



Heritage Statement

Stone Hill House,
Bloxham

April 2021 | Project Ref 5057D

HCUK Group is a multi-disciplinary environmental practice offering expert advice in archaeology, heritage, landscape, arboriculture, and planning. It began life in 2010 as Heritage Collective LLP, before becoming Heritage Collective UK Limited in 2014. In the coming years diversification saw the addition of Archaeology Collective, Landscape Collective and Planning Collective, before all strands came together to be branded under a single umbrella: HCUK Group, based on the acronym for the original company. A home working company since the beginning, we are pleased to employ a talented workforce of consultants and support staff, who are on hand to advise our clients.



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Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Relevant Planning Policy Framework.....	3
3.	Background and Development	7
4.	Statement of Significance.....	17
5.	Proposals and Impacts	26
6.	Conclusion	40

Appendices

App. 1 Scale of Harm table (HCUK, 2019)

App. 2 GPA3 Assessment: Historic England's Guidance on Setting

1. Introduction

- 1.1** This report has been prepared by HCUK Group on behalf of Bloxham School. It relates to an application to restore and amend a series of outbuildings to the rear of Stone Hill House to enable the expansion of its current use as a Boarding house for the school. Stone Hill House is a grade II listed building within the Bloxham Conservation Area. Cherwell District Council (CDC) are the determining local authority and this report seeks to provide proportionate information on heritage values and significance to assist with decision making.

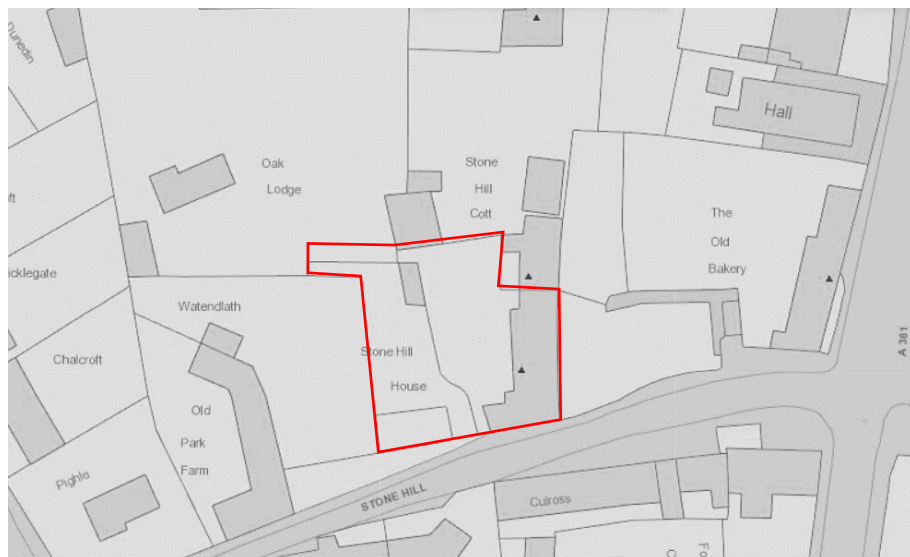


Figure 1: Site location, the whole area is washed over by the Conservation Area.

Background

- 1.2** The proposal affecting Stonehill is presented to CDC within the broader framework of a School Masterplan which looks at the future of the school and the various opportunities and constraints in which it operates. Stone Hill House is one of several Boarding Houses which need to grow in capacity in the near future to secure the School's ongoing viability as an educational institution. A full statement of the educational context is provided by Edgars.
- 1.3** This report presents a baseline heritage assessment in line with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which expects applicants to be able to explain the significance of heritage assets in a proportionate way. It also contains a heritage

impact assessment considering the effect of the proposal on the identified significance of the listed building and the conservation area. It does not undertake the planning balance, which is a matter for the Council though the applicant's position is presented in the Planning Statement by Edgars.

- 1.4** Pre-application discussions with CDC were undertaken in late 2020 and the design scheme presented here by Acanthus Clews Architects has developed to respond to concerns and suggestions made during that process and following detailed heritage assessment and input on the historic development of the site.
- 1.5** A site visit was undertaken in May 2020 to inform this assessment. Photographs taken during the site visit are used within to this report. Reference is made to architectural drawings by Acanthus Clews Architecture and to a planning statement from Edgars Planning Consultants.
- 1.6** Due to the constraints in place during 2020 no archival visits have been possible though detailed online research has been undertaken. This is not thought to have limited the understanding of the buildings presented here and the amount of detail provided is considered proportionate to the proposals presented to decision makers.

Key Considerations

- 1.7** The key consideration presented within this Heritage Statement is whether or not the proposals for the Stonehill House site cause harm – that is erosion of heritage values – to the significance of Stonehill House, or to the character and appearance of the Bloxham Conservation Area.

2. Relevant Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1** The decision maker is required by sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building and its setting when exercising planning functions. The decision maker must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the significance of the listed building, and there is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm its heritage significance.¹
- 2.2** There is a broadly similar duty arising from section 72(1) of the Act in respect of planning decisions relating to development within conservation areas.
- 2.3** For the purposes of this statement, preservation equates to an absence of harm.² Harm is defined in paragraph 84 of Historic England's Conservation Principles as change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.³
- 2.4** The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as being made up of four main constituents: architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The assessments of heritage significance and impact are normally made with primary reference to the four main elements of significance identified in the NPPF.
- 2.5** The setting of a heritage asset can contribute to its significance. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:
- The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.*
- 2.6** Historic England has produced guidance on development affecting the setting of heritage assets in The Setting of Heritage Assets (second edition, December 2017),

¹ Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited v East Northamptonshire District Council and others [2014] EWCA Civ 137. This principle has recently been confirmed, albeit in a lower court, in R (Wyeth-Price) v Guildford Borough Council.

² South Lakeland v SSE [1992] 2 AC 141.

³ Conservation Principles, 2008, paragraph 84.

better known as GPA3. The guidance encourages the use of a stepped approach to the assessment of effects on setting and significance, namely (1) the identification of the relevant assets, (2) a statement explaining the significance of those assets, and the contribution made by setting, (3) an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and significance of the assets, and (4) consideration of mitigation in those cases where there will be harm to significance.

2.7 The NPPF requires the impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset to be considered in terms of either “substantial harm” or “less than substantial harm” as described within paragraphs 195 and 196 of that document. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that substantial harm is a high test, and case law describes substantial harm in terms of an effect that would vitiate or drain away much of the significance of a heritage asset.⁴ The Scale of Harm is tabulated at Appendix 1.

2.8 Paragraphs 195 and 196 of the NPPF refer to two different balancing exercises in which harm to significance, if any, is to be balanced with public benefit. Paragraph 18a-020-20190723 of National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) online makes it clear that some heritage-specific benefits can be public benefits. Paragraph 18a-018-20190723 of the same NPPG makes it clear that it is important to be explicit about the category of harm (that is, whether paragraph 195 or 196 of the NPPF applies, if at all), and the extent of harm, when dealing with decisions affecting designated heritage assets, as follows:

Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.

2.9 Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the NPPF state that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset when considering applications that affect its significance, irrespective of how substantial or otherwise that harm might be.

⁴ Bedford Borough Council v SSCLG and Nuon UK Limited [2013] EWHC 4344 (Admin).

Local Policy – Cherwell District Local Plan (2006)

- 2.10** Policy C18 Development Proposals affecting a listed building: states that the council will have regard to preserving a listed building, its setting, and any features of interest it possesses.
- 2.11** Policy C21 Proposals for re-use of a listed building: requires the use of a listed building to be compatible with its character, architecture integrity and setting.
- 2.12** Policy C23 Retention of features contributing to the character or appearance of a conservation area: establishes a presumption in favour of retaining features that make a positive contribution to a designated conservation area such as buildings, trees, and walls.
- 2.13** Policy C27 Development in villages to respect historic settlement pattern: of particular importance in conservation areas, development should address the local historic plan form and settlement pattern.
- 2.14** Policy C28 Layout, design and external appearance of new development: in sensitive areas, such as conservation areas, development should be of a high standard and should (usually) utilise traditional materials.
- 2.15** Policy ESD 15 The Character of the Built and Historic Environment requires development to provide sufficient assessment of the impact of a proposal on heritage assets.

Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan (2016)

- 2.16** The Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan establishes the vision and guiding framework for the preservation and evolution of Bloxham as a rural ironstone village.
- 2.17** Of particular relevance is theme 2 protect and enhance or rural heritage. This theme establishes that development should meet the following objectives:
- 2.18** Objective A: Protect and enhance the conservation area. This is to be achieved through Policy BL10 which requires development, in accordance with the relevant conservation area appraisal, to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

- 2.19** Objective B Contribute to the rural character of the village. Within this objective, Policy BL11 requires that development should respect the local character, with particular consideration given to elements such as scale, massing and layout, densities, preservation of open space, good use of landscaping, and carefully considering the local vernacular materials including ironstone and brick.
- 2.20** Objective C Recognise the importance of space and key street-scenes and views. Considering the place-specific character of Bloxham, Policy BL12 calls attention to the need to preserve the rural nature of the village, open spaces including gardens, identified amenity spaces and recreational facilities, the tranquillity of public rights of way as well as key views intrinsic to the local sense of place including those of the church and Bloxham School.

3. Background and Development

3.1 Stonehill House is believed to represent an 18th century enlargement of an existing house, one of several in the village either built de novo or extended to provide larger and more comfortable 'gentlemen's residences' for increasingly prosperous families.⁵

3.2 The 1802 Bloxham Enclosure Map is the earliest large-scale mapping to show individual properties (Figure 2). At this date the house occupied the eastern end of a U-shaped block of buildings.⁶ There is a connection shown between the main block facing east, and buildings to the rear on the western side of the property. This map shows the High Street curving south eastwards down what is now known as Humber Street and crossing the brook by means of the Old (Great) Bridge. A second crossing to the west (New Bridge) was accessed via Stone Hill and the upper part of what is now Little Bridge Road. The present straight course of the High Street and a third bridge were added in the 1830s.⁷



Figure 2: Extract from 1801 Enclosure Map with approximate extent of the Site marked on.

⁵ Lobel & Crossley 1969.

⁶ Oxfordshire History Centre: Stockton Collection Box 39 x and QS/D/A/Vol.B.

⁷ Lobel & Crossley 1969.

3.3

The Enclosure Award does not refer to the house specifically, although in detailing the boundaries of three small adjacent land plots to the west (Nos. 302, 303 & 304), it shows that it was a farmhouse belonging to Harry Davis at this time. All three plots were small enclosures of former orchard and cottage garden which were the subject of an exchange between neighbours Edward Lamley and Harry Davis. The boundaries of Plot No. 304 are described as follows: "*Bounded on part of the north and on the east by the remainder of the Homestead belonging to the said Harry Davis, on the south by the street in Bloxham and on every other part by the Homestead of the said Edward Lamley in Bloxham aforesaid*", whilst Plot No. 303 was recorded as being bounded on the north and east by the rick yard belonging to Harry Davis.

3.4

The Bloxham tithes had been commuted in 1793, and so there is no mid-19th century parish tithe map which for the majority of parishes in England gave not only a detailed map of the buildings and property boundaries but also recorded the owners, occupier, significant house names, field names, landuse and acreage. Following the 1802 Enclosure, there is no further documentary information available for Bloxham until the 1841 census, which recorded the names, ages and occupations of each resident, and whether they were born in the county, but often makes it difficult to pinpoint their addresses.

3.5

In this case, the owner of the farm, Harry Davis, he can be identified with the Reverend H (Harry) Davis, clerk, aged 75 years, who together with his wife and three adult daughters, were living in Church Street, presumably at the vicarage close to St Mary's church; the enumeration district places them in the south part of Bloxham, east of the Turnpike Road.⁸ In his will, dated 8th December 1841, Reverend Davis left the farm (identified with Stonehill House) to his son Henry: "*all that messuage, tenement or farmhouse with the yards, gardens, outbuildings and appurtenances hereto belonging situate and being on the north side of the Town of Bloxham and now in the tenure or occupation of my said son, Henry.*"⁹ Henry was recorded in the census as a farmer, aged 45 years, living, together with his younger sister Sarah and one servant, adjacent to Thomas Gulliver's farm, in the northern half of Bloxham, on the west side of the Turnpike Road.¹⁰ They were still

⁸ National Archives HO107 Piece 875, Book 7, Folio 34, Page 18.

⁹ National Archives PROB 11/1954/428, 8th December 1941.

¹⁰ National Archives HO107 Piece 875, Book 6, Folio 7, Page 6.

there in the 1851 census, although by this time Henry was styled as a landed proprietor.¹¹ A contemporary trade directory of 1852 lists Henry Davis, Esq, Mrs (sic) S Davis and their neighbour Thomas Gulliver Esq amongst a list of 15 private Bloxham residents.¹²

3.6

Henry died in December 1858. His sister Sarah, a fundholder, was living alone when the 1861 census was taken.¹³ She was still there in 1871, an annuitant, aged 65 years, together with two servants.¹⁴ She died in 1877.¹⁵ The contents and furniture were sold by auction on 30th October 1877, as advertised in a local newspaper, *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (Figure 2).

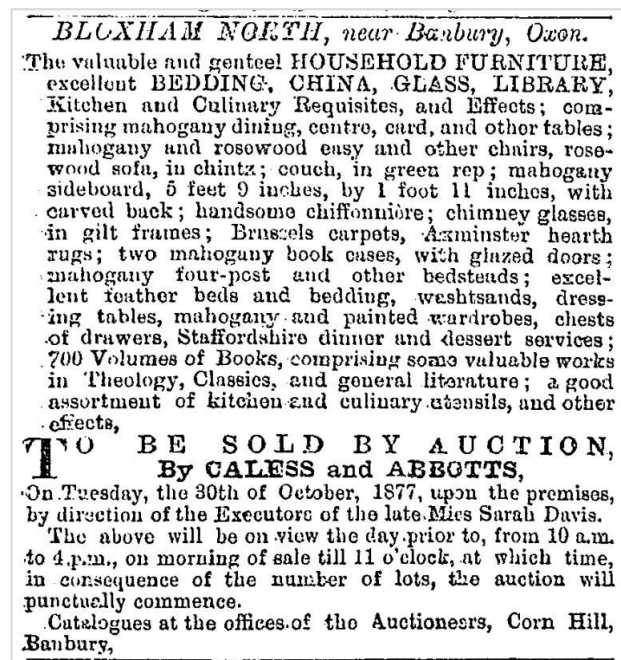


Figure 3: *Jackson's Oxford Journal* advertisement

3.7

Seeking the new occupants of Stonehill House in the 1881 census, in the absence of a house name, taking into consideration the proximity to Cliftons' blacksmith's smithy and the Plumb and Gregory families, who had been close neighbours of Sarah Davis, the most likely candidate is the household of George and Susannah Bartlett. The 1881 Ordnance Survey map suggests that the physical structure between Stonehill House and the rear outbuildings has been removed, but there are

¹¹ National Archives HO107; Piece: 1733; Folio: 93; Page: 15.

¹² Gardner 1852.

¹³ National Archives RG 9; Piece: 913; Folio: 72; Page: 5.

¹⁴ National Archives RG10; Piece: 1459; Folio: 79; Page: 21.

¹⁵ England & Wales National Probate Calendar (Index Wills & Administrations 1858-1995).

still a substantial range of outbuildings to the rear around a yard, along with discrete areas of gardens.

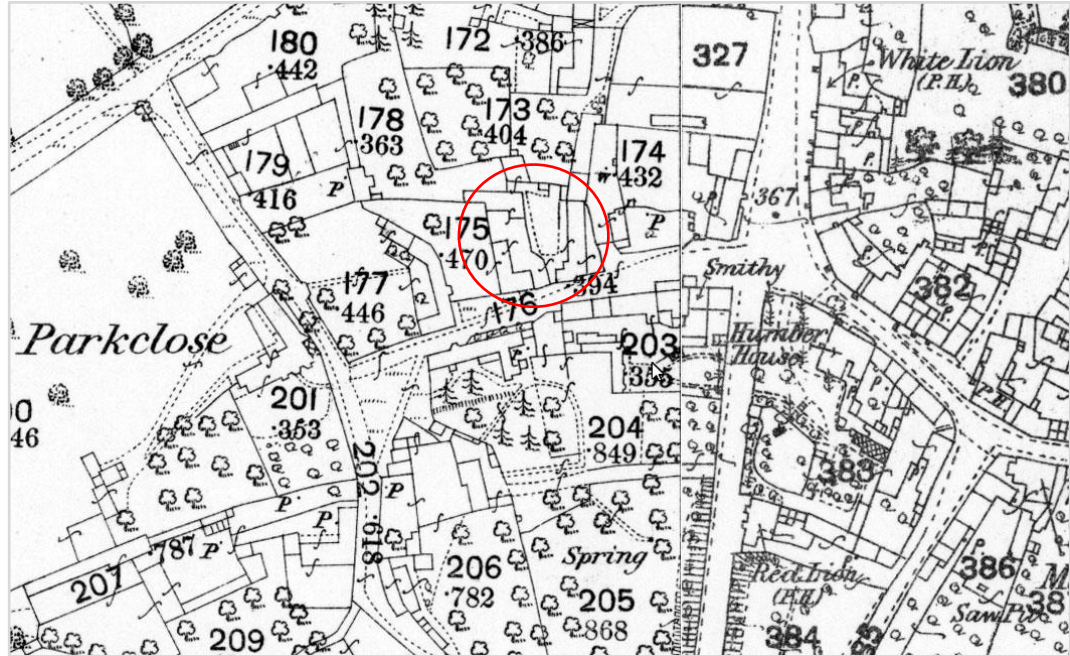


Figure 3: 1881 Ordnance Survey extract with site location identified showing various outbuildings, yard and garden areas.

3.8 George Bartlett was described as a 'builder & contractor employing 30 men'. The household included George and Susannah's five sons, together with two servants.¹⁶ George was a master carpenter and joiner from Deddington who was working in Bloxham by 1868, when his third son Richard was born. He was also named in a trade directory in the same year as carpenter in Bloxham¹⁷ and the 1871 census¹⁸ data records that they lived elsewhere in the town and their success may be reflected in the move to Stonehill house.

Barrett and Bartlett and Bloxham School

3.9 George Bartlett had gone into business with Thomas Barrett, builder and another Bloxham resident at Humber House. Thomas Barrett, aged 26 years, was also a carpenter¹⁹ and was intimately linked to Bloxham school having sold the plot of land and farmhouse that was to become All Saints School to J W Hewett in 1854.²⁰

¹⁶ National Archives RG11; Piece: 1522; Folio: 77; Page: 31.

¹⁷ Cassey 1868.

¹⁸ National Archives RG10 Piece 1459; Folio 78; page 20.

¹⁹ National Archives HO107; Piece: 1733; Folio: 94; Page: 16.

²⁰ Smith 1978.

Thomas Barrett was subsequently contracted to build the first stage of the school buildings under the direction of the diocesan architect, G.E. Street. Financial difficulties led to the auction sale of the school buildings in 1859, which were purchased back by Thomas Barrett and immediately sold on to Rev. P.R. Egerton, who was the inspiration behind the development of the current school.²¹

3.10 Thomas Barrett was again engaged as builder for a new dining hall wing, which was completed in November 1869.²² It is possible that George Bartlett, variously described as master carpenter, cabinet maker and joiner, was also employed on this project. The pair had entered into a business partnership by February 1871, when Messrs Barrett & Bartlett of Bloxham, builders, were reported as having completed work on the new school chapel: *'The roof is of open work of pitch pine, artistically wrought, and supported on oaken beams, and, to match, the organ loft is of the same solid material, the hand-rail having been well cut by Messrs Barrett and Bartlett of Bloxham, who also did the roofing.'* Thomas Barrett was also responsible for rendering the building fireproof by means of a patent using reinforced concrete.²³

3.11 Messrs Barrett & Bartlett were advertised in a trade directory of 1876 as 'Builders, contractors, and surveyors, and brick and tile manufacturers'.²⁴ Thomas Barrett died in January 1877. A local newspaper carried advertisements placed by George Bartlett, builder of Bloxham, seeking creditors to tie up the financial affairs of the partnership following the death of his late partner, Mr. Barrett.²⁵

3.12 It is against this background of this successful partnership with Thomas Barrett that George Bartlett prospered and was in the position to employ 30 builders and to occupy what was known as Stonehill House by the time the 1881 census was taken (3.7 above). George died in October 1885, aged 51 years after which his family appear to have moved.²⁶ The 1891 (census) shows his widow Susannah and son Richard were living at Strawberry Terrace; Richard followed his father as a carpenter, also working at Bloxham School.²⁷

²¹ Gibson 1963; Smith 1978.

²² *Jackson's Oxford Journal* Saturday 20th November 1869.

²³ *Jackson's Oxford Journal* Saturday 25th February 1871.

²⁴ Harrod and Co's Trade Directory 1876.

²⁵ *Jackson's Oxford Journal* Saturday 23rd March 1878.

²⁶ *Jackson's Oxford Journal* Saturday 7th November 1885.

²⁷ Smith 1978.

3.13 Until 1892²⁸ the house was occupied by Richard Billingsley Looker, his wife and son, a cook and two housemaids. His occupation is recorded as Secretary to a Railway Company.²⁹ After this and through the early years of the 20th century Stonehill House was occupied by Oliver Vernon Aplin and, after his death, his wife Dorothea. It appears likely that they bought Stonehill house shortly after their marriage in 1895.

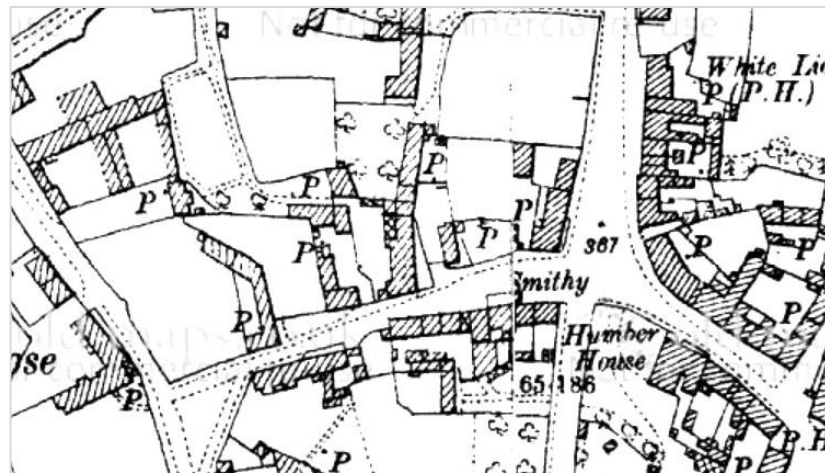


Figure 4: 1900 Ordnance Survey extract

3.14 As well as Aplin and his family a cook, housemaid and nurse were recorded at the house (again unnamed) in the 1901 census.³⁰ Thomas Maule and family, domestic gardener) was recorded close by 'Near Banbury Street'.³¹ The 1900 OS map shows the house during their occupation. There is a conservatory depicted against the rear elevation and the group of outbuildings remain around a yard to the west, perhaps one was occupied by the Maule family, gardeners. There is a secondary access leading off to the north, through what is now the enclosed garden and a separate property.

3.15 The 1911 Census names the house for the first time. The size of the house (number of rooms) was also recorded for the first time: in this case 12 rooms. Oliver Vernon Aplin, aged 52 years, born in Bodicote, was living on private means, together with his wife and family (two sons and two daughters, all born in Bloxham), and one servant (nurse).³² Thomas Mawle, aged 60 years, domestic

²⁸ *Jacksons Oxford Journal* 10 December 1892.

²⁹ National Archives RG12 Piece 1180, Folio 56, Page 3.

³⁰ National Archives RG13 Piece 1401, Folio 67, Page 9.

³¹ National Archives RG13 Piece 1401, Folio 68, Page 21.

³² National Archives RG14 Piece 8267, Schedule No. 12.

gardener, with his wife and two sons (farm labourer and groom) lived next door at Stonehill Cottage (occupying 4 rooms).³³

- 3.16** Oliver Vernon Aplin published several books on the subject of ornithology and natural history, most famously *The Birds of Oxfordshire*, published in 1889.³⁴ He travelled widely in Uruguay (1892), Algeria (1895), Norway (1896) and was an expert on the birds of the LLeyn Peninsula in North Wales and Bardsey Island. A complete list of his work can be found online.³⁵
- 3.17** Upon the outbreak of the Second World War, a Register was taken on 29 September 1939 to provide information regarding the civilian population in order to inform the issue of ration cards, conscription, labour, evacuation etc. The 1939 Register reveals that Oliver V Aplin, widowed, of private means, was still living at the house (unnamed) together with his daughter Dorothea (a VAD Nurse) and son Robert D'Oly, a 2nd Lieutenant in the 6th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment. Oliver Vernon Aplin died in the following year, on the 8th November 1940, aged 82 years.³⁶ The probate record gives his address as Stonehill House, Bloxham, his effects were worth £3111 15s 4d, and probate was granted to his daughter Dorothea.³⁷
- 3.18** It is possible that Dorothea remained at Stonehill House until her marriage to Gerald Griffiths in 1958. By September 1959 a German technical translator and lecturer, Heinrich Eugen Nowottny, (known as Henry Eugen Nowottny) was recorded at this address.³⁸
- 3.19** Stonehill House became a residence for Bloxham School in 1976 under N.W.C.Furley, providing an annexe for up to 20 new boys.³⁹
- 3.20** The early 20th century maps continue to show a substantial series of outbuildings to the rear of stone hill house. The clearance and demolition of the outbuildings must be a later 20th century change leading to the current form at the rear. The reduction in ancillary accommodation may accord with the conversion of the house

³³ National Archives RG14 Piece 8267, Schedule No. 13.

³⁴ http://www.banburyornithologicalsociety.org.uk/images/publications/The_Birds_of_Oxfordshire_Aplin.pdf

³⁵ https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Author:Oliver_Vernon_Aplin

³⁶ Obituary: *British Birds* 34 (11) 1941: 242-3; *Ibis* 83 (1) 1941: 186-187.

³⁷ England & Wales National Probate Calendar (Index Wills & Administrations 1858-1995).

³⁸ Naturalised as a British citizen: *The London Gazette* 20th September 1959: 6636.

³⁹ Smith 1978.

from a comparatively high status domestic property with outbuildings and for much of its life staff accommodation, to a school building, where such additional facilities were not required.

Current condition

3.21 The site today sits behind Stonehill House and divided from the public domain by a boundary wall with arched gateway running into the remains of a ruined building, without a roof, that appears to have been a coach house or stable. This building is clearly depicted on the historic map regression. There are hints at remains of the other outbuildings to the north west but these are far less defined and the northern end of the yard is now occupied by two much later storage buildings.

3.22 The yard area is finished in a mixture of brick sets, concrete or tarmac, and some fragmentary stone surfaces. The surfacing extending down to the rear of the main building is primarily concrete with some stone flags, between the yard and rear of Stonehill house is a raised area of grass and planting supported by stone retaining walls.



Figures 5-6: Stonehill house from the High Street; (right) gable end of Stonehill House with arched entrance through the gable end and wider arch into the yard area.

3.23 Stonehill House is a prominent linear building with main entrance through a recessed doorway set in the gable wall off Stone Hill. There is a small projecting block at ground floor that extends from the south eastern elevation with a pitched

roof. This could be a remnant of the early range of structures shown on the 1802 enclosure map (Figure).



Figure 7: Rear elevation of Stonehill House and its street elevation.



Figures 8-9: (left) yard area with modern garage and storage building; (right) ruined stable or coach house.



Figures 10-11: gateway from yard and garden area towards walled garden; (right) rear of gateway to Stone Hill.



Figures 12-13: (left) typical condition of area behind modern storage building just visible on right of image; (right) rear of Stonehill House with lower pitch roofed structure containing small kitchenette.

4. Statement of Significance

Introduction

4.1 This chapter of the report establishes the significance of the relevant heritage assets in the terms set out in the NPPF, and it comments on the contribution of setting to significance. The identification of the heritage assets equates to Step 1 of GPA3, and the assessment of significance equates to Step 2 of GPA3. Steps 2 and 3 of GPA3 are closely connected, so this chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 5 (Heritage Impact Assessment) and with the tabular methodology at Appendix 2.

4.2 There are two designated assets whose significance has the potential to be affected by the proposals considered in the next section of this report. They are:

- Stone Hill house, a grade II listed building, list entry: 1046178; and,
- Bloxham Conservation area:

Stonehill House

4.3 The list description provides a succinct description, albeit that it did not include any internal inspection.

"Large House. C18. Regular coursed ironstone with fine joints. C20 tile roof. 3 stone stacks (triple shafts) of which 2 are rendered, to ridge and ends. 3-unit plan. 2 storeys plus attic. 6-window range. French door to right; 5 sashes to left and one to right. All have keystone stone surrounds and stone lintels. 6 similar windows to first floor; 4 hipped full dormers. Moulded stop eaves cornice. Stone copings. Entrance from Stone Hill: Recessed with elliptical archway, chamfered sides and keystone stone surrounds. 4-panelled door. Cast iron bootscraper to left. Attached wall with elliptical keystone arch to rear. Stone Hill House is part of Bloxham School. Interior not inspected."



Figures 14-15: Stonehill House eastern elevation (left) and rear western elevation (right)

- 4.4** The ruined outbuildings to the rear, where they are historic, are considered to form part of the building through the provisions of section 1.5(b) of the Planning (listed buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990. As such they are treated as part of the listed building for the purposes of planning decisions.

Architectural Value

- 4.5** This building is architecturally of value because of its comparatively refined 18th century façade which illustrates and reflects the degree of status and wealth of the owners in past times. It also holds a prominent position within the village of Bloxham and its architectural qualities of its front façade is easily experienced from within the public domain and the village's High Street. Its frontage is five bays wide and, somewhat unusually has an entrance in its southern gable; perhaps this was influenced by its position relative to the road or by an earlier property on the site. The entrance sits recessed within an elliptical arched opening with hood mould and keystone. This format is mirrored on a wide carriage arch in the boundary wall to the north. Both front and rear façades feature sash windows with expressed key stones accentuating the lintels.
- 4.6** In the past the property included further buildings around a yard area to the west of the house, and the property still retains a substantial walled garden. These aspects of the listed building to some degree reinforce the architectural evidence

and contribution to the significance relating to illustration of the status of this building. Their contribution has been eroded through loss of the historic structures that now limits means to understand the nature and quality of such outbuildings. The standing remains now only hint at the degree of past ancillary accommodation serving this building. Their removal, particularly the loss of the roof over the stable, has also increased visibility of the rear elevation from the higher level of Stone Hill though this enables views of the building today it has lessened the sense of enclosure to the rear, and separateness from the public streets that would have been present in the past.

4.7

Internally the building retains a linear plan with corridors along the western, rear, elevation, and primary rooms on the east, it appears to have a relatively good degree of integrity and continues to contribute to architectural value in as much as it reflects the historic domestic arrangement. The stair is located close to the entrance at the southern end giving evidence to the vertical circulation through the building. There are some instances of historic fixture and fittings that give evidence of the former style of the interiors including the main stair, chimney breasts, and some aspects of joinery including a few panelled doors and some window shutters. However, much of the building has an institutional feel in common with its use as a school building over the past half century, certainly utility, sanitary and catering equipment and fittings are all modern and of no innate or inherent heritage interest. The principal rooms, with lofty ceilings and a degree of ostentation in their finishes are in the centre of the building. A simpler more utilitarian room is present at the northern end of the linear floor plan and is perhaps the former kitchen – now in use appropriately, as a matron's room. Its fireplace is blocked behind modern units but remains legible with cupboards to either side.

4.8

The building is not considered to derive significance from artistic values, albeit that it is a striking building aesthetically within the conservation area.

Historic value

4.9

Historically this building illustrates aspects of past domestic life within Bloxham, specifically relating to a higher status and more affluent domestic property – illustrated particularly by surviving internal features described above. The previous

chapter of this report has identified through census data owners throughout the 19th and early 20th century and there is some associative interest with the Bartlett family, who as one half of the builders' firm 'Messrs. Barrett & Bartlett' were responsible for the construction and fitting out of Bloxham School. O. V. Aplin a later owner was an ornithologist of some note but no specific features are lined to him and his association mainly serves to reinforce the sense of an important house with affluent owners.



Figures 16-17: left, Main reception room with simple cornice and retained window shutters; the main stair; matron's room with exposed beam and cupboards to either side of the blocked chimney stack.

4.10 Bloxham School purchased Stone Hill House in the mid-1970s and in 1976 opened it as a waiting house for up to 20 new boys who resided there in their junior years before moving on to other senior houses elsewhere within the school. It has more recently been used as a girls' day house. The internal character of the building today is educational, presumably many changes had also been undertaken when the building was in use as apartments. The association and link with the school over the past more than half a century, and linked back further to the 19th century owners who constructed the main school building, adds to a sense of this building's historic values as part of a community. Bloxham School and its influence within the village is important element of history and development of the community as a whole. Stonehill House draws some of its significance from these historic links and

associations with the school both in the past and in its current use and ownership that maintains the building in its current use.

Archaeological value

- 4.11** Any building of age and multiple periods has some potential for archaeological value whereby the physical materials of its construction could contain potential evidence about that property not reflected elsewhere in the documentary record. This aspect of heritage value is considered relatively low as the building shows limited signs of being of multiple phases or great physical complexity. The wider site exhibits archaeological value mainly in the form of the ruined buildings that provide evidence for the form and position of former outbuildings associated with this substantial property.
- 4.12** The building is listed as an 18th century property and this would fit with its external details and style. The Conservation Area Appraisal (draft version March 2020) and VCH suggest that the house may have an older core but observation within the building does not provide any clear clues to such evolution, nor do the external elevations which are remarkably consistent in terms of material style and detailing though two blocked doors are present at the rear.

Contribution of setting

- 4.13** The setting of Stone Hill House consists of private amenity areas directly associated with the property and public areas which enable and allow visual means to experience it as part of an important group of period properties within the heart of Bloxham.
- 4.14** The private garden areas, particularly to the rear of Stone Hill House, offer important illustration of the status of the property in the past. There is a small area to the east that in its openness enables views both towards and outward from the primary eastern façade. To the rear, the current elevated lawn area is the most well kept area of garden, a small lawn with planting around, but there was clearly once a much more expansive area of gardens, with their quality and status hinted at in the finely arched stone gateway which survives. Separate from these private

garden areas there is a more utilitarian yard area, including ruined stable on the street front and remnants of other structures now evidenced in surfaces and some walls. These areas have been reduced in scale and experienced considerable erosion in the removal of ancillary buildings that would once have reinforced this message more clearly. These areas continue to contribute to archaeological and historic interest of the listed building but provide little or no contribution to architectural values. The best surviving former stable is the exception in that it is still legible in its footprint and retaining some openings that hint at its former use and scale. This remains an important element of the site. The current storage buildings are not aesthetically positive or significant in terms of their materials. They do not contribute to heritage values.

- 4.15** There is a link, via a metal stair, between this yard area to the adjacent Old Park Farm. This reflects the shared ownership of both properties and means for staff and pupils to move between the two as needed.



Figure 18: western area of the yard with stair and gate towards Old Park Farm.

- 4.16** From Stone Hill, and from the High Street around the junction of Stone Hill, Stone Hill house is a prominent structure and its wide six bay façade with refined stone detailing is clear. These public areas which are, by and large historic routes enable an experience of this building within a built village centre context alongside other contemporary buildings of varying architectural styles and giving an experience and understanding of the historic nature of Bloxham's core and its development over time.

4.17 From Stone Hill the rear elevation is more visible than it would have been historically since the loss of the stable's roof structure.

4.18 Both areas of setting contribute to heritage significance.

Bloxham Conservation Area

4.19 The adopted Bloxham Conservation Area Appraisal dates to 2007. A draft revised appraisal is also available dating to 2020, this is not yet formally adopted but is considered to provide additional information that is of relevance and pertinent to considerations of the asset today. The latest draft includes a useful summary of the key characteristics of the conservation area as follows:

Bloxham is a large village settlement which lies along one of the country's key roads (turnpiked and alignment altered in 1815) now known as the A361 leading between Devon and Northamptonshire. The settlement has developed around the road.

Bloxham retains part of its medieval core and street pattern with a number of winding alleys and lanes. The line of the original road can still be seen within the settlement pattern.

Bloxham has a particularly good survival of 16th and 17th vernacular stone buildings, which are characteristic of the regional style of architecture associated with the Banbury region.

Bloxham's wealth in the 16th and 17th centuries was based on a combination of agriculture and plush weaving and the characteristic buildings in the settlement are yeoman's houses, farmhouses and a small number of weavers cottages, which date from this period.

Bloxham School, founded in 1853 as a Woodard (Church of England) school, has a major influence on the social life and character of Bloxham today. The principal building was designed by GE Street, but there are a

large number of buildings owned by the school throughout the settlement.

The Bloxham Feoffees (a group of between 8 and 16 yeomen) who had responsibility for the well being of the village community and had an impact on the physical development of the settlement and owned a number of parcels of land around the village. (Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, CDC February 2020)

4.20 The adopted CAA (2007) places Stonehill House in the 'Hill Lanes' Character area, this is three discrete areas marked by mainly residential development on streets and lanes marked by step and dramatic topography. The more recent draft CAA (2020) reassigns Stonehill House, Old Park Farm and Park Close and other nearby houses, into the 'School' sub area responding to the land ownership and use of these areas today as well as the School's important role within the conservation area and settlement history. Though the division of the sub areas has changed the descriptive text actually has changed very little and Stonehill house features within the descriptive text of the Hill Lanes Character Area with only incidental mentions in the revised 'school' area text.

4.21 Stone Hill House makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area in the following ways:

- It is a physical illustration and indicator of the wealth of Bloxham during the 18th and 19th centuries.
- This role as a higher status evidence of the historic settlement core is accentuated by the topography.
- Its elevated position makes it a prominent structure, the 2007 CAA states that the topography exaggerates its prominence to the 'monumental' level – particularly the view from the east looking up towards the building's eastern façade.
- The view at the junction of Stone Hill and Little Bridge Road is particularly noted, though mainly for the view southwards past Park Close and towards the Church spire.

- The role of the tall boundary wall along Stone Hill is highlighted as providing an important sense of enclosure and strong building line.
- Its association and links with the school as part of the School's land ownership and integration of its boarding houses for staff and pupils throughout the village is picked up on. This land ownership and use is tied to the school's important role within the history of Bloxham.



Figure 19: extract from adopted CAA showing Stone Hill with key views (purple cone, arrows and circle) and important strong building and boundary lines (brown). NB: the black triangles indicate the slope of Stone Hill and the narrower pinch point near the western end.

4.22 The private areas around and behind Stonehill are not highlighted in any aspect of the CAA documents, however, in providing evidence for the private garden and ancillary areas associated with this prominent house they do contribute to the historic interest and values of the conservation area. This is irrespective of public access. The current condition of these areas is neglected and so their contribution to the aesthetic qualities of the area is limited.

4.23 They contain potential for archaeological evidence for earlier structures and layout which, along with contributing to the interest of the building itself also plays some small role in the conservation area's wider archaeological and evidential values.

5. Proposals and Impacts

Introduction

- 5.1** Stone Hill House has nearly a century's active association with Bloxham School who have owned and occupied it since 1957. Prior to that association was also linked though previous owners, one of which was partly responsible for the construction of the main school building. Bloxham School has a very long history of utilising domestic properties within the village as staff and pupil accommodation and this ongoing use is reflected and acknowledged within the conservation appraisals as part of the area's historic interest. The history of Bloxham School is closely interwoven with the historic development of the village from the later 19th century and through to the present day.
- 5.2** The School wish to retain and augment Stonehill House as one of its principal boarding houses for pupils providing additional accommodation for a growing student body and the necessary staff accommodation to support the pastoral care of the children in attendance.
- 5.3** The designs to provide the required accommodation have been drawn up by Acanthus Clews Architects following a period of heritage assessment and feedback, and following a pre-application discussion with CDC. Various options were drafted and considered taking into account the needs of the school and pupils and the heritage values of the building and conservation area.

Options appraisal and design development

- 5.4** The area of former outbuildings and ancillary structures indicated on historic maps throughout the 19th century, and partially surviving as ruins on site, was considered to offer a logical and sensitive place to add additional new built form to provide the required accommodation and sustain Stonehill House in its current use within the School's portfolio. A direct extension to the historic core of Stonehill House was considered too disruptive to its architectural values and would necessitate alterations to its internal planform and circulation patterns as well. This option was

dismissed as having the potential for a high level of harm to heritage values, which are closely tied up to its architectural integrity of form and materials.



Figure 20: 1920 25" to one Mile OS extract with ruined or demolished ancillary buildings shaded. Extant listed building is outlined including ruined stable. (National Library of Scotland Maps Collection)

5.5

A new boarding house of the scale required if developed elsewhere would remove the use from Stonehill, possibly placing its future use at risk or uncertainty, and developing what might be a currently green or undeveloped site to secure the required development. This option was discarded by the school. In heritage terms maintaining a viable and now long-established use for Stonehill is a beneficial way of sustaining this listed building's heritage values. Its contextual links with the other school buildings and the school's involvement within Bloxham as a settlement is also part of its heritage values and positive to maintain. Securing an extended Boarding provision on this site

5.6

The provision of a link between the main Stonehill house and the new accommodation is necessary for school safeguarding requirements. The position of this link was a key discussion point within the design development and several positions were tested. Initially, a simple glazed link across the current yard and garden area was considered however, this would have truncated the open garden and yard area. A second position was considered running around the northern edge

of the garden area however this would create a very long and convoluted route and would cut across the historic gateway to the north of the garden area. The proposed link was based on the historic precedent illustrated on the 1802 enclosure map for a physical range of buildings along the southern edge of the site.

Proposals

5.7 The proposals are summarised as follows:

- Removal of late 20th century storage building and garage structures from yard.
- Creation of link structure between south western elevation of Stonehill House (current kitchenette) to the eastern elevation of former stable block, reinstating a broad doorway/gates in the arched opening. Link to be flat roofed and low level to sustain the existing wall line and gateway along Stone Hill.
- Restoration of the stable block including new timber framed traditional roof trusses, retention of the opposed doorways as glazed openings, and repairs to all extant walls. New openings provided to afford connection to link to main building and to the proposed new accommodation to the north.
- Consolidation of yard surfacing with brick setts.
- Repairs to ruined walls north of yard to formalise access and area to the rear garden, including repairs to historic gateway.
- Construction of new accommodation block on former yard area, aligned north to south against the western boundary wall.

5.8 The following sections explore the above elements of the proposal against the values of the listed building and factors relating to the mitigation and design development to minimise harm wherever possible. The potential effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area is also considered for each aspect. It is important to remember that change is not automatically harmful within heritage contexts, and that conservation is the process of carefully managed change. An impact assessment is provided at the end which considers the

proposal overall undertaking an internal heritage balancing exercise whereby positive and negative effects are considered. This only pertains to heritage matters, other public benefits that may arise from the scheme are presented and summarised by Edgars.

Discussion

Removal of current storage buildings

5.9 This element will not impact upon heritage values of Stonehill House. These structures are modern and of no innate historic or architectural interest. They do not reinforce or better reveal or augment the architectural values of the main listed building and although they provide continuing ancillary use of this yard area they are not positive factors in relation to the heritage asset.

5.10 This also applies to the conservation area. These structures are utilitarian and are not positive contributors to the area's character or appearance.



Figure 21: timber storage building, and part of garage on right, to be removed. Brick setts in yard surface to be salvaged and reused maintaining material consistency. (Picture: Bloxham School)



Figure 22: area of link adjacent to gable of Sttonehill House extension, currently used for bin storage. Low wall on right to be removed. (Picture: Bloxham School)



Figure 23: Area of link structure, wall on left to be removed, openings in structures on right and left to be created. (Picture: Bloxham School)

Link Structure

5.11 The school has a clear need for internal connection throughout the residential facilities at Stonehill as a boarding house. The location choice for a link has been discussed above in terms of the options appraisal. The design of the chosen link position has been carefully considered to maintain key features of the site:

- the broad arched gateway onto Stonehill
- the wall height and parapet over the gateway without a visual roof above the gateway to preserve the visual sense of separation between the lower rear portion of the current Stonehill House and the restored stable building.

- Minimal fabric loss to create the linked route between buildings, creating single door width openings, slightly wider into the former stable.

5.12 Within the site, the low level and glazed lightweight structure of the proposed link will assist in maintaining a sense of historic separateness though the link will clearly be visible from within the yard and garden areas. There will be no sense of a restoration of the historic link, the modern materials and form used will preserve legibility of the historic structures and their solid mass walling in contrast to the contemporary adaptation for the building's ongoing use within the school.

5.13 Within Stonehill House the room affected is a small kitchenette. It retains no historic features and the proposed alteration to give access into the link will not disrupt the overall heritage character of the main building.



Figure 24: Modern kitchen to be removed to facilitate link. The window will be entirely retained as will the small WC off this area.

5.14 This work will, however, give rise to some erosion of the legibility of 19th century changes that were carried out at this site to create the current format, removing the linking structure that is depicted on the 1802 map. The format or appearance of that structure is not known but it was clearly removed in the middle years of the 19th century, perhaps to increase accessibility into the rear yard areas. This erosion has been minimised by the design chosen in particular its light weight and modern material and low height.



Figure25: eastern end of the former stable/store, a single doorway will be inserted on the right side. The left area of this image will become a small office. (Picture: Bloxham School)

Restoration of the stable

- 5.15** The historic building to the west of Stonehill House is in a ruinous condition. It has no roof, no doors and limited evidence surviving within the walls of historic use or function. It is suggested as a possible stable or perhaps small carriage house, it may have been more imply a barn or storage building of some kind. The current gates securing this area from the street are later insertions and much smaller than the historic opening. There is no evidence of any roof structure and not all walls are full height. Without investment this part of the listed building is at risk of further decline, with wall tops exposed to weathering and plant colonisation the structures may well experience ongoing decline and potential collapse. With this risk ongoing the proposed restoration of a roof to this structure and the provision of a viable use into the future offers a clear enhancement to its heritage values.



Figure 26: Former stable/store, western end. Note plant growth and lower height and cement capping to right hand wall which will feature a new doorway to link into new structure. A traditional pitched roof will be reinstated. (Picture: Bloxham School)

- 5.16** The proposed restoration would install new stone piers to support a timber framed exposed oak truss in a traditional format with tie beams, struts and purlins. The use of additional stone piers enables the existing historic walls to be retained as legible and without needing to support new roof load. The east and west gables would be reinstated in a matched local stone to form traditional pitched gables. The openings to north and west would be infilled with glazed partitions leaving them clearly legible at their current width. The roof proposed is a standing seam zinc roof, the grey colour will be in keeping with the slate on the main house but will have a more diminutive character. New openings will be created to give access to the main house and in to the new accommodation block leading to a small erosion of fabric.
- 5.17** There is a strong heritage benefit to securing a future use for this derelict structure. The proposed design is traditional in its roof form and will remain subservient to the main listed building. The simple footprint will remain as will its key evidence for historic openings and material characteristics. The creation of new openings, and small subdivision to form a matron's room within this space, with the retention of the ain openings as windows, is not considered to fundamentally change the nature of this ancillary building.
- 5.18** With regard to the conservation area, this structure, when it had a roof which was almost certainly pitched, would once have stood taller than at present and contributed to a greater sense of enclosure along Stone Hill. The proposed restoration will continue to contribute to that positive element of the street scene

identified as beneficial to the conservation area, restoring something closer to the historic situation. The sense of enclosure and strong boundary lines along Stone Hill will be maintained. The existing historic openings within this boundary wall will also remain legible and understandable as openings preserving heritage character.

Landscaping works

5.19 The proposed landscaping and surfacing works have been inspired by a close understanding of the materials used at this site and to be sensitive to maintaining the sense of a hardwearing utilitarian surface in the 'yard' in contrast to the garden areas to the rear of the house itself. The important and well detailed archway to the concealed walled garden will be retained and restored, and in reinstating access and use of the rear walled garden area there will be an enhancement to the amenity areas around Stonehill House.



Figure 27: view over the yard area from upper window off stair within Stonehill House. The curved wall line visible bottom left will be retained.

5.20 The wall that currently divides the ancillary yard from the lawn and path area directly at the rear of Stonehill House will be removed to create the link. The lawn area will be preserved unaltered though the mixed tarmac surface at the rear of the building will be improved to provide a consistent finish running throughout the area.

5.21 Improvements to the garden walls will restore them and improve accessibility through to the rear garden areas enhancing a neglected area of garden.

New accommodation

- 5.22** The new accommodation is designed to maintain material contrast to the main listed house. In its timber clad and metal roofed form it will be subservient in materials and the scale will be of lower height to the main Stonehill House. The rear windows of Stonehill House will look towards the new buildings, through the existing tree and shrub planting, as in the past they looked over the ancillary historic structures. These rear windows are from corridors and stairs, not the principal rooms, which look to the east. The visual introduction of new built form in this area is not considered to change the outlook or setting of Stonehill House in a way that erodes its key heritage attributes.
- 5.23** The building is in the location of former buildings now lost. The scant structural remains that do survive in the form of collapsed walls to the rear of the storage buildings might be recorded by means of condition and it is likely that this could expand understanding and knowledge of these structures through investigation increasing knowledge about this site overall. This ability does not justify new structures but would increase knowledge and mitigate the concealment of the ruined walls and clearance of collapsed masonry to create the new building.
- 5.24** The proposed entrances on the western side of the dormitories to the Old Park Farm site somewhat blur the property divisions, albeit that these are emergency exits only and there is already a small degree of linkage between these sites. In addition the new use will not be truly ancillary to Stonehill House, but will extend the main use of the listed building out into these new structures. This expansion will to a small degree erode historic legibility of a main house and ancillary areas. However, the ancillary functions and historic uses are already eroded with the loss of the historic structures and now best reflected in maps and documentary evidence, we do not know what form or what use the former ancillary buildings had. The reinstatement of built form in this location and removal of nondescript and uninteresting storage buildings will restore a degree of activity and vitality to the rear of the listed building that possibly reflects historic activity to a greater degree, albeit of a different type. The design and contrasting materials have been chosen so

that in visual means of experiencing the listed building there will remain a sense of primary and secondary spaces and structures, preserving historic hierarchy.

- 5.25** Stonehill House has a long history of use by and for the school. This is now part of its heritage interest and the proposed extension builds on and sustains that use. The choice of form and materials, as well as the position and alignment of the new block directly references and is inspired by the historic evolution of this site
- 5.26** The key elements of contribution that Stonehill House makes to the Conservation Area will be preserved following the proposed new block. This addresses local policy C23. The prominence and strong visual role that Stonehill House makes to the conservation area, particularly from the High Street will be maintained. With the reinstated barn/stable roof the new block's visual presence within the conservation area will be legibly behind and within this site. It will not change or intrude into views along the main streets, including where they are identified as 'key' and will not affect means to understand Stonehill House as one of the important 18th century domestic properties within the village.
- 5.27** Following local policies the new design has been designed to respect the settlement pattern in this area (C27), specifically the area of ancillary and outbuilding structures to the rear of Stonehill House in the past. The design is modern and legibly of this era, adding a high quality honest intervention that responds to the use of the building today, but maintains a subservience in its more diminutive material choices and simple fenestration to the main host building and indeed historic structures that are incorporated within the scheme (C28).

Impact assessment – Listed building

- 5.28** Having considered the above discussion the proposals include elements that are both positive, and slightly harmful to the heritage values of Stonehill House, a grade II listed building. Appendix 2 also considered the checklist items set down within GPA 3 steps 2 and 3 whereby the effects on the setting of the listed building are considered systematically. The proposal will effectively extend the listed building itself and this section considers the effects on the significance as an extension to the listed building.

- 5.29** On the positive front there is the great benefit of the restoration of a derelict structure that is part of the listed building, a former storage or stable building. This will halt decline of the structure, remove further risks that would arise without works and provide this part of the listed building with a viable future use. This is a strong heritage benefit. Poor quality storage buildings within the yard area are to be replaced with a carefully designed new accommodation block inspired by the historic context and the ancillary quality of historic open areas, yards and garden walls. Their condition will be improved with new surfaces creating a higher quality amenity space at the rear of the listed building.
- 5.30** On the negative side the proposals will see the connection of the main building to a new structure in an area of formerly ancillary and outbuildings and extension of a single use throughout the main house and into the new block on an area of formerly ancillary, service or practical uses. Though structures were located in this location during the early 19th century they were lost shortly after and no physical link has been present over the past century and a half. This will slightly erode historic values at Stonehill house pertaining to property division and developments within the 19th century, the legibility of separate functional areas within the site and buildings will become less clear. With reference to the table at Appendix 1 it is important to note that this harm affects only one aspect of historic value, and will not seriously affect the significance of the listed building or its key attributes of significance which mainly reside in the physical form, materials, layout and internal qualities and features of the building. Although some harm is identified it is also relevant that the new building will maintain and further secure the current use of the building established over 50 years ago by Bloxham School, also part of its historic interest and an ongoing strand of its history.
- 5.31** There will be some loss of historic fabric through the creation of new doorways and the removal of part of an external wall. One small window into the former store/stable will be affected through the construction of the link roof. Though the loss of historic fabric is regrettable, considering the values of the building overall the impact to historic material has been minimised as much as possible and the removals will not affect legibility of the major material characteristics of the listed building, including key openings such as main entrances, the planform and legibility

of structural footprints and the material aesthetics of primary facades visible from both the public domain and from the private amenity areas. These comparatively minor removals, in the context of the site as a whole, along with the material enhancement and repairs affected to other areas of the site's historic fabric, are not considered to inherently erode the architectural or evidential values of the site to such a degree that causes harm. Overall, the architectural values of Stonehill house as a prominent 18th century dwelling with important enclosing street boundary wall will remain unaltered.

- 5.32** The new building to provide new boarding accommodation, is not considered to erode architectural values of Stonehill House. The physical scale remains subservient and this sense of hierarchy is augmented and maintained in the material choices for the new building. The historic primacy of the main listed building will be preserved – this is considered key to architectural legibility and also feeds into minimising the above identified harm.

Impact on the conservation area

- 5.33** The role that Stonehill House plays within the conservation area as a prominent 18th century dwelling illustrating the expansion and growth of higher status housing in the village will be preserved. The later history of this site as part of the School's important role within the conservation area will also be preserved and indeed sustained and continued into the future.
- 5.34** On Stone Hill the strong boundary line and sense of enclosure provided by the wall with its historic arch way and former entrance into the ruined stable will be enhanced with the restoration of the stable building, repairs to the wall and sensitive enclosure of openings with windows and timber that will retain legibility of the historic access points through this wall.
- 5.35** The effect of the proposals will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area although the upper part of the new block will become visible in some views from Stone Hill. A new structure becoming visible is not automatically harmful to a conservation area. The proposed intervention here has been inspired by the historic situation at this site where a greater collection of ancillary buildings

once stood, and the structures pays reference to more ancillary and subservient architectural styles and materials without pretending to be agricultural buildings. They are honestly contemporary in their detailing and relating to the current use of the site. The proposals will sustain this listed building and its wider site in active use within Bloxham School's portfolio of property within the conservation area, an element of historic function that is acknowledged as important to the history of the village, and to the character of its architecture. Stonehill is, in the recent draft appraisal document, included within the 'school' sub area, acknowledging this historic link.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1** Stonehill House is a grade II listed building, including attached and ruined ancillary structures to its rear in an area of historic ancillary buildings associated with the building. Primarily Stonehill House was a high status dwelling throughout the 18th, 19th and first half of the 20th century. It has been within the property portfolio of Bloxham School since 1957 and in use as a dormitory. As such it plays a role in the important strand of historic and illustrative values that the school makes within the village and conservation area.
- 6.2** Proposals seek to extend its current use with the provision of a new dormitory block with social and staff spaces in the current yard and storage area with an internal link to the main listed building along the southern boundary. The ruined stable/barn structure will be restored with a new roof structure and incorporated into the scheme. A low to medium level of less than substantial harm has been identified arising through an erosion of the historic values of the listed building as the legibility of historic separateness between the main house and ancillary areas will be lessened with the new structure built and a single use extended through all areas. Changes will be noticeable but will not affect the key attributes of the building's significance.
- 6.3** The proposal, in respect of the conservation area, is not considered to cause harm and to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area although part of the new block will become visible. Key aspects of importance to the conservation area will be preserved. In particular the sense of enclosure and important historic boundary wall along Stone Hill, and the prominent landmark quality of Stonehill house from the village High Street both of which will be maintained. In extending and continuing the longstanding use of this building by Bloxham School the proposals sustain the historic values of the School within the conservation area and its acknowledged pattern of using buildings within the village as part of its function.
- 6.4** The National Planning Policy Guidance document advises that the extent of any harm should be clearly articulated (Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723) and we have assessed where within the spectrum of less than substantial harm this proposal falls – the lowest end. This low level has been

minimised through careful consideration of the heritage values, the most sensitive location for a link and the design and material considerations for the new block to maintain subservience to the host listed building. Notwithstanding that, the identification of any harm engages the statutory duty of decision makers as set down in section 16 and 66 of the Act, and policy 196 of the NPPF where less than substantial harm must be balanced against the public benefits of the proposal.

6.5

In this instance there will be a heritage benefit to historic and architectural values in restoring the currently ruined stable/storage building and providing it with a viable use into the future. Other public benefits are associated with securing the ongoing educational use of these buildings as part of Bloxham School and are dealt with in the planning statement. Stonehill House has a half century of historic association with the school, and its ongoing use within this institution is considered a wholly viable future which will secure the building's values irrespective of this change and the small degree of harm arising from the erosion of historic values that make up one strand of the building's significance. Whether or not the benefits of this scheme outweigh the very low level of less than substantial harm is a matter for decision makers at Cherwell District Council having considered

6.6

Conservation is defined as the process of carefully managed change; it is not the same as preservation. At this site, the proposed changes are based on an understanding of the building's key heritage values and the needs of its ongoing use as part of Bloxham School, also an important historic institution that has its uses and accommodation woven through the village of Bloxham since the 1850s. The designs involved careful consideration of the most appropriate location to connect a new building to the historic listed building and a process of pre-application liaison with the local authority.

Appendix 1

Scale of Harm (HCUK, 2019)

The table below has been developed by HCUK Group (2019) based on current national policy and guidance. It is intended as simple and effect way to better define harm and the implications of that finding on heritage significance. It reflects the need to be clear about the categories of harm, and the extent of harm within those categories, to designated heritage assets (NPPF, paragraphs 195 and 196, and guidance on NPPG).⁴⁰

Scale of Harm	
Total Loss	Total removal of the significance of the designated heritage asset.
Substantial Harm	Serious harm that would drain away or vitiate the significance of the designated heritage asset
Less than Substantial Harm	High level harm that could be serious, but not so serious as to vitiate or drain away the significance of the designated heritage asset.
	Medium level harm, not necessarily serious to the significance of the designated heritage asset, but enough to be described as significant, noticeable, or material.
	Low level harm that does not seriously affect the significance of the designated heritage asset.

HCUK, 2019

⁴⁰ See NPPG 2019: "Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated." Paragraph 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723.

Appendix 2

GPA3 Assessment: Historic England's guidance on setting

In assessing the effect of the proposed extension on the setting and significance of designated heritage assets (Stonehill House), it is relevant to consider how the following factors may or may not take effect, with particular reference to the considerations in Steps 2 and 3 of GPA3. The following analysis seeks to highlight the main relevant considerations. It is noted that the works proposed affect both the listed building directly as well as an area of setting. This tabulated approach considers the effect on setting to enrich the discussion within the main text that considers the impact on the listed building directly as the proposed works will become part of the listed building if completed.

<i>Relevant Considerations</i>	<i>Stonehill House</i>
<i>Proximity of the development to the asset</i>	The building will be internally connected but the bulk of the extension will be separated from the main building's rear elevation by c. 15m to the west
<i>Proximity in relation to topography and watercourses</i>	Within the site the topography is broadly flat. The marked topographic drop that accentuates the eastern elevation of the listed building within views from the east will not be affected and the new development will not be visible in this important visual area of experience.
<i>Position of development in relation to key views</i>	Behind and to the rear. Key views are identified primarily as being from the east where Stonehill House is a prominent elevated building – this view will not be affected or changed. Oblique passing views of the listed building from Stone Hill the lane that passes to the south, may include the roof and upper part of the proposed new extension but these views are less critical to appreciation of the primary building and are much more altered. Historically these views would have included roofs of historic ancillary buildings now lost, in this way the proposals will reinstate something closer to the historic character to the rear of Stonehill House with multiple other buildings present.
<i>Orientation of the development</i>	Aligned approximately parallel to the listed building, perpendicular to the former stable/storage building to be

	restored, and directly informed by the historic location of ancillary structures removed in the 20 th century.
<i>Prominence, dominance and conspicuousness</i>	The development will be visible from within the listed building, particularly rear windows, and from the area to the rear of garden and former yard. Nonetheless the design and scale will be lower and subservient to the main listed building in both form and its material characteristics.
<i>Competition with or distraction from the asset</i>	There will be no competition with the asset, it is designed to work alongside and maintain and sustain the existing long standing use. The design utilises deliberately contemporary simple forms and materials to maintain subservience of the new structure and the prominence of the host listed building.
<i>Dimensions, scale, massing, proportions</i>	Lower than the host building but two full storeys. The building widths have been adapted to respect the narrow range width of the main listed building but the widths of new building in comparison will not be appreciable other than in a plan, there is not point at which the widths of the two would be visually comparable.
<i>Visual permeability</i>	The structure will be solid but falls in the developed core of Bloxham and visual permeability in this area is not a key element of heritage values. A sense of visual permeability will be maintained in the insertion of glazing and light weight structural addition against the historic wall and former stable forming the southern boundary. This design detail will preserve a sense of permeability from Stone Hill into the site.
<i>Materials and design</i>	A combination of light weigh glazed structure to form the link, traditional construction in the restoration of the historic barn/stable and a modern timber clad construction for the new dormitory block. Aside from traditional stone used in the restoration of the stable/barn structure the materials are sympathetic to traditional ancillary or agricultural buildings in the area and do not challenge or distract from the high quality blocked ashlar stonework of the main listed building. They are deliberately simpler and more utilitarian.
<i>Diurnal or seasonal change</i>	Not relevant

<i>Change to built surroundings and spaces</i>	A currently under used area, which formerly housed ancillary structures, will be redeveloped. The principal boundary lines, relationship between public and private areas, and the position of surviving historic contemporary buildings will not be affected. A new building will be introduced on an area of setting that has seen 20 th century removal of historic structures.
<i>Change to skyline, silhouette</i>	The prominent skyline silhouette of Stonehill house will not be affected. This will be true both from the east where viewers look up to the main frontage, and from the west where viewers may obliquely see the new block, but it will not breach the ridge line or chimney positions of Stonehill House.
<i>Change to general character</i>	The general character of this area of the setting will change from a somewhat neglected yard area with either derelict or low quality storage buildings in place

Standard Sources

<https://maps.nls.uk>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

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Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990

National Planning Policy Framework, 2019

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MAPS

1802 Bloxham Enclosure Map (and Award) Oxfordshire History Centre: Stockton Collection Box 39 x and QS/D/A/Vol.B.

1881 Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 25-inch scale (Oxfordshire Sheets IX. 7 & 8).

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