



APP/M3645/W/25/3372747: Land South of Barrow Green Road, Oxted

HERITAGE SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

THOMAS COPP

Introduction

1. This Summary Proof of Evidence has been prepared in response to Reason for Refusal 6 and relates to the heritage impacts of the proposed development. It has been prepared by Thomas Copp and my qualifications and expertise are set out at paragraph 1.1-4 of my Proof of Evidence.
2. Two listed buildings are relevant to this Appeal, namely:
 - Church of St Mary; Grade I listed building (NHLE 1189608). The building was listed in 1958 and lies approximately 90m south-east of the Site
 - Court Farm House; Grade II listed building (NHLE 1029739). The building was listed in 1984 and lies approximately 105m south-east of the Site. It sits to the south of the church
3. The development proposals subject to this appeal have been informed by an appropriate assessment of the significance of these heritage assets and by pre-application discussions with Historic England.

Historic Development of Oxted

4. Oxted developed as a series of separate, nucleated settlements which were conjoined in the 20th century, firstly by development in the early 20th century around the railway station; and latterly by post-war development along Church Lane and West Street. It is only with this post-war expansion that the historically distinct areas began to be seen as a single urban area. This was confirmed by the Conservation Officer in their application response, where they confirmed that the parish historically “*consisted of small-scattered settlements*”.
5. This expansion also led to the amalgamation with Hurst Green to the south and Limpsfield to the east, with Limpsfield comprising a historically distinct settlement, located within a neighbouring parish. These areas all have different characteristics, with parts of them designated as separate conservation areas. They do not represent a “historic town” as defined by the NPPF for green belt purposes.
6. Even if the combined urban areas were considered to form a single historic town, the Site does not preserve the special character of the area. It is bordered by 20th century housing at Wheeler Avenue and does not relate to the historic character of Oxted. The Site does make some contribution to the significance of the Church of St Mary (as discussed in more detail below) but does not allow for any appreciation of the wider, historic development and no appreciation of Old Oxted.

Significance of Heritage Assets and Contribution of Setting to Significance

7. The significance of the Church of St Mary is primarily bound in the fabric of the building itself and is derived from the following key elements:

Historic interest:

- Its medieval origins and surviving medieval fabric which illustrate early development of the church and form a key element of the building’s significance

- The later phases of development, which include the 14th century chancel arch and 15th century arcade and south porch, which illustrate the ongoing development of the building and provide additional historic interest
- The restoration of the building in the 19th century, which included the removal of historic tracery and other embellishments, is also of some historic interest in displaying the changing fashions and approaches to “restoration” prominent in the Victorian period (although these changes arguably undermined the architectural interest of the building)

Architectural and Artistic Interests:

- Drawn from its good quality, surviving tracery and its illustration of changing building styles and tastes

Archaeological Interest:

- From its surviving historic fabric and multi-phased development which may provide additional information regarding historic construction techniques and changes to the building over time

8. The setting of the listed building now comprises its churchyard, including the historic cemetery to the north and north-east. Beyond this, it includes the surrounding development on Court Farm Lane, notably including Court Farm House, and the later adjoining development; the modern cemetery to the north and north-west; the adjacent car park; the neighbouring development within Oxted to the east; Master Park to the south; and the Site and planting to the west.

9. The Site forms part of the rural and agricultural setting to the church and is experienced as such within sequential views and as part of the journey to the church from the west.

10. Court Farm House is described in the list entry as a 16th century farmhouse with a large 19th century extension. However, a study of the building by the Surrey Archaeological Survey identifies that the original building dates from 1613, with an additional bay added in the early to mid 17th century, before the building was remodelled in the 19th century (probably round 1861).

11. The significance of the listed building is primarily bound in its historic fabric and derives from:

Historic interest:

- As an early post-medieval building constructed in a traditional style, utilising local materials
- As a relatively high-status dwelling, that replaced the earlier grange and was associated with an extensive landholding
- As an illustration of historic building styles and the evolution of architectural fashions over time, particularly due to the remodelling of the building in the mid 19th century

Architectural and Artistic Interests:

- Drawn from its construction style and the use of the large, double hearth and large, interesting associated chimney
- The changes to the building in the 19th century are of modest architectural interest, while the architectural interest of the building has been diminished by the various 20th century additions

Archaeological Interest:

- From its surviving historic fabric and phased development which may provide additional information regarding historic construction techniques and changes to the building over time

12. The setting of the listed building has been changed both by the alterations to Court Farm and the development of Oxted in the 19th and 20th centuries. It now includes the Church of St Mary to the north, the surrounding development at St Mary's Close and Wheeler Avenue, Master Park and the Site.

13. The buildings are no longer located in an isolated location, but they can still be appreciated as an important historic grouping, both from within their immediate settings of the churchyard and St Mary's Close, and from Master Park. The Site forms part of the rural settings of the listed buildings. However, any visual connection between the Site and the buildings is limited, with views of the church restricted to glimpsed winter views from the PRoW and limited views of the upper stages of the west tower from the southern part of the Site. These do not provide any appreciation of the building's architectural interest. Views of Court Farm House are even more limited and do not contribute to the significance of the building.

14. The rural character of the Site, which is evident on the approach to the listed buildings from the north-west, makes a limited contribution to the significance of the church by partly illustrating its historic interest as a church serving a historically rural, though now much changed, parish. It makes no contribution to the significance of Court Farm House. This is because the extensive changes seen to the building, which include its redevelopment in the Victorian period and more recent redevelopment to form two dwellings with the majority of its associated farm buildings demolished, mean that it is not possible to clearly experience the building as a post-medieval grange, historically associated with an extensive landholding. The physical separation between the Site and the listed building also means that it is not possible to appreciate the historic relationship between the Site and Court Farm House.

Impacts of the Proposed Development

15. The alteration to one part of the setting of the church will give rise to a low level of less than substantial harm, principally due to the impact to the building's historic interest arising from the further change to its setting. The important relationship between the church and Court Farm House, and the ability to appreciate this relationship, both from Master Park and from within the churchyard and immediate setting of the listed buildings, will be unchanged. Although the development will alter a surviving element of the church's historic, rural setting, the changes seen to the setting of the listed building over time and the separation between the two now meant that this element of setting makes only a limited contribution to the significance of the church, with very little opportunity to experience the building, or appreciate its significance.

16. The proposals have been developed to respond to the setting and significance of the Church of St Mary. This has included the provision of extensive open space within the development. The design approach was discussed and agreed with Historic England at pre-application stage.

17. The proposals will change the character and land use of one part of Court Farm House's setting. As discussed above, the Site is historically related to the listed building (previously forming one part of its extensive landholding) but this relationship is no

longer apparent due to the changes to Court Farm House itself, and to the notable changes within its setting. The change to this approach, and to the character of this parcel of land, would not affect the significance of the listed building as a historic farmhouse once associated with a large landholding, but now in a domestic use and experienced within a domestic setting.

18. The limited visual relationship between the listed building and the Site and the physical separation between them mean that the change to this element of setting will not affect the architectural interest of the listed building, or the ability to appreciate that interest. The proposals will have no impact on the historic relationship between the listed building and the neighbouring listed church, and will not diminish the ability to appreciate this relationship, which remains an important element of the significance of both buildings.
19. The proposals will have no impact on the significance of Court Farm House.

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TCMS Heritage Ltd | 585A Fulham Road | London | SW6 5UA

020 3015 6258

admin@tcmsherditae.co.uk

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