

ASTON RISE, ASTON, BERKSHIRE

HERITAGE STATEMENT



JPHERITAGE

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PROJECT: Aston Rise, Aston, Berkshire

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ASTON RISE, ASTON - HERITAGE STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by JP Heritage Ltd on behalf of Mr O J Lewsey and Ms K Hudson to inform proposed extensions and associated alterations at Aston Rise, Aston. Aston Rise is a late 19th century house set within spacious grounds on the margins of the village of Aston.
- 1.1.2 In response to a pre-application enquiry, Wokingham Borough Council's Built Heritage Officer expressed that *there is an expectation that any planning application made to alter/ extend or replace it should be accompanied by a heritage statement*. As such, this document provides information sufficient to understand the heritage value of Aston Rise and the potential impacts of the proposed scheme on heritage significance, where identified. This has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the LPA in accordance with paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Revised 2023).

1.2 Nature of the proposals

- 1.2.1 The proposed scheme is for extensions and associated alterations at Aston Rise.

1.3 Heritage designations



Figure 1: North elevation of Aston Rise

- 1.3.1 Aston Rise is not located within a conservation area and does not contain any listed buildings. It does lie within the area covered by the Greenlands Covenant overseen by the National Trust. The pre-app response from the Conservation Officer included the following comment: *the property outwardly at least is of a form and age such that it should be viewed as being a heritage asset of non-designated status*.
- #### 1.4 Heritage Gateway
- 1.4.1 Heritage Gateway does not contain any records for Aston Rise.
- #### 1.5 Planning history
- 1.5.1 The planning history for Aston Rise is as follows:

R/4/68 – Sun lounge extension (Approved). (1968).

15131 – Dwelling house, garages, swimming pool on land forming part of Aston Rise (Approved). (1981).

16595 – Double garage and store, new porch (Approved). (1981).

35920 – Garage and store (Refused). (1990).

37246 – Garage and store (Approved). (1991).

P/93/1591 – Renew septic tank at ‘The Cottage’ (Approved). (1993).

95/63112/ - Renewal 37246 (garage) (Approved). (1996).

950153 – Renewal of consent 37246 for the erection of garage (Approved). (1996).

981311 – Proposed erection of detached garage (Approved). (1998).

1.5.2 There have been ongoing discussions with the National Trust which have directed the design development of the proposals. With regards to the existing house and ancillary buildings, the National Trust provided the following comments in 2021:

- *Aston Rise appears to date from the 1890s as it appears on the 1900 OS map with the main house and a separate wing or garage at right angles to the south-east. It's been 'labelled' as Arts and Crafts though it's a weaker version of that style.*
- *However, its main characteristic is its asymmetry and the use of gables and gablets at roof level alongside heavy roughcast which had been painted by the 1980s. The elevations are mainly in brick. The roof is plain tiles. Historically the access drive approached the house on the west and around a sweeping drive to the rear of the property suggesting that the rear elevation was formerly the main entrance with the north, river-facing elevation as a garden front.*
- *The later additions do not obscure attractive features but, in themselves the additions are ugly. The porch on the 'front' elevation is equally inappropriate.*
- *The original garage was modest and appropriate to the property whereas the later replacement, attached garage is rather austere in style.*
- *The detached rear outbuildings look to have had character that has been marred by the modern treatment of elevations.*
- *One its most attractive feature of the site is its setting, on a hill with commanding views and within a large plot.*
- *The historic images give a strong sense of the original design form.*
- *The main change has been the re-routing of the drive way from the rear, to the front of the house, and the additions mentioned.*

1.5.3 Discussions with the National Trust regarding the evolution of the proposed scheme are presented in the Design and Access Statement (Spratley & Partners) and should be read in conjunction with this Heritage Statement.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 NPPF (Revised December 2023)

- 2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that in determining planning applications *‘local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to 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 proposal on their significance* (paragraph 200).
- 2.1.2 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as being *‘a building, monument, site, place area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.’* Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and non-designated heritage assets.
- 2.1.3 In determining planning applications, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take account of (paragraph 203):
- 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 vitality; and
 - The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.1.4 Specific guidance on the treatment of non-designated heritage assets emphasises the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 209). It advises that *‘The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset’.*

2.2 Wokingham Borough Development Plan (February 2014)

- 2.2.1 The relevant historic environment policy for the proposed development is as follows:

Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Area)

- 2.2.2 Policy TB24 states the following:

1. *Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Area are shown on the Policies Map.*
2. *The Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:*
 - a. *Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their settings to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible*

enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.

b. Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.

3. *Proposals for building works shall retain or incorporate existing features or details of historic or architectural significance or design quality into the scheme.*

3.0 THE HERITAGE ASSET AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 Understanding the history of the heritage asset

- 3.1.1 The 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1877, surveyed in 1874) shows that Aston Rise had not been built at this time.



Figure 2: Extract from the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1877)

- 3.1.2 The 2nd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1898, revised in 1897) shows layout and footprint of buildings at Aston Rise by the last decade of the 19th century. A drive is shown along the western boundary. This leads to both the north side of the house and to the south where the drive widens out in a sweeping curve. The house itself has a long rectangular footprint with opposing projecting elements towards the centre. The western end of the house is shown with two shallow projections on the north-western corner and a longer wing on the southern side. There is an outbuilding to the south-east which is shown with a conservatory/attached greenhouse along its western side. There is a small circular structure shown immediately to the north-east of the house. The 1911 census records that Katherine M Bradford, a lady of private means, resided at Aston Rise with her two sisters and 4 servants.

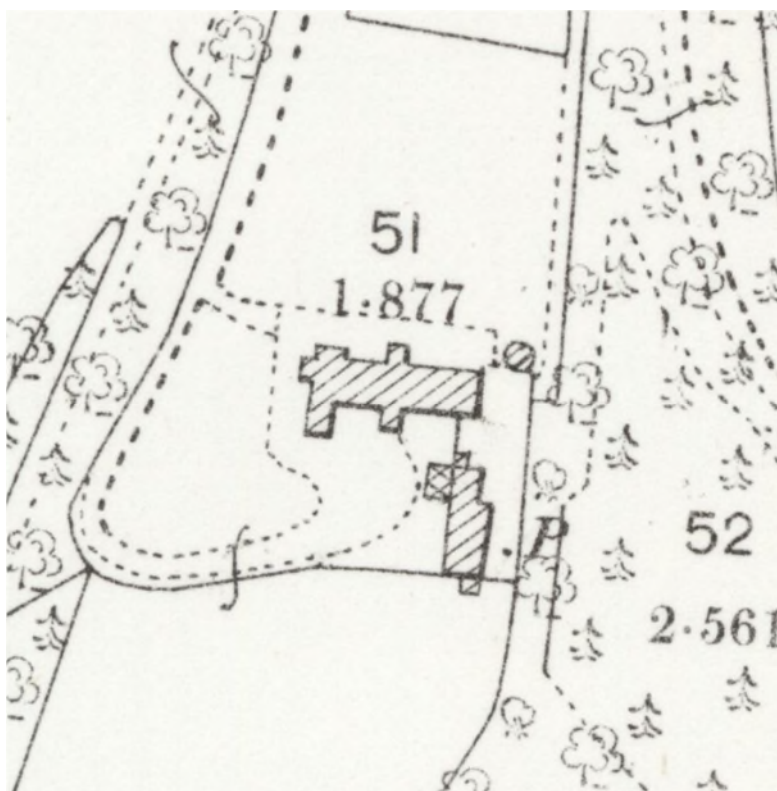


Figure 3: Extract from the 2nd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1898)

- 3.1.3 The 3rd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1925) doesn't show any changes to the house. The ancillary building to the south-east had been extended to the north by this time and two smaller structures built to the south-west. Steps are shown leading from the drive to the north-west and onto the lawn to the north. Between 1918 and 1932 Henry Patrick Surtees, a solicitor, lived at Aston Rise with his family.

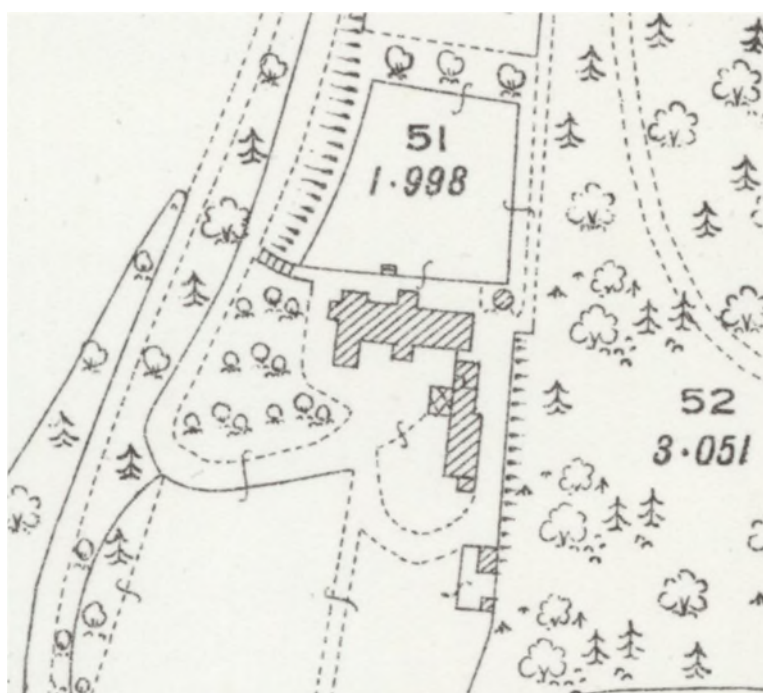


Figure 4: Extract from the 3rd edition of the Ordnance Survey map (1925)

3.1.4 Photographs of Aston Rise in 1948 show the following:

North elevation

- Projecting gabled wing and a 2-storey flush sided bay to the right;
- Roughcast finish to gables;
- 2-storey canted bay with a gabled dormer and a roughcast finish;
- A gabled porch;
- Cross windows to the projecting elements and over the porch;
- Prominent chimney stacks;
- A gabled dormer;
- A lean-to projecting on the left-hand side.

South elevation

- 2-storey projecting gabled structure with a roughcast finish to the gable and a central door and side lights;
- Projecting wing with a chimney stack to the left;
- Casement windows and a largely blank elevation to the right;
- A gabled dormer.



Figure 5: North elevation of Aston Riase in 1948



Figure 6: South elevation of Aton Rise in 1948

- 3.1.5 The ancillary building to the south-west of the house had been converted to a garage by this time.



Figure 7: The cottage in 1948

- 3.1.6 A mid-20th century painting of Aston Rise by K Robinson shows the western aspect of the house including the layout of the garden. This painting confirms that the current door opening on the west elevation was formerly a window. It also shows that the pebbledash/roughcast finish had been painted white by this time.



Figure87: Painting of Aston Rise by K Robinson (mid-20th century)

- 3.1.7 The main change shown on the 1962 edition of the Ordnance Survey map is the rerouting of the access drive along the northern side of the house and to the east of the outbuilding (garage).

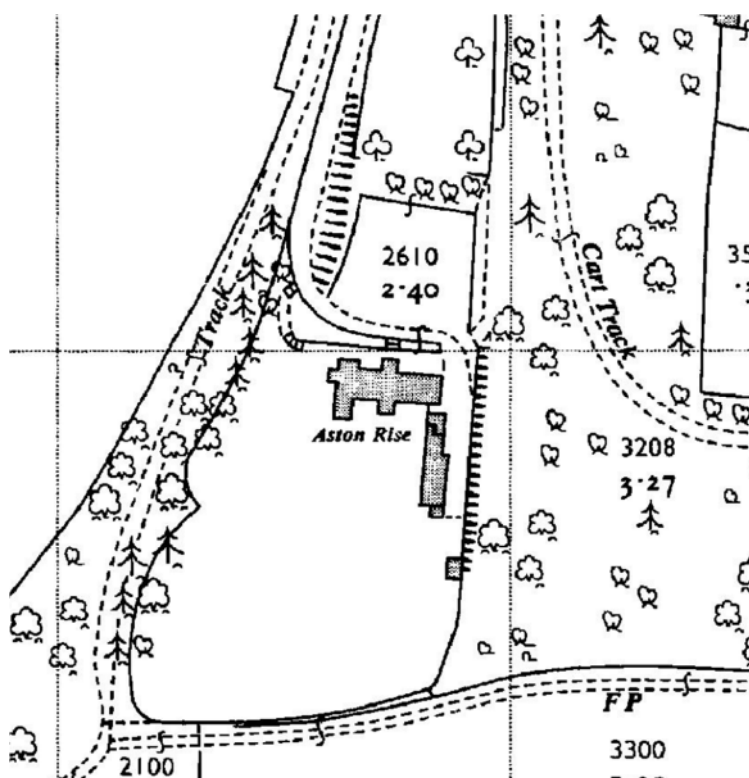


Figure 9: Extract from the 1962 edition of the Ordnance Survey map

- 3.1.8 By 1980 the majority of the windows had been changed and flat roofed extensions with a first-floor balcony had been added to the southern side of the house.



Figure 10: North elevation of Aston Rise in 1980



Figure 11: South elevation of Aston Rise in 1980

3.2 Understanding the form of the heritage asset (refer to figure 20 – suggested ground floor phase plan)

- 3.2.1 Aston Rise is an Arts and Crafts influenced brick-built house with English bond brickwork and architectural elements emphasised by a roughcast finish. The roof is gabled and finished with clay tiles. The elevations are characterised by a variety of forms, including bay windows, gabled projections, gablets, a lean-to, prominent stacks offset from the centre of gables and below the ridge, various proportions of window opening (with both vertical and horizontal emphasis) and the predominant use of brick with roughcast to gables and bay windows.
- 3.2.2 The interior of the house was not inspected as part of this assessment but, based on existing floor plans, the internal layout of the house could be interpreted as follows:
- The central part of the ground floor plan could have been a large central reception hall which may have housed the original staircase. Alternatively, the original layout survives relatively intact and includes a through passage hall with a dining room with a central canted bay window.

- Cross wing on the western side with a flush sided bay window and two fireplaces which was probably functioned as a drawing room (as is the case today);
- A narrow space on the eastern side of the hall which may have housed the original staircase;
- The next room to the east may have served as a kitchen (as is the case today);
- The lean-to element to the east may have functioned as a scullery, larder and store.

3.2.3 Historic maps and the 1948 photograph of the south elevation suggest that the main entrance was on this side of the house. This south elevation is relatively plain when compared to the composition of the north elevation and particularly in oblique views looking south-east from the drive. The apparent 'garden front' on the north side of the building therefore appears to be the principal elevation in terms of design.



Figure 12: Oblique view of the north and west elevations of Aston Rise on the approach to the house along the drive

3.2.4 **North elevation** – The north elevation includes a cross wing with a roughcast finish to the gable to the right. Towards the centre there is a 2-storey canted bay window with a partly cantilevered gabled dormer, all finished with roughcast. To the left of the bay there is a modern porch (1981) which replaced an earlier porch, a modified window opening (raised sill) and a gabled dormer above. There are two casement windows at the eastern end of the main part of the house. The lean-to at the eastern end of the house includes a parapet. The window opening on the south side of the lean-to has a brick on edge head which suggests that this is a later insertion. This window opening is shown on the 1948 photographs.



Figure 13: North elevation of Aston Rise

- 3.2.5 **South elevation** – The south elevation includes the brick gabled cross wing which is dominated by a brick chimney with tumbled and corbelled brickwork. The first-floor window opening to the right is original but the ground floor window is a modern alteration. The majority of the central part of the house is heavily masked by the 1960s sun room extension. This extension wraps around the 2-storey gabled porch with a roughcast finish. There is a gablet dormer to the left of the 2-storey porch. To the right there are two original small window openings (with modern replacement windows) and modern French doors that replaced a window in this position. The lean-to at the eastern end includes a parapet and an original window opening.



Figure 14: South elevation of Aston Rise

- 3.2.6 **West elevation** – The west elevation includes a 2-storey gabled bay with a roughcast finish to the left. To the right there is an original window opening on the first floor and a modern door that replaced a former window opening on the ground floor.



Figure 15: West elevation of Aston Rise

- 3.2.7 **East elevation** - The east elevation is the lean-to element of the house. The original door opening to the right appears to have been modified with a smaller door opening and a modern glazed door. The window opening to the right of the door appears to be a later insertion.



Figure 16: East elevation of Aston Rise

3.2.8 All the doors and windows are modern replacements.

3.2.9 Alterations to the original form of Aston House can be summarised as follows:

- Rebuilding of the porch on the front elevation (rebuilt in 1981);
- Partial infilling of a window opening above the porch;
- Insertion of a window opening and remodelling of a door opening on the east elevation of the lean-to;
- Replacement of a window with French doors on the right hand side of the south elevation;
- Rooflight on the right hand side of the southern roof slope;
- Flat roofed ground and first floor extensions (sun lounge built in 1968) on the south elevation;
- Insertion of a ground and first floor window on the right hand side of the gabled wing on the south elevation;
- Insertion of a door opening on the west elevation of the rear wing;
- Replacement modern windows and doors on all elevations;
- Roughcast finishes painted white.

3.2.10 The outbuilding (now ancillary accommodation/cottage) shown on historic maps survives as a gabled and half-hipped structure on the south-east side of the house. This appears to have been re-clad and painted white. The pattern of window and door openings shown on the 1948 photograph of the outbuilding has been substantially altered. There is a modern brick garage (built in 1981) on the northern side of the outbuilding which replaced an extension to the outbuilding shown on the 1925 Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 17: Oblique view of 'the cottage' looking north-west



Figure 18: Modern garage on the north side of 'the cottage'

3.2.11 There is a garage with a timber cladding and a half-hipped roof to the south of the original outbuilding which was built in the late 1990s.



Figure 19: Timber clad garage to the rear of 'the cottage'

3.3 Assessment of the significance of the heritage asset

- 1.5.1 The following assessment of significance references Wokingham Borough Council's criterion for *Buildings of Traditional Local Character*.
- 1.5.2 **Age** – 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. Historic map regression suggests that Aston Rise was built in the 1890s and is therefore of relatively late date. The building of large Arts and Crafts style houses along this part of the Thames around the turn of the century is a distinctive local characteristic and Aston Rise therefore meets this criterion to a degree.
- 1.5.3 **Rarity** – As an Arts and Crafts influenced house dating from the 1890s, Aston Rise is not considered to be of any great rarity within the local context (as noted above). As such, Aston Rise meets this criterion only to a very minor degree.
- 1.5.4 **Aesthetic value** – The style of the building is typical of the period and of the locality but is not considered to be of particular note as an Arts and Crafts influenced house. Indeed, the National Trust suggest that Aston Rise is a weaker version of this style. The composition of the north and west elevations (comprising a projecting gable, canted bay with integral dormer, flush sided bay, a mix of vertical and horizontal emphasis openings and areas of roughcast render) is perhaps the most pleasing aspect of the house and also the least altered. The loss of all the original windows and doors, a modern porch, a 1960s rear sun lounge and alterations to openings/new openings has diminished the aesthetic value of the house, particularly the south elevation. Aston Rise meets this criterion to a minor degree.
- 1.5.5 **Group value** – The converted outbuilding on the south-east side of the house forms part of the original layout of Aston Rise. This building has been much altered and extended and there is limited inter-visibility between the house and the outbuilding. The legibility of the original function of the outbuilding is also low. The group value of the Aston Rise site is therefore low, although the house could be considered within the context of large house building the area at the turn of the last century.
- 1.5.6 **Evidential value** – There is no significant contemporary or historic written record for Aston Rise and the building does not therefore meet this criterion.
- 1.5.7 **Historic association** – There are no original drawings for Aston Rise and the architect/builder is unknown. The census and electoral role records show that a certain Katherine Bradford lived at Aston Rise in 1911 and that Henry Patrick Surtees resided at the property from 1918 until 1932. There are therefore no historic associations of note and Aston Rise does not meet this criterion.
- 1.5.8 **Archaeological interest** – Aston Rise does not meet this criterion.
- 1.5.9 **Designed landscapes** – Aston Rise is not associated with a locally important designed landscape, park or garden. Aston Rise does not meet this criterion.
- 1.5.10 **Landmark status** – Aston Rise not considered to be a building with strong communal or historical associations, or with striking aesthetic value and does not therefore meet this criterion.

1.5.11 **Social and communal value** – No social or communal value has been identified. Aston Rise does not meet this criterion.

Summary

1.5.12 Based on the assessment above, Aston Rise meets a number of the criterion for *Buildings of Traditional Local Character*. The heritage value primarily relates to the age, i.e. local distinctiveness, and the aesthetic value criterion above, although to a low level of local heritage significance.

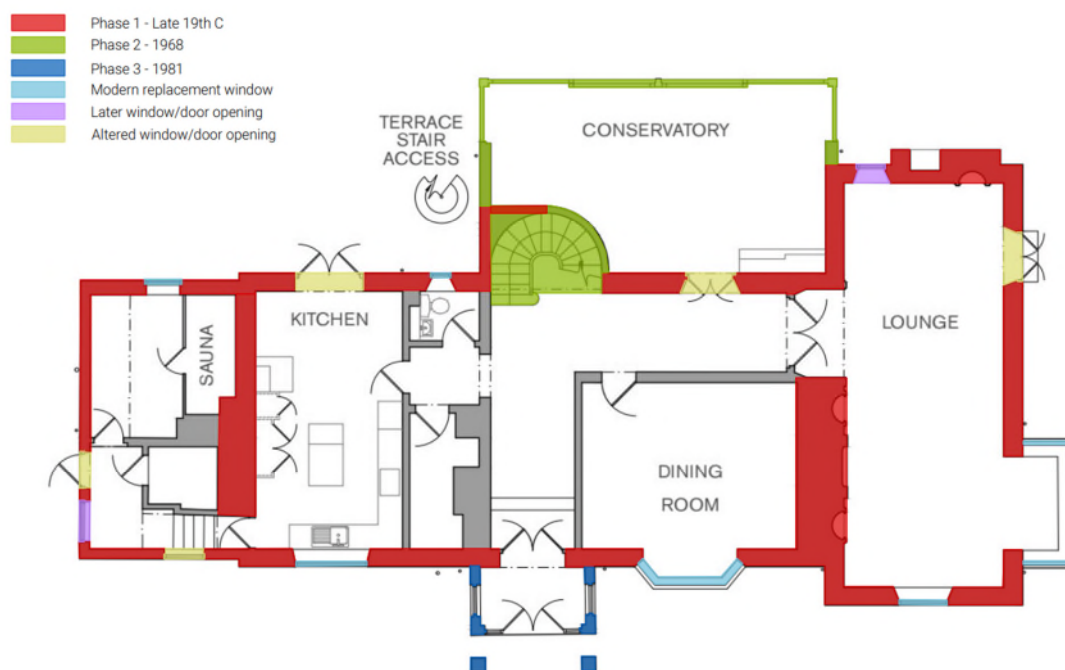


Figure 20: Suggested ground floor phase plan

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Proposals

4.1.1 The proposed scheme is for the following:

- Removal of the existing porch, lean-to, the cottage and garage;
- Eastern extension;
- Rear extensions;
- Replacement porch;
- Alterations to the house.

4.2 Removal of the porch, lean-to and cottage

4.2.1 **Porch** – Historic maps show a projecting element in the position of the current porch and the 1948 photograph of the north elevation of Aston Rise shows a gabled porch-like structure which is assumed to be the original. The current porch was constructed in the early 1980s and, other than being gabled, is of different design to the original. The early 1980s replacement porch is of no heritage value and its removal would not adversely impact on the aesthetic values of Aston Rise.



Figure 21: Early 1980s porch on the north side of Aston Rise

- 4.2.2 **Lean-to** – The brick lean-to on the eastern side of the house is part of the original house. It is single storey and of brick construction with a parapet to the mono-pitched roof. The elevations are very plain which possibly defines the lower status of this part of the house as part of the service end of the house. Nevertheless, the overall appearance of the lean-to is a departure from the architectural language of the rest of the house and is of low aesthetic value. The window on the north elevation is either a later or modified window opening without a brick head detail. The door and window openings on the east elevation are later alterations. The only original window opening is on the south elevation. The window itself is a modern replacement. The loss of original external details has diminished the aesthetic contribution the lean-to may originally have made to the house. The removal of the lean-to would therefore have only very minor impacts on the aesthetic value of Aston Rise.



Figure 22: Later or modified window opening on the north elevation of the lean-to



Figure 23: Later and altered window and door openings on the east elevation of the lean-to



Figure 24: Original window opening on the south elevation of the lean-to

- 4.2.3 **Cottage** – The cottage to the rear of the main house appears to have formed part of the original layout of the Aston Rise site. The 1948 photograph shows its original, or earlier, form and appearance. The overall form of the cottage with the main gabled component and a half-hipped element remains legible. However, the original weatherboard cladding has been replaced with white painted shiplap timbers and pattern of window and door openings substantially altered. The northern end of the building includes a modern attached garage. Overall, the historic character of the cottage has been much eroded and the building, as it is today, makes a negligible contribution to the setting of the main house. As such, the demolition of the cottage would not have harmful impacts on the historic environment.
- 4.2.4 **Garage** – The late 1990s garage is of no heritage value and its removal would not therefore impact adversely on the historic environment.
- 4.3 Eastern extension**
- 4.3.1 It is proposed to replace the existing lean-to with a 2-storey extension. In terms of scale, the proposed extension would have a lower ridge height than the existing house and the western

wing and, as such, would read as subservient to the host building. The proposed extension would project southwards and would partly occupy the footprint of the modern garage which is proposed to be removed. The southward projection references the existing western cross wing. In terms of architectural language, the proposed extension would include a mix of cross windows and casement windows to match the existing and the proposed improvements to the existing elevations. These openings would include segmental arched heads (or structural arches) in the same manner as the existing. The proposed door on the east elevation would have a modest flat hood so that it would read as a secondary entrance, thereby preserving the hierarchy of entrances to the house. Materials would match the existing so that the new wing would blend with the host building.

4.4 Rear extensions

- 4.4.1 The late 1960s sun room extension effectively rotated the house so that the north elevation became the front elevation. The sun room along with a staircase blocked the main entrance on the northern side of the house. The south elevation now reads as a rear elevation.



Figure 25: Late 1960s sun room

- 4.4.2 The existing first floor element of the sun room is to be retained but the glazing is to be removed and the opening infilled with brick and new window openings that would be more in keeping with the style of the existing house. The ground floor element would be extruded in brick with a strip of French doors that stylistically would be in keeping with the spirit of the host building. It is also proposed to extend the existing 2-storey gabled element that was once the main entrance to the house. This element has been much altered in the second half of the 20th century. The proposed extension would use materials to match the existing so that the original design of the house remains legible.
- 4.4.3 It is also proposed to add a lean-to or catslide extension on the right-hand side of the south elevation. This part of the south elevation is, to a large extent, blank and includes French doors that replaced a former window. The proposed extension in this location would be subservient to the host building and would not mask any architectural details of merit.



Figure 26: Right hand side of the south elevation

4.4.4 It is proposed to replace the two modern rooflights on the south roof slope with a gabled dormer to match the existing dormer. This represents an enhancement to the roofscape.



Figure 27: Proposed north elevation (signed off by the National Trust)



Figure 28: Proposed south elevation

4.5 Replacement porch

- 4.5.1 The proposed replacement porch would be brick-built with a flat roof with a central pair of doors. The overall composition would blend with the character of the north elevation and represents an improvement on the existing modern porch.

4.6 External alterations

- 4.6.1 External alterations not noted above relate to changes to fenestration on the north elevation. This would include the insertion of a staircase window which would span two storeys. The style of the window would be in keeping with the character of the house and would emphasise the idea of a relatively large reception hall which was typical of Arts and Crafts design. Other changes would include the lowering of the sill of the modified window over the porch back to its original proportions and the enlargement of the windows on the south elevation of the west wing. These alterations to the south elevation are considered to be sympathetic to the original design and would, indeed, enhance the character of this elevation. It is also proposed to sympathetically replace all the modern windows throughout the house. This would represent an enhancement to the character of the building.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 This assessment provides information on Aston Rise sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on the identified heritage values. As such, it is considered that this Heritage Statement meets the requirements set out in paragraph 200 of the NPPF and local planning policy and provides sufficient information regarding the historic environment.
- 5.1.2 The conclusions of this report are that Aston Rise was built in spacious grounds in the 1890s and included an outbuilding to the south-east. The design of the house is influenced by Arts and Crafts ideas in domestic architecture of the time but is a relatively weak version of this style. The architect/builder is unknown and none of the people who resided at the property are of any historic note, locally or otherwise. As such, Aston Rise is considered to be of relatively low local heritage value which is principally derived from its aesthetic value and the local distinctiveness of Arts and Crafts houses in the area at the turn of the last century.
- 5.1.3 The proposed scheme has been developed over a period of time and with close consultation with the National Trust's Covenants Board Design Panel and has received National Trust Consent under the terms of the Greenlands Covenant. The proposed scheme would include the removal of less accomplished elements of the original house as well as poorly designed later accretions. The proposed extensions and alterations to the exterior have been sympathetically designed to blend with the established character of Aston Rise but also to enhance the character and appearance of the house. The demolition of the existing outbuildings would result in the loss of modern structures as well as a substantially altered historic structure (the cottage) which has negligible historic and aesthetic integrity within the setting of the main house.
- 5.1.4 As such, it is considered that the proposed scheme would sustain the local heritage values of the Aston Rise site in accordance with the NPPF and Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan policies with regards to the historic environment.

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