
Planning and Heritage Statement

Application Description

Construction of outdoor swimming pool with kitchen / storage facilities and associated landscaping works. Partial demolition of existing external walls and construction of new stone external walls and gate. (Retrospective)

Application Location

South Wraxall House
Lower South Wraxall
Bradford on Avon
Wiltshire
BA15 2RY

1. Introduction

This planning and heritage statement has been prepared in support of a listed building consent application with householder planning permission for the retrospective works carried out in the rear garden of South Wraxall house, a Grade II listed detached house.

The works consist of the enlargement of a portion of the existing rear walled garden. This side garden area is ancillary to the main form of the walled garden, and has been enlarged to accommodate an outdoor swimming pool. To enhance the use of the swimming pool, a modest outbuilding has been constructed to serve as an outdoor kitchen / BBQ, with attached storage.

The works (which took place in 2020-2021) involved the following: The demolition of a small portion of the main perimeter wall of the walled garden. The removal of additional walls within the side garden, and the construction of new stone walls along its perimeter. The construction of an external swimming pool, hardstanding, and soft landscaping within this side portion, contiguous with the walled garden. Construction of a modest outbuilding, clad in natural materials to serve as an outdoor kitchen and ancillary storage associated with the swimming pool.

The work has been carried out to a very high standard, in line with the quality and setting of the Grade II listed property.

This application seeks to regularise the unauthorised works, ensuring that the permission is granted retrospectively.

2. Site Description and Proposal

The application site forms part of the domestic curtilage of South Wraxall House and is located to the rear of the principal building, adjoining the south-east corner of the historic walled garden. The pool area occupies a projecting portion of land that extends from the main body of the walled garden, forming a contiguous edge along its south-east boundary. Historically this area functioned as a side garden, spatially separate from the principal garden enclosure but clearly related to it.

The swimming pool has been constructed as a fully submerged structure, with surrounding ground levels retained at their pre-existing heights. These levels are marginally higher than those within the walled garden itself, and no wider regrading of the garden has taken place. The pool and associated works are entirely screened from the principal elevations of the house and are largely imperceptible from within the curtilage, including from the walled garden, due to the combination of boundary walls, planting and level changes.

The development comprises a rectangular in-ground swimming pool constructed with insulated concrete walls and base, with an internal render finish. Natural stone paving, approximately 20mm thick, has been used to the pool edging and capping, with surrounding paved areas formed in natural sandstone laid in random sizes and courses. A single step provides access between the walled garden and the pool area.

A small combined outdoor kitchen and pool storage outbuilding measuring approximately 6.5m by 2.0m has been erected adjacent to the pool. The structure is timber framed, with horizontal iroko weatherboarding to the external faces. Kitchen doors are set within aluminium frames, while the store is enclosed with vertical close-boarded iroko panels. The building is modest in scale and positioned to sit against existing boundary features.

New boundary walls have been constructed to define the pool area and retain existing ground levels. These are formed in coursed Cotswold rubble stone with weathered stone copings, with sections faced in reclaimed ashlar stone. Existing raised planting beds have been extended between the pool area and the walled garden, with additional recessed planting beds formed along the new wall edges. Discreet brown metal wall-mounted downlights are fixed to the new walls to provide low-level illumination.

The works are the subject of a retrospective application for Listed Building Consent and Householder Planning Permission.

3. History and Site Development

Main House

South Wraxall House has evolved over several centuries as a substantial private residence within its rural setting at the edge of Lower South Wraxall. The earliest identifiable phase of development dates from the seventeenth century, when a single range stood perpendicular to the road and served as the original dwelling. This early building is shown on the Andrews and Dury map of 1773 and provides the foundation around which the later complex grew.

During the early nineteenth century the property expanded significantly with the construction of a Regency wing fronting the road. This created the principal elevation and established the present orientation of the house. At the same time, the earlier range was raised to achieve the increased first-floor ceiling heights that survive today. A series of stables and service outbuildings were added to the north, forming two enclosed courtyards that continue to define the spatial structure of the site. By the mid-nineteenth century further embellishment had taken place, including the addition of orangeries to the main façade and new structures within the courtyard area. A large conservatory was also constructed in the location now occupied by the glazed verandah.

Twentieth-century changes were more fragmented in character, ranging from minor alterations to a large rear extension built in 1979. Subsequent internal work, attic conversions and targeted repairs continued into the 1990s and early 2000s, while various consents addressed the sensitive reuse of outbuildings, reinstatement of architectural features and selective removal of earlier modern additions.

Curtilage

The wider grounds have historically formed an important part of the property's character and use, with walled garden compartments, kitchen garden areas and structured planting shaping how the site has functioned and evolved over time. Mapping evidence demonstrates that this part of the curtilage has consistently accommodated domestic activity and incremental change. The 1840s Wiltshire Tithes map records only the main house and stables, with no rear outbuildings present. By the first edition Ordnance Survey mapping of 1844–1888, the walled garden had been established and was accompanied by three small outbuildings, comprising two greenhouses and a solid garden structure. These buildings had disappeared by the time of the 2019 Ordnance Survey edition, leaving only the enclosing boundary walls. Their loss corresponds with the 2008 planning permission for the demolition of garden outbuildings and associated alterations to the retaining walls.

The rear walled garden has long acted as a functional and visual focus within the domestic curtilage, but it has also been subject to adaptation in response to changing domestic needs. Within this context, the swimming pool now

present occupies a projecting area historically used as a side garden and later associated with ancillary structures and horticultural use. As a result, the significance of the listed building derives primarily from the architectural and historic interest of the main house and its immediate formal setting, rather than from the later-evolving peripheral garden areas. The development therefore sits within a part of the site long shaped by landscape refinement and domestic change rather than open or undeveloped land.

4. Heritage Significance

South Wraxall House is designated at Grade II for its special architectural and historic interest as a late eighteenth-century country house of refined classical composition, constructed in limestone ashlar with a mansard slate roof. Its significance derives principally from the quality of its principal elevation, proportions, materials and detailing, including the formal entrance portico, sash fenestration and associated garden-facing rooms. While the interior was not accessible at the time of listing, it is understood to retain historic interest consistent with the external architectural character of the building.

The gate piers and front boundary wall are separately listed at Grade II and contribute to the significance of the property through their formal treatment, craftsmanship and relationship to the principal approach and public-facing setting of the house. Together, the house and its front boundary structures form the core heritage assets of the site, with their significance strongly focused on the principal elevations, formal approaches and immediate architectural setting.

Beyond the main house, the significance of the wider curtilage varies. The principal rear walled garden forms part of the historic functioning of the house and retains evidential and historic value as a long-established kitchen and productive garden. While its planting and internal layout have evolved over time, the enclosure itself and its role within the domestic organisation of the site contribute positively to the understanding of how the property historically operated.

By contrast, the adjoining side garden area, where the swimming pool is now located, is of lower heritage significance. This area has historically accommodated ancillary and utilitarian uses, including a series of outbuildings shown on nineteenth-century mapping and subsequently removed in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Its function, layout and physical form have been subject to repeated change, and it does not form part of the formal designed setting of the house. Its contribution to the overall significance of the listed building is therefore limited and subordinate.

The setting of South Wraxall House is largely defined by its immediate architectural context, front boundary treatment and principal garden spaces. The pool area lies outside key views to and from the house and does not affect the appreciation of the listed building from public viewpoints or principal internal or external vantage points. As such, the heritage significance of the site is concentrated in the main house, its formal setting and surviving historic garden enclosures, rather than in the later-evolving peripheral garden areas.

5. Assessment of Impact on Significance

This assessment considers the impact of the swimming pool and associated works on the significance of South Wraxall House, its curtilage and its setting, as identified above.

Impact on the Listed Building

The swimming pool and associated outbuilding are physically separate from the main house and do not involve alteration to, or loss of, any fabric of the listed building itself. The works are located to the rear of the property and are fully screened from the principal elevations by intervening outbuildings, boundary walls, planting and changes in level. There are no views of the pool area from the principal rooms or garden-facing elevations of the house. As a result, the architectural and historic interest of the listed building, from which its primary significance derives, is preserved.

Impact on Curtilage Structures

The works have involved the demolition of sections of garden walling within the wider curtilage, including approximately 10 metres of deteriorated rubble wall forming part of the walled garden enclosure and a further length of ancillary side garden wall of mixed origin. These walls comprised a combination of previously altered fabric, remnants of former outbuildings and sections subject to earlier permissions, within an area that had already been extensively remodelled as part of previous landscaping works. While the loss of historic fabric is acknowledged, the demolished walls were not of consistent date, quality or architectural interest and did not form part of the formal setting of the house.

New boundary walls have been constructed using traditional materials and detailing appropriate to the site, and remaining sections of the walled garden enclosure have been retained and repaired. A new gate has been introduced between the stables and the pool area, with only a single fixing into the stables wall and no material impact on significant historic fabric. In accordance with the principles set out in Historic England Advice Note 10, the contribution of curtilage structures to the significance of a listed building varies according to their historic function, relationship to the principal building and degree of architectural or historic interest. In this case, the affected area forms part of a historically utilitarian and changeable zone of the curtilage, and the impact on heritage significance is limited.

Impact on Setting and Views

The pool area is not visible from public viewpoints, from the approach to the house, or from principal internal or external viewpoints within the site. The historic side access route has been retained, albeit gated, maintaining the established circulation pattern within the curtilage. The setting of the listed building, as defined by its principal elevations, formal approach and main garden areas, remains unaffected.

Use and Activity

The swimming pool introduces a domestic recreational use within the private curtilage of the house. This use is ancillary to the residential function of the listed building and is contained within an enclosed and visually discreet part of the garden. It does not introduce activity that would be at odds with the historic character or use of the property.

Reversibility

The swimming pool represents a reversible intervention within the garden. While the removal of the pool would not result in harm to the listed building or the principal walled garden enclosure, it is acknowledged that sections of historic walling removed as part of the works have been lost. This loss is confined to fabric of low heritage significance and does not undermine the overall significance of the listed asset.

Conclusion

The development results in no harm to the significance of South Wraxall House and no harm to its setting. The impact on the wider curtilage is limited and relates primarily to the loss of fabric of low heritage significance within an area long characterised by change and adaptation. The overall effect of the works on the significance of the designated heritage asset is therefore neutral, and at worst constitutes a very low level of less than substantial harm.

6. Planning Policy

In considering this application, the local planning authority is required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building and its setting, in accordance with Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

At national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment in a manner proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset affected. It recognises that heritage

assets are irreplaceable, but also that change may be appropriate where it sustains the ongoing use of historic buildings and where any harm is clearly and convincingly justified. The NPPF further acknowledges that not all elements of a listed building or its curtilage contribute equally to its significance.

Local planning policy similarly seeks to ensure that development affecting listed buildings and their settings preserves their special architectural and historic interest, while allowing for sensitive adaptation and change where this is appropriately designed and justified.

As demonstrated within this statement, the swimming pool and associated works do not result in harm to the significance of South Wraxall House or its setting. Any impact is confined to fabric of low heritage significance within the wider curtilage, in an area long characterised by ancillary use and incremental change. The proposal therefore accords with national and local planning policy objectives for the conservation of heritage assets and represents a proportionate response to the statutory duty.

7. Conclusion

This Heritage, Design and Access Statement has considered the retrospective construction of a swimming pool and associated works within the curtilage of South Wraxall House, a Grade II listed building. The assessment has been informed by an understanding of the historic development of the house and its grounds, the hierarchy of heritage significance across the site, and the statutory and policy framework governing development affecting listed buildings.

The historic evolution of South Wraxall House demonstrates that it is a building shaped by successive phases of change, adaptation and refinement. While the architectural and historic significance of the site is firmly rooted in the main house, its principal elevations and formal setting, the wider curtilage has historically accommodated a range of ancillary and utilitarian uses. The rear walled garden and adjoining side garden areas have been subject to repeated alteration, including the construction and later removal of outbuildings, changes to boundary walls and ongoing landscape refinement. This context is important in understanding the character of the part of the site in which the swimming pool has been constructed.

The assessment of heritage significance confirms that the area affected by the development is of lower heritage sensitivity than the principal building and its immediate setting. The swimming pool and associated outbuilding are physically separate from the listed house, are fully screened from key views, and do not alter the appreciation of the building's architectural interest or its relationship with the surrounding landscape. The domestic recreational use introduced by the pool is ancillary to the established residential use of the property and is contained within an enclosed and private part of the garden.

While the works have involved the loss of sections of curtilage walling, this loss is confined to fabric of mixed origin and limited heritage value within an area long characterised by change. The remaining historic enclosures have been retained and repaired, and new boundary walls have been constructed using traditional materials and detailing appropriate to the site. Taken as a whole, the works do not undermine the significance of the listed building or its setting.

In accordance with the statutory duty under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the objectives of national and local planning policy, the development preserves the significance of South Wraxall House. The overall effect of the works on the designated heritage asset is neutral, and at worst results in a very low level of less than substantial harm, confined to elements of low heritage significance within the wider curtilage.

The development represents a proportionate and discreet intervention that supports the continued residential use and long-term stewardship of the listed building. For these reasons, the retrospective grant of Listed Building Consent and Householder Planning Permission is respectfully sought.

Appendix 1: Historic Mapping

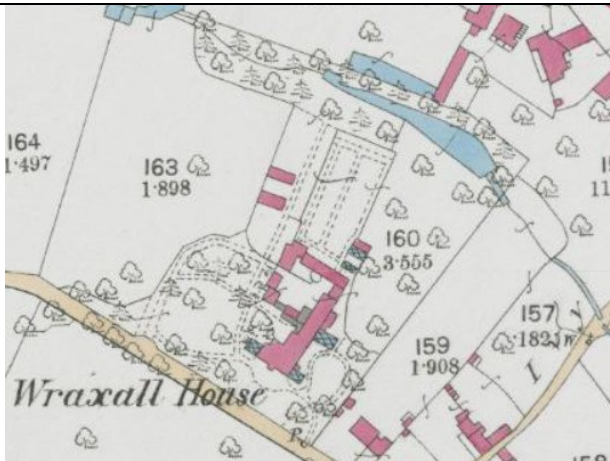
Courtesy of KnowYourPlace



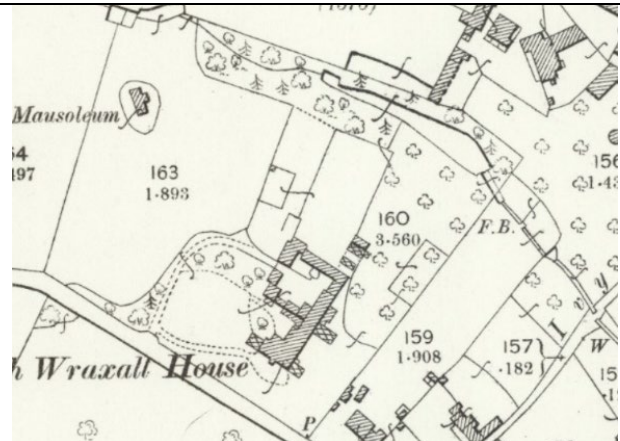
1773 Andrews and Dury Map of Wiltshire
Establishing site presence in C.18th



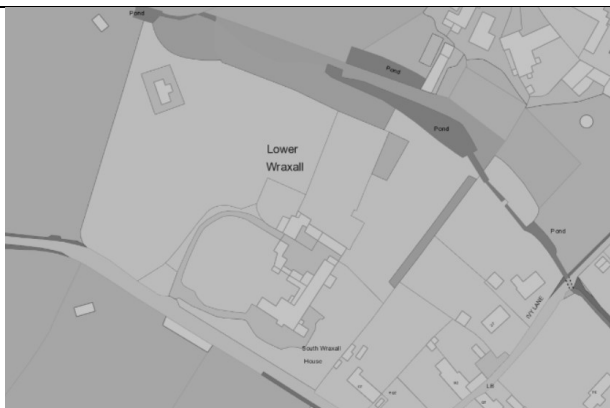
1840s Tithe Map of Wiltshire
Stable block present behind main house
No further outbuildings present beyond Stables



1844-1888: OS 1st Edition
Development of Main house.
3 structures present to RHS of rear Walled garden



1894-1903: OS 2nd Edition
Mausoleum Present in NW garden. No changes to walled garden area.



2019 Q2 OS mapping
Outbuildings to RHS of rear Walled garden not present



Current Day: OS Map API – Road Map
Current swimming pool wall arrangement with Outdoor Kitchen structure present.

Appendix 2: Planning History

Application no.	Approved Application Description
W/95/01262/FUL	Addition of 3 dormers to north side of front range and one dormer to east side of north range - Approved with conditions
W/00/02016/LBC	Rebuilding of gateway piers - Approved with conditions
W/02/00664/LBC	Alterations
W/07/01741/FUL	Removal of 1970's extension and restoration of original extension behind, construction of conservatory after demolition of lean to in east garden
W/07/01742/LBC	Creation of kitchen in existing garage and forming conservatory on east wall, new staircase from ground floor parlour room to first floor, removal of 1970s extension and restoration of original extension, new attic stairs and associated internal alterations
W/07/03661/FUL	Conversion of domestic outbuildings to home office, demolition of modern covered walkway, alteration to the window along the rear staircase
W/07/03662/LBC	Revision to application 07/01742/LBC, move window to rear (secondary) stairs and form shower room, install three dormer windows in northwest slope of rear wing, convert outbuilding to home office and demolish modern covered walkway
W/08/00160/LBC W/08/00159/FUL	Erection of timber framed glass house in existing vegetable garden within domestic curtilage
W/08/03328/LBC W/08/03323/FUL	Demolition of garden outbuilding and taking down retaining walls, reshaping wall with swan's neck detailing and construction of curved retaining wall in the front garden
W/10/03372/LBC	To restore single door to dining room
16/04225/LBC 16/03783/FUL	Internal and external alterations to existing building, and construction of iron verandah.

Some of the previous applications relate to the refurbishment and extension of the main house, and some relate to the structures within the listed property's curtilage.

The most relevant are the approved applications W/08/03328/LBC & W/08/03323/FUL - Demolition of garden outbuilding and taking down retaining walls, reshaping wall with swan's neck detailing and construction of curved retaining wall in the front garden – as this relates to the same area which the current application does also, perhaps indicating that sensitive development and alteration to this portion of the property is considered acceptable.

Appendix 3: Historic Photographs



View of Side Garden (stables in background) c.2009



View of Demolished wall to boundary of side garden



View of side wall of "side garden" (now demolished)



View of Walled Garden, with planted boundary between walled garden and side garden shown on right.



View within relandscaped walled garden c. 2010, with demolished walls of side garden in view to the left hand side in the distance.



View within walled garden c. 2010, with demolished walls of side garden in distant view to the left hand side