

Toft Hall, Heaton, SK11 0SJ

**HERITAGE STATEMENT AND DESIGN AND
ACCESS STATEMENT**



fgp

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline the Historic and Architectural Significance of Toft Hall, to describe the proposed alterations and to assess their impact on this Significance.

THE PROPERTY

Toft Hall is a Grade II Listed C17 former farmhouse situated in a courtyard of other converted former farm buildings that are considered to be within it's curtilage and contribute to its setting. The group of buildings sits within open countryside.



THE PROPOSAL

The property is currently used as holiday accommodation for large groups of up to 20 guests in association with the adjacent barns. The character of the building and its setting are the key points that attract customers. The alterations proposed are the formation of 3 No. en-suite bathrooms to provide

suitable facilities for guests; allowing the property to remain competitive and attractive to potential customers and thus financially sustainable.

THE BUILDING FABRIC AND ITS EVOLUTION

Listing Information and Description

(NB Listed as TOFTHALL not TOFT HALL)

Grade: II

Date Listed: 1 February 1967

List Entry Number: 1293842

English Heritage Building ID: 275276

OS Grid Reference: SJ9577762531

OS Grid Coordinates: 395777, 362531

Latitude/Longitude: 53.1599, -2.0646

Location: Heaton, Staffordshire SK11 0SJ

Locality: [Heaton](#)

Local Authority: Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

County: [Staffordshire](#)

Country: [England](#)

Postcode: SK11 0SJ

HEATON C.P. - SJ 96 SE SJ 957 625 5/67 Tofthall - 1.2.67 - II

Farmhouse. C17 with C18 alterations and mid-C19 alterations and additions.

Coursed stone; stone slate roof; verge parapets on moulded and carved kneelers; corniced side and end stacks. Irregular plan of hall range, large parlour cross wing and rear wing. 2 storeys and attic. Entrance front: in 2 parts; gable to right with 2 ranges of glazing bar sashes in block surrounds surmounted by labelled 3-light, chamfer mullion window with lattice casements to apex with finial; traces of former mullion windows flank sashes; set-back centre of 3 ranges of block surround sashes (now casements to ground floor) right-hand range with boarded door in place of window and with 4-light chamfer mullion window placed centrally directly over head of first floor windows; lower mid-C19 wing of 2 ranges of casement windows

attached and set back to left. Garden front of 2 projecting gables flanking central, recessed range has a similar pattern of C18 refenestration again with evidence of former broad, low mullion windows to the ground and first floors with the earlier windows retained in the attics (of 3 lights to left and paired single lights to right gable).



History and Context

The land on which Toft Hall sits, Heaton manor, with the manors of Leek and Leekfrith were, for centuries, the property of the monks of Dieulacres Abbey. Toft Hall is not listed in the records that the Abbey had to produce for King Henry VIII at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries (including their likely sale value, tenants and rents), but this it is almost certainly one of the twenty one holdings listed for Heaton. Ellen Toft is listed as paying rent and this may indeed refer to Toft Hall.

Ellen Toft is recorded as living in Heaton in 1538. It is likely that she may have lived at the site of Toft Hall but in an earlier building. Irregularities in the plan of the oldest section of the house suggest that a Toft Hall itself dates from the late 1500's. An earlier stone building on the site probably helped form the plan of the existing house.

The main house is T shaped with a hall and crossing. Originally the living room would have filled the whole ground floor of the hall section and was heated from a fire at its east end (what would now be the fireplace in the dining room). However, the present chimneybreast is not earlier than 1750 when coal replaced wood as the main fuel.

To the west part of the house the music room and snug have substantial cellars underneath them. These would have been used for storing meat and dairy produce. In the mid 19th century these were 'poshed up' and now contain some impressive vaulted ceilings! (NB Authored by Faith Claverdon)

The Development of and Changes to the Fabric

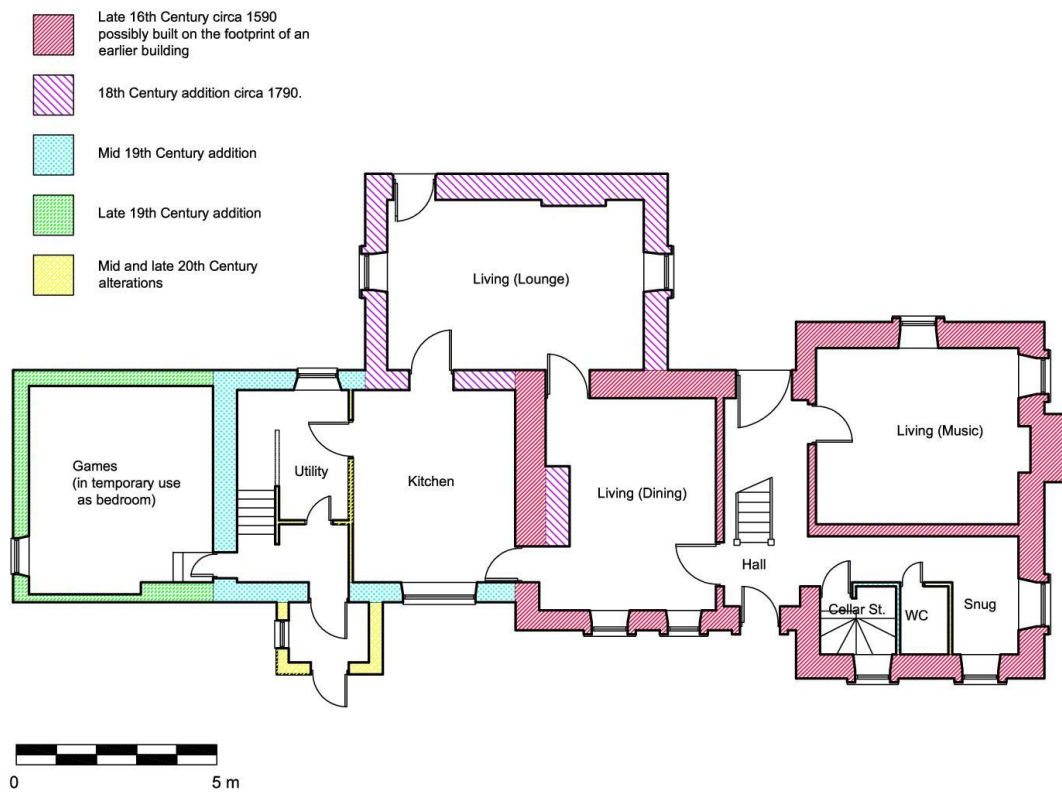
Toft Hall has had major changes over the years; including:

- Original Hall (T shaped) built c 1600
- Addition of Living room and bedroom at rear of property c 1690
- Addition of Music Room and Snug c1790
- Removal of Mullion windows and replacement with sashes (date unknown)
- Blocking up of some sash windows (date unknown presumably to reduce Window Tax)

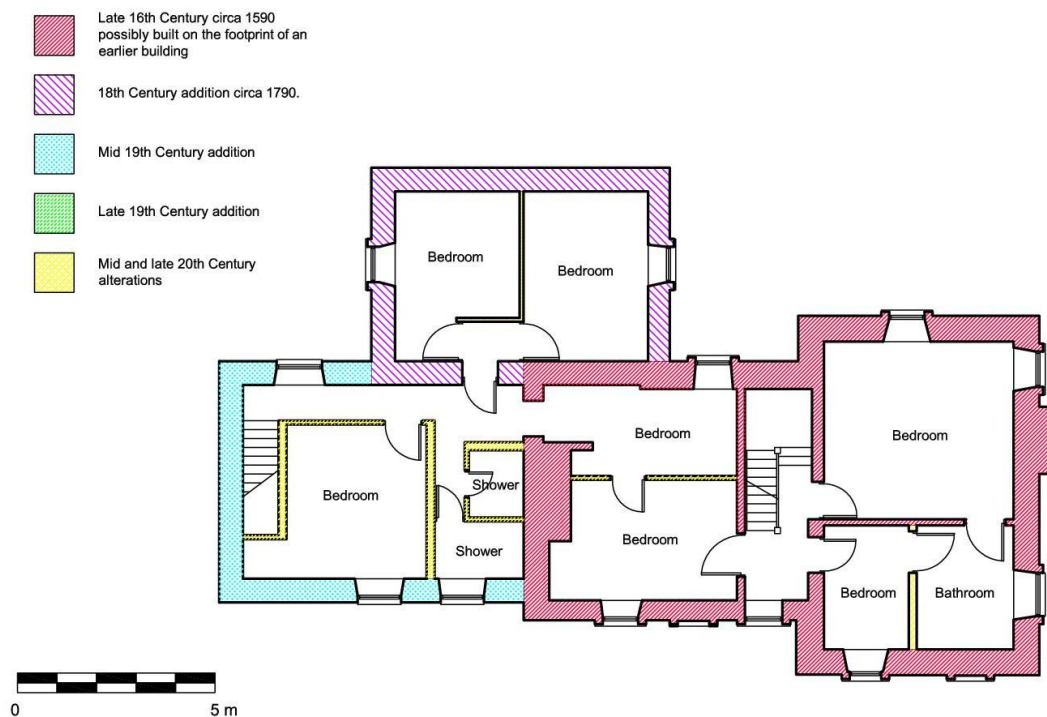
- Alterations of the roof to make bedrooms on second floor (date unknown)
- Cellar improvements (c1850?)
- Removal of arched window at front of property and replacement with casements (c1950/60?)
- Removal of extensive wooden paneling from interior (c1950/60?)
- Complete renovation from dereliction under listed building permission 1997

The main house exhibits a typologically common 'T' shape. It is not entirely clear whether the leg of the 'T' was originally a High Hall open to the roof. The window at high level on the front elevation appears to be original and this suggests an upper floor. This may have been in the form of a Garret leaving a high living space below. One hypothesis might be that the house built in the late 16th Century was constructed on the footprint of an earlier medieval Hall with a cross wing. The timber used in the newer house may have come from the original house. Some of the timbers in the house show signs of having been part of an earlier structure. The shape of the main roof truss members suggest that they could be reclaimed blades from a cruck frame building. There is then a significant amount of the historic fabric remaining. The exterior is legible and exhibits stylistic attributes that are typical of the various periods over which it has developed. Internally significant amounts of historic fabric remain and the evolution of the layout can be read. There are no special internal features of note although the exposed roof trusses on the top floor do allow the evolution of the structure to be understood. These appear to have been much altered during the life of the building and/or possibly reclaimed from an earlier building. Whilst most of the internal walls are of plastered masonry there are some that appear to be in wattle and daub whilst others are far more recent stud and plasterboard.

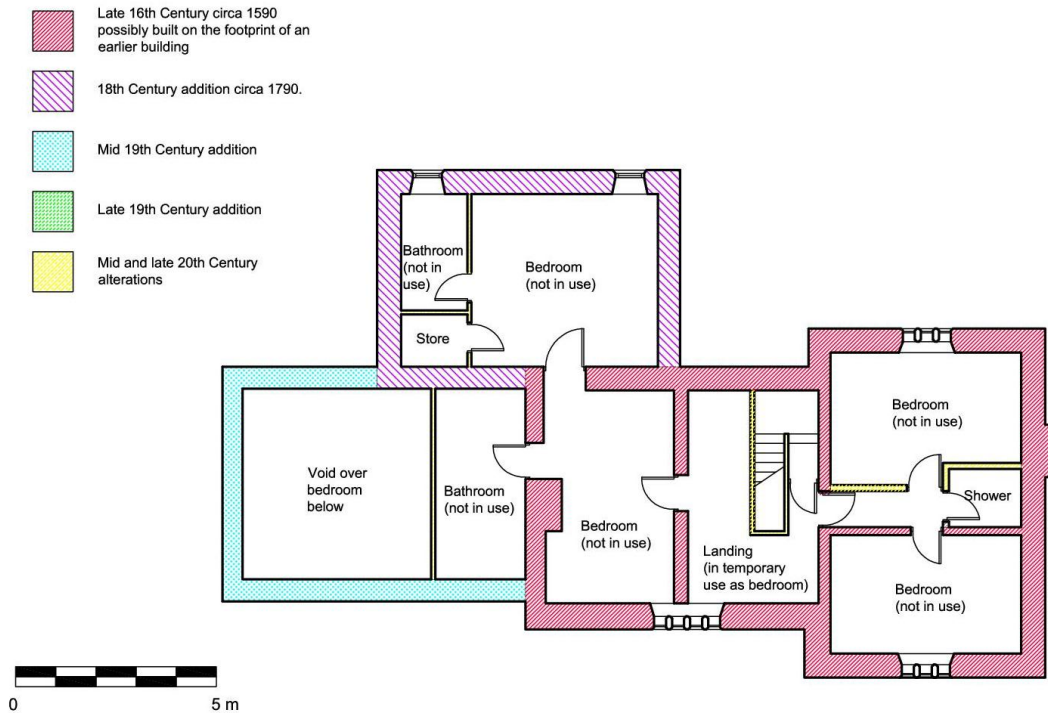
Therefore whilst not of great national significance, Toft Hall remains, however, a good, albeit altered, example of yeoman architecture of the 17th century.



Ground Floor Plan showing how the house is believed to have developed



First Floor Plan showing how the house is believed to have developed



Second Floor Plan showing how the house is believed to have developed

WHO VALUES THE BUILDING AND WHY

The remote rural location of the building means that the general public is barely aware of its existence although it may have played some part in the life of the more local community. It is, however, available to hire for holiday accommodation and therefore can be experienced and enjoyed by visitors and customers. Its character and setting make it attractive for this purpose.

Those that enjoy the countryside and landscape in the area may well value the gentle contribution this group of buildings makes to this landscape.

Historians may value the building as an example of particular periods of rural architecture and its development. It is a source of information on how our ancestors lived.

THE HERITAGE VALUE OF THE BUILDING

Historic England suggest in their publication '*Conservation Principles – Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*' that Heritage Value can take various forms:-

Evidential Value – The potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. (e.g. archeological remains)

Historical Value – The potential of a place to aid the understanding of history and how the present day is connected to the past. This tends to be by the place illustrating history or by it being associated with history. (e.g. a place associated with a particular event, invention or person of historic significance)

Aesthetic Value – The potential of a place to offer sensory and intellectual stimulation (e.g. A place of great natural beauty or outstanding design that influenced architectural development)

Communal Value – A place that is valued by a community because of its meaning and association with collective experience or memory. (e.g. a place of worship or an old school building)

Clearly some places may exhibit a combination of these values to varying degrees.

The Evidential Value of Toft Hall

The evidential value and potential of Toft Hall lies primarily in the stone and timber framed remnants of the 16th Century House and to a lesser extent the 18th Century alterations. This fabric is not particularly rare or unusual and is unlikely to yield any new historic insight. It does, however, contribute to the body of evidence that points to the way in which houses of this type in rural

locations were being constructed during these periods and to the architectural and aesthetic taste of those times.

Historical Value of Toft Hall

The historical value of the building lies in the ability of current users to appreciate how past generations may have used the building. The ability to interpret this from the building as it now stands is limited to a large extent by the fact that it has been altered so much. The change of the whole group of buildings from a farm to holiday accommodation also means that the complex has limited *illustrative* potential.

Historic research has not revealed any particular events or individuals of national significance *associated* with the building. The building is mentioned in 'A History of the County of Stafford' along with a reference to one of its occupants William Armett of who little is known although as Sherriff he must have been locally respected.

Hawksley Farm east of Heaton hamlet retains some fabric from a 17th-century house, as does the nearby Toftthall Farm. The latter was the home in 1741 of William Armett, sheriff of Staffordshire in 1764; he improved the house and laid out a walled garden. Known as Toft Hall in 1775, the house was remodelled and extended to the south in the mid 19th century.

Citation - A P Baggs, M F Cleverdon, D A Johnston and N J Tringham, 'Leek: Heaton', in A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 7, Leek and the Moorlands, ed. C R J Currie and M W Greenslade (London, 1996), pp. 186-191. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/staffs/vol7/pp186-191> [accessed 13 November 2016].

Therefore whilst the building has some Historic value in the way it illustrates how farm houses have developed from their medieval origins this is limited to that of general interest and a contribution made in conjunction with interpreting it alongside other similar buildings.

Aesthetic Value of Toft Hall

Toft Hall and the group of buildings surrounding it is an aesthetically stimulating composition enhanced by its quiet rural setting in an attractive landscape. The natural materials of its construction and its architectural detail further enhance its aesthetic qualities. It does not represent a particular architectural innovation and it is not a unique example of its type. It is, however, in good order and has a pleasing coherent composition which is clearly attractive to holiday makers.

The Communal Value of Toft Hall

The remoteness of the building from adjacent settlements and its historic use as a single dwelling with associated farm buildings means that Toft Hall was historically not used extensively by the wider community. Its communal value is thus fairly limited. Local family connections may exist and its use by holiday makers may over time change this.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF HERITAGE VALUES

Toft Hall is valuable in Heritage terms not because it is particularly remarkable evidentially, historically, aesthetically or communally but because it has value to a varying degree in all of these ways. Its communal value is probably of the lowest importance with the evidential and historic value being more important especially when appreciated in connection with other similar buildings. It is the buildings aesthetic value that is arguably the most important. It has retained its architectural quality and character, is a cohesive example of the prevalent architectural styles of the periods in which it was constructed and relates well to its setting.

ASSOCIATED OBJECTS AND COLLECTIONS

When the present owner took possession of the property it was in an advanced state of dereliction. No objects or collections of any note are thus present or known to be associated with Toft Hall.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING AND CONTEXT

Toft Hall is not within a Conservation Area or The Peak District National Park although this is nearby. It is set in its own grounds approximately 1/3rd mile from the nearest road and other dwelling. It is set within the District of Leekfrith near the settlement of Heaton. The remote rural setting clearly adds considerably to the aesthetic value of the building as do the adjacent former buildings of modest scale and sympathetic materials and detail. The buildings and mature trees sheltering it in turn contribute to the attractive landscape pattern and its interpretation. The house remains hierarchically dominant within the group. The building contributes to and derives some significance from being read and understood alongside other buildings of its type and period both locally and nationally.



A COMPARISON WITH PLACES WITH SIMILAR VALUES

In their study of 'Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Character' in Staffordshire' for Staffordshire County Council, Edwards and Lake identified numerous typologies for the grouping of farm buildings. Toft Hall farm is similar to many farmsteads in the region in being in a well defined courtyard form. The house is a little more unusual and is considered to be a good albeit much altered example of the houses built by the more affluent yeoman farmers of the late 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries. It might be suggested that it bridges the gap between the farm cottage and the landowner's country house from which it derives elements of its architectural language.



Nearby Horton Hall which was built around the same time as Toft Hall. Whilst larger it exhibits similar stylistic traits of this transitional architectural period with a mixture of Gothic and Classical elements.

Toft Hall can also be seen as illustrating to some extent the transition from medieval architecture through the debased classicism of the Jacobean period and the more correct Carolean period to the Georgian with the later addition of windows of that period proportioned and arranged to reflect the taste of that time.

PROPOSED WORKS

Purpose of the works

At the last Fire Officers inspection the use of the top floor en-suite bedrooms by guests was prohibited due to the low door heads. This meant that four double bedrooms were put out of action. This significantly impacts on the business model for the premises and threatens the buildings economic sustainability. A number of options are being explored with regard to solving this problem but in the meantime the games room and second floor landing have had to become bedrooms. The former games room has no direct access to a bathroom and the second floor bedroom still has to access a bathroom via a door with low headroom. Only one of the bedrooms at first floor has en-suite facilities and one of the existing bedrooms is very small and only suitable for one bed. Guests expect at least some of the rooms to have an en-suite and not having sufficient rooms with this facility is harming the ability to attract customers and the reduced number of beds available is impacting on the rates that can be charged. In the short term the introduction of en-suites and enlarging one of the bedrooms will at least mitigate the problem whilst a longer term solution is found. The changes proposed will be permanent although reversible if required and will improve the offer to customers even if the top floor rooms can be brought back into use.

Proposals

- 1) Add 1 en-suite shower room to the former games room
- 2) Add 2 en-suite shower rooms within existing first floor bedrooms
- 3) Remove a stud wall and door opening put in in 1997 and replace with a wall to make the room divided into unequal sizes The existing bathroom would become a bedroom and the existing small bedroom a shower room.

Impact of proposals on Significance of the historic fabric

The alterations will have no impact on the external appearance of the house. Internally the en-suites are planned to be close to existing water supplies so that additional pipework is minimised and they will be sensitively installed in a way that minimises any damage or loss of original fabric. The en-suites are to be formed within existing bedrooms so no damage will be caused by the removal of historical walls, etc. There is no cornicing or other features in these rooms. The partitions will be constructed in timber stud and plasterboard and thus they could be removed at a later date without and damage to or loss of historic fabric. The evidential value of the building is thus hardly affected. The addition of these rooms has little if any impact on the interpretation of the historic, aesthetic or communal value of the building. The walls to be removed and the door that is to be blocked up were late 20th Century alterations designed to be reversible at that time. The impact of their removal therefore has no effect on the evidential, historic, aesthetic or communal value of the building.

An additional benefit of the proposed work is that it will improve the buildings carbon footprint and environmental impact. Currently occupants do not have enough showers and baths use a lot more water.

Involvement/Consultation

Since 1997 the owners have worked with SMDC Conservation Officers, Duncan Gillard, Faith Claverdon and Gill Bayliss to ensure a sensitive approach to works is undertaken. Conservation Architects, David Slade and more recently Philip Wootton RIBA AABC have been consulted.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Amount

The proposed works are very minor in nature and do not increase the floor area or volume of the building.

Layout

There is no change to the layout of the site and relatively little change to the building interior.

Scale

There is no change to the scale of the building

Landscaping

There is no change to the landscaping of the site

Appearance

There is no change to visual appearance to the exterior of the building. Internally the changes are minor and no features or details are effected. The materials used and decoration will be sympathetic to the character of the building.

Access

Access requirements are set out in Part M of Building Regulations "Access to use of Buildings". Including the Cellar there are four vertical levels in the property. The applicability of Part M is limited, there is no intended change of

use and whilst the general principle is nothing should be made worse, some practical improvements will be effected as follows:

A ground floor bedroom with en-suite shower room will enable better accessibility for less mobile visitors.

CONCLUSION

The proposed works are necessary for the continued economic sustainability of the building and will enable a continued contribution to the local economy and tourism. Any harm to the evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value of the building is minimal if any and far outweighed by the benefits to society that the proposals offer :-

1. Maintaining a viable sustainable use for the building which is the best way to protect it from physical decay
2. Maintaining a viable business making a valuable contribution to the local rural economy
3. Assisting with tourism and allowing the public to visit and enjoy historic and landscape heritage
4. Improved facilities for those with disabilities
5. Improvements to environmental performance