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Design & Access Statement | Heritage Statement

## **Stone House, Church Street, West Chilmington, RH20 2JW**

Statement prepared by Chilcroft Heritage Planning  
January 2026



Corporate members of:  
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings  
Historic Houses Association  
The Georgian Group



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## 1) INTRODUCTION

- 1.1) I am Haig Dalton, founder of Chilcroft Heritage Planning, an established independent heritage consultancy since 2006. In the years before this, I was a local planning authority officer, within development control departments. I have worked on a wide range of projects throughout the United Kingdom, predominantly (but not exclusively) for private sector clients.
- 1.2) I hold an IHBC/RICS accredited masters degree in Historic Building Conservation (MSc); a postgraduate qualification in Architectural History from the University of Oxford (Oxon); I am an Affiliate member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).
- 1.3) Over the last 21 years I have specialised in the historic environment, both in terms of understanding and analysing physical fabric, and in terms of policy application, specifically by assessing impacts, providing advice and supporting development proposals. My experience includes a diverse range of cases relating to the assessment of physical changes to, and development affecting all manner of heritage assets, their settings and historic fabric.
- 1.4) I have undertaken numerous impact assessments where I have considered the impacts of new development on the historic environment (dealing with physical impacts, setting, townscape, views and inter-visibility), including dealing with the effects of development on heritage assets and historic fabric.
- 1.5) I have provided expert written evidence for planning applications and appeals, including public inquiries, on behalf of appellants and planning authorities.
- 1.6) I understand my role in compiling this Heritage Statement; to give independent and objective evidence on matters within my expertise, based on my own independent opinion and uninfluenced by the instructing party; the applicant. I confirm that I have stated the facts and matters on which my opinion is based, and that I have not omitted to mention facts or matters that could detract from my conclusions.

- 1.7) I believe that the facts stated within this Heritage Statement are true and that the opinions expressed are correct. I have drawn attention to any matters where I consider I lack sufficient information to reach anything other than a provisional conclusion. I have adhered to the standards and duties of the professional bodies I am a member of, and will continue to adhere to those standards and duties.
- 1.8) I was first approached in relation to the proposal in October 2025, when I was asked to provide a heritage statement in relation to the planning application on behalf the applicant. My quote was based on several stages/elements, the first of which was an initial case review, including a site visit during December 2025. I confirm that I am able to act as the applicant's heritage expert following this initial work and a site visit.
- 1.9) As an independent expert professional, I have formed my own opinions and have come to my own conclusions about the effects of the proposed development on heritage assets.
- 1.10) I have included in my statement photos taken on my original site visit. The photos were taken with a compact digital camera and they have not been digitally altered, aside from cropping superfluous areas of sky and/or foreground. This visual assessment is intended to be informative, but it is not intended to be exhaustive.
- 1.11) This statement will describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by the setting, as required by Para.207 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2024). It will assess the significance of the heritage assets by way of Historic England guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017) in accordance with their preferred five-step procedure, identify, assess and explore the significance of their setting and consider the applicant's scheme in relation to them.

## 2) LEGISLATION AND POLICY

- 2.1) Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act place a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.
- 2.2) Section 72 of the Act places similar duty on the decision maker with respect to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas, however this does not extend to the setting of conservation areas.
- 2.3) The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** constitutes the Government's current national guidance and policy regarding development in the historic environment. It is a material consideration and includes a succinct policy framework for local planning authorities and decision takers. It relates to planning law by stating that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.4) Paragraph 203 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment with emphasis on "significance", defined in Annex 2 as:

*"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance."*

- 2.5) Annex 2 of the NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset 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."*

- 2.6) Paragraph 207 of the NPPF places a duty on the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, providing a proportionate level of detail. The effects of any development on a heritage asset therefore need to be assessed against the four components of its heritage significance: its archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interests.
- 2.7) Paragraph 208 of the NPPF notes 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) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 2.8) Paragraph 212 states with regard to heritage assets. that great weight should be given to their conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial or less than substantial harm.
- 2.9) Conservation (for heritage policy) is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

*“The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.”*

- 2.10) The importance and relevance of this definition is that it does not suggest conservation to be the same as preservation. Indeed, what sets conservation apart is the emphasis on proactively maintaining and managing change and not on a reactive approach to resisting change. In its simplest interpretation conservation could amount to a change that at least sustains the significance of a heritage asset.

- 2.11) Paragraphs 214 to 215 describe two levels of potential harm that can be caused to the significance of designated heritage assets, namely substantial harm and less than substantial harm. These effects are to be weighed in the planning balance according to the guidance set out within the paragraphs, bearing in mind the statutory provisions above. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including grade I and II\* listed buildings should be wholly exceptional.
- 2.12) Paragraph 215 deals with cases of less than substantial harm and notes that any such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Heritage protection and the conservation of heritage assets are recognised as of benefit to the public.
- 2.13) Harm is defined by Historic England as a change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.14) Paragraph 219 of the NPPF notes that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
- 2.15) **The National Planning Practice Guidance** provides advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment in accordance with the NPPF. The PPG currently relates to the 2019 version of the NPPF but will be updated in due course to reflect NPPF 2023.
- 2.16) In regards to the setting of heritage assets the PPG notes:

*“The setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage.”*

2.17) The guidance notes that a thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

2.18) In relation to harm the guidance states:

*“Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.”*

2.19) Paragraph 020 of the document notes that public benefits can be heritage based and can include:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset; and
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset for the long term.

2.20) The **Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning** Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017) is a document published by Historic England as a second edition in December 2017, replacing the earlier 2015 setting guidance. The document provides for a thorough understanding of the setting of a heritage asset and the relationship of the setting to curtilage, character and context.

2.21) The guidance document notes, in paragraph 18, that the protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change. The document recognises that not all heritage assets are of equal importance and states that the contribution made by their setting to their significance will also vary. Not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without causing harm to the significance of the asset.

2.22) As per earlier Historic England guidance, the document advocates a stepped approach to assessing the impact of change within setting on the significance of heritage assets. This stepped approach is:

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);

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

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

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

2.23) Guidance under Step 2 notes that the asset's physical surroundings and how the asset is experienced (such as views, noise, tranquillity, sense of enclosure etc.) should be taken in to consideration.

2.24) Step 3 is also important in making it clear that a proposed development should not be assessed in terms of its impact on setting; instead it should be assessed in terms of the impacts on significance. That is to say, what matters is not the extent of visibility of the development or change to the setting of an asset, but the extent of change to its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest. In some circumstances, this evaluation may need to extend to cumulative and complex impacts which may have as great an effect on heritage

assets as large-scale development and which may not only be visual. At the very least the assessment should address the key attributes of the development in terms of its location and siting, form and appearance, additional effects and permanence.

- 2.25) Paragraph 39 notes that options for reducing the harm arising from development may include the relocation of elements of a development or changes to its design. It notes that good design may reduce or remove the harm.
- 2.26) **Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** requires great weight to be given to preserving the setting of a heritage asset. In *Jones v Mordue [2015] EWCA Civ 1243* the court confirmed that if the decision-maker has worked through the relevant heritage paragraphs in the NPPF, they will have complied with the s66 duty.
- 2.27) In *Barnwell Manor [2014] EWCA Civ 137* the court confirmed that great weight should be attached to the desirability of preserving the setting of a heritage asset.

### **3) DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

- 3.1) The proposed development includes the retrospective removal of an internal wall and infill of an interconnecting door with a stud wall. Large nibs and a ceiling beam will continue to define the historic context of the historic floorplan and the stud wall is a reversible intervention.
- 3.2) The way in which the listed building of Stone House is best appreciated as part of its significance as a heritage asset, will be preserved. The proposal solely relates to the interior of the building and would not affect the setting of neighbouring heritage assets or the conservation area.
- 3.3) The dwelling is accessed via Church Street with pedestrian access via a gate between the two. The semi-detached dwelling is separated from the adjoining dwelling of The Old School House by a boundary wall and garage. The external aspect of the dwelling, its setting and means of access would be unchanged by the proposals.
- 3.4) The proposed works would be centred on areas inside the dwelling, without reference to the adjoining dwelling of The Old School House. Together the two dwellings are a Grade II listed building.
- 3.5) The proposal is one that has already been carried out and the purpose of this application is therefore to regularise that. As an independent specialist, Chilcroft Heritage Planning have assessed the works and determined that Listed Building Consent should have been sought for these works.
- 3.6) The proposal does not seek any change of use for the building or its curtilage. The existing use as a single residential dwelling will therefore remain unchanged.
- 3.7) The proposals relate to the existing dwelling, which sits above the water table. The design would not alter the ground level or involve any works to the foundations of the building, involving excavating down below this existing level. All hardstanding surfaces would remain as existing.

#### 4) ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 4.1) The proposed site of Stone House forms part of a single listing with The Old School House that abuts it directly to the north and is a Grade II listed building (**List No. 1182256**). The former school buildings were building in c.1870 with the village school forming the main bulk of the building to the north and the proposed site being used as the headmasters house. As such, it has a separate entrance fronting Church Street, with the principal elevation facing east (**see Fig 1**). The two storey building is constructed of stone with a gable end roof and uses casement windows with zinc glazing bars, a tiled roof and single stone dormer window to one side. A central porch with a timber frame canopy and tiled hipped roof makes for a modest entrance into a small hallway, leading to a central, single staircase, which is believed to be in its original location. To each side of this sit the principle reception rooms, with the sitting room to the right and dining room to the left. At the rear of the dwelling overlooking the main curtilage sits the kitchen and the space between it and the dining room was historically divided by an internal brick wall, with no direct access between the two. Single doorways leading out into the ground floor hallway provided the only means of access between the dining room and kitchen areas (**See original ground floor plan**).
- 4.2) The historic floorplan throughout the dwelling remains broadly intact, with little or no evidence of significant alternation. The fireplaces, staircase and principle rooms all remain in situ, which adds to the buildings significance. Despite subsequent changes, including this retrospective application, the legibility of the historic floorplan remains able to be clearly understood and appreciated, which is considered to be part of the listed buildings significance.
- 4.3) The proposed site is situated within the West Chilton Conservation Area, with Church Street to the eastern side and the Grade I listed building of St Mary's Church directly to the south. Beyond the frontage of Stone House sits the Grade II listed Whipping Post and Stocks (**List No. 1182260**). The proposals, which are internal only, are therefore likely to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, with no loss of significance to the neighbouring church or village stocks.



**Fig 1:** The proposal relates to the interior of Stone House only and would therefore preserve the setting of neighbouring heritage assets and maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

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**Fig 2:** The view from the dining room looking into the kitchen. As a retrospective application, the former partition wall has been opened up, leaving large nibs and a ceiling beam to distinguish between the two.

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**Fig 3:** Large nibs and a ceiling beam have been left at each side, showing the outline of the original wall. Whilst the loss of historic fabric cannot be condoned, anything that replaces it can only ever be a replica and the existing side nibs and ceiling beam do at least broadly continue to allow for the appreciation of the former divide to be still clearly understood.

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**Fig 4:** The large nibs at the side of the wall still allow for the division of this space to be understood, in the context of the historic floorplan of the dwelling. Skirting and architraves have been replicated to match.

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**Fig 5:** The original doorway leading from the hallway into the kitchen has been boarded over as a stud wall, sitting behind the coats on the wall. This is considered to be a reversible intervention.

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**Fig 6:** The infill of the former doorway has been achieved seamlessly and with a matching skirting board. This change is a reversible intervention in accordance with Historic England guidance.

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## 5) IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1) Whilst the living arrangements and use of a property cannot be a primary consideration in the case of a listed building, they will undoubtedly feature in many renovation works. With a listed building however, the historic fabric should always remain the primary consideration and any changes should seek to preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage asset.
- 5.2) The proposals have already been carried out at Stone House and this application is therefore retrospective. As professionals, we have pointed out that these works should have been carried out subject to Listed Building Consent and the applicant now fully understands this. The proposals are therefore designed to regularise these and may require little subsequent change.
- 5.3) Following an inspection of the building, we have observed the changes that have been made to the listed building and examined how these have affected the significance of the heritage asset. The changes outlined in this proposal, are all at ground floor level and involve alterations to the internal floorplan of the dwelling and which are no doubt intended to make the space more user friendly for modern living. Whilst we sympathise with the owners who use it as a family home, where a listed building is concerned, this can never be the primary concern and historic fabric must always remain the main consideration. In this case, we have carefully considered the potential to reverse these changes and if this would be an appropriate course of action.
- 5.4) From the hallway leading into the kitchen, the single doorway has been blocked up with a stud wall, directly behind where the coats now hang (**see Fig 5**), and made good with matching skirting (**see Fig 6**). This infill has been achieved seamlessly and has maintained the corridor beside the staircase, leading through to the downstairs bathroom. The doorway beside it leading through into the dining room is arguably the more important of the two, being located more centrally within the entrance hall and closest to the front door and sitting room, thus broadly maintaining the historic flow of the floorplan and sense of connection between these main living spaces. On balance, this is a reversible intervention, that accords with Historic England guidance.

- 5.5) Inside the dwelling, the removal of a wall within the existing kitchen space is arguably the most serious intervention and one that would have required Listed Building Consent, due to the loss of historic fabric. The change centres on the internal brick built wall that divided the dining room and kitchen, with no interconnecting door between the two. Historically, these two rooms were purposefully divided to create a formal dining area separate of the kitchens. A member of staff would likely have prepared meals in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century rather than the headmaster or his wife and so, the two spaces would have been deliberately divided, to ensure that the two areas of the ground floor remained separate. Of course, this is very different from modern day living practices where no servants are involved and open living spaces, particular in the case of kitchens and dining, are preferred. Although it would be possible to continue walking from the kitchen, through into the hallway and back into the dining room carrying food and utensils, we can accept that it is far from ideal and the space as it is now set out across these two rooms, functions much better. Due to the small and somewhat cramped nature of the floorplan, the proposed layout is arguably more usable and in the best interests with providing Stone House with a long term sustainable use, as a dwelling.
- 5.6) Whilst we deeply regret this intervention, the loss of this part of the wall is now well established and any historic fabric long removed and lost. In accepting this fact, we have to go forward from this position. The recreation of a wall in this location would not be deemed to be a suitable substitute and would amount to no more than a replica, that would have no historic fabric value whatsoever. The recreation of this structure is not something that is supported by Historic England best practice and is therefore not thought to be the best solution. Where a wall between two rooms is removed, it is common practice to leave a nib at the side of each wall, to denote that the space was once divided at this point. The proposal has already done just that having left two large nibs and a ceiling beam spanning the space (see Fig 2, 3 and 4), fulfilling this visual purpose. It is therefore considered that this design should be retained as a compromise.

## 6) CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1) This heritage assessment has correctly identified the significance of the Grade II listed building. The proposal has therefore met with the requirements of para.207 of the NPPF to consider the impact of the proposal on a heritage asset in accordance with the significance of the heritage asset.
- 6.2) The proposal would not impact on the external appearance of the listed building or its curtilage and would therefore preserve the setting of the designated heritage asset, in accordance with Historic England *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2018). Furthermore, the internal proposals would preserve the setting of the adjacent listed buildings of St Mary's Church, the Whipping Post and Stocks and the shared asset of The Old School House. There would also be no harmful impact on the West Chilton Conservation Area and it would leave the character and appearance unchanged.
- 6.3) The heritage assessment that has been conducted has focused on the significance of the listed building and its historic fabric, rather than any personal desire of the applicant, ensuring that the designated heritage asset remains the primary consideration.
- 6.4) The infill of the former kitchen door from the hallway with a stud wall and matching skirting has been achieved seamlessly and is a reversible intervention in accordance with Historic England guidance. The design and use of materials is considered capable of preserving the significance of the listed building.
- 6.5) Although the loss of the internal wall between the dining room and kitchen is regrettable, its historic fabric cannot be recreated and would amount to a replica, which is not an approach supported by Historic England best practice. Where an internal wall has been removed, it is common practice to insert nibs at the side of the wall to denote where the divide in the living space originally was. In this case, the presence of a large nibs to each side and a ceiling beam spanning the space has arguably already had this effect and serves this visual purpose.



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