

Heritage Statement of Significance

and

Heritage Impact Assessment

for

Relocation of staircase and minor internal
alterations in relation to staircase with external
window and door alterations

at

Stickleys House

Sibford Gower

OX15 5RT

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Heritage Statement of Significance

Stickleys House, Sibford Gower, Banbury OX15 5RT

Introduction

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF;2019) defines significance as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest’.

The significance of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF as being made up of four main constituents: architectural interest, historic interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The setting of a heritage asset can also contribute to the significance of the asset.

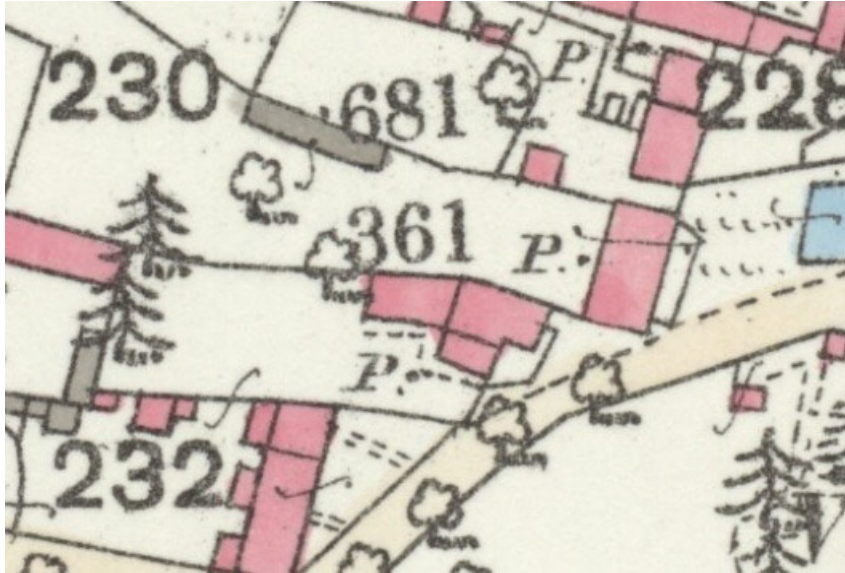
Assessment



Stickleys House is located at the western end of Main Street within the settlement of Sibford Gower.

The building itself appears to be of three builds. The earliest part of the house (the eastern end), located gable end to the highway, dates from the 17th century. The west part of the

house was probably added in the late 18th or early 19th century, maybe initially as an ancillary building. The southern projection was added in the latter half of the 19th century. By the time of the national survey of 1881 the building had reached its current form. This chronology is evidenced from the architectural details of the different parts of the house and interrogation of the OS maps from the 19th century.



Ordinary Survey Map 1884 (dwelling houses are shown as red and ancillary buildings as grey).



Ground floor plan showing the sequence of construction. (17th century red; late 18th/early 19th century green; later 19th century orange; 20th century purple).

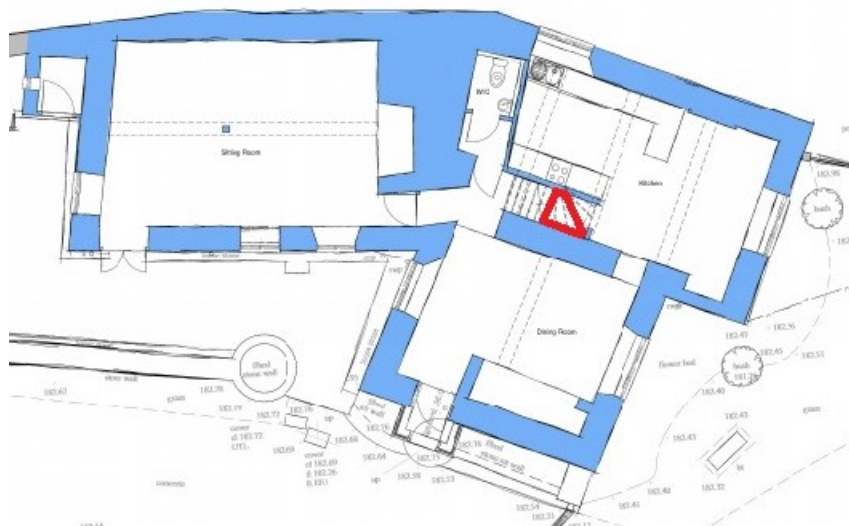
The 17th century part of the house is of three storeys, constructed in local-quarried squared coursed ironstone. The roof is steeply pitched with a stone slate roof laid in diminishing courses. The east gable has stone coping stones and moulded kneelers. This detail is absent from the west gable. There are a mixture of window casements from metal casements with wrought-iron fasteners in the 17th century part of the house to replacement 20th century timber side-hung casements in other parts of the building.

Internally some original features – the fireplaces – survive but the building was reputedly in very poor condition in the 1980s and much internal work and rearrangement appears to have taken place prior to the property becoming listed on 20 September 1988.

Records for the property are sparse and the planning history is silent on the internal layout of the building.

The 20th century works appear to have been most invasive in the area of the current kitchen. A modern stud partition wall has been introduced to create a ground floor toilet. The location of the stair from ground to first floor also appears to have been moved to its current position adjacent to the doorway in the south-west corner of the 17th century section of the house. This not a location where traditionally we would expect to find an historic stair. It is also the case that historically staircases were constructed to rise continuously up through the house. This is not the case here where the section of stairs from ground to first floor is located in a different position from the remainder of the staircase from first up to the attic.

Inspection of the existing ground to first floor stair shows that for the most part the timberwork is of poor quality and of 20th century construction. The stringer and the majority of the treads and risers are of new wood. There is a short section of three steps however that appear to have been salvaged from a former staircase, There is a woodworm-eaten quartered timber support and the underside of these three steps are limewashed however nothing else historic about the staircase could be seen.



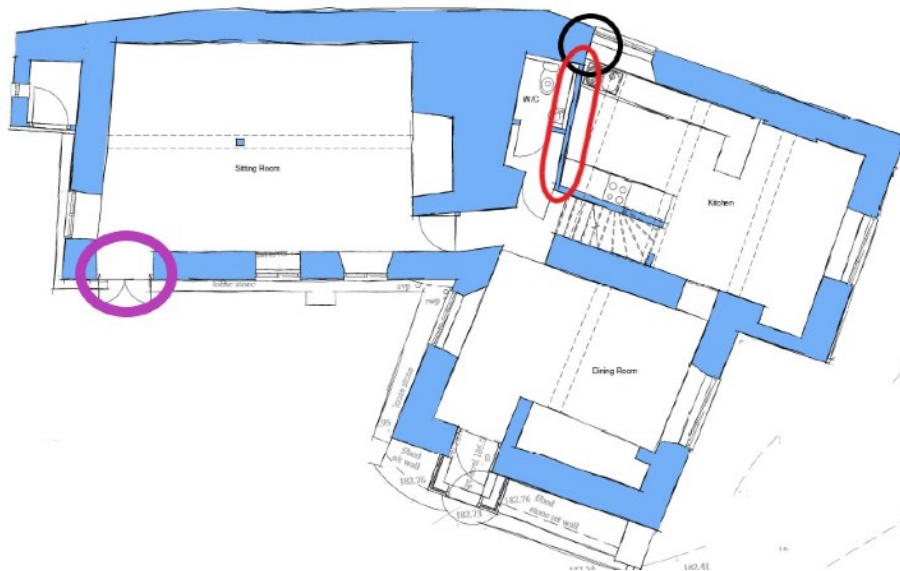
Section of an earlier staircase found incorporate within a modern stair.

It can therefore be concluded from the foregoing evidence presented above that the section of stair from ground to first floor has less significance than the other remaining sections of staircase which link the upper floors of the house.

The other obvious intervention that was part of the 1980s refurbishment work was the creation of a ground floor toilet. This has been achieved by the introduction of a modern and

light-weight stud partition (highlighted in red on the plan below). To facilitate this arrangement, it would appear that the western spay of the window opening on the north elevation of the house has been blocked-in to accommodate the new wall (highlighted in black).

The quality of this work is at best mediocre and somewhat compromises the historic layout of the house. Therefore, although the provision of toilet facilities is important the actual layout and the way this has been achieved is assessed as of detrimental impact to the architectural significance of the house.



The introduction of double doors onto the front elevation of the house (highlighted in purple on the above plan) also appears to be part of the 1980s refurbishment package. Certainly there is an argument to be made for garden access from the western end of the property as the only other exit is via the front door – the house does not have a ‘back’ door. However, the introduction of such a feature on the south/front elevation of the house - which is an elevation that can be viewed from the highway - lacks understanding of the traditional form of vernacular buildings from this area. The impact on the significance of the building is therefore considered detrimental.

Conclusion

Stickleys House as an example of the specific vernacular architecture from North Oxfordshire which developed between the 16th and 18th centuries. As such it is of undoubted historic and architectural significance although sadly some of the architectural significance of the building has been eroded by the reordering and building work of the late 20th century.

Changes to the layout of the building have been made probably initially when the two main parts of the house were jointly brought into residential use and then subsequently when the house was ‘restored’ in the 1980s. Not all of these changes have been necessarily detrimental to the architectural detailing of the building although some have eroded the character and significance of the building’s internal layout. These changes have most

particularly affected the area that is now the kitchen and the lower part of the staircase but also include the rather anachronistic introduction of a pair of French doors into the west end of the south elevation.

- External form and fabric of the property is of high significance.
- The metal window casements are of high significance.
- Internal layout of the house is of medium/high significance where there are minimal intervention and of low/limited significance where there has been disruptive intervention.
- The staircase at ground to first floor level is of low/limited significance – although the salvaged section is certainly of slight curio interest.
- The staircase to upper floors is of medium/high significance.

That said the overall significance of the building as a heritage asset remains high.

Statutory List Description

SP3436-3536 16/150

Stickleys House

(Formerly listed as Sibford Gower)

GV II

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

Listing NGR: SP3501837891

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Heritage Impact Assessment

Introduction

Any proposal for works of alteration to a listed building must be measured against both national policies, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and local policies, as set out within the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031.

The most relevant national policies are NPPF policies Nos. 184-202 (Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

The most relevant local policy is policy ESD15 – The Character of the Built and Historic Environment.

Assessment

The submitted proposal is a light-touch scheme which seeks minimal internal rearrangement.

The current ground floor layout of the east end of the house has the ground-to-first floor stair the location of which eats into the kitchen space. This staircase also sits uncomfortable within the 17th century section of the house and appears located as if it were an after-thought.

There are four elements of change:

1. The removal and replacement of the 1980s ground-to-first floor stair with a new timber stair of appropriate vernacular design in a slightly different location. This replacement will allow the staircase to meet with Building Regulations as well as remove this element of 20th century intrusion from the original and historically most significant part of the house. The stair to be removed is modern and therefore in this respect the work will not result in loss of original fabric. Work to the ceilings (which are not historic) and the supporting timbers of the ceiling/first floor will be the minimum necessary. At this stage it is not known what works were undertaken to the supporting floor beams and joists during the 1980s refurbishment but there is no intention to remove further historic timber. This change may be viewed as having a neutral impact on the architectural significance of the building.
2. The creation of a ground floor toilet room will require the erection of a modern stud partition. The proposal is to limit the invasiveness of these works by reusing the existing window opening and not to create a new window opening which would give the north elevation a very crowded appearance. The subdivision of the existing window is not an ideal arrangement but does limit the loss of original fabric and removes the need for a more invasive approach in the most significant part of the house. This change may be viewed as having a neutral impact on the architectural significance of the building.

3. There is slight evidence that there may have been an opening on the south-east corner of the kitchen. The wall is thinner in this location than the other historic walls in this section of the house. The proposal is to create a window opening to house a side-hung traditional timber casement of appropriate style to match the other historic casements present on the house. This change may be viewed as having a neutral impact on the architectural significance of the building.

4. The change of location for the double doors from the south/front elevation of the property – which can be viewed from the highway – to the aesthetically and architecturally more sympathetic location on the west gable of the house. It is proposed that this doorway be reduced to that of a window opening occupied by side-hung traditional timber casements of appropriate style to match the other historic casements present on the house. This change may be viewed as having a neutral/positive impact on the architectural significance of the building.

Conclusion

The changes proposed aim to enhance the enjoyment of this property whilst at the same time respecting the vernacular architectural tradition of the area.

The changes may all be viewed as have a neutral impact on the architectural significance of the building, the relocation of the double doors may even be viewed as an enhancement of the appearance and significance of the building.

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