HPS

Professional Archaeological Services

Mills Platt, Corsham, Box Hill, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 8EZ

Heritage Statement

29 September 2022

Client:	Richard & Denise Cockrem
Project Site:	Mills Platt, Corsham, Box Hill, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 8EZ
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Non-Technical Summary

Heritage Planning Services has been commissioned by Richard & Denise Cockrem to carry out a heritage impact assessment for the property known as Mills Platt, Corsham, Box Hill, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 8EZ (the Project Site).

The proposed development will comprise the erection of a single storey building to house a Study. The building will be set against the southeast elevation of Mills Platt and will be clad in modern materials, with a sedum roof and central glass rooflight. The proposed location makes good use of the existing terracing, which will screen the southeast facing elevation from view. The addition of the sedum roof will also reduce the visual impact, with the effect of blending the structure into the garden environment.

The new building will have a material impact on the southwest facing elevation of the boundary wall, which by virtue of the association with Mills Platt is considered to be curtilage listed for the purpose of this assessment. However, the southwest elevation appears to have been constructed in recent history and has no real historic or architectural merit. On initial inspection it appears that the masonry to the southwest may have been erected to support the earlier drystone walling identified on the northeast elevation. The wall in its current form is not considered to make a positive contribution to the historic character and setting of Mills Platt and the impact of concealing the southwest elevation may be considered negligible.

The proposed new development has the potential to make good practical use of a space that has in the past been subject to piecemeal development that has had a negative impact on Mills Platt listed building.

The addition of a well-designed purpose-built Study, which is largely concealed by existing landscaping and integrated into the garden environment by way of a living roof, has the potential to enhance this area of the Project Site.

It is considered that the proposals offer a chance to enhance the appearance of the southeast elevation of Mills Platt and any impact to the heritage asset is considered to be less than substantial and at the lower end of that scale.

1. Introduction

1.1. Heritage Planning Services has been commissioned by Richard & Denise Cockrem to carry out a heritage impact assessment for the property known as Mills Platt, Corsham, Box Hill, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 8EZ (hereafter the Project Site).

1.2. The proposed development will comprise the erection of a contemporary single storey building in place of a modern annex attached to the southeast elevation.

1.3. The report has been prepared by Sam Driscoll MCIfA, Heritage Planning Services and completed under project reference HPS-509/22.



Figure 1 Detailed Project Site location, outlined in red. Centred on NGR ST 83454 69680.

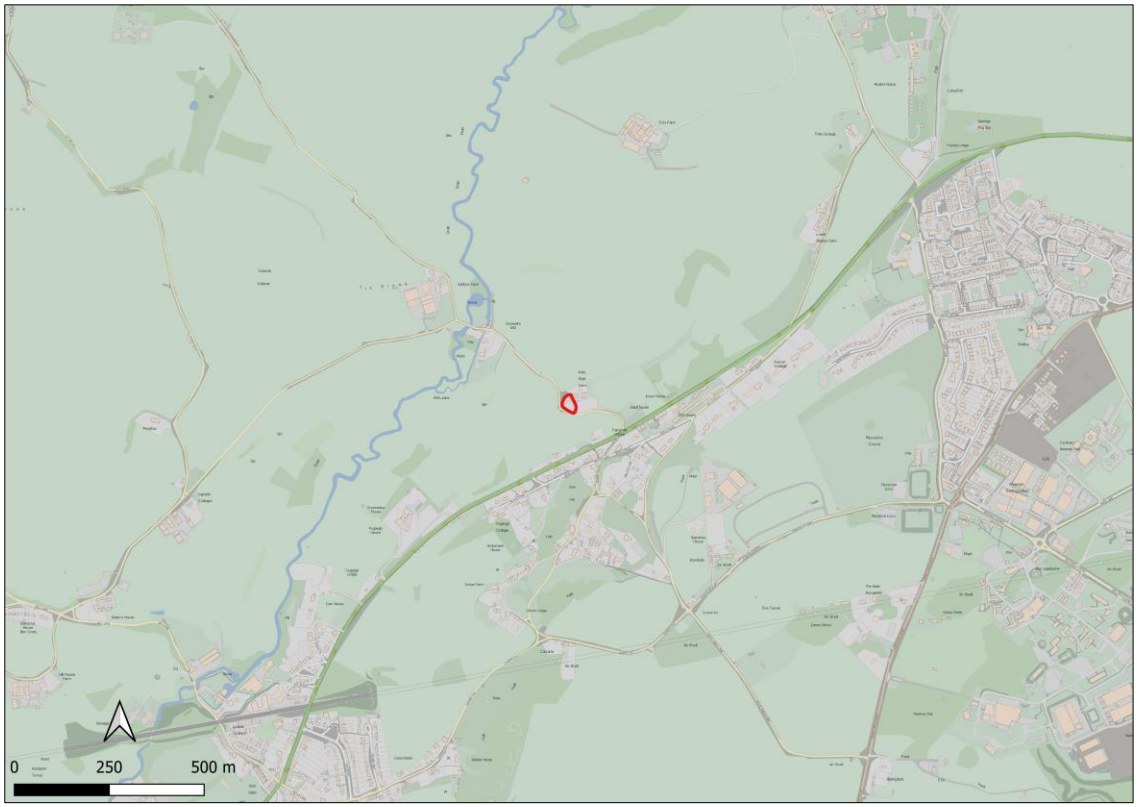

Figure 2 General Project Site location, outlined in red. Centred on NGR ST 83454 69680.

2. The Project Site

2.1. The Project Site is accessed via a rural road, leading north off Box Hill, and is located within the historic boundary of Mills Platt Farm.

2.2. The Project Site comprises land to the southeast of the 17th century Grade II listed Mills Platt (formerly Mills Platt Cottages), described as follows-

List Entry Number: 1022804. "House, C17, rubble stone with stone tiled roof, coped gables and ridge stack to rear wing. One and a half storeys. L-plan. Earliest section is east end of rear wing, mid C17, with south front 3-window range of 2-light recessed chamfered mullion windows, upper dormer gables. Drips-tones to all windows except those in right end bay. Plank door in chamfered surround to left of end bay. Casement windows, some leaded fixed lights. To left, straight joint to one window range, upper dormer gable with 2-light recessed ovolo-moulded window and hoodmould, ground floor 5-light mullion window, extended from original 2-light with stone lintel over, bolection-moulded with carved roundel frieze, apparently a reused door or fireplace lintel. Straight joint to gable end of west cross wing. Attic blank ovolo-moulded single light with hood, 2 first floor recessed cyma-moulded 2-light windows under single hood, similar ground floor 2-light window with hoodmould and door in flush cyma-moulded surround with shallow porch, slab sides and scrolled brackets to pediment hood. West front has 2 dormer gables, that to left with 2-light recessed chamfered mullion

window and hood, that to right with gable stack and single light recessed cyma-moulded window and hood. Ground floor 3-light and 2-light recessed cyma-moulded mullion windows, dripstone over 3-light and hood over 2-light. North end wall has recessed chamfered 2-light ground floor window. Hipped stair tower in rear north angle, 2- light upper window, single light below. To right, one window range with dormer gable and incised W/S/E 1694, 2-light recessed cyma- moulded window hood over C20 lean-to with reset 2-light north window and reset east oak plank door. To left a former doorway with hood and inserted C20 window. Straight joint to earlier range to left. One dormer gable and larger gable to left, both with 2- light recessed hollow moulded windows. Ground floor C20 window in chamfered former doorcase, 2-light recessed ovolo-moulded window with hood and C20 lean-to. Marked on F.Allen map of 1630."

2.3. The heritage asset which was formerly listed on the 20th December 1960 include the NW/SE orientated curtilage listed wall which extends from the southeast corner of the Project Site and forms the boundary between the Project Site and land belonging to Mills Platt Farmhouse, to the northeast.

2.4. The 17th century Grade II listed Mills Platt Farmhouse (private dwelling) is located c. 30 m to the northeast of the Project Site (List Entry Number: 1022804).[1]

2.5. The c. 18th century Grade II listed Mills Platt Barn is location 26 m to the ENE of the Project Site (List Entry Number: 1022805), within the curtilage of Mills Platt Farmhouse. [2]

2.6. The adjacent listed buildings are not expected to be intervisible with the proposed new development.

Site Visit

2.7. A site visit was carried out on the 8th September 2022 in dry, bright conditions.

2.8. The Project Site comprises the location of a former modern annex that was attached to the southeast elevation to the east corner to the Mills Platt.

2.9. The previous annex has been partially removed, revealing a property boundary wall. The structure comprises a double skin stone wall to a height of approximately 2m. The feature has been substantially rebuilt. The southwest elevation facing the Project Site has been constructed in mortared limestone, likely using stone from an earlier structure. It is not clear if this part of the wall is a reconstruction or simply an attempt to support the masonry of the northeast facing elevation.

[1] For the formal listing see https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1363591?section=official-list-entry
[2] For the formal listing see https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1022805

2.10. The northeast facing elevation comprises close bedded dressed limestone blocks abutting the east corner of Mills Platt, likely preserving an element of the early 20th century boundary wall. Drystone coursing to the southeast has become loose and is collapsing.

2.11. The wall is situated in the location of the rear wall of open livestock stalls which are recorded on the 1840's Tithe Map. This structure was demolished in the late 19th / early 20th century, and it is suggested that the stone may have been reused to create the boundary wall.

2.12. The remainder of the Project Site preserves the modern southeast and southwest walls of the partially demolished annex and a structural beam that supported the mono pitched roof.

2.13. A large electrical junction box attached to the southeast elevation of Mills Platt will be internalised within the proposed replacement extension.

2.14. The proposed new development will be screened from the neighbouring Grade II listed Mills Platt Farmhouse by the boundary wall.

2.15. The new development will be partially visible from the rear ground floor and upper floor windows to the northeast of Mills Platt but will not be situated within the direct line of sight.



Photo 1 Northeast facing view of the Project Site from the garden terrace. The walls in the foreground comprise the remains of a former annex. The electrical junction box is clearly visible against the southeast

rear elevation.



Photo 2 Southwest elevation of boundary wall between Mills Platt and a garden area belonging to the neighbouring Mills Platt Farmhouse. The wall may be a recent construction to support the drystone northeast elevation.



Photo 3 Northeast elevation of curtilage listed boundary wall between Mills Platt and a garden area belonging to the neighbouring Mills Platt Farmhouse. Dressed limestone is preserved against Mills Platt

house. Dry stone courses to the southeast have worked loose and have begun to collapse.



Photo 4 Southwest facing view from the Project Site looking along the southeast elevation of Mills Platt cottages, now converted into a single private dwelling. The angle of the building faces away from the location of the proposed new extension.

3. Development Framework

3.1. With regards to the relevant policy and development framework, the following are considered appropriate to the current proposal:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021;

16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

189. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

190. Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

195. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Considering potential impacts

199. 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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

200. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.*

202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

206. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted 2015. Policy CP58 Ensuring conservation of the historic environment.

Core Policy 57
Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality. Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through:

i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced.

iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

iv. being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and historic landscapes.

vi. making efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context to deliver an appropriate development which relates effectively to the immediate setting and to the wider character of the area.

Core Policy 58
Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment. Designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance, including:

i. nationally significant archaeological remains
ii. World Heritage Sites within and adjacent to Wiltshire
iii. buildings and structures of special architectural or historic interest
iv. the special character or appearance of conservation areas
v. historic parks and gardens
vi. important landscapes, including registered battlefields and townscapes.

Distinctive elements of Wiltshire's historic environment, including non-designated heritage assets, which contribute to a sense of local character and identity will be conserved, and where possible enhanced. The potential contribution of these heritage assets towards wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits will also be utilised where this can be delivered in a sensitive and appropriate manner in accordance with Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping).

Heritage assets at risk will be monitored and development proposals that improve their condition will be encouraged. The advice of statutory and local consultees will be sought in consideration of such applications."

4. Historic Development of the Project Site

4.1. The information presented here is derived from sources including the Wiltshire Historic Environment Record (Know Your Place), Historic England National Monuments Record database (PastScape), the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), the Historic England Archive, and surviving cartographic resources, along with other published or documentary sources.

4.2. The Project Site is located within an irregular plot known as Mills Platt. The history of the site is detailed on the Box History and Places Website [3] and the key points are summarised here.

4.3. The 'Platt' element of the name is a rendering of 'Splatt' historically referring to a small plot of land. The enclave was created when a new quarry was excavated in the communal agricultural land that ran down to By Brook. The resulting plot was named as a Splatt of land by Drewetts Mill, resulting in the modern Mills Platt.

4.4. Mills Platt enclosure is recorded on Francis Allen's 1630 map, annexed from the larger field named Brockwells. The individual buildings are not discernible.

[3] http://www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk/mills-platt.html



Figure 3 Francis Allen's 1630 map showing field names Quor Close and Brockwells. Mills Platt Farm is circled in blue.

4.5. The Project Site comprises a terrace of workers cottages built to support Mill Splat Farm. The cottages appear as four dwellings but would have been further subdivided as required, to support the families and single labourers working on the farm. The oldest parts of the terrace are said to be preserved within the Kitchen and Snug of the east range.

4.6. The farm prospered in the 17th century and this affluence is represented by the redevelopment of the west range in 1694. [4] The redevelopment of the terrace in the latter years of the 17th century may be attributed to the Speak family or to the Duckett family of the Hartham Estate, who acquired the land around this time.[5]

4.7. Up until the mid 18th century the Project Site had been located on one of the main north south routes leading from the Old Bath Road to Box. However, on the completion of a new road (now the A4) west bound traffic out of London favoured the new route direct from Corsham to Box, leaving the buildings isolated within the rural landscape, marking the end of significant expansion of the farm.

[4] http://www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk/mills-platt.html
[5] The Duckett Family, Box History and Places (http://www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk/mills-platt.html).

4.8. By 1797 Mill Splatt was owned by the Rev T Heath of Calstone and the properties were leased to William Wiltshire, a Yeoman farmer from Corsham.

4.9. The properties on the site appear to have gone up for sale in March 1832. Four plots of leasehold land came up for auction in the area of Quarr Close: Lot 1 - a cottage rented by Robert Newman; Lot 2 - a cottage occupied by Widow Wiltshire, with a small court in front and a piece of garden; Lot 3 - a cottage occupied by Robert Snell (potentially the Project Site) and, Lot 4 - a piece of ground used as a Freestone Quarry of about 2 acres in the rent of Thomas Strong. The report in The Bath Chronicle, 8 March 1832, went on to say, "All the above premises are near the great Turnpike Road leading from Bath to London."[6]

4.10. William Wiltshire is presumed to have acquired the site and in 1840 Wiltshire is listed as the Landowner, leasing Mills Platt Cottages to four families (Box Tithe map plot 74a). The Tithe Map clearly shows the four attached dwellings, with an attached ancillary building to the northeast.

4.11. The cottage occupants listed in the 1841 census differ from those listed on the Tithe Apportionment suggesting that leases may have been short term or even seasonal. However, John Dancy and James Alderman and families are listed on both Apportionment and census. Both men are aged 40 and listed as Farm Labourers.

4.12. William (aged 70) was listed on the 1841 census as occupying a property on Box Hill with Rebecca Wiltshire (35) and Thomas Wiltshire (14) whose relationship to William is unknown.

[6] http://www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk/quarr-close.html



Figure 4 Tithe Map c. 1840. Project Site outlined in red.

4.13. On William's death the Project Site appears to have passed to Rebecca and another relation. On the 4th September 1856, the Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette advertised the sale of property on the Project Site "under the wills of the late Mrs Rebecca Wiltshire, and Miss Wiltshire." Lot 1 was "Mills Platt Farm House and Cottages, with gardens, barn, orchard, and long close containing together 12 acres, 1 rood and 37 perches."[7] The site is known as Mills Platt here and it would appear that the two name variations were interchangeable in the mid-19th century.

4.14. The cottages continue to be leased to Farm Laborers throughout the 19th century. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1884) gives more detail of the development of the site by the latter end of the century. Mills Platt cottages were still shown as four dwellings, with small extensions to the northwest and northeast elevations.

4.15. In 1910 the land still formed part of the Hartham Estate. In October of that year plans were passed for a small extension to one of the cottages 'Mill's Platt'.[8]

4.16. The cottages at Mills Platt were put up for sale in April 1912, listed as occupied by Messrs Clifford, Gay and Freebury, the fourth was apparently unoccupied at this time.[9]

[7] https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000360/18560904/033/0002
[8] Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser - Saturday 01 October 1910
[9] Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser - Saturday 20 April 1912

4.17. The animal stalls attached to the northeast of the Project Site were demolished between 1899 and 1919. The location of the rear wall was retained as the modern property boundary. A range of small buildings were erected along the southern boundary of the adjacent field to the northeast of the Project Site.

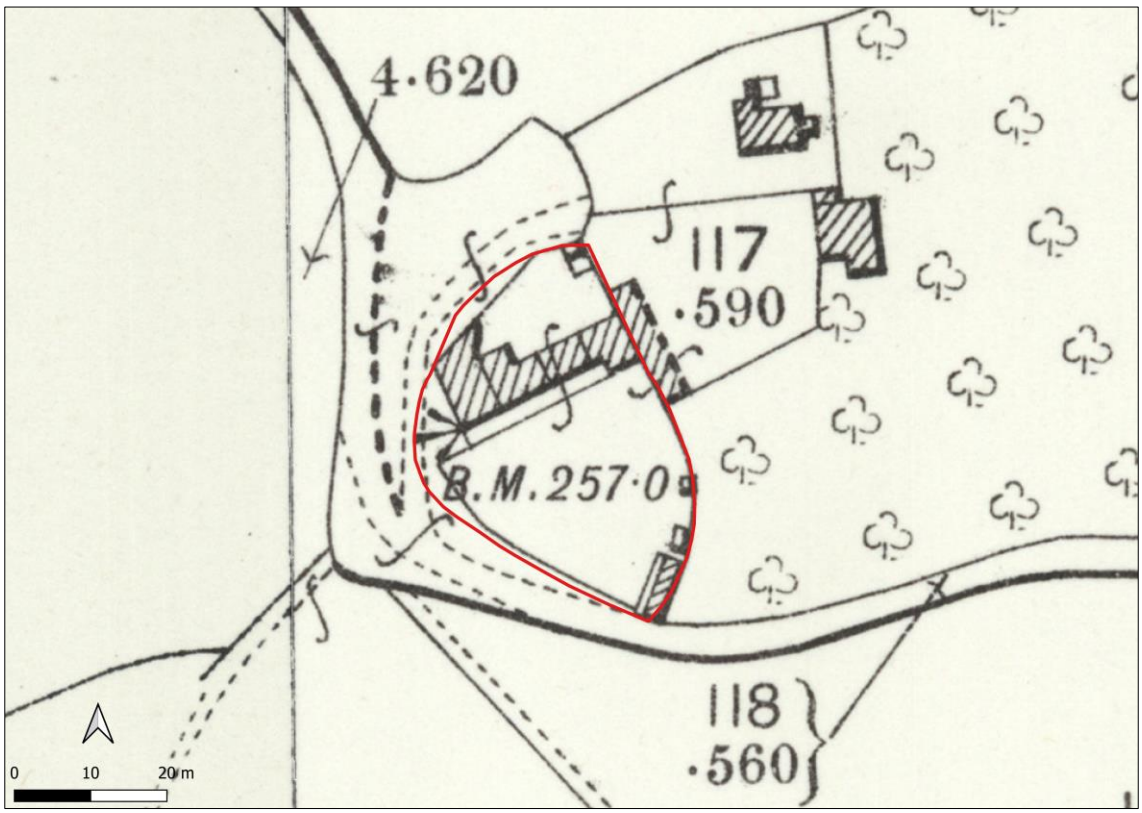

Figure 5 Ordnance Survey Map Wiltshire XXV.11 Revised: 1899, Published: 1900. Project Site outlined in red. The open animal stalls are still present to the northeast of the Project Site. The agricultural building was replaced with a development to the southeast by 1919.

4.18. The four cottages on the Project Site went up for sale in 1918, as part of Lord Islington's Hartham Estate, recently sold in bulk to a private investor (not named). The lot went unsold at this time.[10] The land and cottages were advertised at auction again in January 1923, still counted amongst the holdings of the Hartham Estate.[11]

4.19. The cottages continued to be occupied throughout the 1930s and 1940s until finally being converted into a single dwelling known as Mills Platt.

[10] Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser - Saturday 18 May 1918
[11] Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser - Saturday 20 January 1923

5. Significance

5.1. Mills Platt has clear local historic and architectural significance, preserving an example of early 17th century workers cottages which document the growth of the thriving farmstead originally known as Mill Splatt.

5.2. The property is well preserved within the historic setting, which includes Mills Platt Farmhouse and Barn, to the northeast / east of the site.

5.3. Although Mills Platt has been altered internally to create a single dwelling, the external character of the early terrace is well preserved. The principal southwest and northwest elevations are significant to the setting and character of the site and will be unaltered within the proposed new scheme.

5.4. The southeast elevation is not widely visible, being principally observed from the terraced garden which rises high above the Project Site. Although equal in historic and architectural value, alterations in this area will have little impact on the wider historic setting.

6. Proposed Development & Impact Assessment

6.1. The proposed development will comprise the erection of a single storey building to house a Study. The building will be set against the southeast elevation of Mills Platt and will be clad in modern materials, with a sedum roof and central glass rooflight.

6.2. The structure will replace a modern annex which has recently been partially demolished.

6.3. Due to the screening of the site, the new development is expected to have a negligible impact on the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed Mills Platt Farmhouse and Barn.

6.4. The proposal will be visible from the southeast of the Project Site only. The proposed location makes good use of the existing terracing, which will screen the southeast facing elevation from view. The addition of the sedum roof will also reduce the visual impact, with the effect of blending the structure into the garden environment.

6.5. The southwest facing elevation will be primarily visible when approached via the rear access along by the Kitchen.

6.6. The extension will not be directly overlooked by the property due to the southwest angle of the terrace.



Photo 5 Northeast facing view along rear path to the Kitchen Door. The Project Site is visible at the end of the path.

6.7. The new building will have a material impact on the southwest facing elevation of the boundary wall, which by virtue of the association with Mills Platt is considered to be curtilage listed for the purpose of this assessment. However, the southwest elevation appears to have been constructed in recent history and has no real historic or architectural merit. On initial inspection it appears that the masonry to the southwest may have been erected to support the earlier drystone walling identified on the northeast elevation.

6.8. Cartographic resources indicate that the northeast facing elevation is likely to date to the early 20th century redevelopment of the farm outbuildings and it thought to preserve reused historic material. Parts of the original structure appear to be preserved where the masonry abuts Mills Platt to the northwest. The central and southeast stonework is collapsing.

6.9. The wall in its current form is not considered to make a positive contribution to the historic character and setting of Mills Platt and the impact of concealing the southwest elevation may be considered negligible. The northeast facing elevation will be preserved in its current state and any repairs to the more historically significant portion of the structure may be easily carried out from land to northeast, assuming that access is permitted.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The proposed new development has the potential to make good practical use of a space that has in the past been subject to piecemeal development that has had a negative impact on Mills Platt listed building.

7.2. The addition of a well-designed purpose-built Study, which is largely concealed by existing landscaping and integrated into the garden environment by way of a living roof, has the potential to enhance this area of the Project Site.

7.3. It is considered that the proposals offer a chance to enhance the appearance of the southeast elevation of Mills Platt and any impact to the heritage asset is considered to be less than substantial and at the lower end of that scale.

8. Bibliography

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