

HERITAGE ASSET – ASSESSMENT of SIGNIFICANCE and IMPACT

**PROPOSED
CONVERSION OF
DISUSED STABLES AND
WAGON LODGE INTO
HOLIDAY LETS AT WOODSELL
FARM, HILLSIDE ROAD
STALISFIELD, KENT
ME13 0JF**



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View from former stables over meadow

HERITAGE ASSET – ASSESSMENT of SIGNIFICANCE and IMPACT

PROPOSED REPAIRS and CONVERSION of EXISTING DISUSED STABLES And WAGON LODGE INTO HOLIDAY LETS At WOODSELL FARM, HILLSIDE ROAD, STALISFIELD, KENT ME13 0JF

Woodsell Farm is situated near the top of the Kent Downs at an altitude of approx 135 metres and the farmhouse is a Grade II Listed Building dating from the 17th Century. It was listed by English Heritage on 24th January 1967 and the text of the listing is as follows:-

House, C17 and C18. Timber framed and clad with chequered brick, with hung tile, and tile hung rear range. Plain tiled roof. Two storeys and hipped roof with stacks to left and projecting at end right. Regular fenestration of 3 glazing bar sashes on first floor and 2 on ground floor with central glazed door and flat hood on scrolled brackets. Recessed 2 storey late C20 extension on left.

Listing NGR: TQ9620853072

Although the farmhouse is listed Grade II, the former stables and Wagon Lodge do not appear to be. There is no mention of any other structures in the listing, but the Late C20 extension to the West of the farmhouse is mentioned, and the flat roofed garages to the East are not. This suggests that the garages were added to an already listed building. The outbuildings are in the North Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but not within the curtilage of the farmhouse and, although in a dilapidated state, the former stables have some attractive flint faced walls and the Wagon Lodge is an oak framed building with an attractive timbered roof which is now covered with corrugated asbestos, but will be re-tiled with plain clay tiles.



Inside the Wagon Lodge looking up at the roof structure

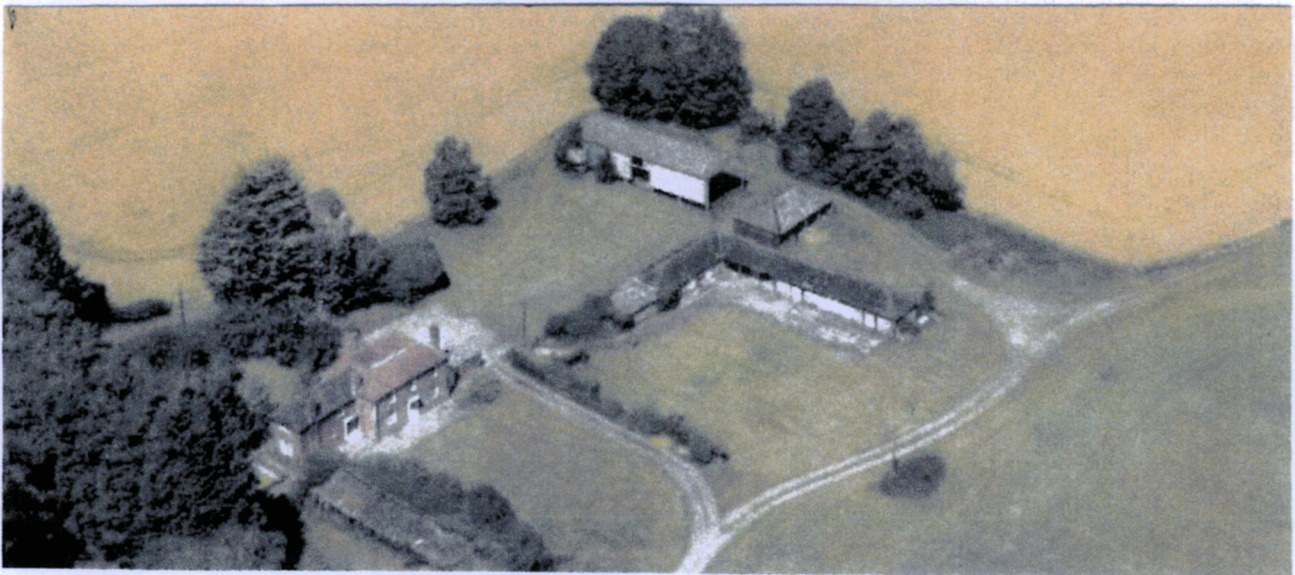
Under the previous ownership Woodsell Farm was used for raising pheasants and red legged partridges then charging their clients to shoot them. This caused very considerable ecological damage. Every year 30,000 pheasants and 20,000 partridges were bred and fed on maize, grown on the farm to feed them. Neither bird species, nor maize, is native to the British Isles. Hedgerows and undergrowth were removed to deprive the



The stockade for insects and small animals and new hedge.

game birds of cover. A field was given over for parking for the large SUV vehicles favoured by the shooters and the multi-thousands of spent cartridges contaminated the natural environment with the inevitable consequence that Woodsell Farm now has very little wildlife. The shooting license expired in January and the present owners, Artysea Ltd, have not renewed it. They have restored a Grade II listed Georgian terrace of former naval officer's houses on Star Hill, Rochester, which is now part of Rochester Independent College, and a shipyard in Truro, Cornwall, where traditional sailing vessels are now built. It has already planted new native species hedgerows and removed most of an overgrown Leylandii hedgerow to the West of the farmhouse. The trunks and branches have been formed into an insect and small animal-friendly stockade. A new native species hedge is planted just inside the stockade. Artysea Ltd is working with ecologists and organisations like the Woodland Trust, to establish a farm where native wild flower seeds will be cultivated, some for bird feed and some to be sold to organisations and individuals to establish natural meadows.

The farm will also host seminars and undertake research work. Artysea Ltd intend to restore Woodsell Farmhouse, undoing some of the very odd changes made when the new wing was added in the late 20th Century including returning the main entrance door to its original central position in the C17 part of the building. The semi-ruined Bull Sheds in front of the left hand side of the farmhouse are also to be restored, but first, the conversion of the former stables and Wagon Lodge into holiday-lets. This will get attractive buildings restored and generate an income for the farm, thereby helping to fund future improvements.



Aerial view of Woodsell farmyard. The 'L' shaped building is the former stables with the Wagon Lodge just beyond. Woodsell Farmhouse has the tiled roof with the Bull Sheds at the bottom of the picture.

This proposal is very similar to a planning application submitted in 1991 and approved. The work was not carried out, so the planning approval has lapsed. A new planning application is therefore necessary. As the buildings have not been maintained, they are now in great need of restoration. Apart from two small extensions, the buildings will remain the same size as they are now. Roofs will be re-slatted on the former stable block and tiled in lieu of the corrugated iron now in place on the former wagon lodge. Joinery is to be fixed in existing openings when possible.

The extension to the stable building is tucked away behind the existing flint wall and it largely replaces a former extension with a mono-pitch corrugated iron roof that has no practical or aesthetic value whatsoever. The extension to the wagon lodge is to the rear, close to a large 20th Century 'Atcost' type barn used to shelter agricultural machinery. It will be oak framed with the posts and braces visible to tie-in with the repaired or replaced posts and braces in the original part of the building. It is to be weatherboarded and the corrugated iron roofing is to be replaced with handmade plain clay tiles, similar to the tiles on Woodsell Farmhouse.



The Wagon Lodge with the 'Atcost' barn behind. Note the crude concrete stools supporting two of the oak posts and the remnant of the original weatherboarded end wall. There are no braces to the oak posts on the closest bay, so it can confidently be assumed that this part of the Wagon Lodge is an extension.

The proposed holiday-let apartments will help to enable the execution of future renovations and restorations of Woodsell Farmhouse and the Bull Sheds. In their own right the completed work will be an enhancement to the AONB, and it will attract discerning visitors to the farm, which will be of benefit to businesses in Stalisfield, such as the Plough Inn. They will also enable the planting of native species hedges, bushes and trees as well as fields cultivating wild flowers for the production of seeds. The income generated will help to finance the much-needed future restoration of Woodsell Farmhouse.



The former stables & Woodsell Farmhouse with flat roofed garage extension

The three flat roofed garages attached to Woodsell Farmhouse were not mentioned in the listing description although the late C20 extension was. This indicates that they were built after the listing. They are not a worthy addition to a listed building.

In the meantime, getting the farm working is the main priority and the former stables and Wagon Lodge is an integral part of this as well as being high priority due to their deteriorating condition. The damage caused by the activities by the pheasant shooters is in the process of being rectified by the restoration of hedgrows. The crops of wildflowers are far more suitable for 'chalk-land' than the highly fertilised maize crops grown to feed the game birds, so this proposal for visitor accommodation, which will help make the project financially viable, richly deserves officer support.

In short; this proposal will have a big impact on the AONB. And it will be an entirely beneficial one.



View of the former stables and Wagon Lodge from the East, with Woodsell Farmhouse beyond.

Document consulted - British Listed Buildings

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