

**Preston Farm
Preston Brockhurst
Shropshire
NGR: SJ 537 246**

**A
Heritage Statement
&
Outline Heritage Impact Assessment**

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Summary

There are proposals to refurbish and redevelop some of the redundant farm buildings of Preston Farm in north Shropshire for residential use. This report is a heritage statement and an outline assessment of the potential impact of the proposals on designated and non-designated heritage assets (architectural and archaeological) within and adjacent to the study area under the guidelines of the NPPF. It is not concerned with other planning matters. It concludes that with appropriate scale, design and layout the proposals will have no significant impact on any designated or non-designated heritage assets.

1. Introduction

Proposals have been made to restore and convert to residential use some of the redundant agricultural buildings of Preston Farm in Preston Brockhurst, north Shropshire. The buildings are not listed but are considered to be a non-designated heritage assets and they are adjacent to several listed buildings, including the Grade I-listed Old Manor House.

This Consultancy was commissioned to assess the potential heritage impact of the proposals on both designated and non-designated heritage assets within and adjacent to the study area. The remit does not extend to any other planning matters. This work was undertaken in December 2018 and observations were made entirely on and from the site and from the public domain.

1.1 Report Format

The report format is quite simple. After this brief introduction, there are short sections on the requirements of NPPF (Section 2) and Heritage Impact Assessments (Section 3). These are followed by an outline of the setting and history of the site (Section 4) and a description of it (Section 5). Section 6 is a short discussion and suggested phasing of the development of the site and the proposals are outlined in Section 7. The Heritage Impact Assessment is in Section 8; Section 9 is a short conclusion with recommendations and Section 10 a list of the references used for this report.

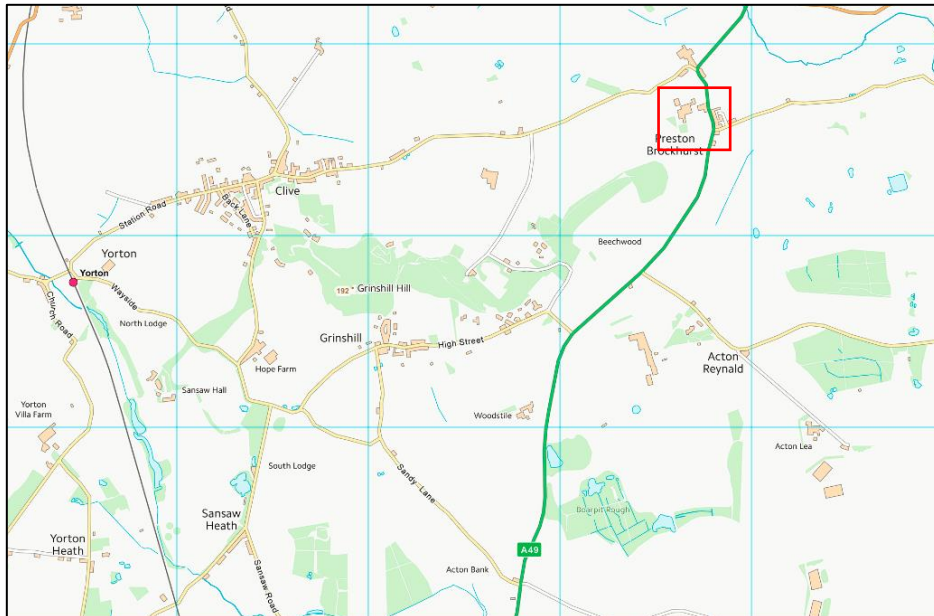
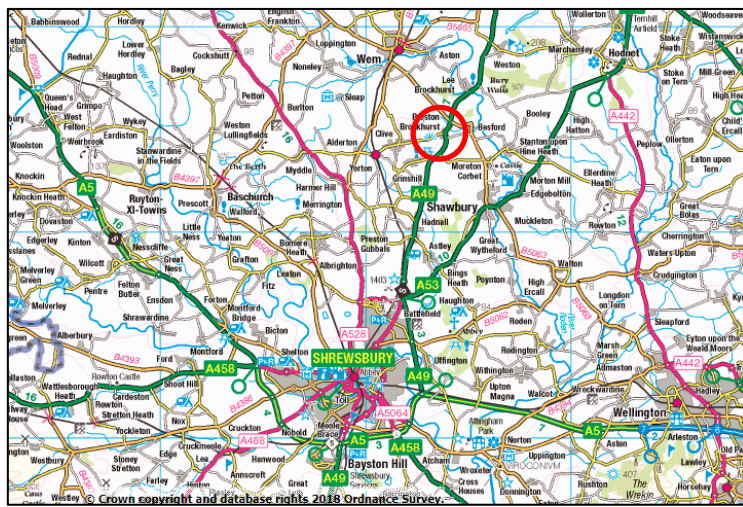


Fig.1: Location plan
(Ordnance Survey Open Data).

2. National Planning Policy Framework Guidelines

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework

Planning law relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 of the Act deals with the responsibilities of local planning authorities – the decision makers - when dealing with planning applications that could impact on heritage assets and states that:

*‘In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses’.*¹

Government guidelines regarding the listed buildings and conservation areas legislation in the 1990 Planning Act changed twice in two years, resulting in the introduction of a new *précis* of planning guidance published in March 2012 – the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) – which replaced all other separate Planning Policy Guidelines and Planning Policy Statements.² The glossary of the NPPF described ‘heritage assets’:

‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).’

The main relevant paragraph in the NPPF states that local planning authorities should require applicants:

*‘...to describe the significance of any heritage assets 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 proposals on their significance’.*³

Generally, the *National Planning Policy Framework* recommends approval of development ‘where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date... unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’.⁴

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 c.9 section 66 (1), 41

² Department for Communities & Local Government, 2012, *National Planning Policy Framework*, para. 128.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *NPPF*, para. 14

3. Heritage Impact Assessments

3.1 General Introduction

The purpose of a heritage impact assessment (HIA) is to meet the relevant guidance given in the NPPF. This outlines the need to inform the planning decisions when considering proposals that have the potential to have some impact on the character or setting of a heritage asset. It is not concerned with other planning issues.

The nature of the heritage assets and the potential impact upon them through development are both very varied. The heritage assets include both designated heritage assets – such as listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and conservation area – and non-designated heritage assets, a rather uncomfortable and sometimes subjective category that includes locally listed buildings, field systems, buried archaeological remains and views.

The degree of impact a development could have on such assets is variable and can sometimes be positive rather than negative. The wide range of possible impacts can include loss of historic fabric, loss of historic character, damage to historic setting, and damage to significant views.

Under the requirements of the NPPF and of other useful relevant guidance, such as English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* and *Informed Conservation*, and recent material from the newly formed Historic England, the process of heritage impact assessments can be summarised as involving three parts:

1. understanding the heritage values and significance of the designated and non-designated heritage assets involved and their settings;
2. understanding the nature and extent of the proposed developments;
3. making an objective judgement on the impact that the proposals outlined in Part 2 may have on the information outlined in Part 1.⁵

3.2 Definition of Setting

Setting, as a concept, was clearly defined in PPS5 and was then restated in the NPPF which describe it as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

⁵ English Heritage, 2008, *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*; Clark, K, 2001, *Informed Conservation: Understanding Historic Buildings and Their Landscapes for Conservation*

The latest version of the Historic England guidance on what constitutes setting is virtually identical to the former English Heritage guidance:

‘Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.’⁶

The new Historic England guidance also re-states the earlier guidance that setting is not confined entirely to visible elements and views but includes other aspects including environmental considerations and historical relationships between assets:

‘The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. This will vary over time and according to circumstance’.⁷

In terms of the setting of heritage assets the approach is the same but the latest Historic England guidance - *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 (GPA3)* of 2017 - suggests a five-step approach.⁸ The steps are:

- Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;
- Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated;
- Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it;
- Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm;
- Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

⁶ Historic England, 2017, *The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd ed.)*, para.9

⁷ *Op.cit.*, Part 1, reiterating guidance in the PPG of the NPPF.

⁸ *Op.cit.*, para.19

3.3 Definition of Significance

The glossary of the *Planning Practice Guidance* (PPG) to the NPPF defines significance as:

‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’.

The PPG also states that:

‘Local planning authorities may identify non-designated heritage assets. These are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which are not formally designated heritage assets. In some areas, local authorities identify some non-designated heritage assets as ‘locally listed’.’⁹

but cautions that:

‘A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage interest for their significance to be a material consideration in the planning process’.¹⁰

3.4 Definition of Harm

Current guidance by Historic England is that ‘change’ does not equate to ‘harm’. The NPPF and its accompanying PPG effectively distinguish between two degrees of harm to heritage assets – *substantial* and *less than substantial*. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states that:

‘Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss....’.

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that:

‘Where a development proposal would 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 proposals’.

⁹ Planning Practice Guidance, 2014, paragraph 39

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Recent High Court rulings have emphasised the primacy of the 1990 Planning Act – and the fact that it is up to the decision makers in the planning system to ‘have special regard to the desirability of preserving the [listed] building or its setting’.

As stated by HH Judge David Cooke in a judgment of 22 September 2015 regarding impact on the setting of a listed building:

‘It is still plainly the case that it is for the decision taker to assess the nature and degree of harm caused, and in the case of harm to setting rather than directly to a listed building itself, the degree to which the impact on the setting affects the reasons why it is listed.’

The judgment was agreed by Lord Justice Lewison at the Court of Appeal, who stated that:

*‘It is also clear as a matter both of law and planning policy that harm (if it exists) is to be measured against both the scale of the harm and the significance of the heritage asset. Although the statutory duty requires special regard to be paid to the desirability of not harming the setting of a listed building, that cannot mean that any harm, however minor, would necessarily require planning permission to be refused’.*¹¹

¹¹ Court of Appeal (PALMER and HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL & ANR) in 2016 (Case No: C1/2015/3383) para.34.

4. Setting & Outline History

4.1 Preston Brockhurst

Preston Farm is in the small village of Preston Brockhurst in north Shropshire, a little over 8 miles north of Shrewsbury and 11 miles south of Whitchurch and on the main road – the A49 – between the two.

The village lies to the north-east of the ridge of sandstone hills around Grinshill and overlooks the valley of the River Roden – a tributary of the River Severn – to the east. Generally, this gently rolling area of northern Shropshire was heavily influenced by glaciations and, in particular, with the gradual northwards retreat of the last ice sheet. In this area the solid geology is mainly buried deep beneath fluvio-glacial and river deposits of sands and gravels.

The first element of the name is Anglo-Saxon; ‘preston’ is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *prēosta-tūn*, meaning the ‘ton’ or settlement belonging to the priest or priests.¹² The name was a fairly common one, but as none of the township was held by a church or monastic house in 1066, ownership by such priests must have been earlier in the Saxon period.¹³

At the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086 the village was simply referred to as *Prestone*. Much of this area was owned by the Toret family by around 1200 and in 1255 it was referred to as *Preston Turet*.¹⁴

It passed, through marriage, to a branch of the powerful Corbet family in the mid-13th century. Their main residence was at the castle in Moreton Corbet – the village being renamed in part after the family – and from the late 1570’s they began building a fine and architecturally up-to-date mansion next to the medieval buildings.

That house (now a ruin in the care of English Heritage) appears to have been damaged in the English Civil War and although the family were living there again in the 1660’s they also began rebuilding another early-17th century house at Acton Reynald which seems to have become the more important residence.

The addition of the Brockhurst element of the name to Preston Brockhurst had taken place by the end of the 13th century. It appears to be related to a large wood called Brockhurst (a name probably derived from a ‘wooded hill frequented by badgers’) which was largely in nearby Lee Brockhurst parish; in a deed of 1291 it is referred to as *Preston subtus Brokhurst* – i.e., being on the edge of Brockhurst.¹⁵

Preston Brockhurst had been part of the Corbet’s estates prior to the English Civil War of the 1640’s but because of his support for the Crown during the conflict, Sir Vincent Corbet had to sell some of his lands to pay the extortionate fines levied by Parliament for his ‘delinquencies’.

¹² Gelling, M, 1990, *The Place-Names of Shropshire, Part One*, 242

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Op.cit.*, 175; 242

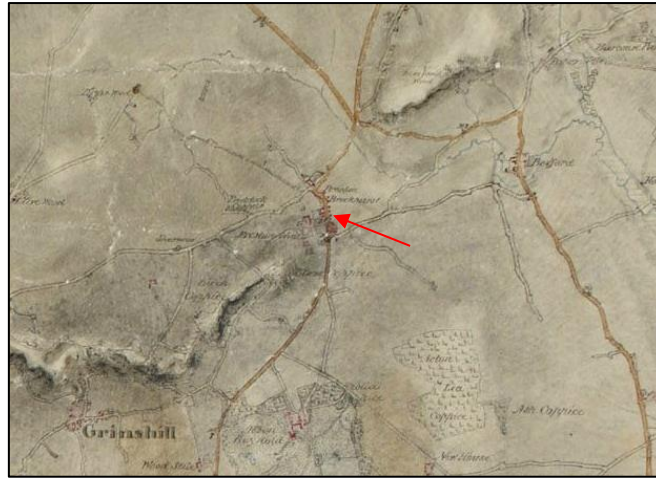


Fig.2: Extract from the original Ordnance Survey drawings begun in 1817.

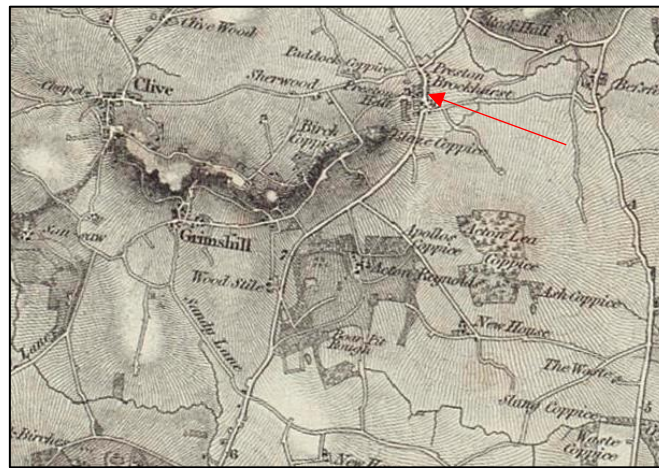


Fig.3: Extract from the 1st edition of the 1'' Ordnance Survey map of 1833.

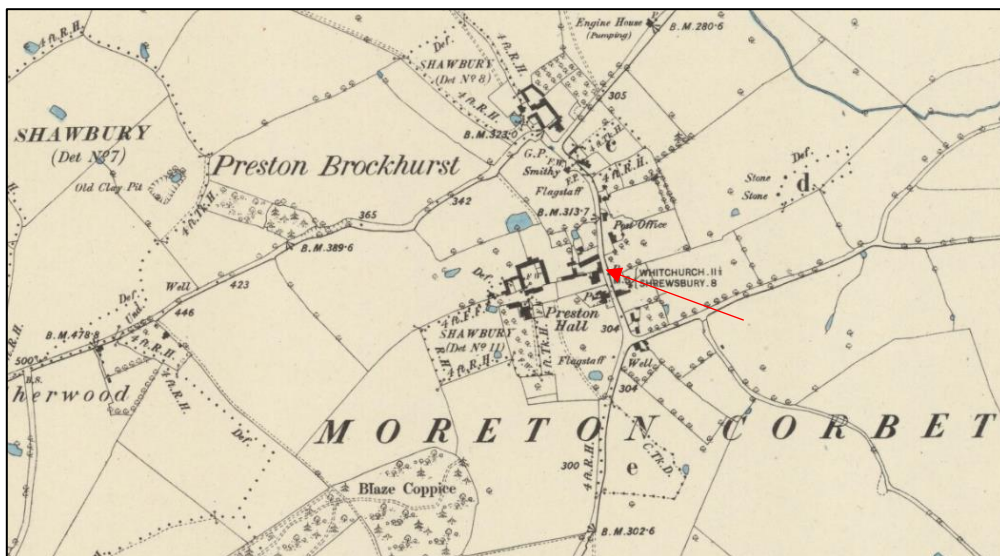


Fig.4: Extract from the 1st edition of the 6'' Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1880.

4.2 Preston Farm

Preston Brockhurst was one of the estates sold to Samuel Wingfield and, according to Richard Gough, writing his *History of Myddle* at the end of the 17th century, included:

‘One very good farme (which had beene held for severall generations by the famyly of the Dawsons, gentlemen of good accompt) to Mr Wingfield, of Shrewsbury, who pulled downe the hall, wherein oulde Mr Dawson lived, and built there, a faire Hall of free-stone, where his son Thomas Wingfield Esq. now dwelleth’.

The new house built by Wingfield, formerly known as Preston Hall and now as the Old Manor House, is Grade I listed. Thomas Wingfield was High Sheriff in 1692. His son was Borlase Wingfield and his grandson, Rowland Wingfield; Rowland acquired the Onslow estate near Shrewsbury and sold Preston Brockhurst back to the Corbets in 1743.

It is evident that the main house and the farm were separate entities by the end of the 19th century. In the early-20th century, Sir Vincent Corbet lived at the Old Manor House whilst John Anwyl was the farmer, living in the separate farmhouse situated to the east on the side of the main road. The 17th century timber-framed building was known as Preston Hall Farmhouse until the mid-20th century but is now simply known as Preston Farmhouse.

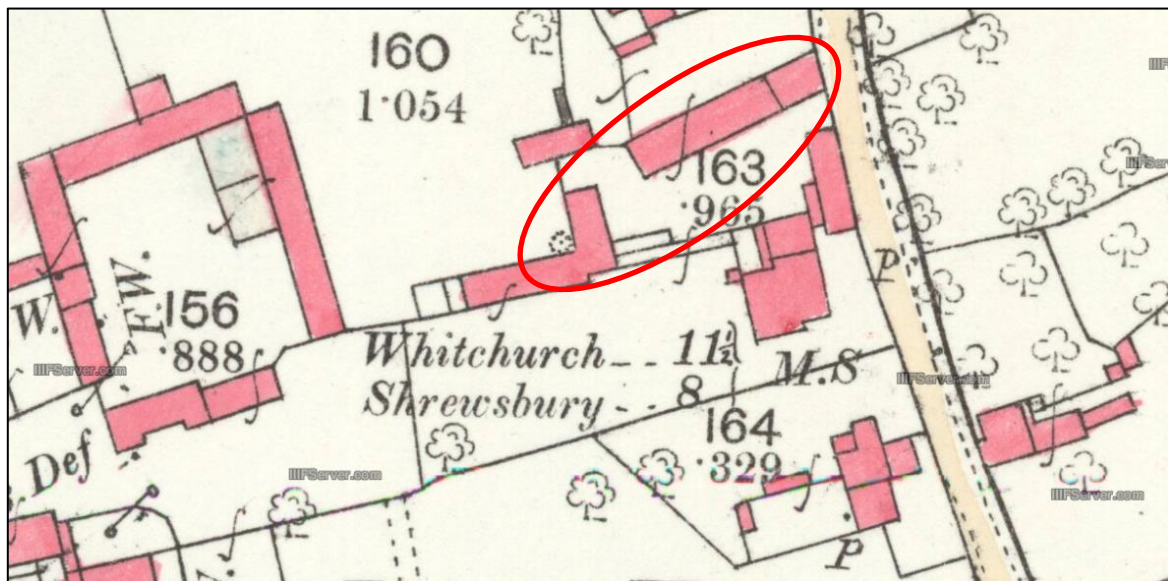


Fig.5: Extract from the 1st edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1879.

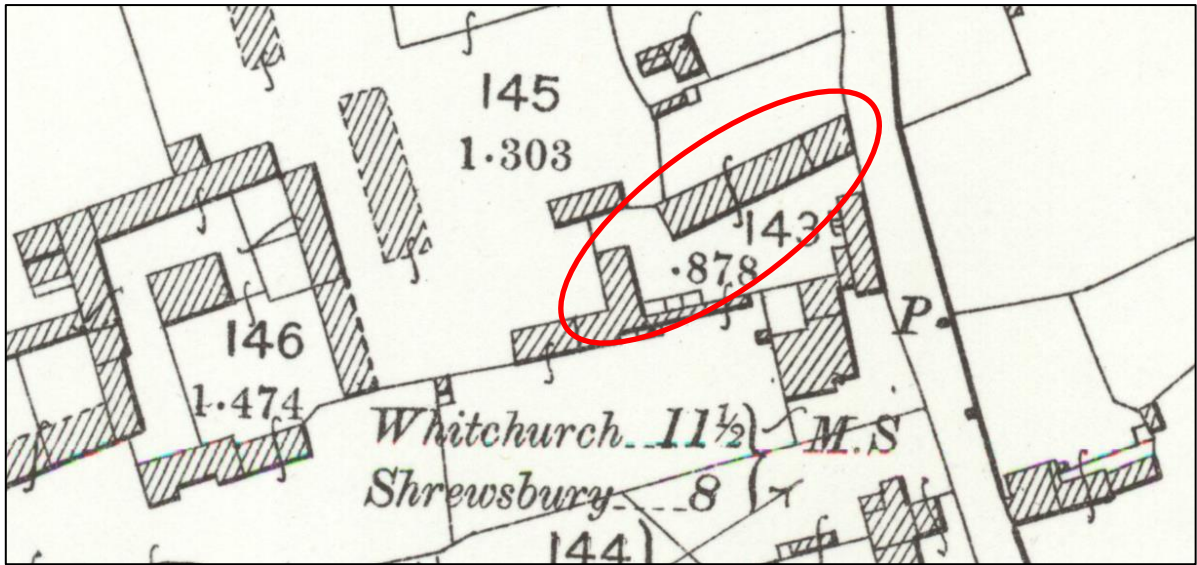


Fig.6: Extract from the 2nd edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map, revised in 1900.

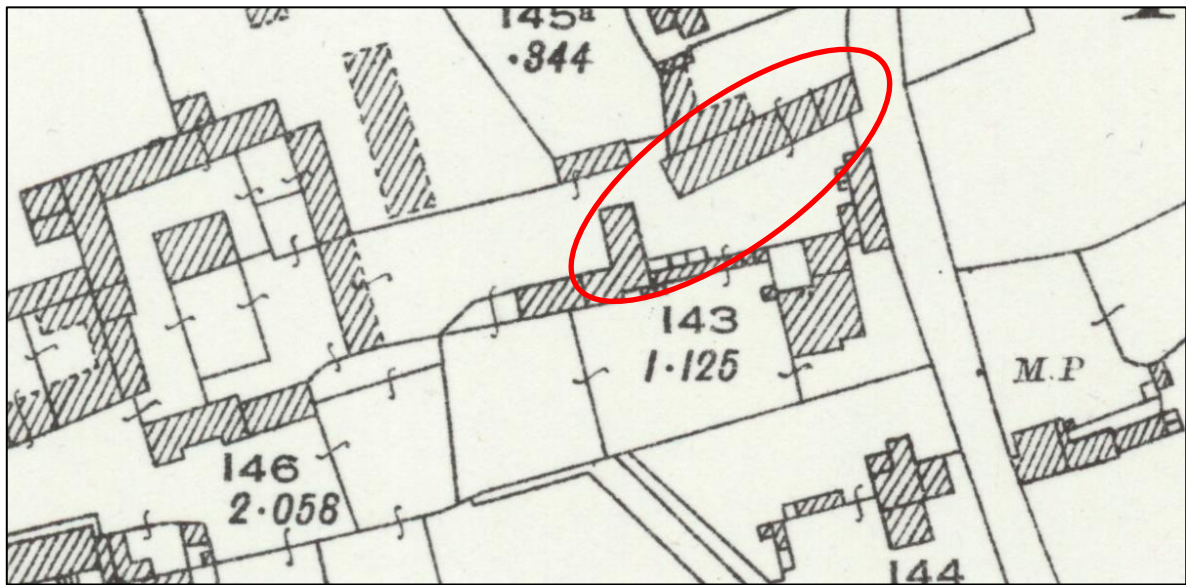


Fig.7: Extract from the 3rd edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map, revised in 1924.

5. The Buildings

The buildings studied for this report occupy the west and north sides of an informal farmyard immediately to the north of the Farmhouse; there is a larger and more formal farm stead further to the west and on slightly higher ground closer to the northern side of the Old Manor House (see Pl.1).

The Barn (Building A) occupies the western side of the farmyard, whilst the more structurally complicated Stables Range (Building B) and Stone Range (Building C) are arranged along its northern side.

Along the south side of the yard are other brick-built structures towards the west, or Barn, end whilst the eastern end of this side of the yard is formed by the north gable end of the Farmhouse and some of its rear outshots. The yard is open, at the east side, to the main road.



Pl.1: The farmyard and buildings from the east, with the main road in the foreground.

5.1 Building A: The Barn

The Barn is a large, tall and originally uncomplicated structure on the west side of the farmyard. On its eastern side it is abutted by the altered ranges on the south side of the yard – those closest converted latterly to garages.

5.1.1 Description

5.1.1.01 The Exterior

The Barn is a three-bay building of composite construction. There is a tall plinth of solid well-worked and coursed grey sandstone blocks over 1m high, well weathered on the west and north gable ends where some poor cement patching has been attempted. The only gaps in the plinth represent the openings of the side walls.

The gable ends and their short returns are of hand-made red bricks laid in lime-rich mortar to an irregular English Garden Wall bond. The gable ends are pierced by widely spaced rows of header vents. And in their upper sections have simple taking-in doorways under plain timber lintels.

Above the stone plinths the side walls were originally of three bays of timber framing – consisting only of full-height studs (mostly re-used from an earlier square-framed timber-framed structure) rising from the sole-plate to the wall-plate in the outer bays and large opposing cart doorway openings in the central ones.

The framing was originally sheathed externally in horizontal weather-boarding. The present weather-boarding is a mixture of both horizontal and vertical boarding and clearly associated with later changes. Some of the planking could be *in situ* though more of the planking could be primary, but re-set.

Originally there were large full-height double cart openings in the central bay of each side wall, flanked by thicker bay posts. These openings have been altered. On the west side there is still a pair of strap-hung plank doors which could be original or modified. The original threshold has been built up and the right-hand (or western) jamb has been rebuilt in brick and stud panels.

The eastern doorway, to the yard, has been more radically changed and the original doorways have been removed. Instead there is a small pair of strap-hung doors cut into the re-clad weather-boarding of the opening.

These planked doors are formed with a segmental arched head and are flanked, low down, by brick jambs on each side which relate to the narrowing of the original width of the cart opening. Above, and to one side, is a taking-in doorway cut directly into the weather-boarding.



Pl.2: The east elevation of the Barn (Building A).



Pl.3: The Barn from the north-west.

5.1.1.02 The Roof

The roof is plain gabled, of fairly low pitch, and covered in dark grey plain tile; there is a ridge of rounded hand-made ceramic bonnet tiles of similar material. Structurally, it is three bays, coeval with the framing below.

The two trusses are of simple king-post design, with up-braces from the king-post to the principal rafters. The trusses and the gable walls support a single tier of trenched purlins and a ridge-board where the common rafters meet.

5.1.1.03 The Interior

The interior was evidently originally one single space open to the apex of the roof, divided only by two ephemeral cross frames flanking the central bay. These cross-frames have been altered but initially seem to have consisted on a single central full-height stud from sole-plate to the truss tie, flanked by long down-braces from the bay posts.

The northern bay is still a full-width space and open to the roof but the rest of the interior has been partitioned and is difficult to access. There is a partly boarded cross-partition on the line of the former cross-frame between the central and eastern bays and the rest of the interior has been sub-divided.

5.1.2 Discussion

This building was evidently constructed as a purpose-built three-bay threshing barn. It was a simple structure of brick gables and weather-boarded stud-framed side walls above a stone plinth.

It has a central threshing floor accessed by opposing full-height and full-width cart doorways in the side walls. To either side were the vented storage bays for the crop awaiting processing or for processed crop awaiting to be used or sold – with taking-in doorways high in the gables for charging or unloading.

Specific dating is difficult. The composite construction and the re-use of sections of a former timber framing in a very simple stud frame for the side walls suggests a date no earlier than the later-18th century, and it may have been slightly later still.

In a historical context, the impact of the long-drawn out Napoleonic Wars was for an increased demand on home-produced crops, including corn, due to the wartime conditions and barriers to imported foodstuffs. This increase in domestic crops also led to an increase in the numbers of threshing barns required to process them.

The barn was subsequently adapted for new uses, probably later in the 19th century – accounting for the internal alterations and the changes to the former threshing floor doorways. Nevertheless, the building is relatively intact.



Pl.4: The north gable of the Barn; the Old Manor House is in the distance to the right.



Pl.5: The little altered interior of the northern bay of the Barn.

5.2 Building B: The Stable Range

The Stable Range is a long rectangular single storey structure with loft fronting the northern side of the farmyard; its eastern gable is abutted by the slightly later Stone Range (Building C). It is built mainly of hand-made bright red brick but retains some earlier elements – probably re-used – and is evidently of more than one phase of construction.

5.2.1 Description

5.2.1.01 The Exterior

The building is mainly of red brick but the size and quality of the bricks, and the bonding, varies considerably. There is, on the lower two thirds of the eastern portion of the south elevation some Flemish bond, with English Garden Wall bond above. On the rear wall of this section is English Garden Wall bond. The western portion of the brickwork, including the west gable, is a more consistent double-header bond.

There is a clear vertical construction break in the brickwork on both side elevations – but these do not relate to each other. The one on the south side does seem to relate to the remains of timber-framed cross-frame within the building; the one on the north side is possibly related to a brick cross wall a little further to the east.

The South Elevation

The main front elevation is the south side, facing the yard. At the western, of left-hand, end is a modern double doorway beneath a flat lintel. In the section west of the vertical break in the brickwork are two doorways with two-ring segmental arched brick heads, the right-hand one being the larger of the two and with an integral external chamfered rebate with stone pintle blocks for a strap-hung single-leaf ledged plank door.

The other doorway is narrower and has a two-leaf ‘stable’ door in a timber frame. In between is a window, also with a segmental arched head but with mid-20th century glazing. Above is a small dormer with a taking-in doorway serving the loft.

In the right-hand section there is a degree of symmetry at the right-hand end, with a doorway flanked by windows, all with segmental arched heads; that of the doorway is of two-rings, those of the window just one. Above the left-hand window is a low taking-in doorway, its head formed by the wall plate.

Immediately to the east of the vertical construction break is a blocked segmental arch headed window and next to that the present window is set within the blocking of what had been a contemporary segmental arch headed doorway.



Pl.6: The Stable Range (Building B) from the south-east.



Pl.7: The Stable Range from the north-east.

The North Elevation

On the north elevation there is now just one doorway, roughly centrally positioned and opposite the larger doorway in the south elevation. This has a segmental arched head to the opening and a timber frame to the simple plank door – but looks to have been inserted.

There is evidence for three other doorways on this elevation, all carefully blocked in brick – two quite close together towards the left-hand, or eastern end, and another towards the right-hand end.

The other two openings in the elevation are a segmental arched ground-floor window towards the right-hand end and a small taking-in doorway to the loft, with a strap-hung plank door, towards the left-hand end. There is no evidence for any other openings.

The West Gable

The west gable is mainly of brick – with chamfered corners; the square-headed wide opening on the ground floor is a modern insert. The brickwork is topped by a brick-nogged truss from a timber-framed building. This consists of a tie-beam, collar and principal rafters, with three queen struts between tie and collar and a pair of raking ‘V-struts’ from the collar to the principals.

Peg holes for redundant mortises in the soffit of the tie-beam show that it was related to a square-frame with corner braces. The fact that it is exactly the same width of the range is interesting but otherwise there is no obvious evidence that the truss is *in situ* and that the brickwork below it has replaced the rest of its framing – although the relationship between the upper section of the brickwork and the truss is remarkably clumsy. It is just as likely to have been re-used from elsewhere.

The East Gable

The east gable is abutted and obscured by the slightly lower Stone Range (Building C); it seems to be of brick – but there does seem to be a fossiled tie-beam of a truss in the brickwork and, possibly, more of the truss could survive.

5.2.1.02 The Roof

The roof is plain gabled and covered in plain tile, with a ridge of machine-made interlocking bonnet tiles. Only parts of the roof structure are visible. Apart from the truss of the west gable end, there are also two other trusses in the roof structure that appear to have come from an earlier building.

One, the first one in from the west gable, consists of a tie-beam, principal rafters and a single pair of ‘V-struts’ from tie to rafters. The second, on top of the remnant of the cross frame east of the cross-passage, is less easy to see but does seem to be a proper truss of some sort.



Pl.8: Part of the roof structure, showing an open truss of unknown provenance.



Pl.9: Interior of the central section, looking west and showing the inserted loft floor.

There could another in between that these last mentioned trusses above the loft floor – and there is possibly remnants of a truss in the east gable as well. The purlins are otherwise supported on brickwork. In the visible portion of the structure at the western end, there are two tiers of trenched purlins on the south slope but just one on the north slope. The rafters meet at a ridge-board where visible.

5.2.1.03 The Interior

The interior has been much altered. The main interest lies in the remains of a now brick-nogged cross-frame a little to the east of centre – and aligned with the clear vertical construction break in the brickwork of the south elevation. This frame could be much altered and *in situ* – or simply have been re-used from elsewhere; it appears to be topped by a truss.

There is a loft throughout most of the interior; this was clerly inserted, possibly replacing an earlier one. The timbers supporting the loft are mainly flitched bridging beams and, like the joists and boards they support, are crisply sawn.

The westernmost bay has a less rigid upper floor; it is separated from the rest by a match-boarded partition. To the east of it is the longest of the full-width spaces, and this has a cross-passage between the doors in the side walls at its eastern end. It also has timber hay racks and brick mangers on the rear wall. The eastern section is divided into three narrower spaces by brick walls and stalls – and there are more timber hay racks.

5.2.2 Discussion

This range is complex in its development; there is just the possibility that it is a radically rebuilt timber-framed building, of which few fragments survive. The differences in the brickwork and the various construction breaks have no clear logic to them and suggest an *ad hoc* series of changes over many years.

If the framing is genuine and *in situ*, it is possible that the building had 17th century origins. In its present much altered state it is mainly of the 19th century. The layout suggests that it was built, in part at least, for stabling rather than as a byre. However, in its present lay-out, it was clearly used for housing cattle.

5.3 Building C: The Stone Range

The Stone Range abutts the east gable end of the Stable Range (Building B). A section of the exposed brickwork of the Stable Range above the Stone Range is rendered, and indicates that either the Stable Range was once taller or that it has replaced a taller range.

5.3.1 Description

The Stone Range is lower than that earlier building and slightly narrower, but its side walls are more or less in line. It relies on the earlier building for its west wall; its east wall is built at a slight diagonal angle to the others, presumably to maximize the available space between the Stable Range and the main road.

5.3.1.01 The Exterior

It is mainly built of large and well-worked blocks of grey sandstone but there are some structural inconsistencies. The front, or south, wall has two doorways. The one at the extreme left-hand end has a neatly formed lintel block with integral raised keystone; the left-hand jamb of the opening is, however, of brickwork and the strap-hung door doesn't seem to fit properly.

The other doorway opening was probably inserted, given the fact its head is cut into the soffit of two adjoining stone blocks in the coursing; the timber door frame gives some support to the 'lintel'.

On the rear, or north, side there is brickwork in the eaves. There is a modern inserted window just to the left of centre. To the right of centre is a carefully blocked doorway. The masonry of the gable, which has no openings, butts uncomfortably against that of the rear wall.

5.3.1.02 The Roof

The roof is plain gabled and covered in plain tile. The ridge is of machine-made interlocking angled bonnet tiles. Structurally the roof is of three bays but the trusses, which appear to be well-crafted queen post loft trusses, are in fact rather crude.

Each consists of a tie-beam, which also supported the joists of the loft floor. Two thin scantling studs rise directly to the purlins, which are linked by equally thin straining beams not connected to the studs. There are additional short horizontal timbers nailed between the studs and the wall-plates. The common rafters meet at a ridge-board and are supported by a single tier of purlins.



Pl.10: The south side of the Stone Range (Building C).



Pl.11: The Stone Range from the north-east.

5.3.1.03 The Interior

The much altered interior is presently divided into two unequal full-width spaces by a rubblestone cross wall directly beneath the western truss. The upper portion of the partition, at loft level, is of timber vertical planks.

The interior is presently set out as loose-boxes for cattle with timber hay racks against the rear wall. The range was originally lofted throughout, but only the western bay retains its upper floor; the rest of the loft floor has been removed.

5.3.2 Discussion

This range was built on the footprint of an earlier and slightly taller range, both having being built against the gable end of the earlier Stables Range (Building B). Dating is difficult but a broad mid-19th century range seems likely. As built there were just doorways in the side walls, the ground-floor probably used for cattle and the loft above for feed storage.



Pl.12: The interior of the StoneRange.

6. Overview

This small group of buildings is associated with the adjacent listed Farmhouse and once formed part of the larger 'home farm' associated with the former Preston Hall (now the Old Manor House).

The purpose, and to a lesser extent, date of the Barn (Building A) appear to be straightforward but the development of the Stable Range (Building B) is much more complex, even though its significance in heritage terms is less. The Stone Range was simply a later extension of it – though replacing a building that was slightly taller.

Because of their age and their relationship with other heritage assets, they are considered to be non-designated heritage assets in their own right. The farmstead, and these buildings within it, are not considered to be within the curtilage of the Old Manor House; it is possible that, despite current guidelines from Historic England, they could be considered to be within the curtilage of the Farmhouse. They are certainly part of the settings of the Farmhouse and the wider setting of the Old Manor House.

7. The Proposals

There are developing proposals to carefully restore and convert these now redundant farm buildings. The proposals involve utilising most of the existing and now blocked openings to form windows and doorways and the external changes should be relatively minimal – though the Barn will require more study to elucidate the phasing and significance of the present weatherboarding in order to assess the best way of restoring the building to its original appearance.

The main alterations will be internal, in order to create the necessary dwelling spaces and circulation patterns - but the lack of any significant internal partitions, fixtures and fittings will allow for considerable scope.

8. Heritage Impact Assessment

8.1 Impact on the Buildings

With good design the proposals should result in relatively few external changes to the buildings. It is considered that the buildings are capable of such adaptive re-use because most already have several original or early inserted openings that can be utilised for the necessary doorways and windows for the new dwellings.

Internal changes can be designed to respect as much of the original or earlier plan forms as possible, though there are inevitably some changes to their layout associated with the conversion to dwellings. Fortunately, the interiors were mainly full-width originally so little or no historic fabric has to be removed and virtually all of the changes are additive.

The change from agricultural to domestic use will have an inevitable impact on the general character of the former foldyard and its surroundings but that is compensated by the refurbishment of the buildings and the ensuring of their long-term futures in an optimal viable reuse. Of particular benefit will be the careful restoration of the timber-framed East Barn.

8.2 Impact on Adjacent Heritage Assets

The site is fairly secluded with few other properties nearby. The adjacent Grade II listed Farmhouse has been much altered and faces away from the foldyard. However, the proposed adaptive re-use of the farmstead will ensure that its relationship with the farmhouse is maintained.

Just to the south of the Farmhouse is another building of similar date and construction, the White House; this is largely screened from the farmstead by the Farmhouse but the proposals will have little impact on its setting or significance anyway.

To the north, on a sharp bend in the main road, is another timber-framed building with 17th century origins, Grove Farm; this is Grade II listed, as, separately, is its Gateway. Both are too far distance from the farmstead to be impacted by any conversion proposals and such proposals would, in any case, result in no harm on their character, setting or significance.

Most of the listed buildings and structures in Preston Brockhurst are associated with the former Hall, now the Old Manor House. As outlined above (*see* Section 4.2) this small stone-built manor house was built for the Wingfield family during the Commonwealth period. It is a good example of its date and is listed Grade I.

Associated with it are several other listed structures, all separately listed Grade II including: the Service Block; Forecourt Walls; Garden Wall Gate and Piers; Stable Block; Brewhouse; and Dovecot. These are all close to the main building. Further to the south are the Grade II listed Entrance Gates and the Kitchen Garden.

This is clearly an important group of listed buildings and several other unlisted structures associated with the Old Manor House would be considered to be non-designated heritage assets either for their intrinsic historic value or for their contribution to the group.

The buildings in this study are no longer within the curtilage of the Old Manor House but they do contribute to its wider setting, and that of the group of associated structures. The Old Manor House, due in no small part to its elevated position, is easily viewed from the farmyard as are several of the other listed structures.

Any changes to the buildings in the study area – and especially to the Barn – would have a limited impact on the setting of the Old Manor House and the associated heritage assets. However, it is considered that careful adaptive re-use of the now disused buildings would enhance the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. It would result in their repair and restoration and ensure their long term future as part of the wider group of important heritage assets.

8.3 Archaeological Issues

The proposed works are on a ‘brownfield’ site – the well-established farmstead – and involve adaptive reuse of standing buildings. Consequently, the amount of groundworks required will be relatively limited.

The site is, however, of some antiquity and it is recommended that, should and deep or extensive groundworks be needed, advice be obtained from the county’s archaeological advisor as to the possible need for an appropriate archaeological watching brief during such works. The main buried remains known to exist will be those of the earlier northern range of the complex.

9. Conclusions & Recommendations

The proposals for the sympathetic refurbishment and adaptive reuse of these presently redundant farm buildings of Preston Farm provide a new lease of life to the buildings which should ensure the long-term futures of these non-designated heritage assets. It will also preserve and enhance the setting of several adjacent designated heritage assets.

There will necessarily be some loss of historic fabric, but given the overall nature of the scheme that is considered to be acceptable – though it is recommended that an appropriate ‘preservation by record’ of any significant areas to be lost is undertaken.

The revised NPPF and current planning guidance recommends that heritage assets should be retained and restored and where necessary converted to new uses when old uses are no longer possible. Such adaptive use is considered acceptable to ensure the long-term futures of such assets, especially when it ensures their ‘*optimum viable use*’. The buildings are now agriculturally redundant, so need a new and viable use that will not impact adversely on their significance. The proposals provide such a use that will result in relative little external change or loss of historic fabric.

The NPPF does not categorise all ‘change’ as ‘harm’ and with good design it is considered that the buildings are capable of being converted in a manner that will protect its significance and ensure its longevity. Even if it is considered that some ‘harm’ would result from the proposals, it would clearly be at the very lowest end of the ‘less than substantial harm’ spectrum. In that case, Paragraph 196 of the revised NPPF states that:

‘Where a development proposal would 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 proposals including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use’.

For the reasons outlined above, this is considered to be the case in regard to these proposals and the listed building concerned. The optimum viable use is no longer the use for which the building was initially built, or for later uses for which it was adapted.

In the context of these buildings and their setting, the proposed conversion to residential use is considered to be a logical and sympathetic optimum viable use, the key public benefit of which is the securing of the long-term future of these non-designated heritage assets.

For the reasons outlined above these proposals can be sympathetic to the historic buildings and their setting, and to the settings of the Grade II listed farmhouse, the Old Manor House, and the other heritage assets associated with it. Such proposals will result in the optimum viable use and longevity of a designated heritage asset.

In the recent past, planning guidance has recognised that change to historic buildings is part of their history and that buildings are not and should not be fossilised in time. The prospect of such change, even to listed buildings, is anticipated in the government's *National Planning Policy Framework* but more clearly outlined in earlier guidance from 1996, *Planning Policy Guideline No.15* (PPG 15), which stated – in relation to listed buildings that:

‘Many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses. Indeed, cumulative changes reflecting the history of use and ownership are themselves an aspect of the special interest of some buildings, and the merit of some new alterations or additions, especially where they are generated within a secure and committed long-term ownership, should not be discounted.’

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The Consultancy

Richard K Morriss founded this Consultancy in 1995 after previously working for English Heritage and the Ironbridge Institute of the University of Birmingham and spending eight years as Assistant Director of the Hereford Archaeology Unit. Although Shropshire-based the Consultancy works throughout the UK on a wide variety of historic buildings for clients that include the National Trust, the Landmark Trust, English Heritage, the Crown Estates, owners, architects, planning consultants and developers. It specialises in the archaeological and architectural analysis of historic buildings of all periods and planning advice related to them. It also undertakes broader area appraisals and Conservation Plans.

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