



# HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

17 Hollyhock Cottage, Down Ampney

## ABSTRACT

Assessment of the internal principal features which contribute to the grade II listing of no.17 Hollyhock Cottage, Down Ampney.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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1	Introduction .....	1
1.2.	Proposal .....	1
2	Site Visit.....	3
3	Kitchen Floor Assessment .....	4
4	Stairway Assessment.....	6
5	Recommendations .....	17
6	Bibliography .....	18

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1.1. A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), also known as a Statement of Heritage Significance can be utilised to meet the requirement under para.189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states “In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.” (NPPF, para.189, 2019).
- 1.1.2. A Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been submitted in support of the planning application. The DAS is validation requirement for a Listed Building Consent under the Listed Building Regulations 1990 (as amended). The DAS contains a detailed assessment of the heritage considerations which have informed the design of the proposed development. The HIA has been produced in support of the DAS to offer a detailed assessment of the internal principal features within the development property which are significant to the Grade II listing for the building.

## 1.2. PROPOSAL

- 1.2.1. The proposed development relates to a Householder and Listed Building application for a rear two-storey extension. The host property is a two-storey dwelling and part of a semi-detached pair. The host property dates to the mid-18th century and represents a typical pair of Cotswold estate cottages for the area.
- 1.2.2. The proposed rear two-storey extension would involve various internal works to the existing property to integrate the proposed extension into the fabric of the building. The two principal features which would be affected by the proposal would be the existing kitchen floor and the existing stairway which is the only current access between the ground and 1<sup>st</sup> floor.
- 1.2.3. The host property is a Grade II listed building and as such special consideration needs to be given to the historic fabric of the building, its context and any other reasons for listing the building. Historic England is the public body responsible for protecting the historic environment of England by preserving and listing historic buildings. As part of their role, Historic England keeps a record of listed buildings within the country. The list entry number for the property in question is ‘1152159’ and was first listed on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1986. The property was listed as a grade 2 category and includes the adjoining property no.16, Down Ampney. Historic England include a description of the listing which outlines the key historical features noted for listing the building. In regards to no.16 and 17 Down Ampney the description states:

*“Pair of semi-detached cottages set back from road. Mid C19. Coursed and dressed stone with alternating flush quoins, stone slate roof with coped verges, centre stone ridge stack with grouped flues. Single range of single storey and attic with projecting*

*single storey porches on each side, also with coped verges. Each cottage has small gable with 2-light stone mullion with metal casement in flush stone surround. Similar below with smaller panes. Chamfered stone Tudor archways to each porch with plank door to No 16, half-glazed door to No 17. Good example of 'estate' cottages.”<sup>1</sup>*

1.2.4. The description of the listing focuses on the external features of the host property, drawing particular attention to the building’s front elevation which is considered to be the most significant feature of the listed building. The assessment of the historic significance of the building and its external features are contained within the DAS. The HIA focuses on the two internal principal features which also have the potential to add to the significance of the Grade II listing of the property. The HIA has been split into two sections which assess the significance of following features:

- Kitchen Floor, and
- Stairway.

1.2.5. The assessment of significance is informed by the Historic Environment Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>2</sup>. The PPG details what is meant by significance in reference to historic assets stating it is the “value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.” The significance of an historic asset can be interpreted as:

- a) “archaeological interest:** As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- b) architectural and artistic interest:** These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
- c) historic interest:** An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.”

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<sup>1</sup> Historic England List Entry - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1152159>

<sup>2</sup> Historic Environment PPG - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

## 2 SITE VISIT

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- 2.1. The NPPF requires under para.189 for proposals to be informed by further evaluations where it is considered heritage assets would contain archaeological interest stating “Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.” (NPPF, para.189, 2019).
- 2.2. The HIA has been informed by a site visit to assess the internal features of the listed building which was undertaken on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The site visit only included investigation of materials which could be seen without undertaking intrusive evaluations of features which would have required an additional listed building consent to undertake.
- 2.3. In regards to the stairway, the structure of the stairs can be accessed from an under stairs cupboard situated in the dining room. The kitchen floor has been tiled around the kitchen units; however, the subfloor can be accessed through removing the applicant’s fridge unit. Consequently, it was considered a visual assessment would be sufficient to understand the historic significance of the features identified.

### 3 KITCHEN FLOOR ASSESSMENT

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- 3.1. The proposed development would result in the existing kitchen arrangement changing. The proposal seeks to remove the existing subfloor, lowering the kitchen to the infill / foundation layer. This would change the finished floor level (FFL) from 85.42m to 84.99m, which would require 430mm of existing floor to be removed to meet the proposed floor level.
- 3.2. The existing kitchen floor is covered with tiling up to the kitchen units, with the remaining floor being left exposed allowing access to the subfloor. The existing kitchen floor is shown in Photograph 1 below:

*Photograph 1: Kitchen Floor Materials*



- 3.3. The DAS notes that the kitchen section of the property was subject to a renovation which included replacing the roof structure in 1985. As part of these renovation works the original kitchen floor was removed and replaced with a concrete sub-floor with modern style tiling to the finished floor. The subfloor can be seen in Photograph 2 below:

*Photograph 2: Concrete Subfloor Exposed under Kitchen Units*



- 3.4. The concrete subfloor was laid in 1985 and reflects modern practices. It is considered the removal of the section of the floor would not impact upon the heritage significance of the Grade II listing. Furthermore, due to the time when the floor was laid it is highly unlikely any archaeological interest is contained within the subfloor which would warrant the need to maintain the floor in its current condition.
- 3.5. There is no evidence that the original infill / foundation layer of the kitchen structure has been changed during the 1985 renovation to the building. However, the proposed development does not include excavating the original foundations which would remain in-situ and continue to support the structure following the completion of the proposal. The infill / foundation layer was likely laid in the mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> Century and could contain an element of archaeological and historic interest. However, the proposal does not intend to disturb the original infill / foundation layer, therefore, it is considered the significance of this element of the listed building would not be subject to change and would remain as existing.
- 3.6. Consequently, the removal of the subfloor is not considered to detract from the significance of the Grade II listed building due to the floor being a modern addition to the property.

## 4 STAIRWAY ASSESSMENT

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- 4.1. The staircase in the property has been identified as a principal feature which requires further investigation to understand its significance and how this contributes to the Grade II listing of the property. The proposed development would result in the replacement of the existing staircase with a larger stairway which would allow for the construction of deeper steps and a reduced incline in accordance with current building standards. Currently the existing stairway is the only access between the ground and 1st floor and is proportionate in scale to the main element of the existing building which excludes the kitchen and rear porch area.
- 4.2. Stairway construction in the Georgian period was generally considered to form part of a carpenter's or builder's career high point which required a specific set of skills to implement. This is usually in reference to the geometrical pattern staircases which were built on a continuous curve, had no newel posts and were more complicated to construct. These types of structures were typically built from either timber or stone and are considered to represent a significant heritage asset due to the craftsmanship required to construct them.
- 4.3. The staircase in no.17 Hollyhock Cottage is a winder style stair of timber construction. A winder staircase is where a section of the steps is narrowed at one end for turning a corner, Photograph 3 shows the staircase found in no.17 Hollyhock Cottage with the winder steps centred around the newel post which forms part of the doorframe entrance to the staircase.



*Photograph 3: Winder Staircase at no.17 Hollyhock Cottage*



- 4.4. The staircase is designed as a close string stair with the sloping pieces which support the ends of the steps which are known as strings containing grooves to accommodate each step enclosing the ends of the step. Photograph 4 & 5 shows the strings from above and below. This type of design in staircases is not restricted to the time period and the components required to construct this type of stair are still used in modern stair construction.

*Photograph 4: Stair Strings Visible above the Stairs (to match skirting height)*



*Photograph 5: Stair String Below Stairs*



- 4.5. However, the staircase does have additional support from timbers placed below the flyers called rough strings and the winder steps are supported by rough pieces called bearers as shown in Photograph 6. The bearers of the winder steps are joined to the newel post which forms the entrance way to the staircase, the upper string of stairs is also supported by this newel post (Photograph 7 refers).

*Photograph 6: Bearers Supporting the Winder Steps*



*Photograph 7: Bearers and String attached to Newel Post (which forms the doorframe to the entrance to the staircase)*



- 4.6. The newel post forming part of the doorway entrance to the staircase is unusual, but the use of doors to stairs is not representative of the Georgian period. Therefore, it is considered this design feature does not contribute to the archaeological or historic interest of the Grade II listing. However, it is considered the design of the staircase would have some architectural interest due to the conscious design implemented by the original tradesman that constructed the staircase.
- 4.7. The staircase is steep in nature and has shallow treads to each step and high risers. The steepness of the stairway and shallow steps is due to the limited space within the main element of the property. This is a reasonably unique feature of the property which is dictated by the form of the building and would contribute to the architectural interest of the listing. Although the staircase would not comply with current building regulations, the design of the staircase is not specific to the time of its construction in the mid to late 1700s. This is evidenced by the stairway not following the typical construction practices of the time as demonstrated in Quattro Libri Book 1 (translated

in 1738, Isaac Ware) which states “The steps ought not to be made higher than six inches of a foot; and if they are made lower, particularly in long continued stairs, it will make them the more easy because the rising one’s self the foot will be less tired; but they must never be made lower than four inches ; the breadth of the steps ought not be made less than one foot, nor more than one and a half” (Palladio, Quattro Libri Bk1, 1570: trans. Isaac Ware, 1738). Additionally, the New Practical Builder publication identified specifications for common stairs stating “the breadth of common stairs is from nine to twelve inches.” (Peter Nicholson, The New Practical Builder, 1823). In the context of stair construction of this period, the term breadth refers to the depth of the stair. Photograph 8 shows the depth of the stairs being 7 ½ inches which is below the standard stair specification for the time period. The height of the riser is approximately 9 inches high which also beyond the typical height of a stair for the period. Consequently, it is considered reasonable to conclude the staircase was designed to fit the specific aperture in the building to join the different levels together. This does contribute to an element of architectural interest to the staircase due to its deviation from construction standards of the time, however, it does not contribute to the historic or archaeological interest of the building.

*Photograph 8: Depth of Stair Tread*



- 4.8. Regarding the construction of the staircase, the original wood used in the construction was pine. This reflects the likely status of the original occupiers of the property. Pine wood was the most common and cheapest material used in stair construction in the Georgian period. In grander properties staircases formed an

important part in demonstrating wealth and status during the Georgian period with wealthier property owners commissioning stone or hardwood staircases with intricate balustrade designs and the steps being worked to form detailed nosing to each step.

- 4.9. The modest construction of the staircase demonstrates that the property was not built for those of high social status within Georgian society and reflects the nature of the property as a typical estate cottage used to house working families attached to the wider estate. The pine construction adds some historical interest to the Grade II listing helping to demonstrate the type of person the building was constructed for, although this is evident in the wider construction of the building. Therefore, it is considered only minor weight can be given to the use of pine in the staircase in contributing to the heritage significance of the property. Photograph 9 shows an element of the original staircase. However, modern screws have been used to reinforce the structure detracting from the overall historical construction.

*Photograph 9: Original Pine Staircase (note modern fastenings reinforcing the structure)*



- 4.10. The stair construction also includes various fasteners ranging from round headed nails to Philips-head screws. Photograph 10 shows an example of the different style fasteners found in the stair construction within the property.

*Photograph 10: Example of Different Fasteners in the Step Bearer*



- 4.11. It is clear from the different use of fasteners that the staircase has been subject to a number of reinforcements since its original construction. Based on the type of fasteners used and the type of wood used to reinforce the stair structure these have taken place during the 1900s to early 2000s. These amendments to the original staircase structure have not been undertaken sympathetically to the original staircase construction. Photograph 11 shows an unsympathetic addition to the original staircase which has been fastened using modern fixings and using a different type of wood to the original staircase which detracts from the original construction. In terms of archaeological interest, the materials used in the construction of the staircase were common during the period and there are numerous examples of fastenings from this time period, consequently it is considered little weight can be given to the significance of the fastening materials used in the staircase contributing to the overall heritage significance of the property. Additionally, rough strings have been replaced with different types of wood which has resulted in the loss of part of the original structure (Photograph 12 refers).

*Photograph 11: Example of Unsympathetic Addition to the Staircase Construction*





Photograph 12: Replacement Rough String



- 4.12. Regarding craftsmanship, the overall construction is relatively simple and reflects current modern practices, although there is a difference in the type of materials used which reflects the period of construction. The finish of the staircase does not contain intricate designs which denote the likely social status of the original occupants of the property being from a working-class background associated with the Estate. Furthermore, the staircase contains shallow nosing with the exception of the first step within the staircase which contains a prominent nose, but this feature is simple in nature. The newel post which forms part of the doorframe does add a level of craftsmanship and architectural interest to the staircase but is not a unique feature within properties from this period.

- 4.13. Based upon the above assessment of the staircase, it is considered the existing staircase represents limited archaeological and historic interest to the significance of the Grade II listing. However, greater interest can be placed on the architectural interest in the construction of the staircase, in relation to the specific design of the staircase which reflects the proportions of the original building and the use of the newel post within the doorframe to the stairway entrance. Later additions to the staircase to reinforce the stairs has resulted in the loss of architectural and archaeological interest of the staircase.
- 4.14. On balance, it is considered the architectural interest of the staircase relates to the specific building but does not demonstrate a significant form of craftsmanship which would add to overall significance of the Grade II listing. In terms of the historical interest of the staircase, it does represent a form of construction from the Georgian era but it does not follow the general building standards of the period. Therefore, it has some local interest in relation to the property but does not add to the wider historical context of the Georgian era. There is limited archaeological interest in the construction of the staircase and the materials used which are commonly found in period properties. Furthermore, the insensitive additions to reinforce the staircase have resulted in the overall archaeological significance being reduced.
- 4.15. Therefore, it is considered the loss of the staircase as part of the proposed development would not detract from the overall significance of the property which would still reflect the character of a typical estate cottage

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

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- 5.1. The HIA has assessed the identified internal principal features within the listed building which would be impacted by the proposed development. In regards to the kitchen floor, the tiles are of modern construction and have no significance to the listing. The subfloor is of a concrete construction and was installed during the 1985 renovation to the property. Consequently, it is also considered the subfloor has no significance to the listing of the property.
- 5.2. The proposed development would result in lowering the kitchen floor by 430mm, removing all the concrete subfloor. This would result in the foundations or infill layer being exposed with a shallower subfloor and floor coverings placed over the foundation / infill layer. It is difficult to determine the significance of the lower levels of floor construction without disruptive exploratory works. However, the proposal does not include changes to these floor levels. Therefore, it is recommended during the construction of this phase of the proposal a qualified professional is on-site to oversee the works to identify any potential heritage significance which would require further consideration upon removing the subfloor.
- 5.3. Regarding the removal of the staircase to accommodate a standard stairway, the existing staircase has been assessed as contributing to part of the overall significance of the listed building in the form of architectural and historic interest. However, this is considered to be minimal when viewed in relation to the whole property. Consequently, it is considered the loss of the staircase would not have a detrimental impact upon the significance of the Grade II listing of the property.
- 5.4. However, it is noted that the applicant has expressed an interest in preserving the staircase in-situ as part of the development which would remove the architectural and archaeological interest loss. The applicant has proposed to maintain the staircase as an under-stair storage area with the proposed staircase being placed above the existing one. This would maintain the architectural and archaeological merit of the staircase with the features identified remaining following the completion of the development subject to amended plans being submitted.

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