

**Pumpkin Cottage,
6 St Andrew's Lane, Headington, Oxford**



Assessment of Heritage Significance

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Figure 1. Map of part of the Old Headington Conservation Area, showing the application site in blue and listed buildings/structures in red and orange (Old Headington Conservation Area Appraisal, Oxford City Council)

Summary

Although Pumpkin Cottage appears to be a simple late seventeenth-century, two-unit cottage with a rear range, it has a much more complex and intriguing history and may date from the early seventeenth century. Sufficient fabric is exposed to be able to assess the significance of different parts of the structure, even if its historical development is not fully understood. Overall the heritage significance of the historic house is high.

A lengthy and detailed description and discussion of the house is given, explaining the elements which are unresolved and speculating on explanations. Whilst these remain speculative, this in no way diminishes the assessment of significance, as it is clear that this is an important building in the historical development of Old Headington and it may hold clues to early settlement in the village.

It makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Old Headington Conservation Area, reinforcing the rural village character of the lane.

Introduction

This assessment of significance has been commissioned by Project Development (UK) Ltd to inform proposals for making some alterations to Pumpkin Cottage, a Grade II listed building. This will then allow the impact of these proposals on identified significance to be assessed. It has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

The house is a multiphase house and has had a number of alterations and extensions in the past. This assessment considers the historic house, as it existed in the first half of the twentieth century. Later twentieth-century extensions are not considered to be of any architectural or historic interest. The house was in a very dilapidated state at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was repaired and modernised in the latter part of the twentieth century. It is reported that some of these repairs involved introducing extraneous historic details which may be confusing the understanding of the development of the house. These are highlighted in the text.

The site lies within the Old Headington Conservation Area and this report also assesses the contribution this building makes to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

A visual survey of the house and its context was undertaken to establish the phasing of development, noting features of particular architectural and historic interest which can help with this understanding. The historical development of the site has been researched using published and unpublished sources in the Bodleian Library, Corpus Christi College archive, the Oxfordshire History Centre and the online history of Headington.

This statement has been researched and written by Dr Kathryn Davies, BA(Hons), MA, DPhil (Oxon), Dip TP, FSA, MRTPI, IHBC. Dr Davies is a heritage consultant who has been a Chartered Town Planner and qualified in conservation for over 30 years. She is a founder member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and is currently its Vice-Chair.

She has extensive experience of working in planning and conservation in local authorities and for Historic England (formerly English Heritage) as a Historic Buildings Inspector, Team

Leader and as the Principal Historic Places Adviser in the South East. She is currently an independent consultant undertaking work in both the private and public sectors. She has been appointed by CABE as a Built Environment Expert to sit on design review panels and is a member of the BOB-MK design review panel.

Dr Davies is a Visiting Fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford. She has lectured widely on conservation and her specific area of research, early modern, secular wall paintings, on which she has published a book and several papers.

Historical context

There is evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement in Old Headington and it was part of a royal estate as early as the tenth century. The earliest standing building is the church which dates from the mid-twelfth century. The medieval village developed around this with its network of lanes leading to the open fields surrounding it establishing the road network that survives today. As Oxford developed after the Reformation, Headington expanded and there is evidence of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century building in the village. Further expansion occurred between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as craftsmen and labourers moved out of the city to Headington where property was cheaper. The small houses and cottages built of local limestone mostly date from this period and give the settlement its strong village character.

Description of site

Pumpkin Cottage is located on St Andrew's Lane in Old Headington, immediately north of St Andrew's Church. St Andrew's Lane, formerly known as Church Lane, joins Larkins Lane to the north at the site of a former common well and then loops back on to Church Road, one of the principal routes through the old village, see figure 1.

The site includes the house, adjacent garage, enclosed garden to the front, enclosed garden to the rear and garden building. Unusually, the historic house is sited at right angles to the lane, fronting the highway of the twentieth century development of William Orchard Close. It is aligned east-west with its east gable directly abutting St Andrew's Lane. The garage lies to the west, abutting part of the west gable but at a higher level as the land rises up William Orchard Close. Internally there is evidence that the garage was part of an earlier structure and this is expressed externally in the remnant of wall which continues onto the footway and forms the west front garden wall. The rear enclosed garden lies to the west of the house and is at a lower level than the garage. In the south west corner of the garden is a small stone building abutting the adjoining walls, with a curved corner facing into the garden. The south wall of the garden looks of some antiquity and may be part of an earlier structure.

Detailed description of the historic house

The house is of random stone rubble with dressed quoins and plain tile roofs. It comprises two ranges. The front, south range is of two units and one and a half storeys under a pitched roof with end stacks. The rear range is two storey and roofed in a complex of two historic hipped roofs of unequal width and different construction, see figure 2, and a late twentieth century hipped roof over the west part, formerly a catslide roof. The whole rear range is much narrower than the front range.



Figure 2. Rear range showing hipped roofs of unequal width

The south front is almost symmetrical with a central door (now a window) with three-light casements to either side and three-light dormers above, see figure 3. There is evidence of extensive lime washing in the past with some remaining fragments of red ochres, yellow ochres and grey. The west stack has two flues and the east stack has only one. Both are in brick. The west bay of the rear range has one two-light casement at ground floor level, which looks like a twentieth century insertion, and one small leaded light at low level. The east bay of north elevation is obscured by a modern extension.



Figure 3. South elevation of front range with central doorway and three light windows and dormers to either side

The west gable is partially obscured by the garage and conservatory, see figure 4. There is a door from the rear range into the conservatory and a three-light window at first floor level

in the rear range. The ends of the purlins on the front range are exposed. Of particular interest is what may be part of a bricked-up window just at the entrance to the garage. It is expressed as recessed stonework, which is either crudely-carved or badly damaged, with the proportions of a window, see figure 5. It is unusual to have a window in a flank elevation. It backs on to where a flue must be although this is likely to be a later insertion.



Figure 4. West elevation partially blocked by garage and conservatory



Figure 5. Blocked up opening in rear range, west elevation

The interior of the front range now comprises a single room though this was clearly formerly two rooms, see figure 6. This is indicated on plans dating from the latter half of the

twentieth century and it is obvious from the ceiling structure and supporting pillar in the middle of the room. The main entrance was into the east bay which is slightly larger than the west bay. There is a stone-built main stack on the east gable with a chamfered and stopped bressumer. A spine beam, centrally positioned, runs east-west. Although this has suffered some decay, it appears to have a chamfer possibly with stops, though these are barely discernible.



Figure 6. Ground floor of front range, formerly two rooms, with the site of the original partition marked by the timber post

This spine beam is most unusual. The west end, now supported by the post, is thicker and carved into a scroll-like bracket, clearly demarcating the end of the exposed beam, see figure 7. The beam continues beyond this scroll decoration and appears to be a junction, as beyond this is a cut-out to house another beam. This may not be contemporary. The short section of the beam below the cut-out has a narrow chamfer, typically seventeenth century. The line of a partition can be seen between the scroll and the cut-out. There must have been something structural in this partition to support the beam end, although there is no evidence of this. The beam has remnants of red ochre paint. The joists, running at right angles, are fairly roughly sawn and also have narrow chamfers with run-out stops. These look typically seventeenth century. They look contemporary with the beam as the irregularly shaped joists fit comfortably into their housings. All have nails indicating the ceiling was plastered at some stage. However, it may be that this beam was introduced from elsewhere when the house was renovated in the late twentieth century. This would explain why the detailing at the end of the beam makes no sense in this location.



Figure 7. Spine beam end in east bay showing decorative scroll with traces of red paint

The west bay has a spine beam running north-south, supported on the external stone walls. This looks modern. It has none of the decorative details that are normally associated with a spine beam of the seventeenth century, i.e. chamfers and stops. Significantly, the spine beam is not centrally positioned but is about a third of the way into the space from the west gable. Joists are fairly roughly sawn and without chamfers and again with nails indicating a former plastered ceiling. Whilst there is no evidence of a hearth in this room, there are two flues indicated by the chimney stacks and earlier plans show a small projection indicating a hearth on the gable. This is confirmed in the first floor bedroom which has an exposed brick stack.

To the north of the blocked stack is an exposed section of stonework. This is probably an internal expression of the blocked window shown, mentioned above and shown in figure 6.

Of particular interest is the north wall. Here, located towards the east end of the bay, there is a lateral hearth, with the flue now blocked, see figure 8. This makes no sense with the current configuration of the floor plan. The hearth appears to have had a chamfered stone surround, although the upper stones do not match the lower ones. The chamfered ones however do not appear to be reused. They relate to each other and all have extensive layers of lime wash, some with evidence of black paint. This black paint also extends onto the adjacent wall. Whether this is a plain wash or part of a decorative scheme is not possible to determine because it is so fragmentary. The flue, now blocked, has soot deposits. The timber lintel over the opening has no decoration and is hacked to take a plaster finish. It is possible that the upper stones of the fire surround and this timber lintel constitute a late twentieth century repair to the hearth.



Figure 8. North wall of west bay showing blocked lateral hearth, straight joint of former wall end or opening and embedded timber lintel

Also of considerable interest on this wall, to the west of the hearth, is a straight joint formed with dressed stone quoins indicating what was formerly the end of a wall or an opening, see figure 8. Above this a rough, plain, embedded timber spans from the door opening across the straight joint and over the hearth. Two small sections of timber are also in the wall below the spine beam. These have no obvious function and may also relate to late twentieth-century repairs.

The north and west walls in this bay are both 28.5 inches thick. All the other walls in the front range are 21 inches thick.

The rear range is also of several builds and has been altered in the late twentieth century. Of historic interest is the stub of wall projecting into the west bay. It is of the same thickness as the external walls and may represent an earlier external wall or a cross wall, though there would be no need to have a cross wall this thick. It does not relate to any feature in the front range. Adjacent to this, to the rear of the lateral hearth, but not exactly mirroring its position, is a timber embedded in the wall, with no obvious function. There is a small, single leaded light window set in a chunky pegged frame on the rear elevation and evidence of a blocked up window on the stairs, see figure 9.



Figure 9. Small single leaded light window on north wall of rear range

These modern stairs rise to a first floor landing which gives access to the two bedrooms in the front range. Until the late twentieth century, the easternmost bay had a catslide roof. The two hipped roofs are different in size and structure and are probably of different dates. Part of the hipped-roof structure is exposed.

The two front range bedrooms are divided by a timber-framed cross wall with evidence of an opening between the two, see figure 10. Purlins are partially exposed and appear to be trenched into the tie beam. The main stone stack projects into the east bay and a brick stack with small fireplace survives in the west bay. This room is about 6 inches narrower than the east room. None of the timbers appears to have ever been exposed to weathering.



Figure 10. Timber-framed partition between the first floor bedrooms in the front range, showing the blocked up opening between the two

Finishes throughout are mostly modern. All the ground floor finishes are late twentieth century, both floors and walls. There are floorboards on top of the joists which are exposed in the first floor west bay but covered by modern boarding in the east bay. Most of the wall and ceiling finishes are modern plasterboard apart from small areas of lath and plaster. All the joists have nails or nail holes indicating that the ground floor ceilings were originally plastered.

Documentary evidence

An estate map of Corpus Christi College holdings dating from 1605, shows the centre of the village around the church, see figure 11. This includes St Andrew's Lane, then called Dagg

Lane, and the common well at its junction with Larkin's Lane¹. Although this map is concerned with accurately showing the College land holding, and it omits details of the surrounding land, it does indicate other buildings along the principal routes, including the church. There is no building shown on the application site. This suggests that the site was not developed in 1605 but negative evidence is not necessarily confirmation of this.

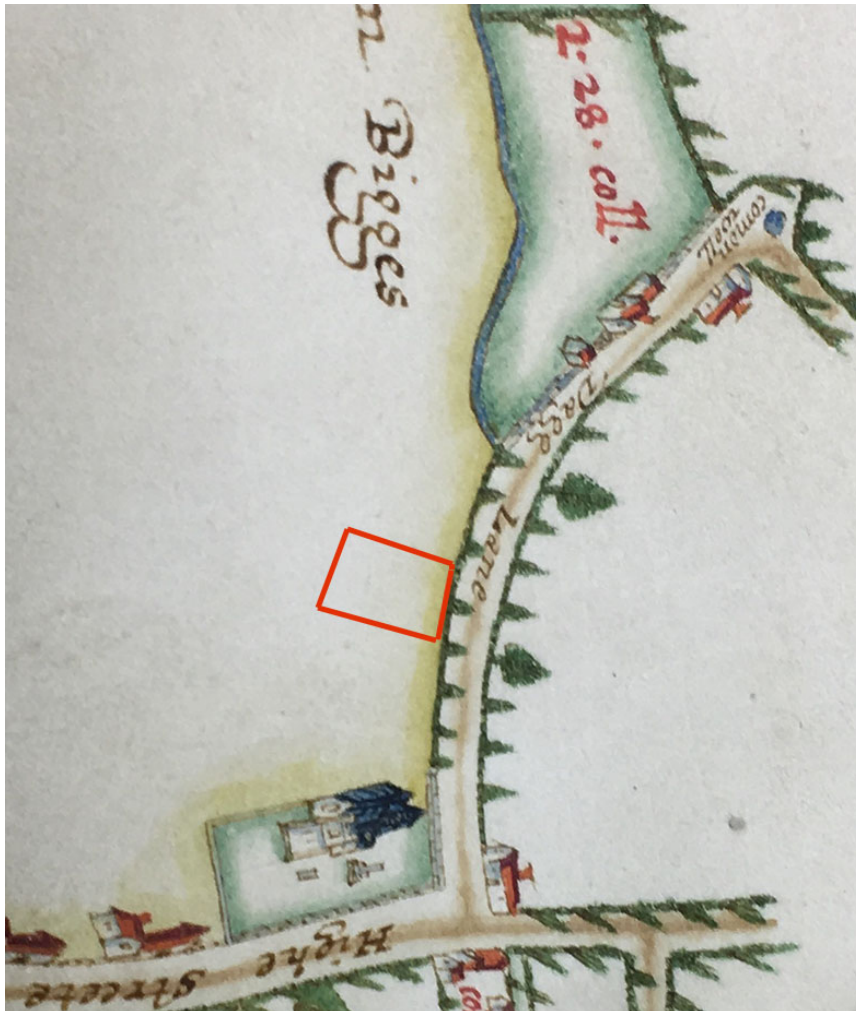


Figure 11. 1605 Estate Map of Corpus Christi College land holding in Headington (Corpus Christi College archive MS 533/1/17)

The earliest detailed map evidence showing the building on the application site is the 1802 enclosure map of Headington², see figure 12. The land in the centre of the village, including St Andrew's Lane, is referred to as 'Old Inclosure' belonging to Corpus Christi College and not subject to the enclosure exercise in hand. The buildings, therefore, may be accurately positioned but not necessarily accurately detailed. The application site simply shows a rectangular building to the rear of the plot and a smaller building which would fit the dimension of the historic house as it survives today. There is another small building shown adjoining the southwest corner occupying what is now the access road to William Orchard

¹ Corpus Christi Archives, MS 533/1/17, 1605. I am grateful to the archivist, Julian Reid for his assistance with this.

² Enclosure award, 1802, PAR126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre

Close. The remnant of stonework forming the west wall of the front garden could be part of this. At this time the land was leased to Richard Pancutt³.



Figure 12. 1802 enclosure map (Oxfordshire History Centre)

A map of the 'Manor of Heddington' from 1870 records properties where the leases have been enfranchised. This shows only properties affected, see figure 13. Pumpkin Cottage is shown as two adjoining structures with the front garden and a small outbuilding on the site of the present outbuilding. The 1879 25-inch OS map shows the present historic house with a building adjoining to the south west, see figure 14. The small outbuilding mentioned above is also present. The land to the west is shown as garden and orchard. Subsequent editions of 1899, 1921 and 1939 do not show any significant change. The adjoining building was presumably demolished to make way for the William Orchard Close.

³ Oxfordshire History Centre

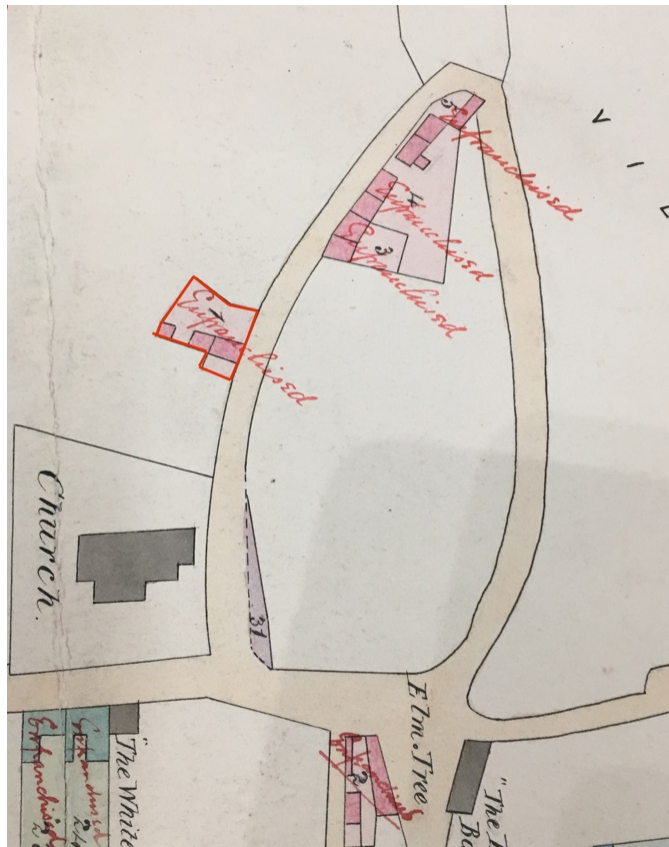


Figure 13. 1870 map of 'Heddington Manor' (Oxfordshire History Centre)

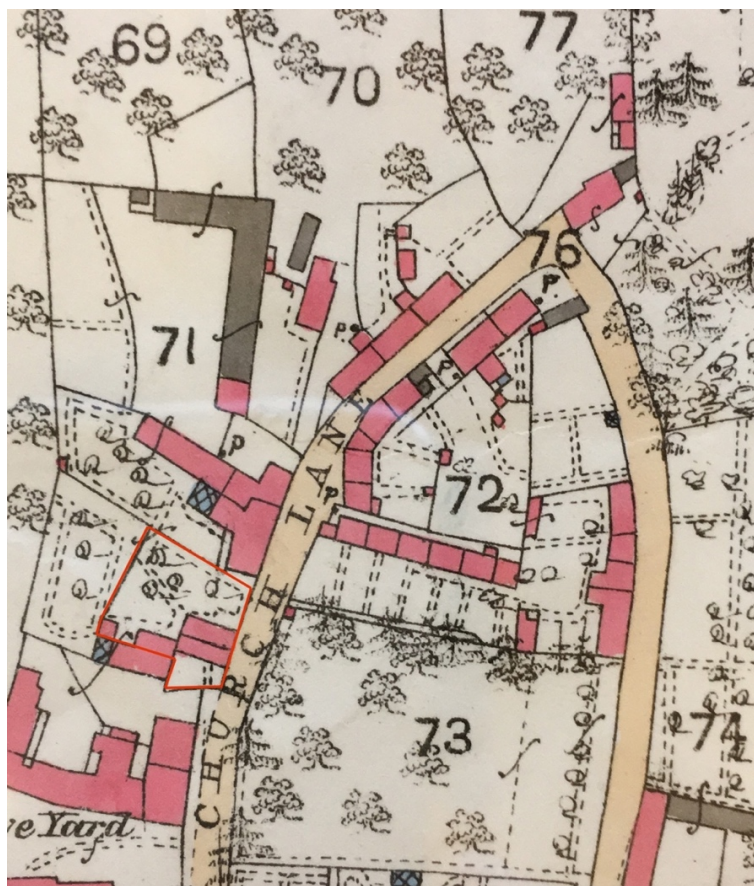


Figure 14. 1879 25-inch OS map (Bodleian Library)

The Headington History website by Stephanie Jenkins refers to the early Court Rolls describing the site as “a messuage or tenement, yard, orchard, garden ground, backside and buildings”⁴. This description would fit the application site as shown on the early maps. Details some of the inhabitants of the house are also given. These date back to 1758 and include several carpenters, a grocer, a gardener’s labourer, a laundress, housepainter and general labourer. The point here is that since at least the mid-eighteenth century, this has been a modest cottage of modest status.

Discussion

This is a multiphase house of at least three identifiable historic builds. A suggested phasing plan is shown in figure 15.

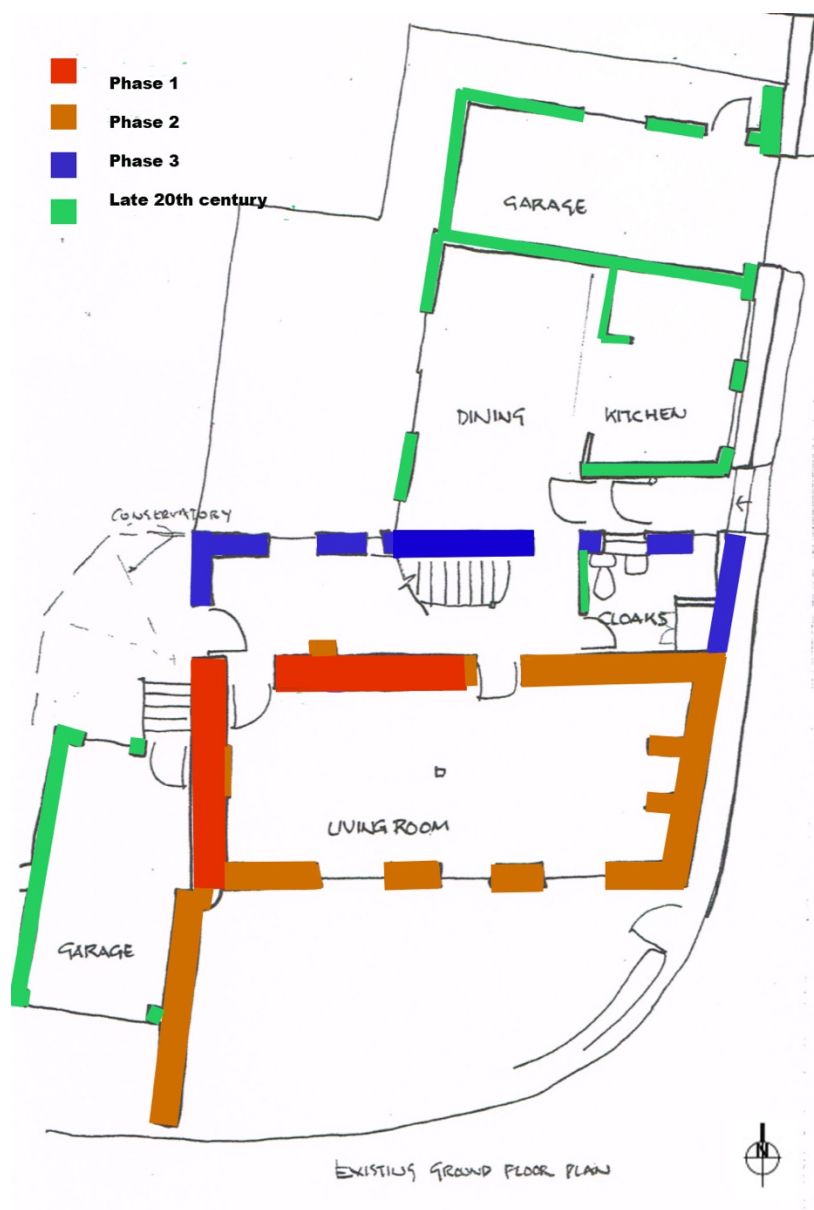


Figure 15. Suggested phases of development

⁴ Stephanie Jenkins, http://headington.org.uk/history/listed_buildings/standrewslane_6.htm. No references are given for source material so these have not been verified.

The front range clearly predates the rear range. The east-west alignment is typical of the early houses in the area. The thickness of the walls in the west bay, the lateral hearth and the dressed stone quoins from an earlier build all point to the west bay being the first phase of the surviving buildings. This may be a late sixteenth century or, more probably, an early seventeenth century fragment of a larger building. There is insufficient evidence to suggest a plan form for this. Spine beams are invariably placed centrally to the bay or, in a larger room, they would be equally spaced to distribute the structural load evenly. In this bay the spine beam is significantly off-centre, suggesting there was another spine beam along the line of the former partition, which in turn suggests this early part of the house extended to into the east bay. However, it could also simply be a late twentieth century insertion. There is too little evidence to speculate further.

There is no evidence to indicate whether this early phase was floored over or whether a ceiling frame is primary. The roof above the tie beam is difficult to access. Photographs taken from the rear range roof space show simple rafters with no evidence of smoke blackening, i.e. there is no evidence one way or the other whether this was an open hall. Nor is there any indication of where a first floor might be accessed. The stub of wall in the rear range adjacent may be the remains of stair tower, a feature found in local buildings, but there is no other evidence for this.

The lateral hearth on the rear wall, with its chamfered surround, suggests a house of some standing, as do the dressed stone quoins. This is at odds with its seventeenth-century form of a two-unit cottage of one and a half storeys, discussed below.

The east bay of the front range forms the second phase of building. The front wall of the west bay may have been built at the same time, forming a typical two-unit plan with a symmetrical front, commonly found in the village. The east bay was the hall with its main stack and the west bay a parlour, heated by the pre-existing lateral hearth, though there is no evidence of a stack. The main entry may have led into an internal cross passage and there is a clear break in the masonry in the rear wall directly opposite the main entry, corresponding to the end of the first phase of building. This would be a normal plan for this date. The door is slightly off to the east now.

The fairly rough, but chamfered, spine beam with its scrolled bracketed end and the fairly rough but nevertheless chamfered and stopped joists demonstrate a desire to display some status. The red ochre colouring reinforces this. Red ochre was a cheap, readily available pigment used both internally and externally. This decorative spine beam is a puzzle. It looks in situ, as the irregularly-shaped joists match their mortices. However it may have been reused from the demolished part of an earlier structure, mentioned above, or introduced when the late twentieth century alterations were undertaken.

The third phase of building relates to the rear range, although this also, is not straightforward. It is likely to have been constructed in more than one build but there is insufficient information to analyse this. As it appears to be overall of a similar build, it is considered as one phase. It has slightly thinner walls, and a small, single, leaded light set in a chunky, pegged framed. This could be late-seventeenth century or early-eighteenth century.

Other than the wall stub and the embedded timber to the rear of the lateral hearth, there are no other details to help date this. The original form and extent can only be guessed at. It is likely to postdate the front range as the two first-floor rooms in the front range were originally interconnecting. Independent access to each room was provided via the rear range. The hipped roof form is awkward and appears to be eighteenth century, although it is possible that the two hips replaced an earlier catslide roof, a feature found on other buildings in the immediate locality. One bay of a catslide roof survived at the east end until the late twentieth-century alterations. Whilst no evidence of the original function of the rooms survives, it is likely that the rear range provided service accommodation.

Assessment of Significance

Significance is assessed using the heritage values set out in Historic England's Conservation Principles.⁵ These include:

Evidential Value – relating to the potential of a place to yield primary evidence about past human activity;

Historical Value – relating to ways in which the present can be connected through a place to past people, events and aspects of life;

Aesthetic Value – relating to the ways in which people derive sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place;

Communal Value – relating to the meanings of place for the people who relate to it, and whose collective experience or memory it holds.

Evidential Value

The different phases of the house can be read to some degree as a result of the stone walls being exposed. However, not all of the fabric of the house is exposed and some exposed fabric may have been introduced in the late twentieth century. Nor has the wider site been researched. The evidence currently available does not satisfactorily explain the history of the house. There is the potential for the site to reveal further evidence of its earlier development, including in the roof space. The late twentieth-century interventions have no evidential value. **Evidential value overall is high.**

Historical Value

This is an unusual house which has unexplained origins. Its historical development can inform some aspects of the development of Old Headington. It has illustrative value in its two-unit plan form and phasing of development. Combined with documentary evidence, it also illustrates well the housing conditions of craftsmen and labourers in the nineteenth century. It has associative value in that its inhabitants over the last 200 years are known and this can provide valuable material for researching local history. **Historical value is high.**

⁵ Historic England, *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*, 2008

Aesthetic value

The siting of the house at right angles to the narrow St Andrew's Lane allows the attractive front elevation to be fully appreciated. The cobbled front yard and its well-planted garden enhance its traditional, characterful cottage appearance. The elevation onto St Andrew's Lane is less attractive but also less prominent. **Aesthetic value is high.**

Communal Value

The evidence suggests that this has always been a private house and never designed to have any communal function. Its external appearance contributes to the public realm with the front elevation being particularly attractive. **Communal value is low.**

Overall significance is high***Contribution to the Conservation Area***

Pumpkin Cottage lies at the heart of Old Headington Conservation Area. The Council's conservation area appraisal for Old Headington analyses the character and appearance in detail and summarises its significance as:

1. Medieval origins of settlement plan and spaces
2. Tranquil village character, creating a well-integrated residential area with attractive green setting and many local amenities available either within the area or in the vicinity
3. Low traffic areas with an intimate, pedestrian friendly environment
4. Green surroundings provided by mature trees and gardens
5. Vernacular materials, contributing to the locally distinctive character and sense of age
6. Survival of traditional buildings
7. Survival of locally distinctive features, e.g. high stone boundary walls
8. Mix of cottages, farmhouses and large detached mansions and villas
9. Lack of significant intrusion from later infill development
10. Green and open spaces contribute to rural character and setting
11. High quality public open spaces that are part of the community's identity
12. Quality of views through the area
13. Visual connection with the countryside

The application site makes a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area in that it has origins dating back to at least the early-seventeenth century phase of the settlement's expansion. Its external appearance as a two-unit cottage reinforces the predominant rural village character of modest houses and cottages built in local materials during the expansion of the village in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Its attractive front garden is particularly noticeable because it is set at right angles to the lane allowing a long view of it when approaching from the south. Other early houses and cottages are set on the highway edge and have little by way of a front garden. Where possible, these informal spaces have been planted and make a positive contribution to the appearance of the lane and its village character. The stone boundary wall surrounding the garden reflects a locally distinctive feature.

The late twentieth century extension is set up to the highway edge and fits comfortably into the street scene. The informal planting on the highway edges helps it integrate into its context.

Conclusion

Overall the heritage significance of the historic house is high. This relates to all the fabric within the historic house, internally and externally, apart from the stairs, the shower room partition and modern finishes. Later alterations and extensions dating from the latter part of the twentieth century, identified in figure 14 are not of any heritage significance.

Whilst the house as a whole makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, it is the south front and its attractive garden which are of greatest value.