

Heritage Addendum

Stonehill House, Stone Hill, Bloxham

Introduction

1. This addendum has been prepared by HCUK Group to provide additional information on heritage impacts to further inform decision making on an open application for planning and listed building consent to undertake works to provide additional boarding accommodation and student facilities at Stonehill House, part of Bloxham School.
2. The application to which it relates is filed with Cherwell District Council (CDC) under application reference: 21/01476/LB and 21/01505/F. A full Heritage Statement was prepared for the initial submission and this addendum should be read alongside that report. This addendum does not repeat the historic and planning policy background, nor the full statements of significance which remain in the Heritage Statement for the purposes of cross reference.
3. Following discussions with CDC officers a number of amendments have been made to the designs. This report provides a revised assessment of impact following these revisions. In addition this note provides further information on the process by which the relevant heritage assets were chosen for assessment within the main heritage statement.

Revised proposals.

4. The proposals have been amended to further minimise both physical and visual effects to Stonehill House and the physical fabric that makes up its principal building and curtilage structures. These changes are detailed in drawings by Acanthus Clews Architecture but can be summarised as follows:
 - Change in roof material to restored outbuilding to be traditional Welsh slate.
 - Change to new building roof form to reduce height thus limiting visual impact and increase sense of subservience.

- Width of glazed link reduced with resultant retention of stone wall and pedestrian gate between Stonehill Garden and yard areas.
 - Changed entrance position between Glazed link and Stonehill rear elevation to reinstate an existing blocked door not create a new one.
 - Retention of greater portion of the boundary wall between Old Park Farm and new building between emergency exit doors.
 - Amendments to fenestration and openings with restored outbuilding and new block to reduce prominence.
5. The above changes reflect the applicant's desire to respond to the heritage of the site and concerns raised by officers. Reduction of the width of the link enables the stone wall and pedestrian gate that divides the yard and garden areas of Stonehill to be retained to a much greater degree. This retains a greater definition of historic areas to the rear of Stonehill House, particularly between small garden area and more practical yard areas. Similar reductions in fabric loss are proposed in the boundary wall between Old Park Farm and Stonehill where the boundary wall will be retained and incorporated between the necessary fire escape doors. Within the courtyard
 6. Reuse of the existing blocked door, and narrowing of the link, lessens physical removal or covering up of fabric from Stonehill house and the ruined outbuilding. This minimises physical effects, and makes best use of an historic feature that has been blocked up in the past but which clearly shows an exit point from the building in the past.
 7. Revisions to the materials of the restored outbuilding's roof will maintain a wholly traditional aesthetic to this aspect, most prominent from the street and within the conservation area. Similarly reuse of the existing cobbles and brick sets within the yard will maintain a traditional hard and robust character. They will be lifted carefully and set aside for restoration at the appropriate point in the project to ensure they are not damaged through the works phase.
 8. The proposals have never tried to pretend that this building is a diminutive outbuilding with storage or practical function. The designs have sought to present a simpler subservient materials palette, not creating another stone building on the site, and a modern and slightly less regular approach to fenestration and

openings, again, to preserve the primacy of the main Stonehill House. The proposed building looks into the courtyard, and because of the restored outbuilding and the enclosed nature of this site will not compete with the main façade of Stonehill in any way. The reduction in the height of the new portion of the building, and provision of an asymmetric profile has been discussed with officers and secures a lower visual impact, certainly from the public domain. It is also a form that is in contrast to the main pitched roof over both Stonehill House itself and the restored traditional outbuilding. This contrast enables clear legibility of the site and its different phases which assists in the understanding of historic and architectural values at this site.

9. Stonehill House has been part of Bloxham School since before the building was listed. This use is a well established part of its history now and maintaining it in this use is considered possible whilst preserving its heritage values both as an individual listed building and within the conservation area.

Impact assessment

10. The ruined outbuilding contains no overt evidence of any past use. There are two small windows high in one elevation, these are not diagnostic of any past specific function. There are no fittings, fixtures or evidence in the floor surface that evidences past use. The two opposed openings, indeed the whole building, are pointed in cement and they could be later insertions into the building. No documentary evidence has been uncovered that clarifies the position of this building. It currently has no use, and although the walls are broadly sound there is no function for this building without adaptation and the restoration of a roof structure. The design of a simple traditional pitched roof is based on the prevailing architecture of Bloxham, and on the Stonehill site including the extant rear extension to the main historic core. Figure 7 within this note provides an historic image that suggests a possibly thatched roof on this building, this material will not be replicated but a traditional slate roof is considered appropriate within this context. The restoration of this building to form an active part of the site is considered to be a heritage benefit. The use of traditional materials in the roof responds to officers concerns and will maintain a traditional material palette within the conservation area and street scene of Stone Hill.
11. The initial Heritage Statement concluded that there would be a low to medium level of less than substantial harm arising to the significance of Stonehill House

through the loss of historic fabric and the erosion of a sense of separateness between the varying areas of Stonehill House and its formerly ancillary buildings and yards; another factor of this harm was the erosion of a sense of separateness between Stonehill House and the adjacent Old Park Farm property, also part of Bloxham School.

12. Following revisions to the scheme, the amount of historic fabric to be impacted has been reduced. The sense of division between the historic garden and yard areas has been retained to a greater degree, and more of the fabric to the boundary wall to Old Park Farm has also been retained. Nonetheless, a small amount of harm is still found to arise through the extension of a single use throughout the site, eroding the historic legibility of main house and ancillary areas. This harm remains within the less than substantial bracket and with the amendments made moves further down the spectrum of that level of harm. Whether or not the benefits, set out in the planning statement, are sufficient to outweigh this harm is for CDC to determine. We continue to consider that there are heritage benefits to maintaining the longstanding School use of this listed buildings and its garden and yard areas, and in the restoration of the derelict former outbuilding, which forms part of the important boundary along Stone Hill.
13. The revisions to the scheme reduce visual changes within the conservation area and ensure a traditional material palette to the restored outbuilding. Bloxham is a complex settlement of multiple periods. The addition of a new, carefully designed structure, is not considered innately harmful to its character but to add a layer that will secure ongoing use of an important building within the area and be a positive development within the conservation area.

Scope of assessment

14. The main Heritage Statement focusses on Stonehill House and the Conservation Area. This addendum now turns to provide some additional information requested by the conservation officer at CDC on other assets deemed to have been covered insufficiently in the initial statement. No additional site visit has been made but additional images have been taken from Google Street view to illustrate public vantage points where relevant.

Old Park Farm

15. This property is considered a non-designated heritage asset. The definition of such an asset in the NPPG states that:

"Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets."

A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets."
(Paragraph: 039 Reference ID: 18a-039-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019)

16. The conservation area appraisal (Draft 2020) expands on the above statement within the Context of Bloxham stating that buildings included as such are: "regionally or locally significant either for their architectural detail or for their part of the social history of Bloxham". Old Park Farm is identified elsewhere as a 'prominent' building on higher ground with a Georgian frontage. With reference to the elevated position Old Park Farm is referred to in the CAA (Draft) as 'monumental'. Though it sits on higher ground than Stonehill house it is a much lower building, and its monumental qualities are not as prominent from the base of the hill as that of Stonehill House. It is aligned perpendicular to the road, with a southern return range that contributes to a marked sense of enclosure at the top of Stone Hill.
17. The local interest of this building is primarily contained in its physical form and appearance, including the use of traditional materials and vernacular styles. The property has a degree of continuity as depicted over time in the historic maps (see main heritage statement). The front of the house appears to take advantage of the view east down Stone Hill but this front elevation is the product of various phases of alteration and does not have an overtly formal or 'designed' appearance. It straddles both a narrow triangle of public domain and private driveway and
18. Because of the change in level there is very limited means to see or appreciated Old Park Farm from the yard area of Stonehill House. There is intervisibility between the two buildings from the rear of Stonehill House first and second floor corridors and the front windows of Old Park Farm, however this relationship is

entirely incidental and not a key factor in either building's heritage interest. They were not designed to look at or over each other though this visual overlap has arisen through the close proximity of village centre development. In the past, it is probable that roofs of the former outbuildings sat between the two and limited the degree of intervisibility. A 1934 aerial photograph, although distant, shows the former outbuildings between Stonehill and Old Park Farm. The roofs appear to be substantial, tall and perhaps thatched. Interestingly the former outbuilding which remains, seems to have a hipped roof.

19. The design revisions and the lowering of the new building's roof pitch will ensure that from Old Park Farm the roof of Stonehill House will remain visible, the lower ridge line will sit beneath eaves level of Stonehill House.

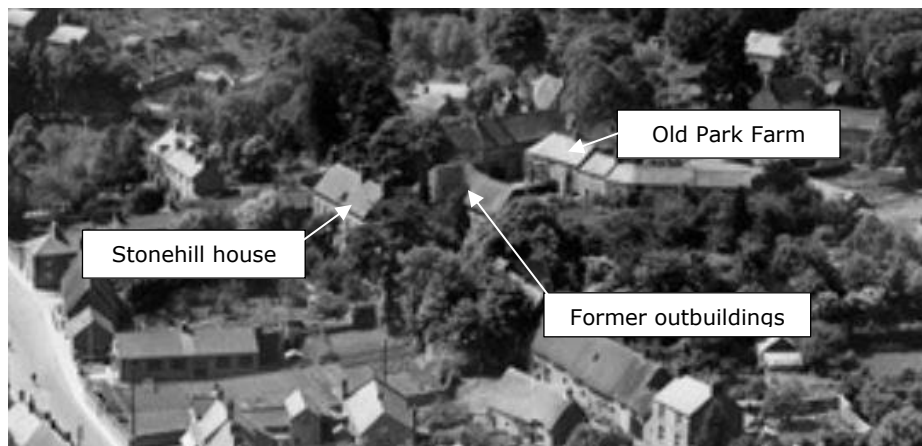


Figure 1: 1934 Aerial photograph (Historic England Archive ref: EPWO44971)

20. The best means of seeing and understanding the local merits of Old Park Farm are from Stone Hill where the front elevation can be appreciated stretching back from the road, and where its southern elevation provides a distinct sense of enclosure to the upper part of Stone Hill. These positions and means of seeing and understanding the characteristics of Old Park Farm will be broadly unaltered if the proposals are built out. There will be no physical impact on Old Park Farm and its local heritage interest will remain.



Figure 2: Old Park Farm frontage from outside the Site on the right, this view will change only with the re-introduction of a traditional roof on the ruined outbuilding.



Figure 3: Views looking towards Old Park Farm from within the Site in the ruined outbuilding and through the existing gateway. These limited views will indeed change but will not fundamentally meaningful opportunities to see or understand Old Park Farm as a building of local interest.



Figure 4: The frontage of Old Park Farm from the public domain on Stone Hill (Google street view). This view will remain unaltered, though the proposed building would become partial visible on turning away from Old Park Farm.

21. In terms of impact of the proposals the local interest of Old Park Farm is considered to be retained. The harm already identified to the listed building of Stonehill House through the partial erosion of property lines arising through the emergency access from the first floor applies similarly to Old Park Farm but to a lesser degree as this asset is not of the same magnitude of importance.

Other non designated assets

22. Treadwell Cottage, Forge Cottage and Cullross, are all identified as non-designated assets (Conservation Area Appraisal, Draft 2020). They make up a continuous run of traditional ironstone properties on the south eastern end of Stone Hill.
23. These locally interesting buildings will not be physically affected. They are best understood and experienced at the base of Stone Hill and from the High Street where the new proposals will be screened by Stonehill House.
24. Ashwell Cottage directly opposite the Site is marked on the plan of local buildings of merit but is not included in the photographic list, its status is a little unclear, it is not mentioned elsewhere in the conservation area appraisal.
25. In all cases views towards these buildings from the public domain are looking away from the site, in some instances past it. Incidental views out of Ashwell Cottage towards the site will experience a change with the new slate roof of the ruined outbuilding but this will not fundamentally erode any local interest it has as a broadly vernacular building within the settlement.

Other listed buildings.

26. In the early stages of the project a site visit was made and the location of other listed buildings identified. Stonehill House has been covered in full. Other listed buildings were considered, viewed from the public domain and their list descriptions read. All buildings other than Stonehill house were scoped out of detailed assessment. This scoping exercise was, unfortunately not described in detail within the main heritage statement. This section provides information on why these designated assets were not covered in greater detail.

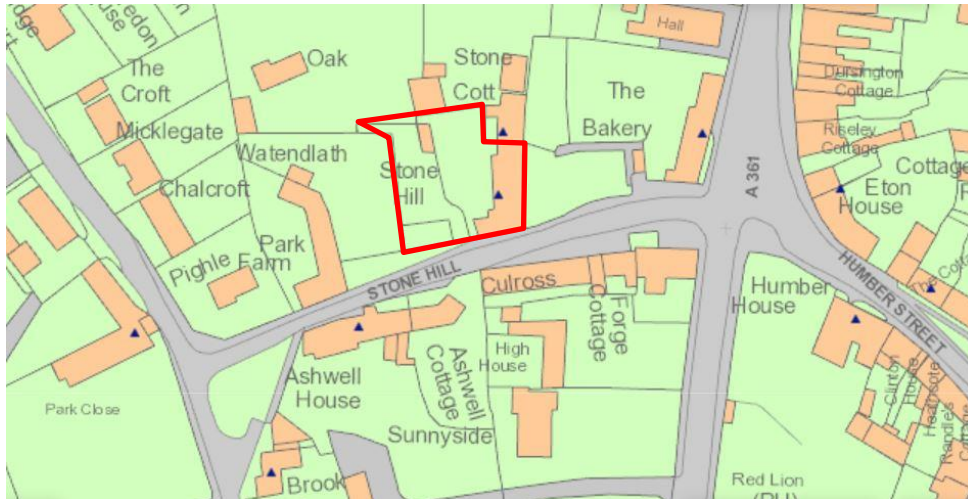


Figure 5: The site location in relation to other listed buildings. (Historic England 'Search the List')

Ashwell House

27. Located close to but on the opposite side of Stone Hill and with its principal elevation facing away from the site towards the falling ground to the South. The list description includes a photograph that shows this formal five bay front façade overlooking the private garden not reproduced for copyright reasons). This garden façade is symmetrical with sash windows, a decorative central door case and veranda. The list description identifies subterranean tunnels as a feature of note.



Figure 6: Ashwell House (Copyright Dr John Airlie Hunter. Source Historic England Archive ref: IOE01/13530/06)

28. The rear elevation of the main portion is markedly plainer (figure 7) but an elongated window probably lighting the stair well of the historic core. Later phases of extension to the east are legible through the presence of straight joints and

feature an entrance and rear windows directly overlooking the entrance to Old Park Farm with oblique views over the site area.

29. No historic association or functional links have been identified between Ashwell House and Stonehill House or its outbuildings. Ashwell House clearly takes advantage of the falling ground to the south, and is aligned so that its principal elevation overlooks this direction. A house of some pretention its architectural and historic values do not appear to be linked in any way to the Site. The Site offers no means to see, experience or understand the key architectural features of this building. The public domain of Stone Hill enables views of the rear elevation and an understanding off some elements of its phasing and development. The primary façade and its architectural interest is focussed to the south.



Figure 7: View of the rear of the historic core of Ashwell House from Stone Hill. (Google Street view)

30. The development of the site will not erode any of these attributes. The building will experience a change within its wider village setting, but not one that prevents any means of understanding this listed building or experiencing its key characteristics. The proposals would not intrude on any 'key' views towards or past this building, particularly not from within the private garden or from Stone Hill, and will not affect how it is approached or accessed. The house is and has always been part of a closely developed village centre with a wide variety of buildings in close proximity. This situation will remain unaffected. Any new development on the Site may become partly visible from some windows in the extended eastern section of Ashwell House, this does not innately erode or damage the special interest of Ashwell House as an individually listed building.

31. Scoped out of detailed assessment because of the specific alignment and position of this listed building and its front primary façade. Also separation by Stone Hill and lack of any means to see or experience this listed building from within the Site area.

Stonehill Cottage, Grade II

32. Though close to the site, and in the same ownership, this small lower cottage attached to the northern end of Stonehill house faces to the east, away from the site with no overlooking rear windows. No element of the architectural interest or characteristics of Stonehill cottage can be appreciated from within the Site because of the mature trees and intervening structure of Stonehill house. There will be no physical effect and the special interest of this smaller cottage will be preserved. Means of understanding and experiencing this asset will not be altered.

The Old Bakery, Grade II

33. Located on the High Street and wholly divided from the Site by the much larger Stonehill House on considerably higher ground. No functional association or links, no visual means of experiencing this listed building alongside the Site area. Development on the Site would not erode the building's specific architectural or historic values or any means by which people can experience it.

Park Close, Grade II

34. Located to the west of the site, on slightly higher ground and looking south away from Stone Hill over its considerable formal front garden. This is an important building within Bloxham. No functional and associative links have been uncovered though more recent history sees both buildings in the school's ownership.
35. Divided from the site by other built form including modern houses and Old Park Farm. Park Close faces away from the Site and is set within its own walled curtilage. There would be no effect arising from the development of the site on this building's individual architectural or historic values, and no means by which Park Close can be experienced or understood will be eroded.

Brook Cottage, Grade II

36. Listed for group value. Divided from the Site by the larger built form of Ashwell House which sits above it on higher ground. There is no means by which this building can be experienced from the Site. Scoped out by virtue of distance,

intervening built form and lack of means to experience or see this building from the site.

37. The above notes identify why these listed buildings were not covered in detail within the Heritage Statement; hopefully the information has been clarified for officers. It is acknowledged that the proposals fall within the tightly developed area of buildings on Stone Hill and that in some views, around from and past these buildings the new development may become visible in part. However, the mere fact of visibility, or a change within an asset's setting does not inherently and automatically equate to harm – that is the erosion of their specific heritage significance.
38. This is a similar assessment as pertaining to the conservation area, the area contains a wide variety of closely developed buildings from multiple periods, this variety is inherently part of the settlements' historic and architectural special interest. The current quality of the space is non-descript containing poor quality storage buildings and a ruined structure. This ruined structure, and the surrounding walls are part of the listed building and is recognised as important to the historic narrative of the site but it has no viable use in its current open form. Finding and facilitating the viable use of historic buildings is the best way of securing their values into the future. The designs set forward, and recently amended have sought to introduce a carefully designed new development to facilitate the ongoing and longstanding school use in a sensitive new building that will hopefully become a positive new introduction within this historic settlement.