HERITAGE STATEMENT

IN SUPPORT OF

A LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION

AT

VERGERS COTTAGE, CHURCHYARD, WESTBURY, WILTSHIRE BA13 3DA



Date: 12 July 2023 **Our Ref:** 231286

Glaston Hall
Spring Lane
Glaston, Rutland
LE15 9BZ

01572 822000

glaston@gateleysmitherspurslow.com

Coverage across the UK from offices in London, Reading, Exeter, Rutland, Nottingham, Llandudno, Chester, Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle.

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CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

3.0 HERITAGE ASSETS

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE ASSETS

5.0 LAYOUT

6.0 AMOUNT

7.0 SCALE

8.0 LANDSCAPING

9.0 APPEARANCES

10.0 ACCESS

11.0 PHOTOS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Design & Access Statement has been prepared by Gateley Smithers Purslow in support of a listed building consent application at Vergers Cottage, Churchyard, Westbury.

1.2 This statement seeks to fulfil the requirements of paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012), which states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by setting. It is proportionate to the scale of the development proposed.

1.3 This statement should be read together with all existing and proposed drawings and supplemental building reports. From here on the term “the building” will refer to the existing building and the term “the site” to refer to the site subject to this application. This statement follows the guidance of the Design Council and the CABE publication ‘Design and Access Statements – How to write, read and use them’. Where required it also takes guidance from Historic England advice Note 12 ‘Statements of Heritage Significance in Heritage Assets’.

1.4 Vergers Cottage is Grade II Listed and within the Westbury Conservation Area. It has a suffered an escape of water incident which has caused some internal damage. Generally this will require removal and replacement of the parquet floor and plasterboard ceilings plus localised plaster repairs at low level on the ground floor.

2.0 Relevant Legislative and Policy Context

Legislation

2.1 The legislation that guides decision making in respect of listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2.2 Section 16 of the Act states that "in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority (or the Secretary of State) Shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

2.3 Section 66 of the Act imposes a general duty upon local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals for planning permission upon the settings of the listed buildings. It states as follows:

> *In considering whether to grant planning permission [or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or it's setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the secretary of state shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*

2.4 Section 69 of the Act establishes powers for local planning authorities to designate areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance as conservation areas.

2.5 Section 72 establishes a general duty in the exercise of planning functions with respect to any buildings or other land within a conservation area to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

National planning policy

2.6 National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021). Chapter 16 (paragraphs 189–208) of the document provides policy guidance for development affecting the historic environment.

2.7 Paragraph 189 recognises that the heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner that is appropriate to their significance such that they can be enjoyed by existing and future generations.

2.8 Paragraph 190 requires local planning authorities to assess the significance of any heritage assets potentially affected to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposed development.

2.9 Paragraph 197 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of: the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

2.10 Paragraphs 199 onwards provide guidance for considering the potential impacts. Paragraph 199 states that when considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This should be proportionate to its significance: the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of whether the harm is substantial, total loss, or less than substantial.

2.11 Paragraph 200 goes on to state that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset, including through development within its setting, should require clear and convincing justification.

2.12 Paragraphs 200 and 201 deal with instances of substantial harm to a designated heritage asset. Development causing substantial harm should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or other criteria are met. Paragraph 202 guides that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

2.13 Paragraph 203 deals with the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset. It advises that in weighing applications that affect non-designated assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

2.14 Paragraph 206 encourages local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Those proposals that preserve elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset should be treated favourably.

2.15 Interpretation of the NPPF is provided by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This guidance note is divided into a series of chapters which is subject to regular review; the historic environment chapter was last updated in July 2019.

2.16 The historic environment chapter guides that understanding the significance of a heritage asset and its setting from an early stage in the design process can help to inform the development of proposals which avoid or minimise harm (paragraph 8). Paragraph 13 provides further guidance on setting, making clear that setting is not only related to visual attributes but other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell and vibration as well as the relationship between places.

2.17 Paragraph 18 provides guidance on assessing harm. It is clear that proposed development may have no impact or may enhance an asset's significance such that no harm is caused. Where development would be harmful to a designated heritage asset, this needs to be categorised as either 'less than substantial' or 'substantial' harm. The level of harm can vary within these two categories. It goes to elaborate that substantial harm is a 'high test' and therefore is unlikely to arise in many cases. This harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.

Historic England Guidance

2.18 Historic England has published a number of best practice conservation guidance documents to assist with decision making. These include:

- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (2nd Edition) (2015): Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) (2017): The setting of Heritage Assets
- Historic England Advice Note 2: (2016) Making Changes to Heritage Assets

3.0 THE HERITAGE ASSETS

3.1 Heritage assets are defined at Annex 2 of the NPPF as follows:

> A building, monument site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

3.2 Designated heritage assets include World Heritage Sites, Schedule Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas designated under the relevant legislation.

3.3 The property is Grade II Listed and within the Westbury Conservation Area. The listing description is as follows:-

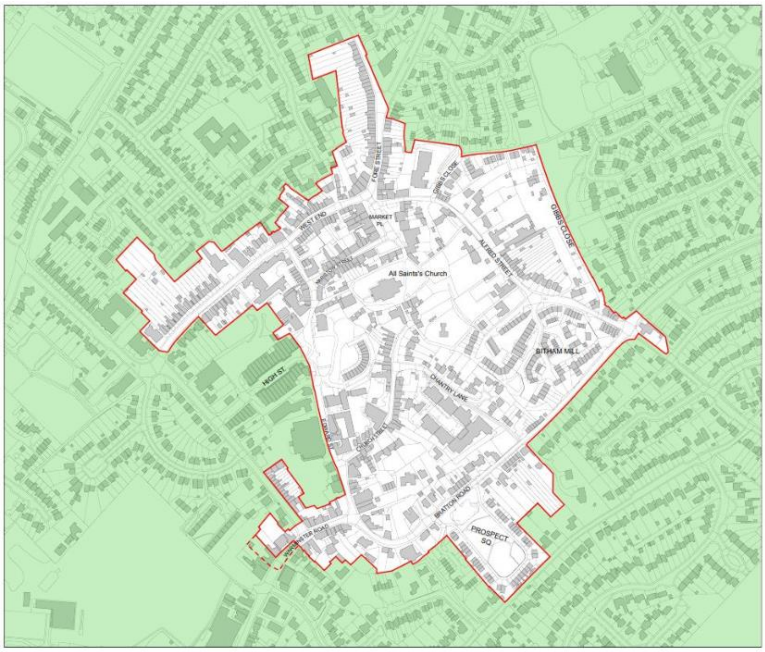
Early C19 and earlier. 2 storeys, whitewashed brick in 3 stages forming a picturesque group, each of a slightly diminishing height from left to right.

Pantile roof, gable end chimneys flanking middle part. Main part, to left, is largest with band at 1st floor level. Tall glazing bar fixed light window to left breaking through band. A 3 and a 2 light window 1st floor and a 2 light window on ground floor to right, all unevenly spaced with small panes.

Doorway in central section: 6 raised and fielded panels, plain brackets to plain flat narrow hood; a 2 light window over. The right hand part (former barn) has a 2 light window on ground floor, the gable end and rear are weatherboarded.

Curved garden wall to path leading to Edward Street: "Gothic" pointed doorway with wrought iron hingework now a garden gateway.

A map of the conservation area is shown below:



A review of the local public access outlines there is limited planning history available for inspection for the property.

4.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE ASSETS

Introduction

4.1 Significance is described by the NPPF (2021) as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. The PPG (2021) provides the following interpretation of each element of significance:

> Archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
>
> Architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
>
> Historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them.
> Heritage assets with interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

4.2 It is acknowledged that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. The setting of a heritage asset is defined by the NPPF 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.

4.3 Vergers Cottage is of important significance in its own right however its place in the core of the conservation area, surrounded by various other heritage assets means it is also highly important to the wider setting and character. Works to the property therefore need to be carefully assessed to ensure this important heritage asset is preserved with respect historic materials, its character and wider setting in the conservation area.

4.4 The works are necessary to address the impact from an escape of water which has damaged internal elements within the cottage. These works are further outlined in the supporting Schedule of Works. It is considered that the repairs and reinstatement works in a like for like manner are justified to preserve the character of the Grade II Listed property. The works will impact both the ground and first floor rooms to include the Bathroom, landing, small bedroom, balcony and then on the ground floor the hallway, lounge and dining room.

5.0 LAYOUT

5.1 Layout will not be impacted upon.

6.0 AMOUNTS

6.1 Areas of work are limited to the descriptions in the schedule of works.

7.0 SCALE

7.1 The proposed works will not impact upon scale.

8.0 LANDSCAPING

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 APPEARANCE

9.1 The reinstatement works seek to preserve the appearance of the property in a like for like process.

10.0 ACCESS

10.1 Not applicable.

11.0 PHOTOS

11.1 The following photos show the damaged caused by the escape of water.



Landing



parquet flooring



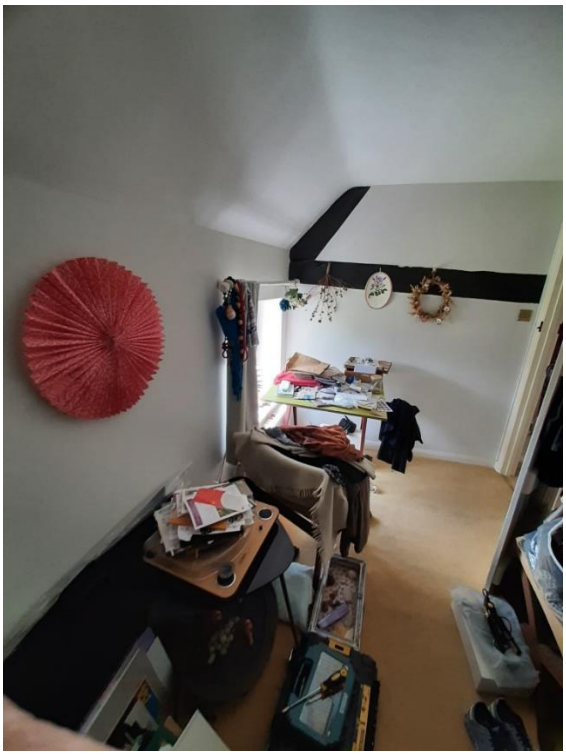
Water damage to plaster



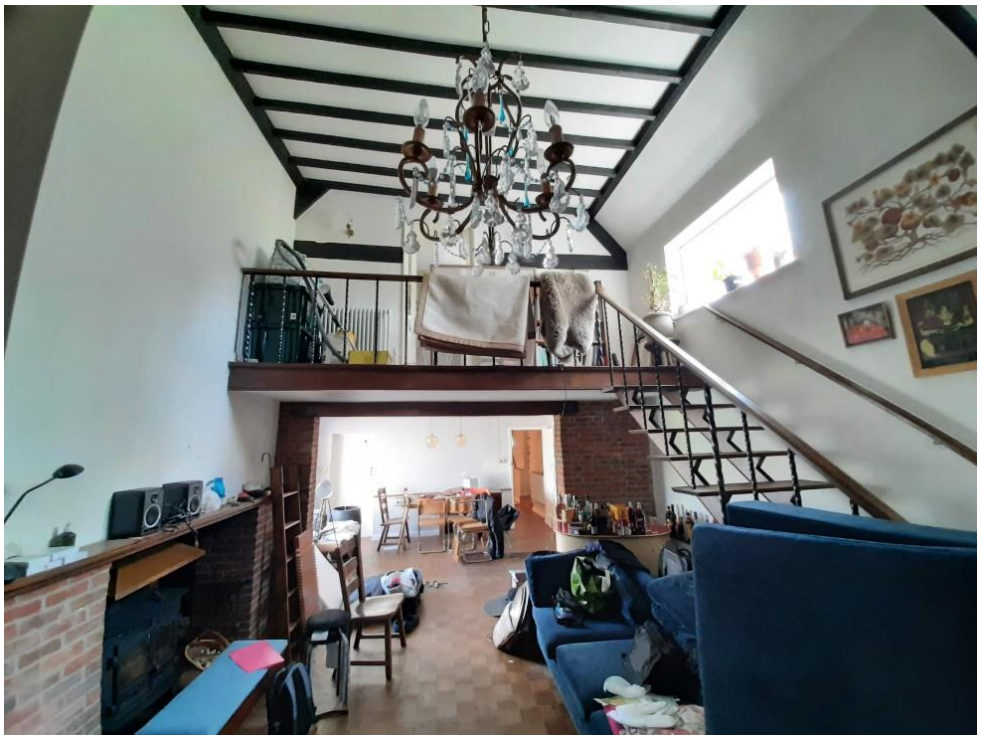
bathroom



Parquet floor



small bedroom



Ground floor

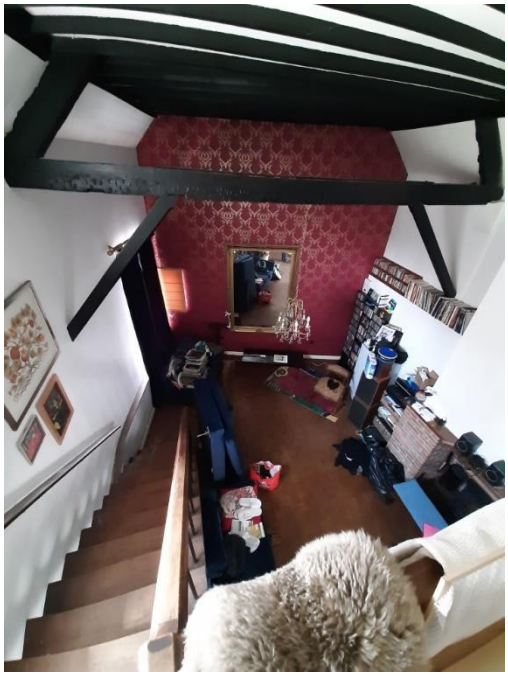
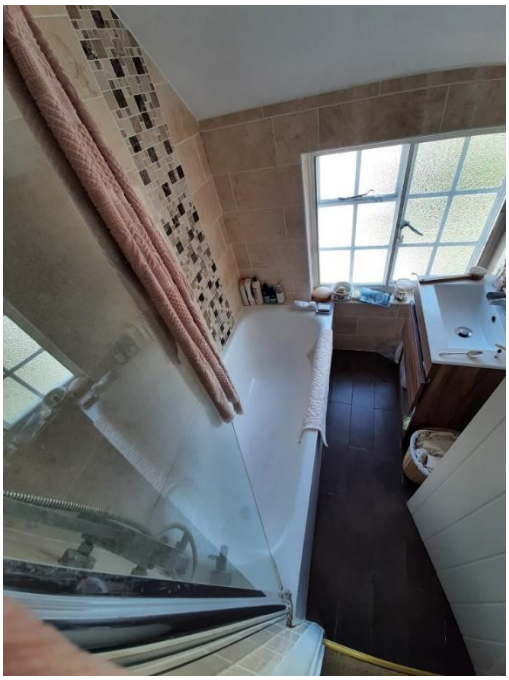


Photo from landing



bathroom



Ground floor