

YEW TREE HOUSE SIBFORD GOWER



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

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Worlledge Associates: Qualifications

Nicholas Worlledge holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Planning and a Postgraduate Diploma in Historic Building Conservation and is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. With over 30 years experience working for a number of local planning authorities until recently he headed up the Heritage and Specialist Services Team at Oxford City Council. Worlledge Associates has been instructed to provide a heritage assessment for the house, to inform the proposals and then to assess the heritage impact of those proposals.

He has experience of working on a wide variety of casework, in historic towns, large urban areas, rural settlements and country estates. He has project managed the repair of historic buildings, including a 13th century lepers' hospital in Blandford, an 18th century thatched stone cottage in Shaftesbury, an 18th century clay pipeworks in Broseley, the Franciscan Friary in Bridgnorth and the Martyrs Memorial, Oxford. He has been involved in significant commercial, residential and University building projects in Oxford – Westgate, Oxford Castle, the Ashmolean Museum, University Science Area, Radcliffe Infirmary, Colleges and the award winning Oxford Brookes campus building as well as providing specialist advice on a number of Country Houses and estates – Crichel House, Dorset, Tottenham House, Wiltshire, Nevill Holt Hall, Leicestershire, Aynhoe Park, Oxfordshire, Hunsdon House, Hertfordshire, Great Tew Estate, Oxfordshire and Bathurst Estate, Gloucestershire. He is currently a panel member on the BOBMK Design Panel, which provides design, heritage and planning advice on emerging planning proposals.

His role with the City Council involved him in detailed discussion on specific schemes with leading local, national and international architects and advising on strategic projects including masterplans, Area Action Plans, Public Realm Strategies and Townscape Character Studies. His work, developing

methodologies for assessing the character of and managing historic areas has attracted funding from English Heritage and has been recognised with two RTPI Awards (in 2011 and 2013) for improvements in the planning process.

Introduction

The intelligent management of change is a key principle necessary to sustain the historic environment for present and future generations to enjoy. Historic England and successive governments have published policy and advice that extends our understanding of the historic environment and develops our competency in making decisions about how to manage it.

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

The National Planning Policy Framework provides a very similar message in paragraphs 128 and 129 expecting both applicant and local planning authority to take responsibility for understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the impact of a development proposal, seeking to avoid unacceptable conflict between the asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

This report is structured to consider first the significance of the heritage asset, then how the proposal affects or does not affect that significance.

Sibford Gower: A Brief History

Situated on a hill about 6.5 miles from Banbury, close to the county border with Warwickshire, Sibford Gower is a twin to its smaller sister village of Sibford Ferris on the other side of the nearby Sib valley.

The Sibford settlements derive their names from the Norman beneficiaries who received grants of land at the time of the conquest. King William rewarded many of the knights who had followed him from Normandy with gifts of land. One of these knights was Henry de Ferrieres - from whom Sibford Ferris gains its name – and who held the manor there assessed at around 1000 acres. The Domesday Survey tells us that there were a further two manors across the valley at Sibford Gower. One, held by William Corbician, which was also assessed at around 1000 acres and the second, with a similar amount of land, was held Hugh de Grantmesnil. A later 1216 charter shows that a Thomas Goher held land at Sibford Gower. It is possible that Thomas's forefathers had come with William the Conqueror since Goher was a French form of the old German Guother.¹

Throughout its history the region has been one of mixed farming with sheep-raising being of considerable importance. Like much of north and west Oxfordshire, the Sib valley came to be known for its sheep farming – the success of which is reflected in the high number of farms between the settlements. By the sixteenth century the trade in woollen cloth had become Britain's richest export and the villages around the Banbury region prospered. This prosperity continued throughout the seventeenth century when Sibford Gower came to be further associated with the successful craft of clock making. A local Quaker, Thomas Gilkes, pioneered a clock making industry in the north Oxfordshire villages with such success that the district dominated the trade for the next century.

¹ P. J. Fowler et al. 1960. *From the Romans to Rock-m-Roll. A Short History of the Sibford-Swalcliffe-Epwell-Hook Norton District.*

The eighteenth century however marked the beginning of a period of economic decline exacerbated by the Inclosure Acts of 1773. Towards the end of the 18th century the Sibfords were characterised by the number of small owner-occupiers. These small farmsteads could no longer afford to pay the charges levied against them and sold to the richer, larger neighbouring owners. By 1851 the number of small landowners had fallen to less than half and in their place had come into existence a new class of dispossessed labourers.

The drastic decline of British agriculture that marked the later nineteenth and early twentieth century was to lead to the exodus of many these labourers into larger towns such Oxford in search of work. The situation only worsened in the twentieth century with the introduction of agricultural machinery, which further reduced the requirements for manpower. Within a 100-year period the populations of the two villages had declined by over a third. These social economic developments are reflected in the patterns of building activity in the Sibford villages.

Architectural Development

Within this small agrarian area has evolved a “distinctive regional style of domestic building of remarkable homogeneity in material and character.”² The villages of Sibford Gower, Sibford Ferris and Burdrop owe their unique style of vernacular buildings to the underlying geology, which gives rise to both the topography and the principal building material of the area.

The use of the distinctive local Ironstone for construction and boundary walls is almost universal in the traditional buildings of the 17th and 18th centuries although local red brick is found in the construction of some houses of the later 19th and 20th centuries. The Ironstone imparts a particular colour and characteristic to these settlements. As a ‘soft’ building material, its use has meant that the architectural decoration is kept simple; drip moulds, mullions and moulded kneeler being the most common expression of status within the Sibford settlements.³

Building activity in the region is largely confined to a single century, a limitation explained by reference to the social- economic evolution of the Sibford communities. The economic prosperity of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century is reflected in the prevalence of 17th century vernacular buildings as an important source of income during this period, sheep farming made many locals extremely rich thus providing the income for construction of several fine houses for the Yeomanry - the emerging middle class.

Indeed the predominant house type across the Sibfords and wider Banbury region is that of the yeoman farmer – a social class which gained prominence throughout England in the 15th to 17th centuries. From the almost general status as serfs, bound to the soil, the yeoman had steadily raised his status

² Raymond B. Wood-Jones 1963. *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Banbury Region*. Manchester; University of Manchester Press

³ Design and Conservation Team 2012. Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Appraisal. *Cherwell District Council*.

through the keenly competitive struggle for land. Revolutionary changes in the 16th century, with virtual ending of subsistence farming, saw the steady rise of farm produce much to the benefit of the yeoman farmer who consolidated his wealth and position in the construction of a new house both for himself as well as for hired hands.

This building activity, which continued throughout the region in the 17th century, came to a steady decline in the 18th century as a general consequence of the decline in prosperity. Apart from the dwellings of large farmers and landowners, little construction occurred with building activity being largely devoted to additions and extensions to earlier homes.

The character of the architecture retained its medieval associations even in the 18th century with Renaissance influences often only being detected in the details of mouldings. Most buildings displaying these influences have been refronted earlier buildings in red brick with a few existing examples of polite architectural buildings— mostly among the 19th century villas and gentlemen's residences.

The Yeoman House

The style of minor domestic architecture, now so characteristic of the region, emerged towards the end of the 16th century. By 1600 it “had reached an established regional form which was to evolve on a more obvious pattern throughout the 17th century under the increasing influence of Renaissance culture and improved social condition.”⁴

This was a period that saw the rise of the yeoman farmer. The dissolution of the monasteries, the decline of the manorial estates, together with the demand for food to supply growing urban populations, all promoted the wealth and status of the farmer who, by the late 16th and early 17th century, had begun to find expression of his new found status in architectural form.

With antecedents in the medieval hall, the yeoman house plan evolved from 1550 onwards, in tandem with greater country houses, towards the achievement of greater privacy. With the changing habits of the time, it became necessary to add to and extend the hall with the provision of rooms for special purposes. By the close of the 16th century many yeoman houses had been modified with the single- storey hall being generally superseded.

The introduction of the wall fireplace in place of the open hearth enabled the introduction of upper floors, which became general to all but the poorer yeoman dwellings. Initially these upper floors were built into the roof space as a loft or attic, lit by dormer windows or windows in the gables, although occasionally the upper floor was added by reducing the height of the ground floor in houses of superior status. The plan form from hall-house further developed towards the full 17th century plan; “the through entrance passage with service room and hall becomes general, whilst a third apartment, the ground floor parlour, serving both as bedroom and withdrawing room, is

⁴ Raymond B. Wood-Jones 1963. *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Banbury Region*. Manchester; University of Manchester Press p.54

added in the larger houses.” At the end of the century, the larger yeoman houses advanced to the two and a half storey height.⁵

Building activity in the region was interrupted by the Civil Wars in 1640. With a major battle fought at Edgehill, the existence of many of the villages around Banbury was interrupted by the passage of armies and the outbreak of war. Many areas were plundered and burnt and several large houses destroyed. Building activity resumed in 1646 on an increased scale with a peak in the construction of more important yeoman dwellings.

With this renewal of activity, a number of further developments in the regional house plan became evident. Many new dwellings had complete first floors. Further developments included the provision of a cellar under the parlour in some houses for the storage of wine and cider. This introduction of a cellar necessitated the relocation of the stairs between the hall and parlour – a position that had been anticipated in larger country houses (such as at Shutford) and that provided a more private approach to the bedrooms above.

Subsequent structural changes over the course of the ensuing century continued as result of the increasing desire for privacy and convenience. By the close of the 17th century the hall had been entirely eliminated and by the late 18th century a double depth plan had emerged. A new symmetry had been transposed onto the more prominent yeoman house with many being of a two-room depth plan with pantry and kitchen beyond the parlour and dining area; “disposed astride a centrally placed entrance and stair hall.”⁶

The end of the 17th century to the beginning of the 19th generally marks a period of alteration to existing buildings. Decline in prosperity resulted in a corresponding decline in the replacement of buildings by newer structures and “the farming communities in the villages around Banbury had often to content themselves with endeavouring to improve and extend their older homes to bring them in line with new architectural trends” (ibid: 203).

⁵ Ibid: 55

⁶ Ibid: 202

Yew Tree House

Yew Tree house owes its existence to John Hopkins, an enterprising yeoman, whose family had a long history of association with Sibford Gower. As Fowler et al (1960) have observed, the families of the Sibford settlements have three unusual characteristics; the length of their connection with the villages; the number of freeholders that they included; and the vigour with which they thrust out branches from these small remote villages all over the Kingdom.

The Hopkins family is a good example under all three heads. Well established in Sibford Gower by at least the 16th century, records shows that they were substantial freeholders in the village with branches sent far and wide - having notable connections in the city of Coventry. A 19th century advertisement for the sale of his property⁷ highlights that John Hopkins owned at least 200 acres of land in the village including a farm house and various farm buildings:

Freehold and Tithe-free Estates.
TO be SOLD by PRIVATE CONTRACT,
Either together or separately,—Two very desirable
ESTATES, containing 230 Acres, situate at Sibford Gower, in
the county of Oxford, each consisting of a farm-house, farm
buildings, and 115 Acres of Land. One of the Estates adjoins
the turnpike road, leading from Banbury and Shipston-on-Stour,
and the roads to the other are good. The whole of the land is
in a high state of cultivation, and the buildings are in substan-
tial tenantable repair. The land-tax and other outgoings, pay-
able in respect of each Estate, are about £6. per annum. Pos-
session can be given up by the proprietor at Michaelmas next, or
a lease taken by him, as the purchaser may prefer. Apply for a
view of the Estates to Mr. John Hopkins, of Sibford Gower, the
owner and occupier, and for terms of sale, to him, or his soli-
citors, Messrs. Golby, Munton, and Draper, of Banbury.

Some of the buildings in question, reported to be of “substantial tenantable repair,” most likely refer to the present Yew tree House and its Dovecote.

⁷ Advertisements and Notices Feb 13 1830. *Jackson's Oxford Journal*. Issue 4007

Hopkins built the house to replace the original one, burnt down in a fire in the 18th century.⁸ Little information exists about this original house although it is likely that the stone dovecote – with its 1728 date stone – was part of the original and probably more substantial farmhouse.

The existence of the dovecote and the date stone both indicate that the Hopkins were quite prominent in the village. “The Renaissance practice of dating buildings reflects the increasing importance of the yeoman and husbandman, and his pride in his new permanent house caused him to inscribe his initials, frequently coupled with those of his wife, on a stone with the date of the erection of the building.”⁹ Dovecotes were furthermore themselves symbols of high social status, built by the wealthy to supply themselves and their households with a luxurious food - the tender meat of young pigeons being a particular delicacy. Their status predicated their prominent sitting, usually near the main entrance road to the house.

Listing Description

SIBFORD GOWER 5P3436-3536 16/157 Yew Tree House GV II House. Mid to late C18. Ashlar ironstone. Slate roof. Stone coped gables with moulded kneelers. Stone end stacks with brick shafts. Central-staircase plan. 2 storeys. 3-window range. Central entrance has 6-panelled door with moulded wood frame, overlight and moulded stone architrave. Entrance is flanked by sashes with barns. Keyblock stone architrave. 3 similar first floor windows. Interior not inspected.

SIBFORD GOWER SP3436-3536 16/158 Yew Tree House, dovecote approx. 20m NE of house GV II Dovecote. Datestone 1728. Coursed ironstone rubble. Steeply pitched tile roof. Entrance has plank door and moulded wood frame. Included for group value.

⁸ Fowler et al 1960. *From the Romans to Rock-m-Roll. A Short History of the Sibford-Swalcliffe-Epwell-Hook Norton District.* p. 15

⁹ Raymond B. Wood-Jones 1963. *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Banbury Region.* Manchester; University of Manchester Press . p.54

The house sits back from the lane almost centrally on a large elevated plot.



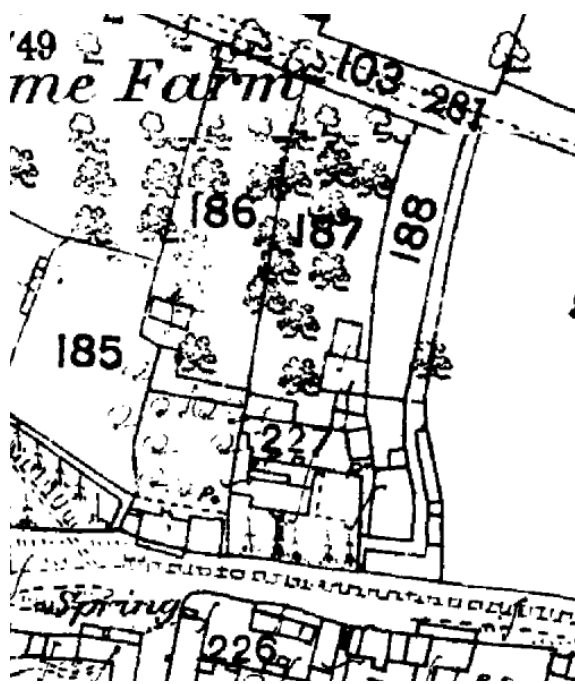
Front elevation



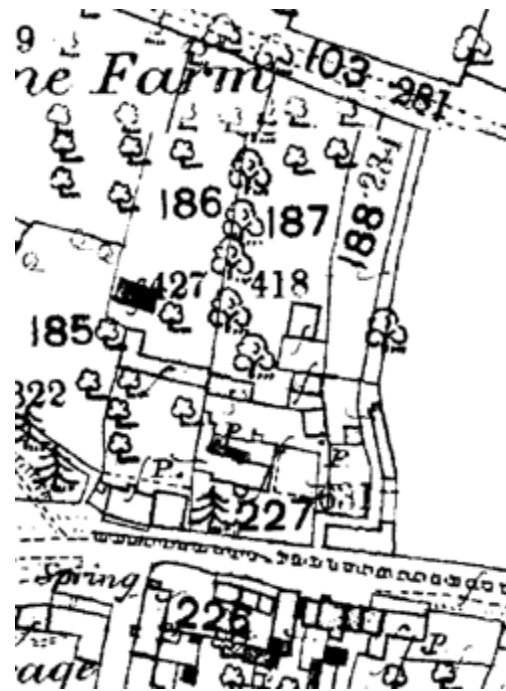
Rear elevation

As set out in the list description the house has a formal façade with a centrally placed door with aediculated window openings on each side and one above the door. The moulding details are simply faceted suggestive of a mid to second half C18th date. The front elevation is in ashlar ironstone, the parapetted gables and rear elevations in coursed and dressed ironstone. The upper part of the chimney stacks have been rebuilt in brickwork and the dormers too appear modern, perhaps rebuilds of earlier ones. The use of slate for the roof, on what is a relatively steep pitch is probably not original and may relate to a C19th make over and renovation.

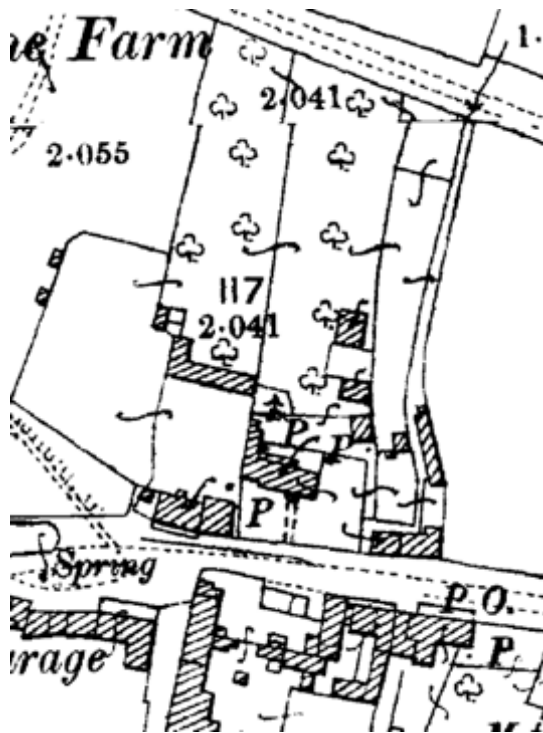
The early Ordnance Survey maps show the house in its original plot, with a paddock onto Backside Lane. This has now been separated from the house and has been redeveloped.



Ordnance Survey map 1881



Ordnance Survey map 1886



Ordnance Survey map 1922



Ordnance Survey map 1974

The house included a series of outbuildings, of which only the extensions on the west side survive (and the dovecote). This early photograph taken from the pond also shows to illustrate that the house was always well screened from the road with a wall and planting behind it.



Main Street looking east, 1898 (<http://thesibfords.org.uk>)



The windows are not the originals and appear to be late C19th (or later) replacements.



Internally, the house is effectively one room each side of the staircase over three floors – its is narrow and tall and extended to provide additional living

space with C19th single storey wing on the west end which provided 'modern' facilities – dairy/scullery, coal shed and wash house.

The basement has a vaulted ceiling in part and may represent a remnant of the earlier building that once existed on site. The stone mullioned window in the basement would appear to confirm this.



The central stairs appears to be of mid C18th (use of newel and closed string is typical for early to mid C18th stairs)) with surprisingly elegant turned balusters (column on vase) for such as 'rural' building but has been part blocked in and would otherwise have presented an elegant structure rising up through the centre of the building. The closed string strikes across the first floor window and the soffit of the stairs has an uncomfortable geometry with the back door, which may suggest that the stairs has been moved. However, it is not unknown for the internal circulation arrangements of C18th houses to 'clash' with the external composition and it is probable that the staircase is as originally built.



The principal rooms on either side of the hall are quite plain with C19th fire surrounds, and the downstand timber transverse beam cased in a simple plaster surround. The doors are six panelled – raised and fielded to the hallway and probably of early C19th date.



Ground Floor

On the first floor the rooms are plain and without decoration with a simple C19th fire surround surviving in one room. The doors are two panelled with L hinges and probably of C18th date. In the bathroom, the door (also two panelled) has a typical C18th rim lock with brass drop handle.



First Floor

Unusually the quality of the stairs continues up into the attic (it would be common for this top flight to be more rudimentary in design and finish) to serve two attic rooms. That said the nosings are simpler, without the moulding detail evident on the lower flights. The roof structure contains a double set of purlins and collar, but the remainder of the roof is concealed behind existing coverings.

Heritage significance

The National Planning Policy Framework in Annex 2 defines significance as:

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

and defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

‘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.’

Placing the building in its historical context and describing its characteristics and appearance is an important component of the evidence gathering exercise to inform understanding of the building’s archaeological, architectural, historic and artistic interest

From the foregoing description of the building and its context the heritage significance of the house can be summarised as follows:

- The house sits in a generous well landscaped plot, in a street that contains a mix of house of different ages and social status. The polite architecture of the C18th gentleman’s residence or yeoman farmer sits along side the more vernacular cottage. This mix – in one sense a socially mixed and inclusive society evidences the history of the development of the village as well as holding aesthetical value in the grouping of buildings around narrow lanes and village and green.
- The design of the house represents contemporary architectural fashions, as expressed by rural craftsmen and builders, with evidence

of later alteration and extension as the house is adapted to meet modern and changing needs.

- The survival of the dovecote provides evidence of the earlier house that once stood on the site and the house may hold further archaeological evidence of the house that was destroyed by fire.
- The simple plan form of the house of central staircase bay flanked by a room on each side survives and evidences how the household operated. The expense was invested in the external appearance of the building, its interior by comparison being simple and without any elaborate decoration, suggesting that first impressions mattered and that status was principally expressed in the external form.
- Its setting within a large plot, in an elevated position, yet behind a boundary wall with a verdant front garden that acted as a visual buffer suggests seclusion and privilege, gained from wealth creation and land ownership, evidenced through the Inclosure Acts and the demise of the small farmer bought out by the more wealthy.
- Surviving early Internal fittings (doors, cupboards and hinges) illustrate the rural and traditional crafts and help to date the building and place it stylistically and technologically within a particular period of architectural development as a historical context.
- The house has aesthetic appeal as a familiar form constructed in local building materials (apart from the slate roof) that helps to place it geographically, and that reinforces local distinctiveness.
- The house evidences periods of change that provide 'chapters' to its history and illustrate the changing needs of contemporary society and that reflect the aspirations of its owners.
- The house is set back from the street, as a deliberately designed element of seclusion. It is the visual recognition that it is set back from

the street, views filtered by planting and a stone wall that contributes to its significance as a detached and politely designed house for someone of some wealth and local standing.

- The dovecote is not visible from the street and its setting, which clearly has changed from its original relationship with a different house on the plot, is essentially internal – a surprising building to find in a ‘back garden’ of a C18th detached house.

National Planning Policy Framework

Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012 the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

Yew Tree House is listed grade II and lies within a designated conservation area and is thus defined as a designated heritage asset. In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset the NPPF states in paragraph 132 that:

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

The Ministerial Foreword sets out this new direction, explaining that intelligently managed change (sustainable development) should be embraced as a positive measure to protect and enhance our historic environment. Greg Clarke states:

Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment.....Our historic environment – buildings, landscapes, towns and villages – can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers

The historic environment policies of the NPPF are supported by Historic England's Good Practice Advice Notes, which give more detailed advice

about gathering the information on significance, assessing the impact and assessing harm with an emphasis on a proportionate approach and proactive and effective management of heritage assets.

The recently published Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) seeks to provide further advice on assessing the impact of proposals explaining that what matters in assessing the level of harm (if any) is the degree of impact on the significance of the asset. It states (paragraph 017):

In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed.....works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all.

The concept of 'substantial harm' and less than 'substantial harm' is relatively new to the management of the historic environment and other than commenting that 'substantial harm' is a high test the National Planning Policy Framework provides little further definition of what this means. However, in a recent High Court Judgement (Bedford Borough Council v. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Nuon UK Ltd [2012] EWHC 4344 [Admin]) Mr Justice Jay defined substantial harm in the following way:

One was looking for an impact which would have such a serious impact on the significance of the asset that its significance was either vitiated altogether or very much reduced.

The Planning Practice Guidance also seeks to provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes 'public benefit'; as it is the public benefit that flows from a development that can justify harm, always ensuring also that considerable weight and importance is given to the desirability to preserve the

setting of listed buildings in weighing the public benefits against the harm. It states (paragraph 020):

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 7). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits.

It explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits including:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting;
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
- securing the optimum viable use for a heritage asset

S66 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation areas) Act 1990

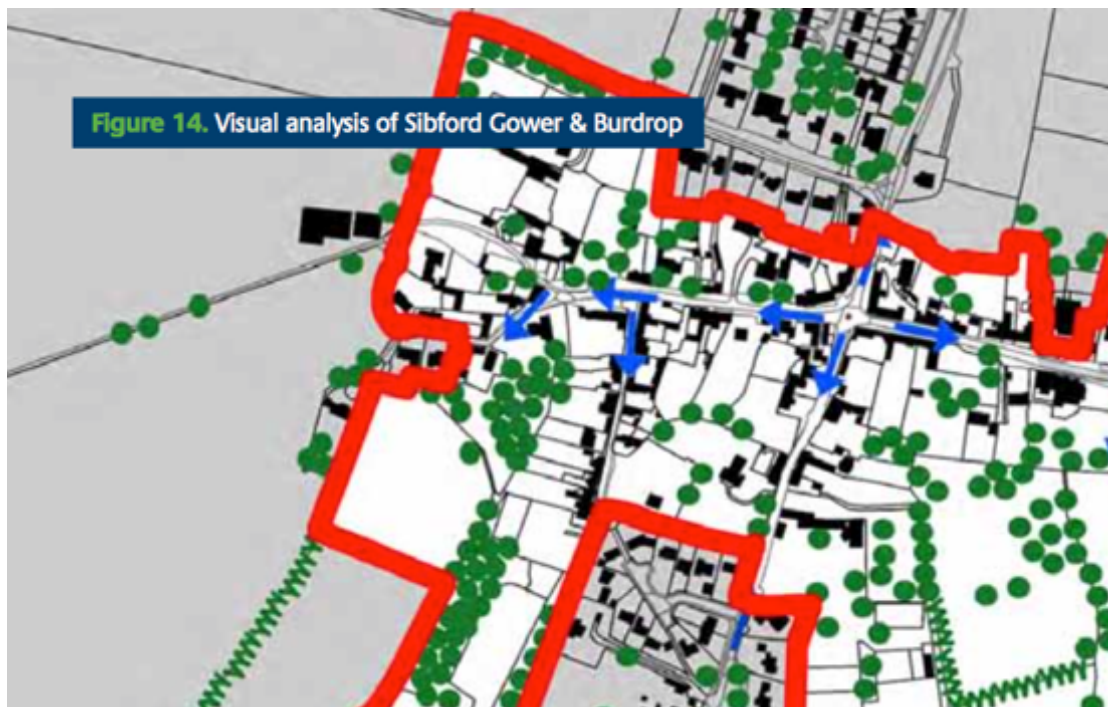
The applicant is aware that section 66 of the Act requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

In the Court of Appeal, *Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants District Council, English Heritage and National Trust*, 18th February 2014, Sullivan LJ made clear that to discharge this responsibility means that decision makers must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings and their settings when carrying out the balancing exercise (of judging harm against other planning considerations).

In this respect the conclusion is that this proposal will not cause any substantial harm and that any less than substantial harm is significantly outweighed by the public benefits, including heritage benefits that would flow from the development.

Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Appraisal, 2012, (Cherwell District Council)

The Conservation area appraisal sets out the history of development and describes the key characteristics of various ‘character areas’. It explains the mix of architectural styles and the range of house types and sizes in the village of Sibford Gower. Yew Tree House gets a mention for its ashlar ironstone and the contribution of the front garden trees to the verdant qualities of Main Street and the sense of enclosure.



Extract of visual analysis map identifying the trees in the front garden to Yew Tree House

There is a management plan and list of policies as a part of the conservation area appraisal documents which sets out how the council intends to deliver on its statutory responsibilities for the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas, effectively seeking to use existing national and local planning policies.

Of relevance to this proposal are the conservation objectives to

- *Promote new alterations and extensions that are sympathetic to the existing buildings in scale, materials and design.*
- *Ensure the preservation of important trees.*

Proposals

Having been under the same family ownership for 86 years, with very limited modernisation or updating, the house and its garden have retained a sense of history and authenticity that is quite rare.

It is now in new ownership and there is a pressing requirement to carry out some essential and much needed repairs and modernisation (kitchen, bathrooms and utility areas). Achieving this successfully in a manner that respects the simple plan form of the main range and avoids loss of the principal ground floor spaces is a particular challenge, especially given that the house is only one room deep and effectively two rooms on each floor.

The house has a double aspect from each room, looking over the front garden and over the back garden. A rear extension would compromise this arrangement and complicate the simple rectangular and uncluttered form of the building and its elevations. Taking the cue from the existing C19th extensions to the west end the proposal involves a single storey extension on the east end, linking to the garden wall with an extension of the existing verandah to provide a more complete composition and 'dry access' to the other end of the building.

Whilst the extension is single storey, given the steep pitched roof (to respect the existing characteristic of steep pitched roofs in the village) there is the opportunity to break through from the first floor bedroom to create a second bathroom in the roof space of the extension.

The extension and outbuildings on the west side will be repaired and renovated, though there is a small structure attached to the end of the range, which is in very poor condition and beyond reasonable repair, and is proposed to be removed.

Assessment of impact

The house is smaller than it appears, being only one room deep and with two rooms per floor. This was remedied by the provision of an extension on the west end of the building, which provided the functional necessities of then modern day life. Other than some updating internally little has changed since then and the property needs to be made for C21st living.

The front and rear elevations are important architectural components that help to establish the character of the building with its simply honest symmetry and scale. Adding an extension to the rear elevation might be expected to be the conventional solution and one with plenty of historic precedents. However, to do so would result in the loss of an important visual connection between the main living spaces and the garden, as well as loss of light to those rooms. It would also be difficult to achieve the circulation without resulting in some changes to the layout. The existing extension and outbuildings sits close to the boundary with the adjoining property and an extension in this area, apart from requiring demolition of the existing extension, may present concerns for the neighbours. This leaves an extension on the eastern gable, where there is space for an extension and that does not involve any demolition work.

The extension is for a new family kitchen and has the benefit of being suitable to accommodate all the paraphernalia associated with modern living avoiding the need for intervention in to or alteration of the historic building (other doorways), which can then remain much in its original state. In this way the proposal has been designed to minimise the impacts on the listed building

The latter part for the C18th and the C19th witnessed growing interest in the visual and functional between house and garden, with parts of the garden performing as 'outdoor rooms'. This promoted the desire for a room with a view and access to the garden to enjoy the garden as a place of pleasure rather than work. The verandah is a design concept that helps to reinforce

this aesthetic connection between house and garden and provides opportunity for 'indoor/outdoor' space without going to the extent of an orangery or conservatory. The existing verandah adds visual interest to the rear elevation, but only extends across a part of the rear elevation, its hipped end clashing with the doorcase on the rear elevation. Extending the verandah across the length of the rear elevation will resolve this present design 'defect' and help to connect the extension with the remainder of the building, aesthetically and functionally.

The proposed extension is designed to be of a scale that it reads as a subordinate element, part of an architectural composition where the main range remains predominant. It is deliberately different from the range on the other gable to avoid an over elaborate attempt at creating a symmetry that should not exist and to ensure that the authenticity of the earlier extension is not undermined by a facsimile that fakes history. Clearly the proposed extension rightly takes reference from historic precedents and traditional practices in terms of materials and proportions but the design subtly introduces contemporary elements to ensure the building would be understood to be of its own time and also to ensure that parts are sufficiently discreet or discernible as separate components.

The mature landscaped garden is an important part of what makes the place special and at the moment there is limited visual connection between house and garden, and limited opportunities to enjoy views of the garden from the house. The proposal seeks to sensitively exploit the opportunities so that the house and garden can be better enjoyed. This would benefit how people can enjoy the house and its setting and also that of the dovecote, which would be more effectively integrated into the viewing experience.

Assessing the impacts against the heritage significance the place holds the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **History:** the proposal represents another chapter in the continuing history of the house and how it is adapted for contemporary society, without erasing earlier significant periods of change
- **Archaeology:** the proposals will involve some below ground intervention (foundations) but this will give an opportunity to understand the extent of any earlier building. There will be limited loss of fabric to make two doorways through the gable end, but this involves coursed stonework that lacks any architectural embellishment.
- **Architecture:** The front and rear elevations, which expressed the architectural style, will remain intact and the extension on the end gable will not undermine the pre-eminence, architecturally of the existing main range.
- **Plan form:** An extension avoids the need to manipulate or alter the existing plan form, which can remain very much as it is.
- **Group Value:** understanding of the historical and functional relationship between dovecote and house will be unchanged. The proposal does not involve any development that would undermine the intervisibility between the two. In the street it is the garden trees that have been noted to contribute to the character of the street and the conservation area. The proposed extension will not affect these trees and because of them the development will be screened from view, or at worst, in winter without leaves on some of the trees, views will be filtered. In any event being able to see the extension would not be harmful.
- **Setting:** the sense of this being a privileged and secluded house – i.e. set in a large plot with a range of ancillary buildings (there used to be more on the site than currently exists) and screened from public view, with the front garden acting as a visual buffer but also a picturesque approach, will remain. The viewing experience from within the site will

incorporate a new element, but this would not undermine the experience or erode understanding of the building.

- **Internal features:** It is not proposed to remove any features of interest. Architectural detailing is limited and thus it is functional features, given aesthetic or historic interest by design or craftsmanship (doors, cupboards, ironmongery) that hold interest, but there is no necessary requirement to have to remove these. Where it may be necessary to upgrade any features, for building regulation requirements, then the intention would be to re-use such details elsewhere in the building (something that has happened already and is a common practice in many historic buildings)

This represented very limited harm to the buildings significance (loss of some historic fabric) which would be outweighed by the public (includes heritage benefits) of retaining the original plan form of the building, securing its repair and renovation, and rescuing of the outbuildings, which are in very poor condition, sustaining its residential use and its setting within a large plot.

Conclusion

The house exhibits characteristics – its design and use of materials that place it in history and geographically, with a history associated with the farming in the area. These application proposals are borne out of an understanding of the site's special interest seeking to balance the owners' needs with those of the building.

Reflecting the history of change the present occupants wish to make some changes to ensure the house is properly repaired and restored and brought up to a standard that meets the needs of a modern society. Such changes are already a part of its history and the proposed interventions, which involve modest extensions, represent a further chapter in the history of the house.

Understanding the heritage significance the house holds has informed understanding of the impact of the proposals, with any harmful impacts mitigated or eliminated by design iteration, helping to ensure that the changes proposed will add interest rather than deplete it. There is potential for further change and the opportunity to add another chapter to the history of the building. There are no aspects to the building's heritage significance that would suggest this couldn't happen successfully.

The National Planning Policy Framework supports the principle of the intelligent management of change, arguing that historic buildings need to adapt to the needs of a 21st century society and modern living, and if done sensitively then the special interest of the heritage assets will be sustained for present and future generations.