

Heritage Statement

Caverswall Castle,
Caverswall, Staffordshire

Mr R McDonald

Heritage Statement in support of

The proposed new timber gates to the pedestrian walkway at Caverswall Castle, Caverswall.

"Good design can help to create lively spaces with distinctive character, streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, pleasant to use and human in scale; and places that inspire because of imagination and sensitivity of their designers."

- *By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System; Towards Better Practice (DETR & CABE, 2000).*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This proposal is for new timber gates to the pedestrian walkway at Caverswall Castle to replace existing metal gates.
- 1.2. The owner has previously erected tubular steel gates to the pedestrian walkway, but this was done without listed building consent. The gates were then subject to an enforcement notice (06/00151/BOC, under section 3.5), issued by SMDC on 11th November 2008, requesting that the gates be removed.

2.0 Description of the Asset

- 2.1. Caverswall is a small village to the south west of the Staffordshire Moorlands. It is situated to the south-east of Stoke-on-Trent, in the Green Belt, with the A50 nearby and the closest train station at Blythe Bridge. The village can be located on the 1856 ordnance survey map; however, a community was evident on the Domesday Survey recorded in 1086.
- 2.2. The village is made up of fieldscape, settlement, ornamental, parkland, recreational, water and valley floor field areas as shown on the Historic Landscape Character Map of Staffordshire. It is also home to a number of listed buildings. On the outermost parts of the village, there are areas of Medieval Historic Landscapes, including strip fields, piecemeal enclosures, water and wetland and rectilinear enclosures.
- 2.3. Caverswall Conservation area was designated in July 1970 and includes the majority of the village. It is defined by the preservation of the area's authenticity, resulting in minimal modern development.
- 2.4. Caverswall Castle, located in the middle of the village, is within the conservation area, with St. Filumena's Roman Catholic Church (Grade II Listed) and St Peters Church (Grade II* Listed) to the east. The High Street, The Dams, The Square and The Hollow emerge from the midpoint of the village, with The Red House facing this central point. The River Blithe is located to the south-west of the Castle, with School Lane and a residential development to the north-west and The Dams to the north. Dove Farm Barns are located to the south-east, with the majority of the southern neighboring land comprising of fields.
- 2.5. Despite the Castle's central position, it is not visible from the roads surrounding it. There are two ways to access the site, the main one stretches from the Square to the circular driveway, resulting in the castle's facade being located on the right upon entry. The second comprises of a gated route from School Lane.
- 2.6. Formed on a mound and enclosed by a moat in the 13th century, a fortified manor house known as Caverswall Castle, which was crenellated by William de

Caverswall in 1275. The Castle changed hands multiple times before the early 17th century.

- 2.7. The erection of a new house, of three storeys at the north of the mound, incorporating the remnants of the initial Castle, by Mathew Cradock, the Mayor of Stafford, concluded at the beginning of the 17th century. During this time, the curtain wall, angle towers, gatehouse and medieval bridge on the moat were restored, repaired, and replaced respectively.
- 2.8. The Castle was used as a nunnery by a group of Benedictine Nuns between 1811 and 1853, who also formed a cemetery within the grounds and built a chapel, opened in 1813. During the 1840s the order left Caverswall after demolishing the chapel.
- 2.9. The Castle was auctioned and sold, during the second half of the 19th century, to the Radcliffe family who drained the moat and added the formal gardens, in addition to building St Filumena's Church in 1872.
- 2.10. The Castle was rented by the Wedgewood family between 1878 and 1890, before being purchased by William Bowers, who proceeded to make vast alterations. These included the construction of the north-east part of the castle, the east and west lodges, stables to the north of the moat, antiquarian decorative finishes to the interior and crenellations over the parapets. He also directed works in proximity to the main entrance including the sundial, balustrading and steps.
- 2.11. The Castle remained in the Bowers family until 1932, when it was put up for auction, and the land and properties were divided. As was common for large houses at that time, the Castle was sold on to institutional use in 1933. In this case, to the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Ghost, who used the Castle as a nunnery, and ran it as an elderly care home and hospice.
- 2.12. During the 1930s, in order to meet the needs of the Castle's use, the building underwent numerous alterations once again. These works included a three-storey brick extension to the moathouse, the conversion of the stables into accommodation, the transformation of the billiard room to form a chapel, and the installation of a lift.
- 2.13. The Daughters of the Heart of Mary came to the Castle in 1965, utilising it as a guest house, but the estate was split in June 1977, and sold to various families the following year.
- 2.14. During 1993, further alterations were made following a change of ownership. The corner towers and a section of the main building were converted into bed and breakfast accommodation.

- 2.15. The Castle was purchased by Mr Robin McDonald in 2006 and, following numerous planning applications, was granted approval to turn the site into a wellbeing retreat in 2016.
- 2.16. The gates in question are located to the west of the main entrance, adjacent to the rear wall of St Peter's church cemetery, at the junction between the Castle's main driveway and the footpath to the rear of the church. The churchyard wall is of coursed and dressed sandstone, of Victorian origin. A buttressed gateway into the churchyard has been blocked up in stone.
- 2.17. To the opposite side, shrubs and trees line the top of the bank to the moat, together with a low wall running into the Victorian balustrading for the bridge.
- 2.18. The current double gates are of decorative tubular steel, painted black, fixed independently via posts set into the ground.



- 2.19. List Entries:

Casverswall Castle, Screen Walls, the Gatehouse and Bridge, located on Caverswall Road are Grade I Listed.

"Castle, later country house. C13 foundation to superstructure of circa 1615, enlarged, altered and refitted circa 1890. The work of 1615 has been attributed to Robert and John Smythson. Red sandstone ashlar; flat roofs largely invisible behind crenellated parapets with multishafted C19 side stacks; the gatehouse and angle towers have tiled roofs and balustraded parapets. Built in a castellar, supra-vernacular style with a foretaste of Bolsover and echoes of Longleat (and strangely reminiscent of Castle Drogo by Lutyens). House: the

single-fronted house is a truncated rendition of the Slingsby plan and facade with symmetry upset by the lack of an eastern stair tower, the vacuum part filled by the additions of 1890 leading on to the gatehouse. Facade: of 3 storeys on a raised plinth over cellars (which are only part below ground level), banded at ceiling levels up to crenellated parapets, fenestrated on all 3 levels by five 3-light chamfer mullion and transom windows, the outer inset slightly from the extremities and formed into full height 3-sided bays with similar 2-light windows to angled sides; the central entrance has a small, 3-sided underplayed single storey porch with balustered parapet and part-glazed C19 doors. The square stair tower is well set back on the west side of the front rising a further storey, banded only under the parapet and fenestrated at that level by a three-light mullioned window with further two-light windows rising with the stairs; the C19 wing of two storeys slightly set back on the east side, of similar style including the two windows, the left hand a bay; the right hand first-floor window has a panel under inscribed "MDCCCXCI". Retaining structure: the house is set to the north side of a square retaining enclosure surrounded by an excavated moat which opens out to lower ground level on the west, forming a prospect which was never used. The lower parts of the walls (approx. 9m high) appear to be the only remnant of the medieval castle (the stonework above garden level certainly seems homogenous with the house) rising to plain parapets (set at garden level) and with octagonal towers on all but the northern-most angle. These rise to two storeys above the inner garden level (and thus approximately four storeys from the floor of the moat); they are pyramidally roofed with balustraded parapets and fenestrated by two-light mullioned windows on most facets but only to the final two storeys. The Gatehouse: of similar style; set on the east side and attached to the angle of the C19 wing of the house; fronted with two 3-sided bay turrets flanking an entranceway with rounded 2 centred arches; the inner face is flush. The gatehouse leads onto the bridge of two round arches with C19 balustrade set on a corbelled band. Interior of main house: entered via a screens passage with the hall opening out to the left via a round arch with carved figures; all the walls are panelled; two round arch (again in imitation of the medieval layout) doorways at far end and fireplace to north (inner) side; the overmantel has C17 elements but heavily remodelled and enriched in the C19 restoration; ovolo moulded beams and joists. Stairway: entered through one of the doors (the other is a blind dummy) at the rear of the hall rising in straight flights, a C19 restoration; lions and unicorns on newels, vase balusters. Dining Room: has 3 C17 low relief panels of hunting scenes reset in C19 over- mantel and late C17 or early C18 panelling. Library: early C18 panelling, C19 strap work, plaster ceiling, C17 overmantel with low relief carvings of fruit. First floor billiard room: set over hall with elaborate C19 plasterwork. The cellar does not bear the promise of Slingsby's garden room, being a collection of plain and unadorned service rooms. Refs: B.O.E. p. 95. M. Girouard. "Robert Smythson and the [Elizabethan Country House" p.181-2." (As stated in the List Entry : 1038000)

The East Lodge to Caverswall Castle and Balustrading Screen Wall, located on Caverswall Road are Grade II Listed.

"Lodge. Dated 1890. Red sandstone ashlar; flat roof concealed behind crenellated parapet. Of a sympathetic style to the castle (q.v.). Two- storey, three-window front, banded at ceiling levels; 3-sided bay to left side with 1:3:1 light mullioned and transomed windows, further similar windows to right end of centre, set over inset labelled panel inscribed WE labelled round arch entrance, the stops inscribed "A.D." and &A "1891"; part glazed door. The lodge occupies a prominent position in the village centre between the Church of St. Peter (q.v.) and the Church of St. Filomena (q.v.)."
(As stated in the List Entry: 1038002)

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1. The Castle's Grade I status and age, dating back to the 13th century, coupled with numerous owners, such as the Wedgewood family, demonstrates a large amount of historic and evidential value, despite its numerous alterations over time.
- 3.2. The Castle has a very central location within the village and, although it is hidden from the main roads, its position increases the Castle's evidential value as it provides an insight into how the building will have impacted upon the way in which the village of Caverswall expanded.
- 3.3. The walls surrounding St Peter's church will exhibit strong historic values in line with the church's Grade II* listed status, proximity to the Grade I listed castle, and the location of several listed chest tombs within the graveyard.
- 3.4. A historic gatepost, with the remains of a latch, still exists in the current position of the gates, demonstrating that this section of footpath would likely have been gated at some point in the past.

4.0 THE DESIGN CONCEPT

- 4.1. The concept for the design is the new replacement gate to the pedestrian walkway.
- 4.2. The owner must remove the current gates under the enforcement notice, but wishes to replace these with simple timber gates to match the design of those at the main entrance (adjacent to East Lodge), as shown in the image to the right. This will help maintain security at the estate as the owner currently has trouble with people wandering on to the site at will.
- 4.3. The gates will be of timber construction, with wrought iron hinges and fixings. The height will be set just beneath that of the existing stone copings. The gates will be fixed via independent posts, avoiding intervention to any historic fabric.



5.0 THE IMPACT

- 5.1. The new gates will have minimal impact upon Caverswall conservation area, nor the heritage assets of Caverswall Castle, East Lodge, and St Peter's Church.
- 5.2. No alteration of historic fabric is proposed, and the gates are not visible within the public domain, beyond the primarily private driveway to the castle and The Keys, to the north.
- 5.3. The timber gates will be designed to match those at the main entrance, and will be more in keeping with the heritage of the castle, marking the pedestrian route adjacent to the boundary walls, and keeping the estate secure.