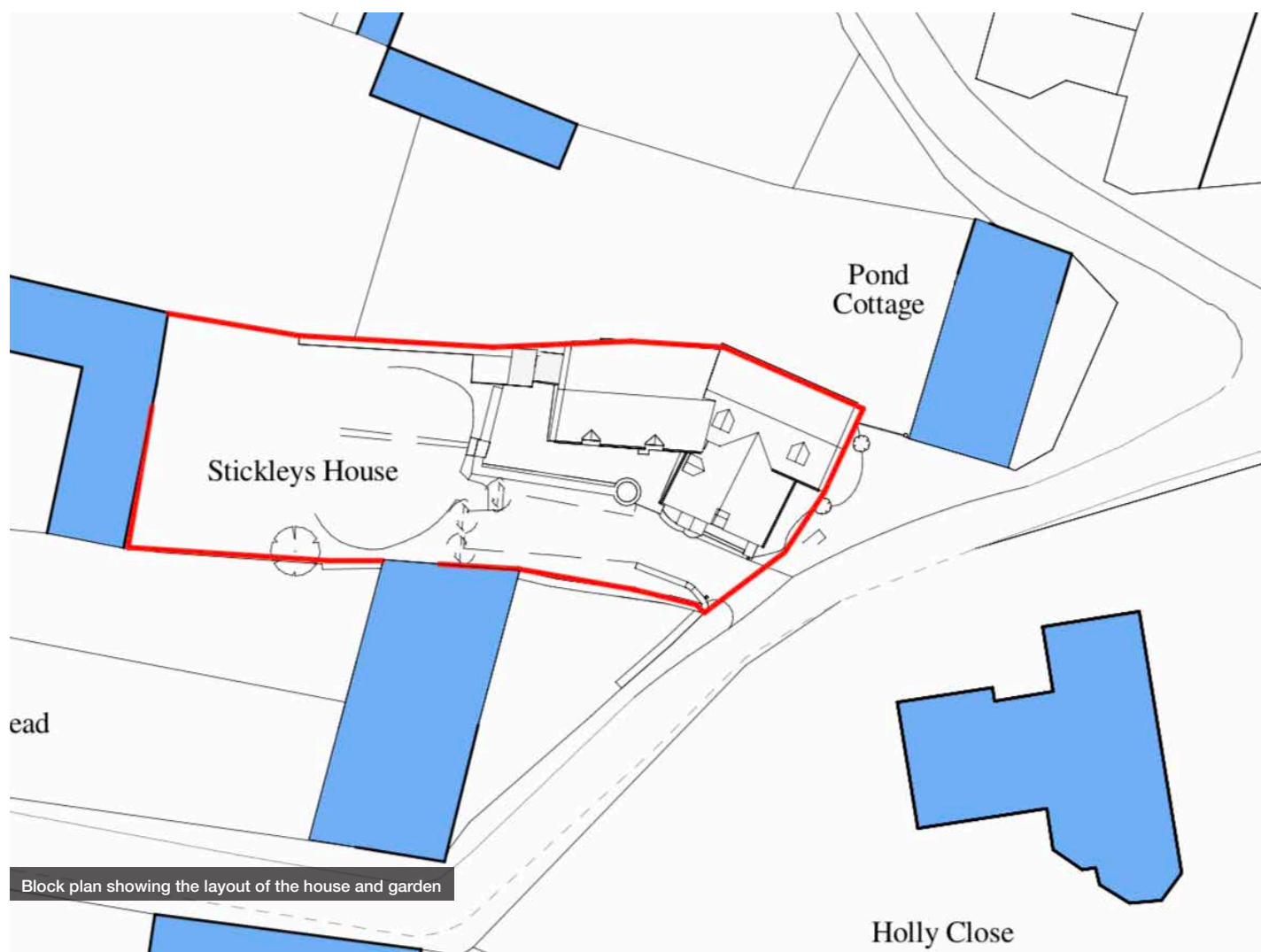
Gables 1987-89 showing the replacement of the thatch, rebuilding of the chimneys, and placement of dormers within the roof

While the live and dead stock was sold in 1967, no record has been located of the sale of the house. A previous Heritage Report by a Rose Todd (Heritage Statement of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment, undated) indicates that the property fell into a very poor state post 1967 and was comprehensively renovated in the 1980s. The 1987-89 image of the house 'Gables' shows major changes from the c1910-20 image and the 1960 aerial.

As the 'renovations' pre-dated the listing, and inclusion of the property in the Conservation Area, it is unlikely any planning approvals were required for these works. In 1995 listed building

consent was granted for 'Renovation to existing windows and stonework. Partial demolition and rebuilding of chimneys with reclaimed red bricks' (95/01327/LB)

On 13 June 2019 a listed building consent application was submitted to Cherwell District Council for 'Relocation of staircase, minor internal alterations associated with staircase and alterations to a single window and external door'. (ref: 19/01101/LB). This was withdrawn on 12 September 2019 following concerns raised by the Conservation Officer to aspects of the proposal.



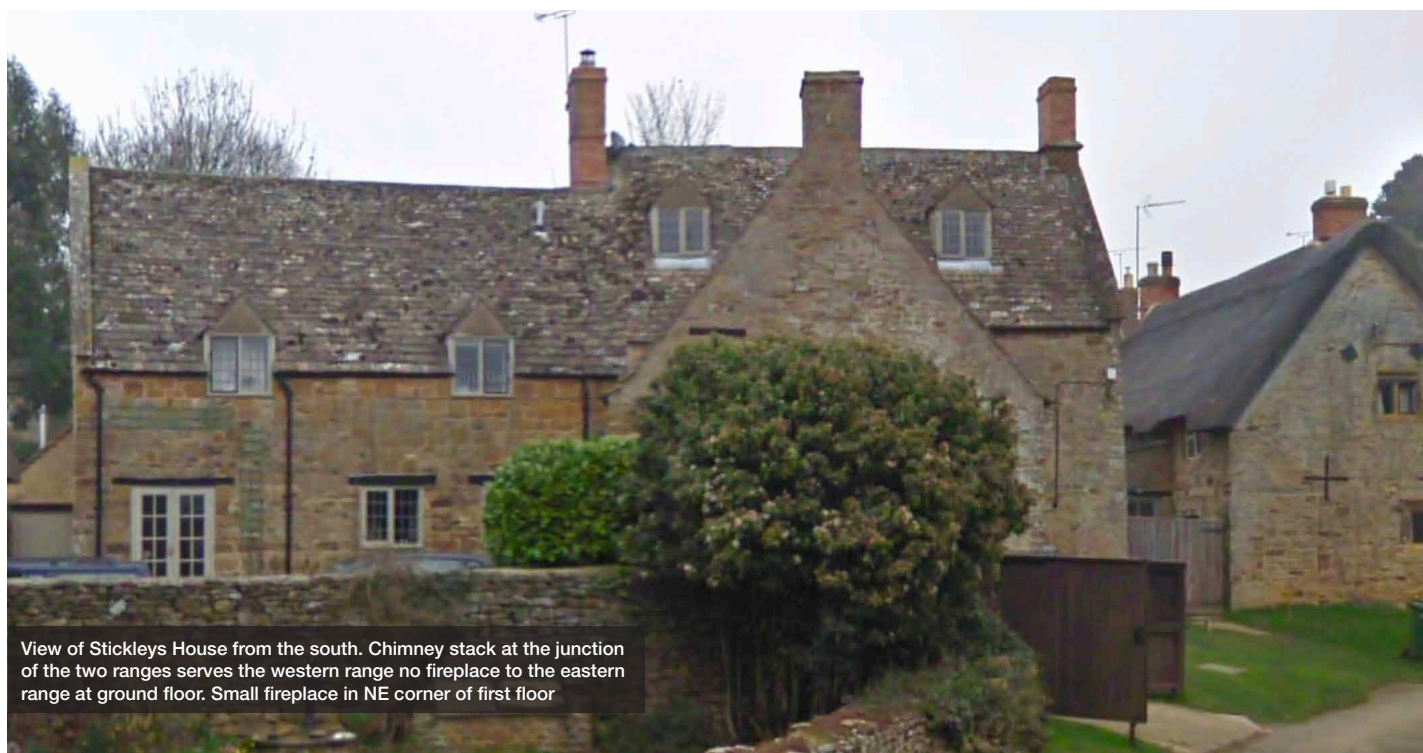
DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSE

The house lies on the west side of the road at the western end of the village. It is constructed of local stone with stone tiled roof. It comprises three linked ranges, all with gabled roofs.

The range closest to the road is two-storey with attic. The ground floor is lit by triple casement windows to the gable and north. The first floor has a triple casement to the gable and double casement to the north. The attic is lit by a double casement to the attic, with two dormers in the south slope. It has a chimney to the apex of the gable.

The south range is single storey with an attic lit by a dormer in the west roof slope and single window to the gable. There is a triple casement to the east side of the ground floor. There is a porch to the south gable. There is a chimney stack to the gable.

The west range is single storey with an attic. There is a pair of French doors and two double casements to the south and double casement to the west. The attic is lit by a double casement to the west and two small dormers in the south wall and roof slope. There is a small lean-to extension to the west elevation.



View of Stickleys House from the south. Chimney stack at the junction of the two ranges serves the western range no fireplace to the eastern range at ground floor. Small fireplace in NE corner of first floor

It is noted from the 1998 list description that the house was not inspected internally and presumably ascribed a date on the basis of the exterior, as being 17th century with later additions to the west, and south, with the southern wing being early 19th century.

A Heritage Report, prepared by Rose Todd, suggests the main phases of development are:

- The two-storey with attic range to the east the first phase;
- The single storey range to the west (rear) the second stage;
- The single storey wing to the south the third stage, built before the 1881 OS survey;
- Small attachment to the western range, possibly quite modern.

From a brief inspection of the house and the existing plans of the house, it is considered the phasing was as follows:

- The single storey range to the west with the large chimney stack and deeply chamfered principal joist is the first phase 17th century;
- The two-storey range with attic range is the second phase, possibly replacing a previous range late 17th or early 18th century;
- The range to the south is the third phase early 19th century;
- The small attachment to the western range post-dates the 1:2500 OS and is probably part of the 1980s restoration.

In relation to this suggested phasing is noted that the plan form of the eastern wing is not a true oblong, which it is highly likely it would have

been, if built as a free-standing house. It runs off slightly obliquely from the western range. Also it does not have a principal fireplace. The chimney at the eastern end serves the western wing, while the stack at the eastern gable serves a small corner fireplace on the first floor. A principal floor joist, noted above the stair at first floor, is not chamfered or possessing any tooled finish, suggesting that it was not designed to be seen.

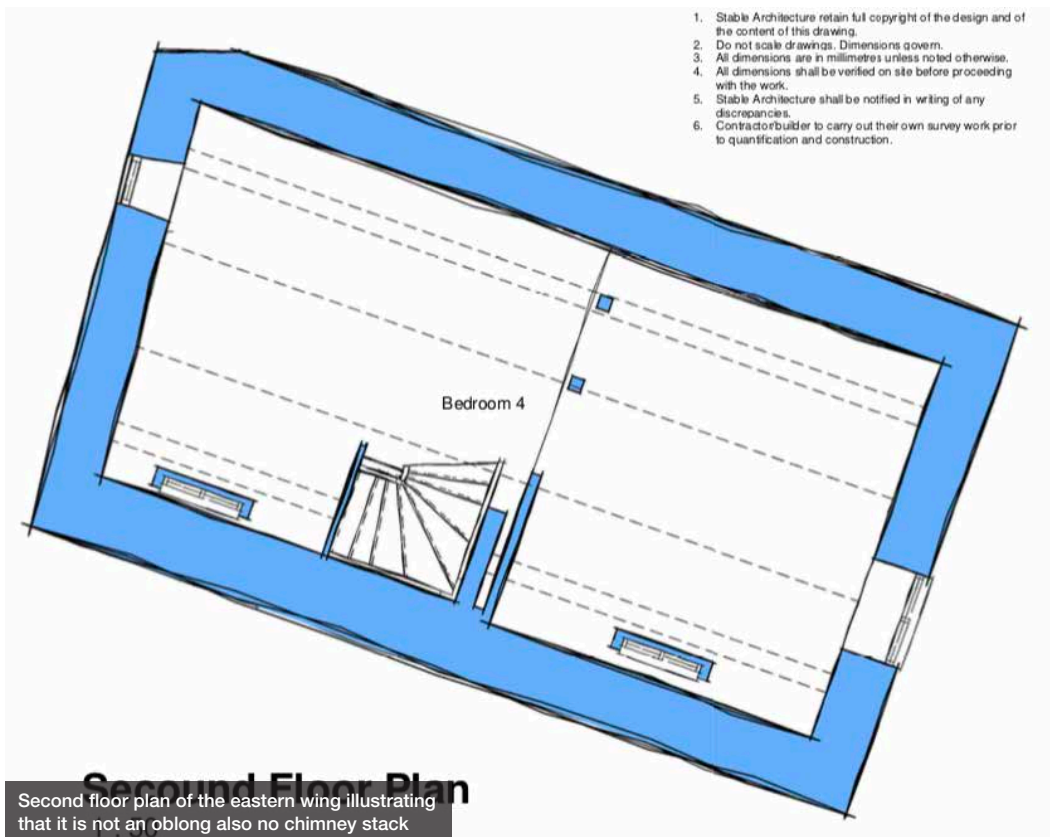
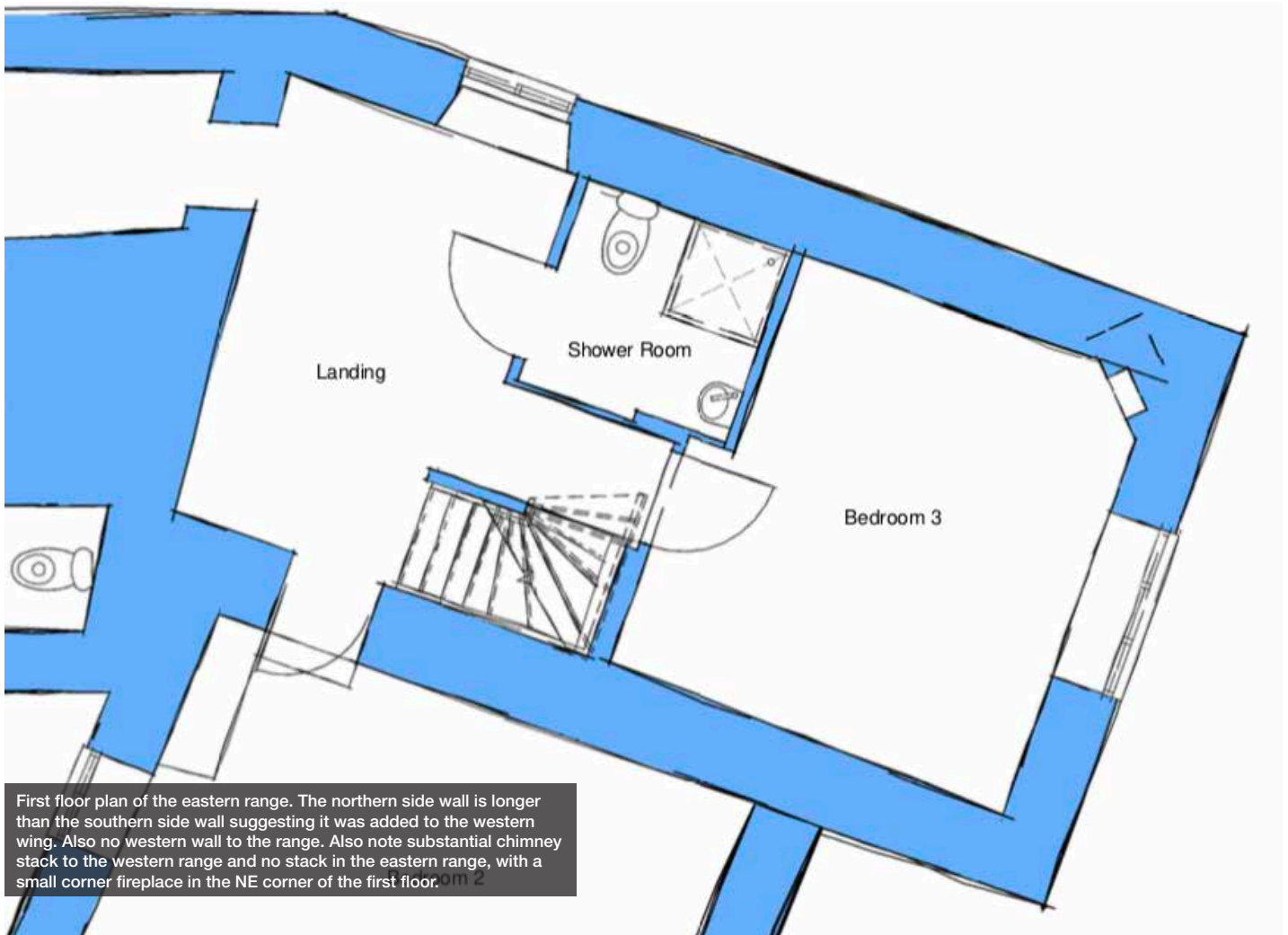
It is also thought that, in the absence of a principal chimney stack with only a small fireplace on the first floor, the second phase of building may have originally been for a non-residential commercial use undertaken in conjunction with the use of the farm holding. The absence of heating to a range of this size is uncommon.

No documentary evidence has been found to support this proposition, although from the history of the village, it is clear Sibford Gower and the broader Parish was involved in a range of non-agricultural occupations in the 17th through to the mid 19th century.

It is clear from comparing the c 1910-20 image, the 1960s aerial, the 1897-89 image and current images that Stickleys underwent considerable changes post 1960, with Rose Todd considering this happened in the 1980s. The principal external changes were:

- The removal of the thatch and roofing in stone slates
- Installing dormer windows in the roof of the western, south and eastern ranges to form attics or add additional light. (Rose Todd suggest that the window to the third-floor gable in the eastern range may date from this period)
- Window in the south gable





Internally the changes are less clear but appear to have been quite interventionist. The recent lifting of carpets to the first floor to expose the floor finishes, and joist ends, and a more detailed inspection of the current staircase suggest a major renovation took place to the eastern wing to facilitate the use of the attic spaces of the eastern and western ranges. These changes are discussed in detail in assessing the impact, or otherwise of the proposals on the heritage significance of Stickleys House.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Significance is defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) as:

‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’.

Placing the asset in its historical context and describing its characteristics and appearance is an important component of the evidence gathering exercise. This both informs our understanding of a site’s significance and the contribution of its setting to this significance.

- Built in stages from the 17th to the early 19th century, with late 20th century alterations, it provides evidence of the phases of development and evolution of Sibford Gower over this period, with the late 20th century renovations, while interventionist, illustrating the acceptance and desirability of adapting and conserving historic building.
- Sibford Gower was characterised by relatively small farms, with an average size of holdings in 1851 being 65 acres. Serving as a farm house to a small farm until the early 20th century and from 1912 until the 1960s to a small holding, it provides evidence of a modest sized village farm house, characteristic of modest farms in Sibford Gower.
- As an example of the specific vernacular architecture of North Oxfordshire which developed between the 16th and 18th centuries, with the use of local stone, steep gabled roof forms suitable for thatch or stone slates, and gabled chimneys.
- While outwardly a traditional vernacular house, its evolution has resulted in an unusual plan form, with the eastern range, which presents as a building of some architectural status, being substantially unheated, raising the potential of an original non-residential use?
- While altered during the late 20th century restoration, the building retains architectural elements and features of significance, including the wrought metal casements, the fireplace and deep chamfered principal floor joist to the western range, and wide floorboards to the first floor of the eastern range.
- Constructed in local stone and employing tradition vernacular architectural forms and detailing, it provides an aesthetically pleasing building which contributes to the architectural character of this part of Sibford Gower and the Conservation Area. The use of local materials contributes to local distinctiveness and helps to place the house geographically.
- Evidence suggests that the name Stickleys relates to a Quaker family of this name living in Sibford Gower in the 18th century, but possibly earlier, until the early 19th century. William Stickley listed as a freeholder in the 1754 poll of Oxfordshire, and his wife, Elizabeth were buried in the Quaker burial ground in 1765 and 1754 respectively, with relatives witnesses to a will in 1794. Stickleys provides evidence of the long tradition of family names remaining with places across generations.

Alterations, including inserting non-structural partitions, and other fabric and details during the late 20th century renovations are not significant.

NATIONAL HERITAGE POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in Feb 2019, the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

Stickleys House is listed Grade II and sits within a designated conservation area. It is thus a designated heritage asset.

In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset the NPPF (Feb 2019) states in paragraphs 193 and 194 that:

‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.’

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (March 2014) seeks to provide further advice on assessing the impact of proposals explaining that what matters in assessing the level of harm (if any) is the degree of impact on the significance of the asset. It states:

‘In determining whether works to a listed building (or its setting) constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.’

The NPPF explains in paragraphs 195 and 196 the differences between ‘substantial’ harm and ‘less than substantial’ harm, advising that any harm should be justified by the public benefit of a proposal.

In cases where there is less than substantial harm, paragraph 196 states:

‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use’.

The PPG also seeks to provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes ‘public benefit’, as it is the public benefit that flows from a development that can justify harm. In weighing the public benefits against potential harm, considerable weight and importance should be given to the desirability to preserve the setting of listed buildings.

Public benefits can flow from a variety of developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social, or environmental progress as described in the NPPF, paragraph 8. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits. It explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits, such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
- Securing the optimum viable use for a heritage asset.

Works of alteration or extension or demolition need not involve any harmful impact and may be necessary to ensure a building has a viable future. Historic England explains its approach to managing the historic environment and how we experience places stating in in 'Conservation Principles' (April 2008) paragraph 88:

'Very few significant places can be maintained at either public or private expense unless they are capable of some beneficial use; nor would it be desirable, even if it were practical, for most places that people value to become solely memorials of the past'.

It also points out in paragraph 92:

'Retaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible'.

It also comments in paragraph 86:

'Keeping a significant place in use is likely to require continual adaptation and change; but, provided such interventions respect the values of the place, they will tend to benefit public (heritage) as well as private interests in it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and private investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognised heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process'.

Amongst the Government's planning objectives for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are properly informed. Historic England's 'Good Practice Advice Notes 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets' (Dec 2017), paragraph 19, explains that,

'amongst the Government's planning policies for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are based on a proportionate assessment of the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset'.

It recommends the broad approach to be followed:

Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;

Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);

Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance;

Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm;

Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.



From this summary of the national heritage management policy framework it is clear that there is a complex assessment decision-making process to navigate when considering change within the historic environment. Central to any decision is the recognition that history is not a static thing and that the significance of our historic environment derives from a history of change.

The policies and advice described above provide an essential framework to guide designers and decision makers. In this respect it is worth noting recent case law and the advice it offers on the application of policy and legislation as set out below

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

Sections 16 and 66 of the Act requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 72 requires a similar approach in relation to conservation areas.

The policies and advice described above provide an essential framework to guide designers and decision makers. In this respect it is worth noting recent case law and the advice it offers on the application of policy and legislation as set out below.

Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants District Council, English Heritage and National Trust, 18th February 2014, and *Sevenoaks District Council v The Forge Field Society*, March 2014, have brought into sharp relief the weight and importance that decision makers should give to the duty under Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

In *Jones v Mordue & Anor* [2015] EWHC 539, the Court of Appeal explains how decision makers can ensure this duty is fulfilled: a decision maker will have complied with the duty under sections 16, 66(1) and 72 by working in accordance of the terms of the NPPF paragraphs 131-134. This report follows this advice to ensure consistency with the duty to preserve or enhance.



PROPOSALS

The proposals of 2019 were to include:

EASTERN RANGE

- Remove the existing modern staircase on the ground floor and the surrounding modern timber stud work walls currently forming the end of the kitchen and install a new modern stud work wall
- Remove a stone nib to the western wall. Trim and adjust existing floor joists and boards to the first floor to install a new staircase along the western wall of the range. Re-install a WC
- Install a new window in the south eastern corner of the reconfigured kitchen

WESTERN RANGE

- Remove the existing modern double French doors from the south wall, partially infill the opening with stone and install a new double casement with all the profile and detail elements matching the two adjoining windows
- Remove stone from the western end wall of the range, salvage for reuse for infilling the removed double doors, and install new double doors.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON SIGNIFICANCE

From a response from the Conservation Officer of Cherwell District Council in response to the previously submitted Listed Building application reference: 19/01101/LB, no fundamental objection was raised to some aspects of the proposals, including:

- The removal of the glazed French doors to the south elevation of the western wing and forming a replacement window opening with a window to match the two existing in this elevation.
- Installing a pair of glazed doors to the western (rear) elevation of the range, provided they are of the same dimension as those removed.

Issues were raised with all other aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 86 of 'Conservation Principles' (April 2008) is fundamental to the approach to be adopted in managing change to heritage assets.

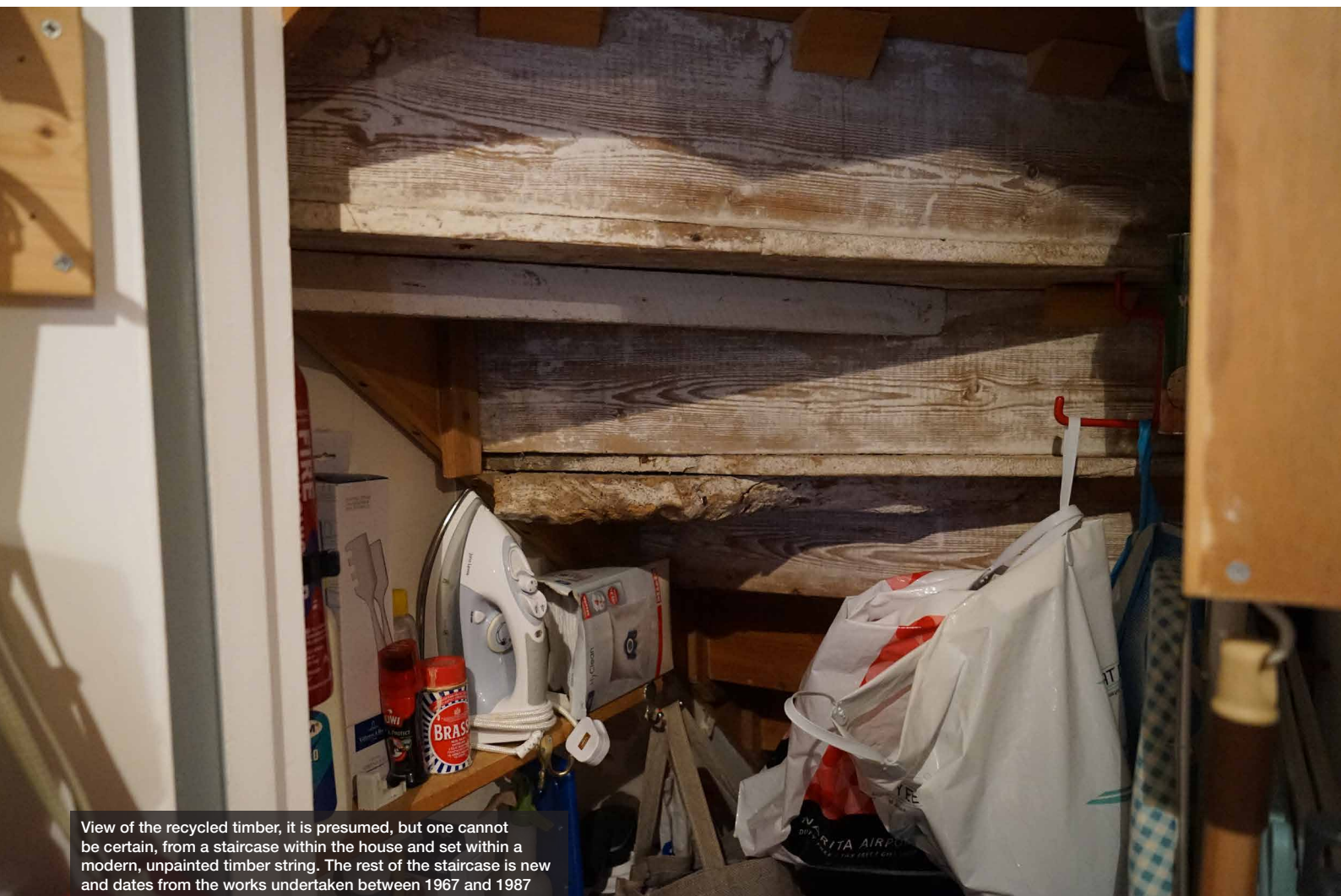
'Keeping a significant place in use is likely to require continual adaptation and change; but, provided such interventions respect the values of the place, they will tend to benefit public (heritage) as well as private interests in it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and private investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognised heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process' [emphasis added]

It is clear from the historical development of Stickleys House, that it has constantly evolved to meet the requirements or desires of successive owners; but appears by the 1980s it had fallen into disrepair and was probably under threat. The works undertaken prior to 1987 resulted in some fundamental changes, such as the removal and replacement of the thatch with stone slates, placement of dormer windows to all three ranges, and internal re-ordering, particularly to the eastern range. While arguably a rather interventionist approach judged by current conservation principles, the building was provided with a viable residential use, to meet 1980s expectations, and at a time when it was not statutorily protected by inclusion in the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (1998) of within a Conservation Area.

It was the patronage and private investment of the then owner which provided Stickleys House with a future which is now statutorily protected. Forty years on lifestyle standards and expectations have also evolved, and if private owners and managers are to be encouraged to invest in the long-term preservation of their heritage assets, they should not be discouraged from further adapting their building, provided the impact of such works cause no or minimal harm to the recognised heritage values, or significance of the building.

REMOVAL OF THE STAIRCASE

There is a general agreement that the vast majority of the staircase from the ground to first floor, including the enclosure is all new work. Three treads show evidence of being older, however, they have newly sawn edges and are fixed into a completely new string. From this it cannot be confirmed that these treads represent a surviving element of an earlier staircase. Even if they were, the historic value that they now hold is negligible. Given they are also in softwood it is probable that the timber derives from the 19th or early 20th century.



The principal issue of concern centres around if this is the original (or early) location of the staircase or where the staircase was placed prior to the 1980s renovation? Given the modest qualities of the building there is no archive evidence to interrogate and so in the absence of surviving documentation interpreting the building phases has been carried out by analysis of the surviving fabric and by comparison with examples of the placement of staircases in other similar houses.

There is evidence to suggest that the work undertaken to the house pre the 1987 image was quite substantial, not only externally as detailed above but also internally.

Careful lifting of the floor boards at the top of the first flight of stairs shows that The floor joists, which are deeper than wider, and are not morticed and housed as would be expected, but rather crudely notched and laid over the structural transverse beams. This means that the joists were laid after the building had been constructed. The dimensions and spacing of the joists suggest they are not 17th century but later. The surface finish on the joists vary across the floor, again suggesting some level of reuse. The floorboards, which are wide and early, do not line through, with the undersides of those exposed covered in limewash. There is an area of modern chipboard, in the NW and NE corners of the first floor, almost certainly dating from the 1980s. This building sequence suggests that this area may have been the location for an earlier staircase, and would be a more logical location.

The recent inspection also revealed that the roof framing to the eastern range is modern, and the staircase from the first to the second floor is of modern construction. These images are included in Appendix 1.

This inspection suggests that this eastern wing has undergone previous considerable renovations with the re-used floor joists, and floorboards. The areas of chipboard, new roof framing and new staircases to the first and ground floor which includes three salvaged stairs, presumably from within the house, all date to the 1980s renovation.

As both staircases in this wing are essentially made of new timber, this does not support the assertion made by the Council officers in relation to the withdrawn (previous) proposal, that because the staircase from the first to the second floor is in the same position as the ground floor stair then the stairs must be in its original position, the age of these staircases, essentially from the last renovation does not support such a conclusion.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT

The impact of the proposal is that three steps, reasonably presumed to be from a former staircase within the range, will be removed, together with the surrounding modern stair framing, which is not significant fabric. The steps do provide evidence of the dimension, rise and going, of the former stair and may indeed have been salvaged to argue the replacement stair was 'like for like' thus avoiding meeting the modern building regulations applying at the time? This does not, however, in itself demonstrate the staircase is in the original position, just that the new staircases may have replicated the one surviving in the building prior to the renovation.

It is clear that the proposal will remove a staircase that formed part of the 1980s renovation, it is far less certain, however, that it removes a staircase from its original, or more accurately its prior location.

Even if the proposition is accepted that the staircase is a new replacement of one in a prior location, the impact of removal, (following recording), and replacement with a new compliant staircase elsewhere, will result in no harm. If the local planning authority considers that there would be some harm, then that would be less than substantial harm and at the lower end of that scale.

NEW LOCATION OF STAIR

The proposed new location will involve the removal of a small part of an existing wall currently projecting into the eastern range of the building to provide clearance for the staircase. It does not appear to have any structural role, and given the suggested phasing of the evolution of the house, it is possible that this is a piece of walling from a building which the eastern range later replaced? It does not appear to serve any obvious historic function. While backing onto the stack in the western range there is no evidence of a fireplace in this location? While the proposal will result in this small loss of fabric, it is not considered it will cause harm to the significance of the house. A new opening will be required for the staircase which will be carefully framed, and the existing opening covered.

BENEFIT

The proposal is in response to a health and safety issue raised by the current owner in relation to the use, and fall, on the current non-compliant stairs. While this is of personal benefit, it is considered that addressing this practical difficulty will encourage the owner to invest in the upgrading of the facilities of the house, as proposed, and therefore its long-term sustainability and preservation for the benefit of the building and the Conservation Area in which it is located.

The history of the house is one of adaptation and change, as evidenced by renovations carried out in the early 1980s, and the recent uncovering of the framing of the first floor. The proposal would add a further layer, and while it will involve some removal of fabric, paragraph 92 of Conservation Principle (2008) states, 'retaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible'.

CONCLUSION

Stickleys House, named after a Quaker family in Sibford Gower in the 18th century, but possibly earlier, it has evolved since the 17th century in a number of phases, with three distinctive ranges, all in place by 1881. This evolution has resulted in an unusual plan, with the substantial eastern range lacking heating, raising the possibility it originally served a non-domestic purpose. The history of the parish notes non-agricultural professions, particularly amongst Quakers, combined with farming from the 17th to 19th century.

In the 19th century it served as the farmhouse to a small farm tenanted by the Lamb family, Quakers who had been in the village since the 17th century. In 1912 it is recorded as serving a small holding of just over 16 acres, with the land attached to the west. In 1967 the live and dead stock was sold from the holding. A c1910 post card shows the house with thatched roofs, which were still evident on a 1960 aerial image.

It is understood the house fell into complete disrepair, resulting in a major renovation in the early 1980s, which significantly alteration to its external presentation, with a change to the roof material, inserting dormers, double doors, addition of a porch. The internal alterations are not documented, but also appear to have been quite substantial, particularly to the eastern range, with replacement staircases, insertion of partitions, installing a kitchen and WC.

The house does not appear to have been altered since the 1980s renovation. The current owners are wishing to undertake some relatively modest changes to the house, including upgrading the old kitchen, but also to address a safety issue (raised due to a fall) with the non-compliant staircase, constructed as part of the 1980s renovation. In the case of the lower stair, the new stair incorporated three steps from what is presumed to have been a staircase in the house, location undocumented.

This aspect of the proposal has raised concerns, firstly through the loss of three steps – the rest of the construction, including the support for the steps, all being modern, and the loss of evidence of the potential original location of the stairs. Recent removal of carpets to the first floor and careful lifting of floorboards shows a history of reused joists and floorboards, including areas of chipboard from the 1980s. The original, or more accurately prior location of the staircases, is unresolved. Notwithstanding, it is not considered the proposal to remove what is substantially a modern stair, incorporating three earlier steps, will cause harm to the heritage significance of the house, or if less than substantial harm, at the low end of impact.

While the installation of a compliant stair will address a concern of the owner, and provide a private benefit, the ongoing sustainability and thereby preservation of heritage assets is carried out almost entirely by investment by private owners, recognised by paragraph 88 of Conservation Principles (2008). The public benefit derives from their preservation and continued contribution to the historic environment. The investment by the current owners will maintain Stickleys House and ensure its contribution to the Sibford Conservation Area, which is recognised in the Conservation Area Appraisal, without compromising its heritage significance.