

Heritage Statement

Monks House

21 Queen Street, Gomshall, Surrey,

GU5 9LU



October 2023

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1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Statement for Monk's House, 21 Queen Street, Gomshall, Surrey was commissioned in June 2023 by Paula Wilson. The report was prepared by Neil Burton BA FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd. Monks House, Gomshall (National Grid Reference TQ 08183 47573) is a timber-framed farm house built originally in 1663 and much enlarged in the nineteenth century. The house was listed grade II in April 1967.

2.0 Background History

History of Occupation

The building was inspected in 1973 by Kenneth Gravett, a noted vernacular architecture specialist, and was also the subject of a report by the Domestic Buildings Research Group (Surrey) in 1980 (report number 2398). Copies of their reports are held by the present owners and form the basis for the following summary.

It appears that the court rolls of the manor of Gomshall Netley for 1663 record that Thomas Street was given leave to enclose a piece of ground 'near gravel pits barn' and to build a new house and a blacksmiths shop. His new house can be identified with the oldest part of the present Monks House. The building remained in occupation by the Street family until 1731. After three years in the tenure of Henry Rogers the property then came into the hands of Thomas Frost in 1734. The Frost family remained in occupation until 1857 when the property was purchased by John Fraser. The Tithe Award made in 1844 shows Thomas Frost as the occupier of the house and surrounding land. During this period the house was the centre of a working farm with outbuildings and land attached.

Gravel Pits Farm, as it was then known, was still copyhold property, held from the Bray family who were Lords of the Manor, but in 1893 John Fraser's daughter Georgina enfranchised the property, converting the leasehold to freehold.

By this date it appears that the farmland attached to Gravel Pits Farm had been combined with the land of High House Farm and the house at Gravel Pits was let to tenants. In the late 1880s and early 1890s the tenant was the sculptor Alfred Gilbert and his family. The 1891 census shows Gilbert living at the house with his wife, four children and one domestic servant. Gilbert also had a studio in London off the Fulham Road where he did most of his work, while his wife and family remained in the country.

This was a very successful period in Gilbert's career, when he was engaged on making a statue of Queen Victoria to celebrate her Golden Jubilee and also the statue of Eros for the Shaftesbury Memorial, which was erected in the centre of Piccadilly Circus in 1893. By this date Gilbert was England's best-known living sculptor, but his private life began to fall apart. His wife had a nervous breakdown in 1893 and was committed to an asylum. The family left Gomshall and moved to Maida Vale.

After the Gilberts' departure the house was let to other tenants. In 1918 the tenant was Arthur Forbes and in 1925 the freehold was sold to Miss Irene Forbes, who lived at Gravel Pits until the mid-1950s. The ownership has not been charted after this date. At some time in the later Twentieth century (but before the date of listing in 1967) the name of the property was changed from Gravel Pits Farm to Monk's House.

Development History

The original house probably consisted of the present front range. There may have been outbuildings between the rear of the house and the rising greensand bank and there are still traces of what appears to have been a stone-vaulted structure set into the bank.

There are no established dates for the existing additions at the rear of the building but the earliest is the small, red brick gabled wing set at right-angles to the original house which probably dates from the eighteenth century. Extending westwards from this rear wing is a later two-storey range with a large chimneystack attached to the long south wall. This range is probably built of brick but is now all covered with modern render and has modern windows. The date of this range is uncertain. Ken Gravett suggested the late nineteenth century, but a building with very much the present footprint is shown on the 1844 Tithe Award Map (fig.1) together with a range of outbuildings extending southwards from the house.

Immediately east of the prominent chimneystack on the rear (south) elevation is a single-storey slate-roofed addition with a round-headed window in the west elevation. The Tithe Award map shows this structure as a link between the house and a range of farm outbuildings while the first Ordnance Survey published in 1874 (fig.2) shows a conservatory in this location. The dating of the rear parts of Monks House remains uncertain but it seems clear that there has been a great deal of alteration. Doubtless the render covering the walls was applied to give some uniformity to an accretive structure.

The modern planning record shows that there have been a number of relatively minor alterations to the building in recent years. In 1991 consent was given on appeal for the western enlargement of the rear range to increase the side of the ground floor lounge and the bedroom above. In 2017 consent was given on appeal for the removal of a chimneypiece and the opening-up of the inglenook in the lounge fireplace and also for making an opening between the lounge and the dining room where there had previously been a window. In 2021 consent was given for alterations at first floor level which included the formation of a corridor and a new bathroom in the rear part of the house and the extension of her main stair from first floor to attic, replacing the existing stair in the north-east bedroom.

There have evidently also been a number of unrecorded minor alterations throughout the house and. A comparison between plans of the building in 1980 and 2021 (figs 3-6) shows the extent of these changes. Many of the finishes including floorboards and doors appear to be relatively modern.

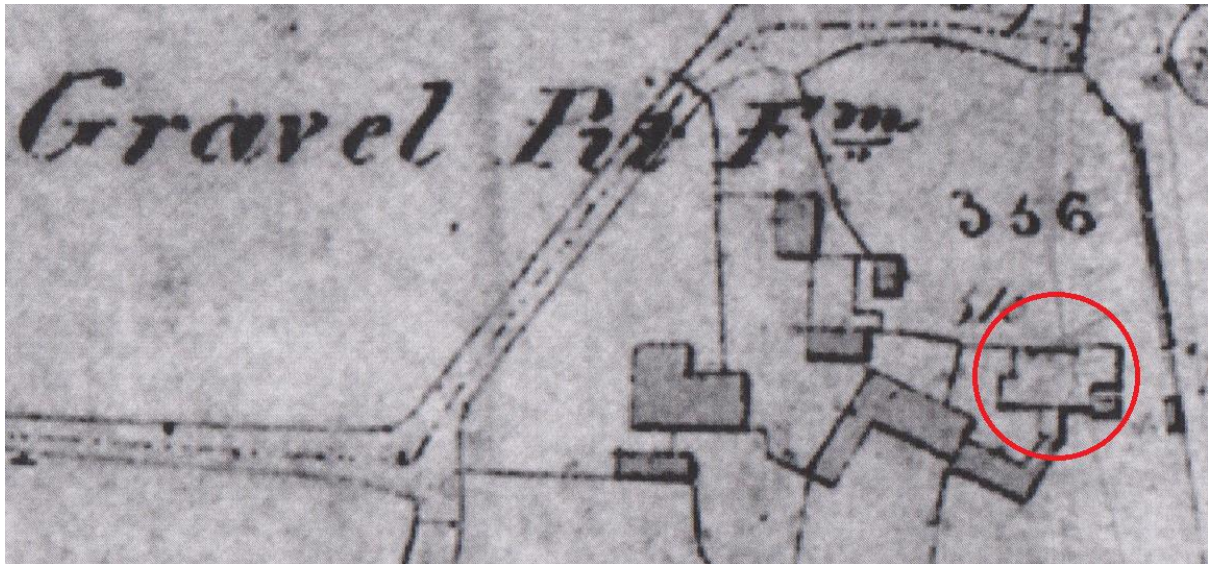


Figure 1: A detail from the Tithe Award map for the parish of Shere, made in 1844 showing the house with a footprint similar to that now existing and extensive outbuildings, which have now mostly gone.

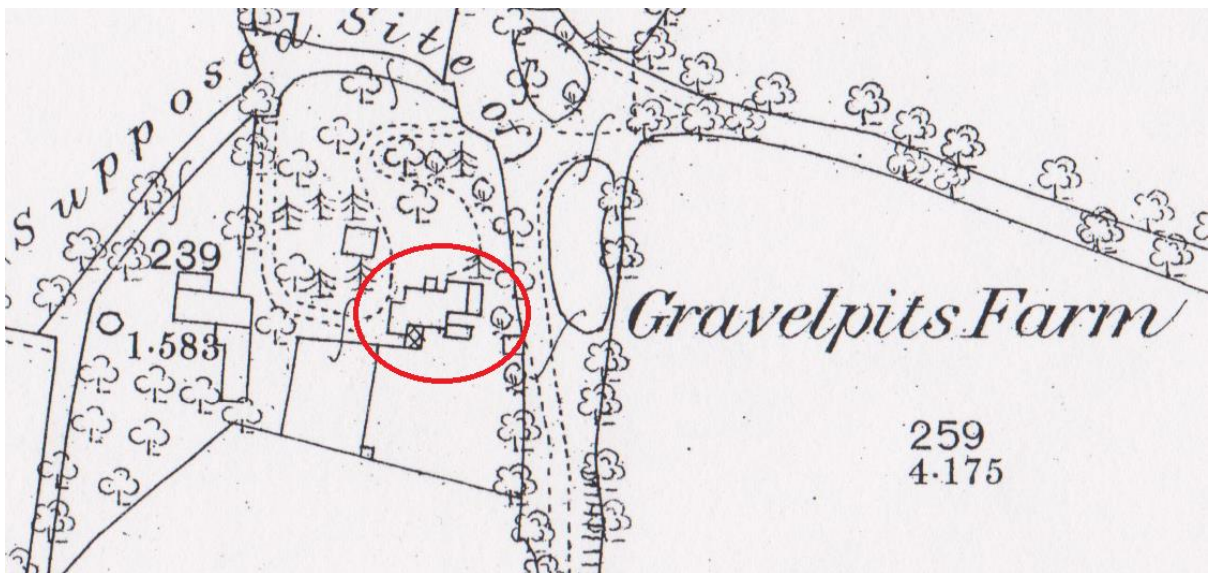


Figure 2: A detail from the 25'' : 1 mile Ordnance Survey (Surrey sheet XXXII.8) which was surveyed in 1871 and published in 1874. The map shows a conservatory at the rear of the house

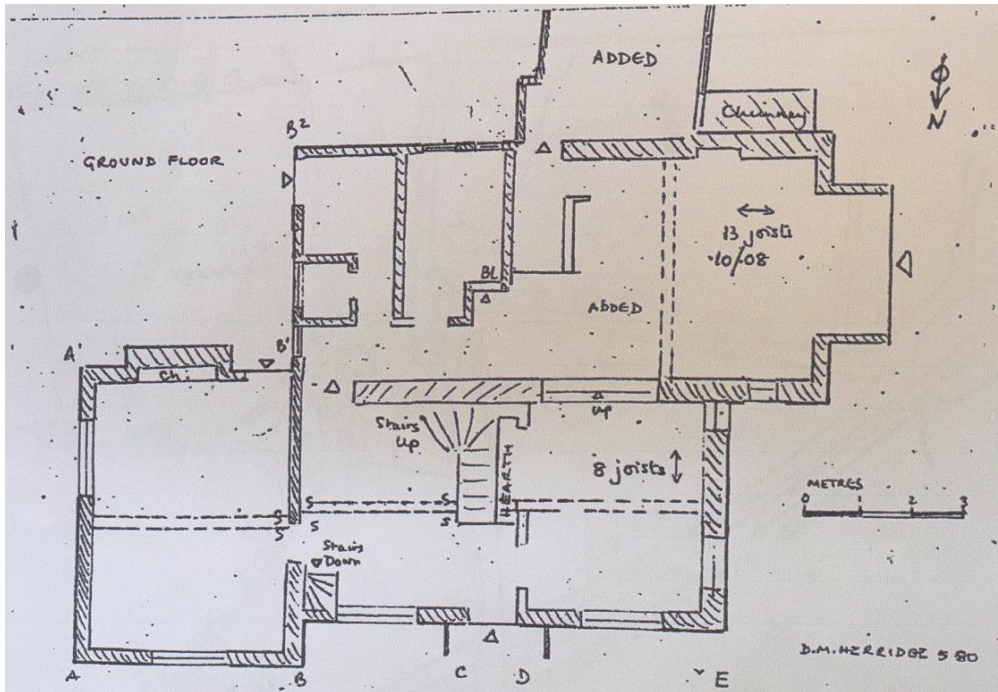


Figure 3: A sketch plan of the ground floor made in 1980 (DBRG (Surrey) report no.2398)



Figure 4: The ground floor plan in 2021 (from estate agent's particulars)

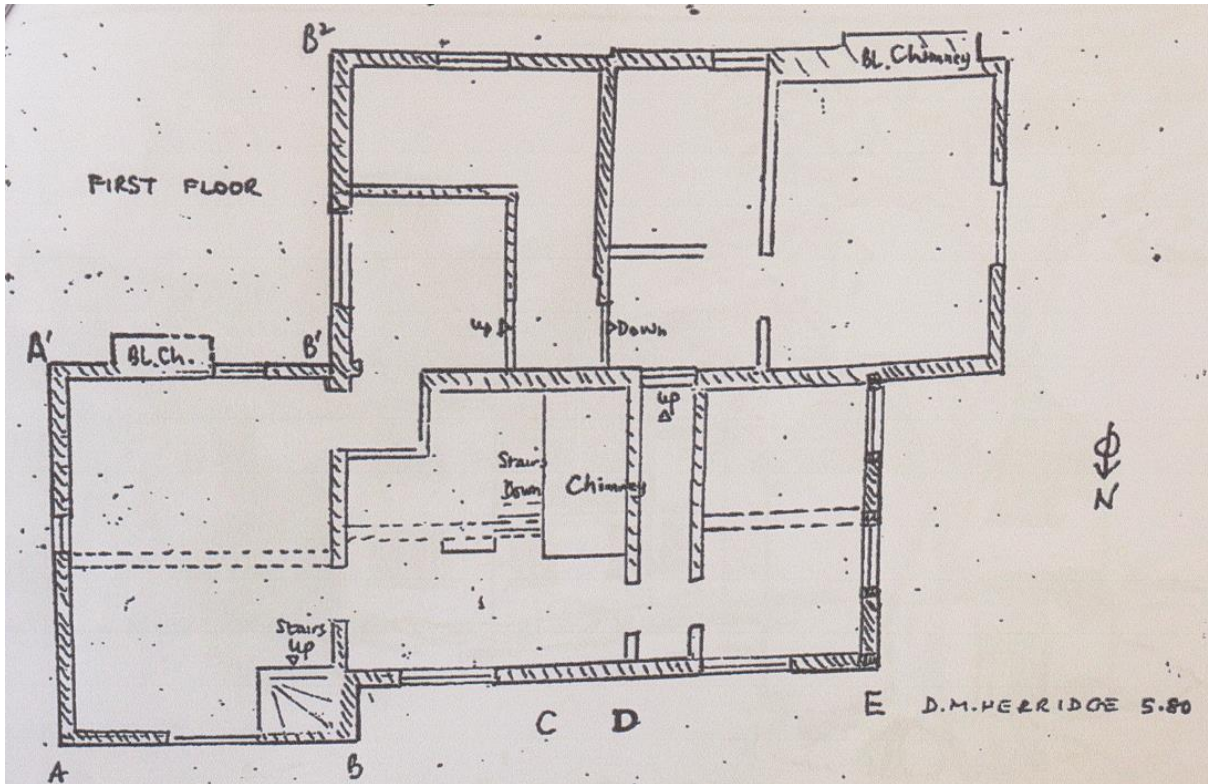


Figure 5: A sketch plan of the first floor in 1980 (DBRG (Surrey report no.2398))



Figure 6: The first floor plan in 2021 (from estate agent's particulars)

3.0 Brief Description

The description in the Statutory List can be found in Appendix 1

Exterior

The north-facing main range is two storeys high and two windows wide with a central doorway under a projecting porch and a cross-wing projecting slightly forward on the left (west) side (fig.7). All this part of the house is constructed with a timber frame resting on a stone and flint ground floor wall; the panels of the framing are filled with flint and brick chequerwork. Much of the main façade is now rendered with the framing revealed only in a few small panels, but the east and west end walls are not rendered and the framing is clearly visible (fig.8). Both the main range and the cross wing have rectangular windows with timber mullions. The main range has a central chimney stack, the cross wing has a stack attached to its rear (south) elevation, which is tile-hung (fig.9).

The rear parts of the house consist essentially of a small wing at right angles to the main range, and a large later wing to the west parallel to the old house. The small wing is built of red brick, now partly rendered and of 1 ½ storeys with a rectangular sash window in the south end gable. Immediately to the east of this wing and set into the bank are what appear to be the remains of a stone barrel vault, presumably for a vanished outbuilding (fig.10). The larger wing is of two full storeys, built of brick, rendered, and with a large chimney stack attached to the long south elevation. Wedged between this range and the rising ground to the rear of the house is a small single-storey slate-roofed addition, with walls partly of red brick west and partly of stone with galletting. All the facings of this small structure look modern.

Interior

The front door leads into a single-storey hall space (fig.11) which occupies the eastern half of the main range with a room to either side. All these spaces have exposed ceiling beams and some exposed framing in the partitions. The east room has a cellar beneath and may have been the original kitchen. At the rear of the hall, set against the original back wall and rising alongside the central stack is a steep curving timber stair of later eighteenth-century type with shaped tread-ends, stick balusters and a ramped mahogany handrail (fig.12). This presumably replaced the original stair. The rear parts of the house on this floor now consist of a small utility room and WC and a long living room (lengthened in 1991) with a large brick inglenook in the long south wall and a French window across the whole of the west end (fig.13).

On the first floor the central room in the old range is a stair hall with the head of the stair from ground to first and a modern stair in the same style rising from first floor to attic (fig.14). The stair hall is flanked by bedrooms. The planform of the rear part of the house on this floor has been reconfigured in recent years to provide a new WC and to form a spine corridor leading from the stair hall to the master bedroom in the south west corner.

Outbuildings

Most of the extensive farm buildings lay to the south-west of the house (see fig.1). The only survivor is a small brick building known as the granary (see fig.15). It is rectangular on plan, two storeys high and is built of red brick laid in Flemish bond with weatherboarding to the gable of the pitched tiled roof. The lower floor has a modern glazed door on the west side. The upper floor is entered from the east side. The upper roof has matchboard lining to the walls and a corner fireplace in red glazed tiles. The granary probably dates originally from c1800 but has clearly been re-fitted internally as a domestic space.



Figure 7: The main north-facing front



Figure 8: The exterior from the west



Figure 9: The rear view from the bank behind the house



Figure 10: The remains of a stone vaulted space set into the bank Behind the house



Figure 11: The central entrance hall



Figure 12: The main stair at ground floor



Figure 13: The south west living room and inglenook fireplace



Figure 14: The stair at first floor level



Figure 15: The west side of the granary to the west of the main house

4.0 Assessment of Significance

The assessment of the significance of historic buildings and their settings is not an exact science. It is based on detailed knowledge of the building type, a comparison with what exists elsewhere, and the extent to which it may be distinctive or have special meaning for different groups of people.

Statutory designations provide some guide to the importance of historic buildings. Monks House was listed at Grade II in 1967. Historic England guidance is that Grade II buildings are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them. The list description is included at Appendix 1. The hamlet of Gomshall is not in a conservation area.

In 2008 English Heritage (now Historic England) published *Conservation Principles*, which identified four principal heritage values which might be taken into account when assessing significance and which can be used to amplify the assessments in the statutory lists. These values are *Evidential*, deriving from the potential of a place to yield (mainly archaeological) evidence about past human activity; *Historical*, deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present; *Aesthetic*, deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; *Communal*, deriving from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience and memory.

In 2012 the Department of Communities and Local Government issued the National Policy Planning Framework (slightly revised and updated in 2019 and 2021) which suggests that for planning purposes, the significance of historic buildings should be assessed under the headings of *archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic* (which are closely related to the English Heritage values) and points out that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting. Heritage Significance is essentially a hierarchical concept, using descending levels of value. These follow guidelines established by James Semple Kerr, which have been adopted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic England and others. The levels of significance are:

- *Exceptional* - important at national to international levels
- *Considerable* - important at regional level or sometimes higher
- *Some* - usually of local value only but possibly of regional significance for group or other value
- *Little* - of limited heritage or other value
- *Neutral* - features which neither enhance nor detract from the value of the site
- *Negative/intrusive* - features which detract from the value of the site

Archaeological Significance/Evidential value

The house was probably constructed on a greenfield site, and there is probably little below-ground archaeology of any value under the house itself. There were once extensive outbuildings and traces of them may survive under the soil. The original internal planform of the original house is unclear and there have certainly been alterations, most obviously the insertion of a new main stair of late-eighteenth century pattern. The rear part of the house is of two main dates, probably late eighteenth century and early to mid-nineteenth century, and here again there have been alterations to the planform on both floors. Few original fittings remain. Overall the building is of ***Some/Moderate Archaeological Significance or Evidential Value.***

Historical Value and Significance

The house is of historic interest as a high-quality yeoman's house of the mid-seventeenth century, built for Thomas Street who may have been a blacksmith, or at least had a blacksmith's forge on the site. The history of ownership and occupation after Thomas Street is well-established. The most distinguished later occupant was the sculptor Alfred Gilbert, maker of the Shaftesbury Memorial (better known as Eros) in Piccadilly Circus. In the late 1880s and early 1890s Gilbert rented the house for a few years as a country retreat for himself and his family. He was then at the peak of his fame and is a figure of national importance. The house is of ***Some/Moderate Historical Value and Significance for its local connections and for the connection with the sculptor Alfred Gilbert.***

Architectural/Artistic Significance

Monk's House is a high quality vernacular building probably built by a master craftsman. The building is constructed with a square-panel timber frame above a flint ground floor wall. The panels of the frame are filled with small squares of knapped flint alternating with bricks; this is an unusual form of infilling (or nogging). The later brick additions at the rear (south) of the house are of little architectural interest. There are few original features within the house. The curving main stair in the centre of the house is a later insertion, probably made in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century as an improvement to the original stair. The house is certainly of ***Some Architectural Significance and Aesthetic Value principally for the original 1663 building.*** The rear parts of the house are later in date, have been altered and are of limited historic or architectural interest.

Communal Value

Monks House/Gravel Pits has always been a private residence and has ***Little Communal Value.***

5.0 The Proposed Works and their Impact on the Built Heritage

The current proposals are detailed in the drawings and statements prepared by Paul Cashin Architects. In sum, it is proposed to re-organise the uses of the ground floor spaces, moving the kitchen from the eastern end of the original house to what is presently the lounge at the western end of the later rear range and to alter the internal arrangement of the small rear wing to provide improved ancillary spaces. Externally, it is proposed to clad the rear range in natural timber and to construct a single-storey dining extension to the kitchen space.

5.1 Internal Works

The present lounge in the rear (south) range of the house is a rectangular space with a large open hearth on the south side. The range was extended westwards in 1991 to increase the size of the lounge and of the bedroom above, with a full-width French window in the new west end wall opening into the garden. The hearth was opened-up in 2017 with a new timber lintel and at the same time a new opening was made between the lounge and the present dining room. All the finishes and fittings of the room are modern. It is proposed that this space should become the kitchen, with a new hob and cooking top within the open hearth and an island fitting containing the sink. No historic fabric would be lost in the work. The present kitchen at the east end of the original house would revert to use as a living space. This would entail only the removal of modern kitchen fittings.

The small rear wing on the south side of the original house presently contains a WC and a utility room both entered from a cross-passage on the north side. It is proposed to alter the internal partitions to incorporate adapt the cross-passage space provide a larder and coat store with a smaller WC and utility room. Several of the existing partitions appear to be modern and it does not appear that any historic fabric would be lost in the work.

5.2 External Works

It is proposed to construct a new single-storey addition over the present paved patio space outside the west end of the rear (south) range. This would act as a dining room for the new kitchen. The addition would be pavilion-like in appearance, with fully-glazed external walls between four corner piers supporting a shallow-pitched metal covered roof with a central skylight and with wide eaves extending along the north and south sides of the south range.

The western part of the rear (south) range is at present faced with cement render which is unattractive and appears to be in fairly poor condition. It is proposed to face this western part of the range (the western gable wall and the return elevations on the north and south sides) with natural timber cladding, and to continue the cladding across the west wall of the small single-storey southern projection with its round-headed window. The wall is of modern red

bricks laid in stretcher bond, with wide joints. Timber cladding would also be used for the piers supporting the roof of the new addition.

In the west gable wall of the rear (south) range are two window openings with metal casements. This end wall dates from the early 1990s when the range was extended. It is proposed to close-up the right-hand (southern) window and to make a new corner window set into the wall and offering views to the west and south.

5.3 Conclusion

In Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, as up-dated in September 2023, local planning authorities are advised to take account of *'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation'* (para.197). A key principle enshrined in the NPPF is the conservation of heritage assets and the presumption against harm to an asset's significance (para 199) and such significance must be taken into account in assessing the impact of a proposal. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (para 202).

The principal part of the listed building, which is the north range dating from 1663, will be almost completely unaffected by the proposals; the removal of the kitchen to another part of the house will only entail the removal of modern kitchen units. The internal alterations to the rear part of the house are all relatively minor and in spaces of little historic interest or significance and will not entail any loss of historic fabric.

The main external changes will be the addition of natural timber cladding to the western section of the rear (south) range over the present modern render and the addition of a single-storey extension to the west end of the range with fully-glazed walls and a low-pitched roof. These works will have some impact on the appearance of the building. The present modern render finish on the exterior of the rear (south) range is of no value in itself and is not visually attractive; natural timber cladding will be an improvement. The proposed single-storey addition will be very much subservient to the principal listed building and visually separate from it. Neither of these works will cause harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.

6.0 Sources

Archive Sources (Surrey History Centre)

Tithe Map for the parish of Shere, 1844 (ref 864/1/116)

Ordnance Survey Maps

Domestic Buildings Research Group (Surrey), *Monk's House Gomshall*, Report no.2398, 1980.

Published Sources

O'Brien, Charles, Nairn, Ian and Cherry Bridget, *The Buildings of England, Surrey*, 2022, pp.371/2

Other Sources

Client's own collection of information

Appendix: List description

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number:1377792

Date first listed:14-Apr-1967

List Entry Name: MONK'S HOUSE

Location

Statutory Address: MONK'S HOUSE, QUEENS ROAD

County: Surrey

District: Guildford (District Authority)

Parish: Shere

National Grid Reference: TQ 08183 47573

Details

TQ 04 NE SHERE CP QUEENS ROAD Gomshall

5/249 Monk's House 14.4.67 II

House. Early C17 with C20 extensions to rear. Timber framed, exposed on ends above colourwashed flint rubble underbuild with brick and flint chequer work infill. Colourwashed roughcast cladding to entrance front with one patch of flint and brick chequer work infill exposed on right hand of gable bay to left end. Plain tiled roofs. T-shaped plan with cross wing to left. Two storeys with gabled bay projecting to left. Ridge stack to left. Leaded casement fenestration with one window on each floor and in attic. Two three-light casements on each floor to right. Panelled door in moulded surround and timber framed, gabled porch to centre.

Right hand return front: gabled parallel range projecting to centre with square single store glazed bay to ground floor. Further range set back to right end with arched, Y-tracery window.

Listing NGR: TQ0818347573



The Architectural History Practice Ltd.,
70 Cowcross Street,
London EC1M 6EJ

www.architecturalhistory.co.uk

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