



**STONEYCROFT
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
CONSULTANTS**

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

**For
Completing the Rebuilding Works of the Manor House,
Demolition of Barn Cottage,
and the Erection of One x 4 Bedroom House
At
Dowles Manor, Bewdley, Worcestershire DY12 3AA**

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Qualifications and Experience

My name is Michael Gerard Harris. I have a degree in Geography and a Master's degree in Civic Design, both from the University of Liverpool. I also hold a Master of Science in Historic Building Conservation from Oxford Brookes University. I am a Member of both the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation.

I spent 18 years in local government, mostly as a Conservation and Urban Design Officer, variously with East Hertfordshire, Wychavon and Bridgnorth District Councils. Since 2005 I have been a Planning Consultant in private practice, first at Balfours LLP, a Shrewsbury-based Chartered Surveyors, and then subsequently becoming a Director of Planning in an Architect's practice in South Staffordshire.

I am currently Director of Planning at Stoneycroft Planning and Development, and have been instructed to undertake this Heritage Impact Assessment on behalf of the Applicants. I am familiar with the application site and the nature and significance of the wider locality.



1.0 Context

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Statement has been produced in support of an application for the completion of the rebuilding works to Dowles Manor, the demolition of Barn Cottage, attached, and the erection of a separate dwelling in the grounds.



Drawing from 1948

Dowles Manor House

- 1.2 The original 16th century manor house was of great historic significance, reflected in its Grade II* status, probably built c.1622, although dated 1560, and restored by Bidlake 1908 – 15, the house was noted for its extensive wall paintings.



Sketch of a section of wall painting

- 1.3 Tragically the house was largely destroyed by fire in 1982. Granted LBC (having been downgraded to II) for extensive repairs the remainder was instead unlawfully demolished and replaced by new building work. Legal action halted the completion of these works and fined the then owner £15,000 plus costs. As a result, the property was delisted:

The following building shall be deleted:

UPPER ARLEY DOWLES ROAD
SO 77 NE (west side)
5/127 Dowles Manor House
- II

UPPER ARLEY CP DOWLES ROAD (west side)
SO 77 NE
5/127 Dowles Manor House
20.10.52
- II

House. Probably 1622, restored 1908 - 1915 by W H Bidlake, partially destroyed by fire 1982. Timber-frame on sandstone ground floor. H-plan. Two storeys with attics in gabled cross-wings; left-hand wing stands to wall-plate level with a central 4-light casement. Ground floor: a 4-light casement in each cross-wing; to centre a 4-light casement to right, entrance to left. Framing: close-studding with mid-rail, straight angle braces and straight tension braces. At the time of the survey the building was protected by a corrugated iron roof, awaiting reconstruction. (Hussey, C: "Dowles Manor House, Worcestershire", CL, March 16, 1945, pp 464-467; Charles, FWB: Conservation of Timber Buildings, 1984, pp 98-99).

Listing NGR: SO7753776417

- 1.4 Planning applications have subsequently regularised the works, including ref:10/0237/FULL for a garage and utility extension. Only the late 19th century Barn Cottage remains in anything like its original state, as the rebuilding works removed any original fabric of Dowles Manor.
- 1.5 The Victoria County History: Worcestershire (1924) contains a detailed description of the undamaged Manor House:

Dowles Manor House, situated off the main road about half a mile north of the church, is the residence of Mr. Jannion Steele Elliott. It is a Li-shaped house of two stories and an attic, with a modern brick addition at the back. Over the doorway is the date 1560. The lower story is of stone, the walls being about 3 ft. 6 in. thick, and the upper part of the house is of half-timber with tiled roofs. The gables of the projecting wings on the south front have original barge-boards with carving in low relief and carved pendants at their apices. The oak mullioned windows on this front are also of the 16th century. The hall, entered directly from the main doorway, occupies the centre of the ground floor of the original part of the house; on the west is a room now used as a drawing room, and on the east the present dining room and the original stairway. There is a wide fireplace opening opposite the doorway with a heavy beam above. The rooms on either side are screened from the hall by heavy oak partitions, with plaster panels covered with 16th-century paintings. The painting on the lower panels is almost obliterated, but that on the upper panels, which has evidently formed part of the same design, represents winged animals and human figures, half figures of Elizabethan ladies in ruffs, and other designs. The present drawing room, probably the original kitchen, is panelled in oak in



small squares, with a fluted frieze and moulded cornice. The fireplace is flanked by oak fluted pilasters with Ionic capitals, and has an overmantel of three semicircular-headed panels divided by similar pilasters, a frieze carved with vineleaf ornament, and a dentil cornice. A serving door to the hall still exists on the east side of the room. In the dining room, which seems to have been the original private chamber or withdrawing room, is a wide fireplace, the head of which is formed by a moulded beam. On the west walls of this room and of the study above some painted panels remain, similar to those in the hall. Formerly the whole room was so decorated, but the paintings were in too bad a state to be preserved. The original stairway, which was separated from this room by an oak screen, part of which remains, has been removed and a modern one constructed in a new position, but otherwise the old portion of the house, with its moulded beams and exposed timbers, remains substantially in its original condition.



Dowles Manor. Photo by L.C. LLOYD 1939. Lantern Slide. Shrewsbury Museums Service (SHYMS: P/2005/2028). Image sy11630

- 1.6 The purpose of this Statement is to assess the relevance of these de-designated heritage assets against national and local guidance, and establish whether the potential impact of this application on their setting can be balanced against the benefits accruing from completing the unfinished building works.

2.0 Heritage Assets & Significance

- 2.1 A designated heritage asset is defined as a World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area, designated under the relevant legislation.



Dowles Manor House under protective sheeting

Heritage Assets - National Planning Policy Considerations (NPPF)

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework was introduced as the full statement of Government planning policies covering all aspects of the planning process. Chapter 12 (pg.30) outlines the Government's policy regarding conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The policies in the NPPF area material consideration which must be taken into account in development management decisions, where relevant.
- 2.3 A heritage asset is further defined in the NPPF as:
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).
- 2.4 **Paragraph 128** demands that local authorities should require an applicant to 'describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any



contribution made by their setting'. The Paragraph outlines the information required to support planning applications affecting heritage assets, stating that applicants should provide a description of the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. This Heritage Impact Statement meets those requirements.

- 2.5 **Paragraph 129** outlines that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset). It then outlines that they should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 2.6 **Paragraph 131** requires local authorities to take account of the following in determining planning applications;
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.7 **Paragraph 137** applies specifically to development that may affect the setting of designated heritage assets outlining that proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the heritage asset should be treated favourably.

Significance of the Heritage Assets

- 2.8 Thus it is clear that understanding both the *nature of the significance* and the *level of importance* are fundamental to decision making, and that the analysis assessing significance of the various relevant factors indicates the manorial group of heritage assets has at some point possessed significant architectural and historic interest.
- 2.9 The NPPF defines the significance of a heritage asset as:
"the value 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."
- 2.10 The following brief assessment is therefore provided on the significance of the heritage assets that may potentially be affected by the application proposals,



and is proportionate to the importance of the asset and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals, given their nature and extent.

- 2.11 'Significance' is the means by which the cultural importance of a place and its component parts can be measured and compared, both absolutely and relatively. Understanding significance makes it possible to develop proposals that will protect or enhance the character and cultural values of a site. Four different types of value (with the assessment in italics) which can contribute to significance are identified as follows:

Evidential value: where a building, structure or place provides primary evidence about the past. This can be natural or man-made and applies particularly to archaeological deposits, but also to other situations where there is no written record. *Dowles Manor once comprised an important medieval and post-medieval structures, listed, together with non-designated heritage assets. Of these structures, the House has been completely destroyed; only the late 19th century wing known as Barn Cottage survives in anything like its original state, although its intrinsic architectural or historic interest is slight.*



Barn Cottage

Historical value: where it illustrates some aspect of the past, and this helps to interpret the past, or that it is associated with an important person, event or movement. *The original building was characteristic*



of an isolated but reasonably high status dwelling from the early 17th century on an estate which evolved in the area during the medieval period and before, often owned by families of significance in Shropshire/Worcestershire society of that period. The listing of the heritage assets reflected their historic status, although this has now been deliberately removed through de-listing.

Aesthetic value: where this may derive from conscious design, including the work of an artist or craftsman; or it may be the fortuitous outcome of the way a building or place has evolved. *The site once possessed a rich repository of historic fabric and paintings of particularly high quality relating to its 16th century origins and the later 19th century alterations including substantial Jacobean structural timberwork, reflecting the development of a prestigious house in order to meet changing fashion and the status of the owners. The site and buildings could have been described as 'picturesque'. The main aesthetic contribution made by the buildings on the site has effectively ceased to exist, leaving an unfinished building site in a small valley surrounded by trees. The existing structures contribute little to this setting*

Communal value: where regardless of their historical or aesthetic value, many buildings or places are valued for their symbolic or social value or the local identity which they provide. *The site as a manor was greatly representative of the economic and social structure of this part of Shropshire in the medieval and post-medieval period, and were important survivors from those periods, both individually and as a group. The fire and subsequent rebuilding are viewed locally as a tragedy, reflecting the loss of an important heritage asset*



The site is entirely surrounded by woodland



Rebuilt rear wing of Dowles – to be retained – rear of Barn Cottage in foreground

Local Policy Considerations

- 2.12 The Wyre Forest District Council Core Strategy 2006-2026 (2010) provides the local planning framework for the study site. The following policies are relevant to the historic environment, particularly ***CP11: Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness***, where buildings and spaces will need to be well-designed through the appropriate use of scale, mass, proportions and materials coherently brought together to achieve 'Design quality', reflecting a thorough understanding of site context.
- 2.13 ***POLICY SAL.UP6: Safeguarding the Historic Environment*** establishes that where proposals are likely to affect the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, the Heritage Statement should demonstrate an understanding of such significance and in sufficient detail to assess any potential impacts. Redevelopment proposals should provide design which mitigates appropriately against the loss of the heritage asset in proportion to its significance at a national or local level. Given that the heritage asset has been almost completely lost, it would appear that completing the half built scheme is an appropriate response to the current circumstances.
- 2.14 So given the nature and extent of the application proposals, this Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the heritage assets (whose significance, or lack, is assessed above) that may be directly affected, and is proportionate to the importance of the assets and sufficient to understand the potential indirect impact of the proposals, discussed below in Section 4.0.

3.0 Setting, Character & Appearance

- 3.1 The indirect visual impacts of the proposed development on the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets within the locality have been assessed as required under paragraph 128 of the NPPF. These are mainly related to views from, to and across the heritage assets.
- 3.2 A setting is the context 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, and may affect the asset's overall significance.
- 3.3 Setting comprises the context (eg. land, landscape, skyline, structures and important views) which is experienced from within and outside a heritage asset. Setting does not have a fixed spatial boundary. It includes 'immediate' setting and 'extended' setting. Visual elements of setting are important, but the setting is also affected by other environmental factors such as noise and activity. Setting is an integral element of the significance of a heritage asset: *'the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence and historic fabric but also from its setting - the surroundings in which it is experienced.'* (English Heritage, 2012).

Context of Dowles Manor

- 3.4 As stated above, a number of heritage assets may be indirectly affected by the proposed development, in that the development may impact upon elements of the setting of these assets. These assets mainly relate to the medieval and post-medieval occupation of the site.
- 3.5 Setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, though land within a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset. This depends on a wide range of physical elements within, as well as perceptual and associational attributes pertaining to, the heritage asset's surroundings.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: *The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England) 2015*

- 3.6 The purpose of this Historic England Good Practice Advice note is to provide information on the concept and acknowledgement of 'setting'. 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 just be neutral.
- 3.7 While setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it does not have a fixed boundary and cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area, or as lying



within a set distance of a heritage asset because what comprises a heritage asset's setting may change over time.

- 3.8 The setting of a heritage asset may reflect the character of the wider townscape or landscape in which it is situated, or be quite distinct from it. The contribution of setting to the significance of a heritage asset is often expressed by reference to views, a purely visual impression of an asset or place which can be static or dynamic, including a variety of views of, across, or including that asset, and views of the surroundings from or through the asset, and may intersect with, and incorporate the settings of numerous heritage assets (Advice Note para 5).

Setting and the Significance of Heritage Assets

- 3.9 Paragraph 10 of the Advice Note opines that all heritage assets have significance, and the contribution made by their setting to their significance also varies. And, though many settings may be enhanced by development, not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without harm to the significance of the heritage asset. However, as Paragraph 11 states *'Protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change; indeed change may be positive, for instance where the setting has been compromised by poor development.'*
- 3.10 A 'Zone of Visual Influence' defines the areas from which a development may potentially be totally or partially visible by reference to surrounding topography. The analysis does not take into account any landscape artefacts such as trees, woodland, or buildings, and for this reason is increasingly referred to as a 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility'. Topography and tree cover renders much of the visual relationship between Dowles Manor and its surroundings such a zone, as views are mostly glimpsed through trees from the nearby public footpath. This obviously changes in the wintertime.
- 3.11 The range of circumstances in which setting may be affected and the range of heritage assets that may be involved precludes a single approach for assessing effects. Different approaches will be required for different circumstances. In general, however, this assessment can address the key attributes of the proposed development in terms of its:

location and siting – *the completion of the building works determines the location of the main house; the relocation of the dwelling known as Barn Cottage is further away, on the site of the permitted stables/garaging. This allows the rebuilt Dowles Manor to maintain its relative prominence.*

form and appearance – *the rebuilt Manor maintains the massing and general form of the original building, but without resorting to copying or pastiche*



additional effects – the removal of what is an unfinished building site will enhance the current appearance of the locality

permanence – *as two new dwellings, the proposals are a permanent insertion into the landscape*

3.12 In order to further assess this impact, Historic England recommends the following broad approach to assessment, undertaken as a series of steps that apply proportionately to complex or more straightforward cases:

Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected:

Manorial complex described in section 1.0 above has an intervisibility relationship with the surrounding landscape

Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s):

The heritage assets are set in a small valley surrounded by woodland; a relatively isolated group of heritage assets, separated by a small stream, a tributary of the River Severn. The feeling of relative remoteness of this manorial complex is a fundamental part of its significance in the consideration of setting, which remains, despite the loss of the heritage assets

Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance:

The proposals are in effect an attempt to evolve the site; the proposals, given their limited ambition as the rebuilding of a half-completed project, will not exacerbate that situation. There is no direct physical impact on the heritage assets

Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm:

It is proposed to finish the building in a form that echoes the original Manor House in massing and layout. Relocating the additional dwelling away from the Manor House will maintain its prominence in the landscape

Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes:

Proposals to be controlled by an application for Planning Consent and the application of appropriate Conditions



3.13 This development need not devalue any further the significance of the place, both its tangible values, such as lost historic fabric, or its associational values, such as its remote placing within the landscape, provided the work is done with understanding and efforts to mitigate its current appearance. It already possesses an inter-visual relationship with the site that this proposal will not appreciably alter.



The front element of the Manor House is only partially rebuilt

4.0 *Impact of Proposals on Heritage Assets*

- 4.1 In determining this application to rebuild Dowles Manor House and demolish the 19th century wing, the main issue would be the proposals' impact on the setting of the group of de-designated heritage assets, and the consequences for the wider landscape and thus the character and appearance of the area.
- 4.2 Overall there would be some indirect impact in visual terms upon the setting of the lost heritage assets but this will not, on its own, constitute a degree of harm to them that would warrant an objection or refusal.
- 4.3 The proposed building has been designed in materials that provide a successful integration with the traditional colours and textures of the area's residential architecture, with its use of an appropriate massing to minimise its visual impact.
- 4.4 In its present state, this part of the site detracts significantly from the character and appearance of the locality, and has a minor negative impact on values associated with the heritage assets. Indeed, as a result of the proposed development and clearing of the detritus, the site will be visually enhanced. The building has been designed to respect the scale and massing of original structures, strengthening the character and appearance of the site. These benefits are considered to substantially outweigh any minor disbenefits associated with the potential visual impact on the setting of the lost manorial complex.
- 4.5 The proposed development is clearly within appropriate specifications and utilises a sensible approach to upgrading the site, reflecting the current layout and ensuring existing fabric is maintained and improved where possible, improving to a degree the existing character and enhancing the level of assimilation. The proposed development has an overall neutral impact as it is in keeping with the character of the original complex and the wider area and so is considered to be of an appropriate design and scale in accordance with NPPF and the Core Strategy Policies.



5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The principle of the proposed works is considered acceptable on the basis of:
- its appropriate form and position in relation to the existing development of this part of the historic rural area;
 - the existing pattern of the development is respected and existing building structural character reflected, where the proposed building and detailing has no direct adverse impact on the setting of the manorial complex or the wider area; and
 - the application is therefore generally in accordance with adopted policies and development guidance relating to the concept of setting.
- 5.2 The character of the area stems as a whole from the interplay of the lost heritage assets of various ages and the surrounding landscape. The scheme design and materials have been arranged to respect the general architectural character and mitigate to a degree the visual impact of the proposals through the refurbishment of the existing building site and removal of general detritus. In such a context, it is considered that the scheme would not change the lost group of heritage assets.
- 5.3 The proposed building would be in a relatively elevated position but would be seen against the backdrop of an existing hillside from most views and in the context of the existing positioning within that landscape. These are in a similar alignment parallel to the existing hillside contours and are of a similar scale. The proposed building would have a residential appearance which is not considered out of keeping in this location.
- 5.4 It is considered that any residual visual effects after the proposed landscaping is taken into account would be limited and outweighed by the benefits of completing the scheme.
- 5.5 This Heritage Assessment indicates that there will be some minor adverse visual impacts on the setting of the lost Manor House. However, the effects on the settings and significance of these designated assets would be minor, given the visual association that would then exist between the proposed new dwelling and the existing setting. On balance, therefore, there can be no effective objection to the proposed development on the basis of indirect visual impacts.
- 5.6 The proposed scheme would be sufficiently sensitive to the historic built environment, and has no major implications in terms of amenity, highways or heritage concerns. The proposal is therefore deemed to accord with the relevant policies of the Core Strategy or the NPPF.

