

Meeting date: 15 February 2022

Report to: CPH Climate Change,
Planning and Housing

Subject/report title: Wharf Farm, 123 Dickens
Heath Road, Dickens
Heath

Report from: Mark Andrews - Head of
Planning , Design and
Engagement Services

**Report author/lead
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Conservation

Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: N/A

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To request the addition of Wharf Farm and its stable building and pigsties to the Council's Local List of Heritage Assets.

2. Decision recommended

- 2.1 To agree the addition of the house, stables and pigsties to the Local List.

3. Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 The report recommends the addition of these historic buildings to the Local List of Heritage Assets to provide them with some additional protection should planning proposals for the site be received.
- 3.2 The interest found in heritage assets can be one or more of Historic, Architectural, Artistic and Archaeological. During assessment of the buildings the Historic England

Listing Selection Guides for both Vernacular Houses and Agricultural Buildings (December 2017) have been used to ensure parity with listing assessments when assessing these buildings.

- 3.3 The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. The general principles used are that: from 1700 to 1850, most buildings that retain a significant proportion of their original fabric are likely to be regarded as being of special interest, though some selection is necessary; from 1850 to 1945, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary.
- 3.4 The Secretary of State uses criteria including the following when assessing whether a building is of special architectural or historic interest and therefore should be added to the statutory list: Architectural Interest: To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its design, decoration or craftsmanship. Engineering and technological interest can be an important consideration for some. Artistic Interest: Artistic distinction can also be relevant to the architectural interest of buildings and objects and structures fixed to them. Historic Interest: To be able to justify special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's history and / or have closely substantiated historical associations with nationally important individuals, groups or events; and the building in its current form will afford a strong connection with the valued aspect of history.
- 3.5 The house dates from the late 18th or early 19th century. Evidence of this includes the brick material and size, the informal brick bond as a variant of garden wall bond, and the scale and proportions of the house which has an element of fashionable symmetry thanks to the bays to either side of the central door and hallway and the chimneys defining wall lines, despite the imbalance of the third bay at the roadside and varied room widths. The house reflects the influence of Classical architecture upon even the modest house, with evident differences in conscious design when compared to earlier and contemporary vernacular buildings. Details typical of the period include the decorative window heads in rubbed bricks to the facade, simpler brick cambered heads to other elevations, the casement windows and the brick dentil course detail at eaves and verges. Handmade plain clay tiles support a build date preceding the greater affordability of Welsh roofing slates than machine made tiles that are seen on numerous later dwellings in the neighbourhood. Slates earlier use tended to be on larger houses such as halls at the centre of estates. Later 19th or early 20th century use on small cottages is seen in nearby Blackford Road. The house has suffered little apparent alteration externally, the stark recent change being the fitting of uPVC windows. Whilst these slightly dilute the character of the house the overall survival of appearance and details is very good. Much historic fabric does survive well externally, but the access to the interiors has not been provided.
- 3.6 The proximity of the buildings to the canal emphasises the reason that the wharf and farmstead developed here. The house compares closely to several alongside the Stratford canal both in the Borough and neighbouring Stratford district. The house and farm buildings have an interesting history as a house constructed in a polite design when compared to the local vernacular, with stables and pigsties reflecting the provision of better conditions for animals key to income. They retain some good historic fabric, but appear not to merit a request for statutory listing. The adjacent small rectangular fields shown on the OS map until the 1980s were typical of

enclosures on midland heathland in the 18th and 19th centuries, with farming efficiency improvements driven by growing markets in expanding towns and cities.

- 3.7 Although an interesting example of a local smallholding serving and initially dependent upon the canal traffic, the buildings do not display the degree of interest required for listing. They have clear local interest, but are considered to fall short of the level of special interest to merit national listing.
- 3.8 The above is all considered to support their addition to the Local List instead.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

- 4.1 An option where statutory listing is not justified is to add the building to the Local List to give its heritage significance greater weight in the planning process. The other option is to 'do nothing', which would make proposals to demolish or alter the building more difficult to resist or satisfactorily revise. Proposals would need to comply with Local Plan policy P16 and other NPPF requirements for Cultural Heritage. However, these would be unlikely to moderate proposals for some alterations and additions to the buildings that might harm their architectural and historic interest and their contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 Designated heritage assets of national significance are included on the statutory list maintained by Historic England. The demolition or alteration of designated heritage assets on that list requires consent from the local planning authority and, in some instances, Historic England. Unauthorised works to them are a criminal offence. Heritage assets that do not meet the exacting standards for inclusion in the statutory list can nevertheless be of significant local architectural or historic interest and often contribute much to local character and distinctiveness. Whilst designated heritage assets are of the highest significance, the loss or degradation of locally important heritage assets can produce a cumulative negative impact upon the experience of their locality and upon the overall character of the Borough.
- 5.2 Following some initial developable interest in the site officers have identified the buildings as having substantial local historic value. The property is therefore proposed for local listing in advance of a potential application and further consider by Historic England for statutory listing. It is your officers professional view that any request for consideration for higher level statutory listing requires assessment of the survival of interior fabric and fittings of the house and stables which it has not yet been possible to assess.
- 5.3 In accordance with national planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the Council maintains a list of such buildings, the Local List, to encourage their preservation. The NPPF sustains the Government's recognition of the importance of retaining heritage assets as part of sustainable development and its support for locally important heritage assets that are not, or do not appear to be, of sufficient importance to warrant statutory listing. Heritage assets are defined in the NPPF glossary and the Planning Practice Guidance.

- 5.4 Controls over the demolition or alteration of buildings on the Local List are not as extensive as for buildings on the Statutory List. Formal consent is not necessarily required for alterations and addition to the list does not automatically reduce permitted development rights. However, inclusion on the Local List does provide some degree of protection - it is a material consideration when determining relevant planning applications, and recognises the special architectural and/ or historic character of a building, structure or place.
- 5.5 The principal criteria for inclusion by the Secretary of State of a building on the statutory list are: architectural interest; historic interest; close historical association with nationally important people or events; and group value. Not all will necessarily be relevant to every case. Similar criteria apply to the inclusion of a heritage asset on a Local List. Criteria for additions are based upon those used by Historic England for considering additions to the Statutory List and have previously been agreed.
- 5.6 The addition to the Local List would help to maintain the positive contribution that these buildings make to local character and distinctiveness. The road is very busy as a key route into and through Dickens Heath towards Solihull and the M42, as well as heading west to Tidbury Green and Wythall. In addition, the canal corridor is well used for leisure purposes and the lowered wharf area allows views of the site from the towpath beyond the canal. The farmstead is therefore seen alongside the canal by substantial numbers of people each year. Together with the canal and partly brick-built overbridge it lends some historic continuity to the immediate area, emphasised by the fields north of the canal. It is part of the tangible built heritage of this distinct area between Shirley and Tidbury Green and maintaining its contribution to that story will allow it to be more fully understood and appreciated in the future.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revitalising our towns and local centres. 2. Deliver UK Central (UKC) and maximise the opportunities of HS2. 3. Increase the supply, quality and energy efficiency of housing, especially affordable and social housing. 	<p>The addition to the Local List would help to maintain local character and distinctiveness at the edge of a local centre, adding to the interest of the area alongside the popular leisure corridor of the Stratford upon Avon canal</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enhance Solihull's natural and physical environment. 5. Improve Solihull's air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions. 	<p>The retention of historic buildings of clear local value supports policies to conserve and enhance the historic environment, maintain local character and distinctiveness, and retain and make active use of the embodied energy within traditional buildings</p>

Priority:	Contribution:
People and Communities: 7. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. 8. Enable communities to thrive. 9. Sustainable, quality care and support for adults & children with complex needs.	Retaining historic buildings preserves local character and can help to ensure and maintain a sense of local pride and well being
10. Promote employee wellbeing	None

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 The owner has been notified of the proposed addition to the Local List, is aware of this report and the process, has the opportunity to comment on the addition, and will be formally advised of the outcome. Ward Councillors, the parish council and the Canal and Rivers Trust have been advised of the recommendation too. A built heritage assessment has been submitted by an interested party. It agrees with dates, details and functions in this report, but attaches lower significance to the buildings than your officers consider to be the case. In your officer's opinion it emphasises why a request for statutory listing is not considered justified, but explains and interprets some building and other details that are considered to firmly justify the addition to our Local List.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 None

6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 None

6.5 Risk implications:

6.5.1 If the buildings are not added to the Local List, it would be more difficult to ensure their retention and carefully managed change, and secure their continuing contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Subject to the development of technologies and methods the site may reveal more about past human activities and patterns of settlement in the future.

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 None

6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), the Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

- 6.7.1 Encouraging the conservation and active use of heritage assets reflects the WMCA recognition of the value of heritage to the character of the region and the character and distinctiveness of the individual local authority areas.

7. List of appendices referred to

- 7.1 Appendix A Assessment of building, historic maps and current photographs.

8. Background papers used to compile this report

- 8.1 Historic England Listing Selection Guidance –

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-vernacular-houses/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-agricultural-buildings/heag122-agricultural-buildings-lsg/>

Historic England National Farm Building Types

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/national-farm-building-types/national-building-types-2014/>

- 8.2 NPPF (2021)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

- 8.3 Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing (Historic England, 2012)

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/good-practice-local-heritage-listing/local-listing-guide.pdf/>

- 8.4 Photographs by author.

9. List of other relevant documents

- 9.1 Solihull MBC Local List of Heritage Assets

https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/Planning_LocalListHeritageAssets.pdf