

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Oak-Framed Glazed Conservatory Extension
Stop Farmhouse, Stop Farm, Fonthill Gifford, Wiltshire
(List Entry No. 1146092 – Grade II)

1.0 INTRODUCTION & SCOPE OF REPORT

1.1 This Heritage and Planning Statement has been prepared and written by Baxter Green Architects on behalf of the applicants to provide an independent assessment of the impact of the proposed internal alterations and extensions at Stop Farmhouse, Stop Farm, Fonthill Gifford, Wiltshire.

1.2 This Heritage Statement accompanies an application for Listed Building Consent and a Householder Planning Permission for a single storey rear extension at Stop Farmhouse, Fonthill Gifford. It evaluates the special architectural and historic interest of the farmhouse, assesses the potential impact of the proposed development, and demonstrates how the design respects and sustains the heritage significance of the designated asset and its setting.

1.3 Stop Farmhouse is situated on the eastern side of the historic village of Fonthill Gifford, within the civil parish of the same name. The property forms part of the wider group of traditional agricultural buildings collectively known as Stop Farm, which also includes a granary and barns, all of which are separately Grade II listed.

1.4 The farmhouse is Grade II listed (List Entry No. 1146092, listed 6 July 1987). Historic England describes it as a two-storey, five-bay rubble-stone house with a thatched roof and later tiled lean-to to the rear. Interior features include chamfered beams with stepped stops and an open fireplace with chamfered timber lintel on stone jambs. The rear range has evolved incrementally, incorporating a 2015 single-storey rear extension constructed in matching materials.

1.5 The examination of the building was undertaken generally within the guidelines of good surveying and building archaeology practice for the purpose of providing a visual assessment of the historic nature and character of the building and how it may be affected by the proposed work.

1.6 This statement complies with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the onus it places on those planning changes to historic assets to include a clear description of the significance of the assets affected, albeit that the requirement in the NPPF is only such that, *'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'*.

1.7 The second part of the statement focuses on an assessment of the effects of the proposed works on the significance of the site in built heritage terms.

1.8 This two-stage approach of understanding 'significance' before moving on to assess the impact of potential change on that 'significance' has for some time been regarded as good conservation practice in the design and application process (see, for instance, English Heritage's, now Historic England's, 'Conservation Principles', 2008) and, following the introduction of the short-lived PPS5 in 2010 and the NPPF (and its more recent iterations), is now effectively a standard requirement for most applications affecting heritage assets.

1.9 Within the objectives are noted that planning has a key role in conserving our heritage assets and utilising the historic environment in creating sustainable places enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. This overriding aim of conserving historic assets through managed change will enable the continuing use of, in the case of this application, a Listed Building to benefits of heritage conservation.

1.10 Policies state that the application should clearly provide a level of detail proportionate to the heritage asset and to ensure sufficient understanding of the impact the proposals will have on that asset. Local planning authorities should consider the nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations.

1.11 For the reasons set out more fully in the body of this statement, it is our considered view that the application proposals would result in a low degree of 'harm' to the significance of the application site; however, in our view this 'harm' is clearly justified by the provision of a long-term, sustainable use for this historic building, securing its future conservation and maintenance.

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

2.1 The farmhouse is constructed in rubble stone beneath a hipped thatched roof with brick chimney stacks. It represents a vernacular late 17th-century farmhouse that has undergone subsequent phases of alteration during the 18th and 19th centuries, along with later 20th-century additions to the rear.

2.2 The site retains a distinctly rural character, defined by open farmland and its relationship to the wider Fonthill Estate landscape. The rear elevation is not publicly visible, being orientated away from public viewpoints and effectively screened by mature vegetation and boundary wall.

2.3 1/93 Stop Farmhouse, GV II, Listing NGR: ST9249932018. 1/94 Barn at Stop Farm, GV II, Listing NGR: ST9251032041. 1/95 Granary at Stop Farm, GVII, Listing NGR: ST9251932024.

2.4 Due to the location and scale of the proposal this assessment has only considered the impact on the Stop Farmhouse.

2.5 Listed Building and a Full Planning approval was granted in 2013 under application S/2012/1781/LBC and S/2012/1780/FUL with external works alterations approved via a non-material amendment.

2.6 The works relevant to this application comprised the construction of a single-storey link, built in natural stone with a slate roof, connecting the farmhouse to the adjacent converted barn. In addition, a new window opening (reference W13) within the rear plain-tiled lean-to was also granted approval in 2013.

2.7 Reviewing the historical map evidence is not particularly helpful for examination of the aspects relating to this application due to the type of proposal and with the knowledge of the 2013 approvals that have been implemented.

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 The purpose of this section of the report is to assess the significance of the site in heritage terms. This will provide a 'baseline' against which the application proposals can be assessed.

3.2 The assessment of the heritage values relating to the proposed extension at Stop Farmhouse can be summarised as follows:

- a) Architectural interest as a vernacular late 17th-century farmhouse with 18th-century and later alterations.
- b) Evidential and architectural value reflected in the surviving 17th- and 18th-century fabric, features, and plan form, which illustrate its historic development.
- c) Historic interest in demonstrating the evolution of rural domestic architecture within the Fonthill Gifford area.
- d) Constructional interest in the traditional use of rubble stone and thatch representative of local building practices.
- e) Group value through its close functional and visual relationship with the associated listed granary, barn, and boundary walls.
- f) Setting value derived from its location within a rural agricultural landscape forming part of the wider historic Fonthill Estate.

3.3 Stop Farmhouse is significant as a well-preserved example of a late-17th century Wiltshire farmhouse that illustrates the evolution of rural domestic architecture. The use of rubble stone, thatch, and later plain tile typifies local vernacular building traditions. Internally, structural timber detailing and historic fireplaces contribute to the building's special interest.

3.4 The farmhouse forms part of a coherent group with the listed granary and barn, collectively reflecting the historic agricultural character of the Fonthill Estate. This association contributes to the group's overall heritage value. However, as the proposed works are modest in scale and have no visual or physical impact upon the other listed buildings within the site, this report will only focus on the farmhouse.

3.5 The building's rural setting, with associated farm buildings and open countryside, reinforces its historic function and character value. The rear elevation is of lesser prominence and has been subject to later accretions, including the 2013 addition and alterations, which has already established a precedent for limited rearward expansion.

3.6 The renovation and extension works undertaken under the 2013 consents (S/2012/1781/LBC and S/2012/1780/FUL) represent an important consideration in assessing the current proposal. Overall, the alterations were considered to preserve the building's architectural evolution through the following measures:

- a) The link extension required the removal of the west wall of the former vestibule to create an opening connecting the new link, thereby providing much-needed ground floor space. The rear vestibule is believed to have been added to the farmhouse in the 19th century. Although the formation of this opening resulted in the loss of some 19th-century fabric, the external form of this range was retained. The intervention was therefore judged to have a low or negative impact on the significance of the farmhouse as a heritage asset.
- b) A new window opening was formed in the west wall of the plain-tiled lean-to. As this element is a 20th-century addition, no historic fabric was affected by the alteration, and the impact was assessed as low or neutral in relation to the farmhouse's significance.

3.7 National guidance on the conservation of the historic environment is set out within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). When assessing proposals affecting heritage assets, local planning authorities are required to consider the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance, while ensuring that any new use remains compatible with their conservation. The NPPF

places particular emphasis on the need to *afford great weight* to the asset's conservation when evaluating the potential impact of development. Where a proposal results in harm to a heritage asset's significance, such harm must be clearly and convincingly justified and weighed carefully against the public benefits of the scheme.

3.8 The interpretation of the NPPF, to provide examples of the potential public benefits that may accrue as a result of extension to heritage assets, and the points relevant to this application include:

- a) Securing long-term viable residential use; *It sustains or enhances the significance of the heritage asset and the contribution of its setting.*
- b) High-quality design reinforcing significance; *It is an appropriate design for its context and makes a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.*
- c) Environmental and sustainability benefits; *It makes a positive contribution to economic viability and sustainable communities.*
- d) Protecting and conserving historic fabric; *It secures the optimum viable use of the heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation.*
- e) Reducing future risk and pressure for intrusive works; *It reduces or removes risks to a heritage asset.*

4.0 THE APPLICATION PROPOSALS AND THE HERITAGE ISSUES

4.1 Section 3.0 established the significance of the site in built heritage terms, drawing on the historical background and description set out in Section 2.0.

4.2 Having considered this, the purpose of this section of the report is to analyse the application proposals against that significance to establish the likely effects of the scheme in heritage terms.

4.3 The proposal seeks consent for the erection of a single-storey, oak-framed glazed conservatory set on a natural stone plinth wall, positioned to the rear of the existing 2013 extension. The oak frame echoes the detailing of the previous extension, ensuring design continuity, with a matching pitched roof and corresponding width of plan.

4.4 The glazed conservatory is integrated with the slate pitched roof using a lead and timber cored-roll gable, ensuring continuity of traditional materials and detailing.

4.5 A lightweight glazed link will connect the new structure to the C20 plain-tiled lean-to adjoining the main thatched range. The conservatory will be traditionally detailed with slim timber sections, conservation aluminium glazing, and minimal visual mass. The oak frame will weather naturally to a subdued tone, harmonising with the existing palette of materials.

4.6 The window inserted in the C20 plain-tiled lean-to is to be altered to form a doorway allow access from the entrance hall into the conservatory. The glazed flat roof linking the pitched conservatory will not disturb the plain tile roof.

4.7 No historic fabric of the primary (thatched) range will be removed or altered. The connection points utilise the 2013 structure, ensuring full reversibility.

4.8 The proposed conservatory is modest in scale and positioned on the rear elevation, where historic fabric has already been altered by the 2013 extension. The design is lightweight and transparent, ensuring that the principal historic form of the farmhouse remains visually dominant.

4.9 The glazed link provides a clear separation between the new and old elements, avoiding physical or visual intrusion into the historic range. The oak frame and natural stone plinth are sympathetic materials that echo the traditional construction while being clearly modern in expression.

4.10 There is no loss of historic fabric and the works are fully reversible. The intervention sits comfortably within the established pattern of rear additions without altering the building's form, proportions, or public view.

4.11 The conservatory provides improved functionality and natural light to the domestic accommodation while respecting the farmhouse's character. Its design follows principles of minimal intervention and visual subordination, ensuring the historic thatched core remains legible.

4.12 By attaching to the 2013 extension rather than the primary historic fabric, the proposal avoids adverse impact and allows future removal without residual harm. The proposal accords with *Core Policy 58* by conserving and enhancing the historic environment through sensitive design and high-quality traditional materials.

4.13 In securing long-term viable residential use the conservatory extends an already altered part of the building, providing much-needed functional living space without encroaching on or altering the principal historic rooms. The proposal enables the listed dwelling to remain a functional and desirable family home, sustaining its optimum viable use. Continued viable occupation is a key public benefit recognised by the PPG and NPPF.

4.14 A high-quality design reinforcing significance through high-quality, craft-led design and use of natural materials, the conservatory exemplifies how new work can reinforce appreciation of traditional construction techniques and materials. This contributes to the broader public understanding of heritage values and design evolution, representing a modest cultural public benefit.

4.15 The proposed conservatory contributes to improved environmental performance and reduced energy consumption, aligning with the NPPF's environmental objective of sustainable development. Demonstrating that sensitive heritage adaptation can achieve such outcomes provides a small but tangible public environmental benefit. While the addition is discreetly located, its high-quality design contributes to the overall positive management of the heritage asset and, cumulatively, to the character of the wider historic environment—representing a modest townscape-scale public benefit.

4.16 The approach of protecting and conserving historic fabric by locating the new conservatory off a previous extension minimises physical intervention to historic fabric, thereby preserving the special architectural and historic interest of the principal listed structure. This design approach supports the long-term conservation of the heritage asset, which is itself a recognised public benefit.

4.17 The proposal reduces the future risk and pressure for intrusive works due to the modest addition providing the necessary amenity space in a location of least significance, avoiding future pressure for internal alterations to the listed structure. This proactive conservation approach constitutes a public benefit through risk reduction to the asset's historic fabric.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 As will be clear from the analysis at Section 4.0 above, the scheme will result in a low to neutral impact on the site in built heritage terms.

5.2 The proposed oak-framed glazed conservatory at Stop Farmhouse represents a sympathetic, reversible, and low-impact addition to a Grade II listed farmhouse. It preserves the building's special architectural and historic interest, sustains its rural character and group value, and complies with national and local heritage policy.

5.3 While the proposed conservatory primarily serves the needs of the occupants, the design has been conceived to sustain the listed building's viable use, encourage ongoing investment in its maintenance, and demonstrate sensitive traditional craftsmanship using traditional oak framing.

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These outcomes contribute to the long-term conservation of a designated heritage asset, thereby providing public benefit that outweighs the limited and reversible level of harm arising from the addition.

5.4 By securing the building's continued occupation, protecting its historic core, and contributing to its sustainable long-term conservation, the proposal delivers modest but clear public benefits which outweigh the limited and reversible degree of harm arising from the addition, in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 202–208 and the Planning Practice Guidance.

5.5 Accordingly, the proposal should be viewed as a positive and proportionate response to the site's heritage significance and as an appropriate continuation of the building's historic evolution.

Appendix - Heritage Impact Assessment

Plate 1 – View towards the 2013 link extension.



Proposed works.

Removal of the bi-folding doors to extend existing open plan Kitchen and Dining space and the erection of a glazed conservatory.

Significance affected.

The architectural and historic interest as a C17 vernacular farmhouse with C18 and C20 additions.

Impact of works on asset

The extension would be single-storey and thus subservient to the farmhouse and compatible with the 2013 extension in both plan width, roof pitch and height. It would be constructed of traditional materials thereby harmonising with the existing buildings.

Scale / Overall effect of impact

Low/neutral representing a sympathetic, reversible, and low-impact addition.

Justification

Improves functional and desirable of the dwelling with a light and airy family room.

Plate 2 – C20 plain tiled lean-to.



Proposed works.

Removal of the window noted in application S/2012/1781/LBC and S/2012/1780/FUL as W13 and the stone wall below to form an internal doorway.

Significance affected.

Evidence of the historic evolution of the farmhouse.

Impact of works on asset

The part of the rear vestibule involved is a C20 addition therefore no historic fabric would be affected.

Scale / Overall effect of impact

Low/neutral allowing improvements to circulation without reducing the natural daylight.

Justification

Improves functional of modern spaces minimising physical intervention to historic fabric.