

Design & Access Heritage Statement

Proposed window alterations at Grade II listed Oldridge Farm,
Ashbourne Road, Whiston
Mr S. Newell & Dr T. Petty

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The proposals consist of alterations to the windows at Grade II listed Oldridge Farm.
- 1.2. Oldridge Farm lies approximately 400m north of the A52 Ashbourne Road, to the northeast of Whiston, along the southwest fringe of the Peak District national park.
- 1.3. Whiston village lies within the Churnet Valley, in the parish of Kingsley, just to the east of Froghall.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSET

- 2.1. Oldridge Farm is described within the Staffordshire HER as *"An isolated farmstead with a dispersed plan including a detached farmhouse and two outbuildings (one adjacent to the west and another set away from the main focus of the farm to the east. The farmhouse of a 18th century date providing a relative date for the origin of the farmstead. By the mid-20th century an additional outbuilding had been added to the farmstead, aligned parallel to the original main range."* (HER No. 52952).
- 2.2. The farmhouse is also individually covered within the HER – *"A listed early 18th century stone built farmhouse, with minor 20th century alterations"* (HER No. 13454).
- 2.3. Shirley Farm (HER No. 57336), to the northeast, and Shirley Brook Tramway Bridge (HER No. 53982), to the west, are the only two heritage buildings/monuments identified within 500m of the site, though this is due to the isolated nature of the farmstead. Several further listed buildings are located within the centre of Whiston village.
- 2.4. According to the Staffordshire Historic Farmsteads and Landscape Character Assessment (SHFLCA 2012), only 31% of historic farmsteads in Staffordshire remain in agricultural use, and less than 15% of farmstead sites contain a listed building (usually the farmhouse).
- 2.5. The Staffordshire Farmsteads Character Statement (SFCS) identifies Whiston as being within 'Character Area 1 – The Peak & the Peak Fringe.' It states that high numbers of farmsteads with surviving 18th century or earlier farm buildings (usually the farmhouse) survive within this region, with a particularly high density along and above the Churnet Valley. This landscape is mainly associated with small-medium irregular enclosures whose creation is probably linked with industrial activity within the valley during the 16th and 17th centuries (SFCS).

- 2.6. A “dispersed plan” means the farmstead has no focal courtyard area, and these types of farmstead make up just 11% of the total for Staffordshire. Furthermore, a “dispersed driftway” plan, with a route running through the farmstead, along which some of the buildings will be aligned (as in this case), are the least common plan type within Staffordshire. Just 0.6% of farmsteads are dispersed driftways, with the majority concentrated in the northeast of the county in the upland areas fringing the Peak District. This is largely due to the large areas of common land present. They usually indicate the need to “flexibly manage livestock within the boundary of the steading” and pre-date the more formal courtyard plans of the 18th and 19th centuries (SHFLCA 2012).
- 2.7. The farmhouse was Grade II listed in 1986, with the following description:
- “Farmhouse. Dated 1723 with minor C20 alterations. Coursed dressed and squared stone of ashlar quality; tiled roofs; verge parapets on corbelled kneelers and with pitched copings and ball finials (unusually on pierced fretted blocks); ashlar ridge stacks. 2-storey and attic, 3-window original main front on plinth in 2 parts: taller gabled projecting wing to right with a single central range of windows of chamfered mullioned type; 2 lights to attic over a labelled 4-light window to first floor and deeper, wider labelled 3-light window to ground floor set immediately over plinth; lower set-back wing to left has a range of 4-light chamfered mullioned windows to left end, labelled to ground floor and with central mullion missing; small round-arch window to right over entrance inscribed on lintel: TM EM 1723. Part-glazed C20 door. Rear elevation is similarly complete.”* (HE List Entry 1038022)
- 2.8. Heritage Consultant, Mel Morris, in her role as acting SMDC Conservation Officer, speculated that the farmhouse likely dates from the mid-17th century and the date stone of 1723 refers to a later phase of rebuilding. According to the SHFLCA, many of the medium or large-scale farmsteads were rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries when it became fashionable for the farmhouse to be set away from the working areas of the farm. Houses faced towards or away (as in this case) from the farm, depending on local tradition and status.
- 2.9. Typically, larger farmhouses were developed from the medieval 3-unit plan, with a central hall/kitchen separated by a cross passage from the two further service rooms at ground floor. By the 17th century, most of these were either built or adapted into storeyed houses with chimney stacks. Mel Morris describes the mid-17th century house as “an east-west houseplace/hall (possibly with chamber over), with a single cross wing comprising a parlour and small service room (the current north-south range), with bedrooms [over].” There was also a lower ground floor dairy beneath the cross wing.
- 2.10. The house was then extensively remodelled in 1723. The original ‘houseplace’ was replaced with the current east-west range, with cross passage, central staircase and purpose-built two-storey (plus attic) kitchen wing. There is also a slightly later single-storey former scullery attached at the far west. The southern

(front) and gable end elevations of this wing incorporate deeply chamfered mullioned windows which are typical of the early 18th century.

- 2.11. The quality of the masonry and size of the windows are representative of a yeoman gentleman farmer (Morris 2022). The flood of 18th century enclosure acts greatly altered the shape of the English countryside and newly-rich farmers wanted a better type of house, built on their own land, in place of the small village-based cottages they'd previously inhabited. The principal elevation faces away from the farmyard, indicating that the wealthy farmer wished to show his visitors into a more formal parlour, as became fashionable in the 18th century (Ryan 2013).
- 2.12. Much of the interior of the house was extensively remodelled in the 19th century (likely the 1860s) and little 17th century evidence remains (with the exception of the cellar). The ceiling to the second bedroom (above the original 'kitchen') has been raised, limiting access to the original attic room above. The early 18th staircase has been replaced, as have the internal doors. The chimney breast to the earlier north-south range has also been extensively rebuilt, and both wings re-roofed.
- 2.13. Window details are a mixture of 17th century (within the north-south range), early 18th century, and some 19th century modifications. Following her inspections of the property in 2022, Mel Morris stated that the windows themselves incorporate "a mixture of C19 or C20 diamond lattice leaded-lights, plain timber fixed lights and casements, and a number of double-glazed timber windows."

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1. The purpose of this statement is to assess any potential impact of proposed works based on the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 200 & 201), which requires applicants to provide a description of the significance of the heritage asset affected.
- 3.2. To assess the significance of any affected heritage assets, this document adopts the methods outlined in Historic England's publication "Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance." The guidance describes four heritage values that may contribute to the significance of a place: Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal.
- 3.3. Evidential value is described as "the potential of a place to yield evidence of past activity." For example, archaeological deposits may provide clues in place of any written record. It is often proportional to the amount of material evidence that has since been lost or altered.
- 3.4. Evidential value is moderate to high in this case. The farmhouse dates to the 17th century, though it has been significantly modified in the subsequent centuries. It remains a good example of a yeoman farmhouse with an interesting and complex evolution.
- 3.5. Evidential value is boosted by the survival of the 17th century cellar. As Mel Morris states, this is of considerable interest and, having reviewed all the evidence (including the large window and blocked external doorway) concludes that it was originally a dairy.
- 3.6. Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative and may be closely related to whether an asset retains its original use.
- 3.7. Historical value is high for the property. The farmstead remains in agricultural use, with the farmhouse still occupied as the main private residence. The presence of the cellar and attic rooms (used as farm labourer's/servant's quarters) is particularly interesting.
- 3.8. There has been some loss of historic fabric over the years, with replacement timber windows in place of the historic metal frames set within the stone mullions. It's believed this occurred prior to listing of the property in the 1980s, though this is difficult to confirm due to a lack of photographic evidence.
- 3.9. Aesthetic value derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

- 3.10. Oldridge Farmhouse is a particularly attractive property, though the more impressive frontage is barely visible from the surrounding area, being shielded by the steeply sloping garden. The rear of the property appears as the principal elevation but is more modest. All the original leaded windows to this elevation have been replaced with timber and plain glass in either single or double-glazed units.
- 3.11. The loss of some of the historic farm buildings, coupled with the more modern "replacement" northern range and concrete yard area do detract slightly from the historic setting, though this is common for historic farmsteads still in agricultural use, purely due to the requirements of modern-day farming. This must be weighed against the evidential/historic value of a farmstead retaining its original use.
- 3.12. Communal value is about the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it.
- 3.13. As a private residence, the property would have had low communal value. However, there is an association with the Locker family (owners during the 19th century according to the Tithe apportionment), who had substantial influence within the small village of Whiston in the 19th century, which does raise historic and community significance.

4.0 THE DESIGN CONCEPT

- 4.1. It is proposed to replace a number of the more modern timber double-glazed windows with more in-keeping slimline aluminium heritage units. The 'Smart Alitherm Heritage' windows, in black powder-coated finish, have previously been approved for use elsewhere in the property as part of the previous applications and discharge of conditions.
- 4.2. Part of the proposals include the replacement of a previously lost mullion to window G08 (see window schedule), utilising Hollington sandstone in a profile to match the remaining mullions to this window.
- 4.3. It is also proposed to secondary glaze the remaining historic single-glazed leaded windows using the Granada secondary glazing system, in order to improve thermal efficiency within the property. The use of secondary glazing was originally suggested by Mel Morris during her initial site visit in 2022.
- 4.4. Details of the above can be found within drawings 01088 AL(0)304, 305 & 306 and the accompanying window schedule.

5.0 THE IMPACT

- 5.1. The aim of this report is to assess the impact of proposals on the significance of any heritage assets that might be affected. In line with current NPPF guidance, proposals should seek to conserve and enhance historic character.
- 5.2. It is clear, both from its listed status and through historic analysis, that Oldridge Farm retains a high level of heritage significance. However, the existing timber single and double-glazed units are a modern intervention that detract from the historic and aesthetic value of the property.
- 5.3. The proposed 'Smart Alitherm Heritage' slimline units have previously been approved for use in both the cellar and snug windows and represent a marked improvement over the bulky softwood frames and double-glazed units. The slimline aluminium frames and black powder-coated finish tie in with the existing historic leaded windows and will enhance the overall appearance of the property. Use of plain glass, rather than reproduction leaded glazing, retains historic legibility as a modern addition.
- 5.4. The provision of Granada secondary glazing's unobtrusive aluminium profile, as per the provided details, will improve thermal efficiency within the property whilst retaining the delicate leaded windows. There will be minimal harm to historic fabric as a result of their installation.
- 5.5. The replacement mullion to window G08 serves to reinstate the original 4-light window to the south elevation of the former kitchen wing.
- 5.6. In conclusion, the proposed changes will seek to improve comfort and functionality for the owners whilst respecting the heritage of the farmhouse as much as possible. It is felt the proposals seek to enhance historic character, as is required by NPPF guidance, and should therefore represent no significant harm to this heritage asset.

SOURCES

Historic England
Staffordshire HER
Staffordshire Records Office
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
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Farmstead Assessment Framework – Historic England
Farm and Rural Building Conversions – Carole Ryan (2013)
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Tracing the History of Houses – Bill Breckon, Jeffrey Parker, & Martin Andrew
Vernacular Architecture – R.W. Brunskill
<https://maps.nls.uk/>
The Genealogist - <https://www.thegenealogist.co.uk/>
A Vision of Britain through Time - <https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/place/24804>
Mel Morris Conservation & Design Response, on behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands DC (Applications SMD/2021/0718 & 0719 - February 2022)