

# Heritage Impact Assessment

## *Additional Information*



In Support of Application for Planning Permission for Proposed Works at  
Arbour Tree Farm, Warwick Road, Chadwick End, Solihull B93 0BE

January 2022

---

Keystone Heritage



## Keystone Heritage



Keystone Heritage  
First Floor  
46 Stone Delf  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S10 3QX

Tel: +44(0)78 3456 1626

Email: [mail@KeystoneHeritage.co.uk](mailto:mail@KeystoneHeritage.co.uk)

Web: [www.KeystoneHeritage.co.uk](http://www.KeystoneHeritage.co.uk)

Cover image: Arbour Tree Farm, Solihull

All rights in this work are reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means (including without limitation by photocopying or placing on a website) without the prior permission in writing of Keystone Heritage except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988. Applications for permission to reproduce any part of this work should be addressed to Keystone Heritage at [mail@KeystoneHeritage.co.uk](mailto:mail@KeystoneHeritage.co.uk). Undertaking any unauthorised act in relation to this work may result in a civil claim for damages and/or criminal prosecution. Any materials used in this work that are subject to third party copyright have been reproduced under licence from the copyright owner except in the case of works of unknown authorship as defined by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988. Any person wishing to assert rights in relation to works that have been reproduced as works of unknown authorship should contact Keystone Heritage at [mail@KeystoneHeritage.co.uk](mailto:mail@KeystoneHeritage.co.uk).

Keystone Heritage asserts its moral rights to be identified as the author of this work under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

© Keystone Heritage 2022

## Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	The Site	5
3	Heritage Significance of Arbour Tree Farm	6
4	SWOT Analysis of the Application Site	9
5	Conclusions	11
	Appendix 1: Sources	12

# 1 Introduction

## Circumstances of this Additional Information

- 1.1 Further to the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted in support of the current application, Keystone Heritage has been commissioned to provide additional information in relation to Arbour Tree Farm near Chadwick End, Solihull.
- 1.2 The application is for the redevelopment of the main farmhouse and residential conversion of surrounding buildings that were formerly part of a working farm. This *addendum* is provided in regard to Local Plan Policy P7.

## Purpose of this Additional Information

- 1.3 This document is intended to assist the local planning authority to reach a positive decision on the proposed works in terms of the heritage benefits offered by the scheme with regard to Local Plan Policy P7. It has been written in compliance with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy P16 (Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness) of the Solihull Local Plan<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.4 This additional information has also been prepared with reference to the following guidance:
  - Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statement - West Midlands region, English Heritage August 2006.
  - National Farmsteads Character Statement, English Heritage October 2014.
  - The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings, Historic England October 2017.
- 1.5 The background history of the application was described in some detail in the Heritage Impact Assessment and will not, therefore, be repeated. The relative heritage values (or 'significance') of each component building, which are fully examined in the Heritage Impact Assessment, will be summarised here for information and a conclusion reached on the collective heritage significance of the buildings as a group.
- 1.6 A standard SWOT analysis is then undertaken examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the buildings' heritage values and a conclusion reached in terms of heritage benefits offered by the scheme in the context of local planning policy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Solihull Local Plan: Shaping a Sustainable Future, December 2013.

## 2 The Site

### National and Local Designations

- 2.1 Arbour Tree farmhouse lies at the north end of a former working farmstead comprising a number of agricultural buildings of varying dates arranged around an open yard area in a courtyard formation. The application site does not lie within a designated conservation area.



Figure 1 Extant buildings within the application site. Source: Google Earth.

- 2.2 No part of the former farm is nationally listed but Arbour Tree Farmhouse is included on Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's list of buildings of local architectural or historic interest.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.3 Other structures within the application site include:
- a short range of single storey outbuildings adjoining the south end of the farmhouse;
  - a detached L-shaped range of single storey outbuildings opposite; and
  - a linear, double-height range to the south comprising a conjoined cottage and former threshing barn.
- 2.4 None of these outbuildings are currently included on the Solihull local list though some might meet the criteria for future inclusion on the list. For planning purposes, these buildings may be regarded at present as non-designated heritage assets.

---

<sup>5</sup> Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Local List ref.13/165.

### 3 Heritage Significance of Arbour Tree Farm

#### Arbour Tree Farmhouse

- 3.1 The farmhouse at Arbour Tree Farm is a red brick and tile structure with some timber framing, parts of which date to the 18<sup>th</sup>, or possibly even 17<sup>th</sup> century. Originally a small cottage with diaper work detailing, it has been extended and altered over successive phases.
- 3.2 The farmhouse is a typical example of dispersed rural settlement in this region, and displays the use of traditional vernacular building materials and techniques. The numerous alterations and additions made to the building over at least four centuries have left a rich, legible archaeological record of the adaptations made in response to the changing needs of the property.
- 3.3 The building has been assessed on a national scale as being of low heritage significance (albeit lying towards the upper end of that category), with the majority of that significance derived from archaeological and historic value.

#### Agricultural Outbuildings

- 3.4 A linear range to the south of the farm yard, including a threshing barn and adjoining cottage, also appears to be shown on the Tithe map of 1843 and may be contemporary with the earliest phase of the main house. The timber framed red brick and tile construction is typical for the area and, together with the farmhouse, provides an important narrative as to the scale and type of farming undertaken at Arbour Tree.
- 3.5 The building has clearly undergone extensive alterations in the past, as evidenced by numerous infill sections and blocked openings, giving the traditional farm building an additional level of archaeological interest.
- 3.6 An L-shaped single storey range on the west side of the yard was added by 1887 and later extended between 1917 and 1925. The addition of stables at this relatively late date (at a time when motorised vehicles were widely being adopted) may indicate the social status of Arbour Tree Farm, or that horses were being kept for personal recreational use.
- 3.7 This range is not in beneficial use and is beginning to suffer from a lack of maintenance. Part of the building has been re-roofed using modern sawn timbers but elsewhere the stables seem to retain the original timber roofing structure.

- 3.8 A single storey range of outbuildings comprising two stables and a kennel adjoins the south end of the main house. These appear from map evidence to have been constructed between 1887 and 1905 in a similar style and technique to other outbuildings but the existing roof structure suggests they may be earlier. Again, the late date and small size of the stables suggests these may not have been to house working animals.
- 3.9 The outbuildings have been assessed as having low heritage value, commensurate with the modest architectural quality in their historic fabric and the local level of historic interest in the structures. It is possible that some of these buildings, notably the former threshing barn and stables with a good degree of historic fabric survival, would meet the criteria for future inclusion on the local list.

#### Yard Area

- 3.10 The open area around which the outbuildings are arranged has not always been as open as it is today. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century this area contained a substantial structure (at least in footprint) labelled on later maps as 'Tank'.



*Figure 2 Central courtyard at Arbour Tree Farm.*

- 3.11 However, the yard as a central part of the farmstead was clearly an early or original element at Arbour Tree, the position and dimensions of which were essentially defined by the L-shaped threshing barn range shown on the Tithe map of 1843. The addition of outbuildings throughout

the 1800s enclosing the space on three sides further reinforced the identity of the yard as a feature of the farm itself, entered from the south or east and giving access to the farmhouse to the north.

- 3.12 The existing brick surfacing and dovecote may be relatively modern additions, but the use of this space in conjunction with the working barn and stables in an area animated with noise and activity would have been a defining feature of the farm. The yard is currently disused and is becoming overgrown.

#### Group Value of the Farm

- 3.13 Individual buildings at Arbour Tree Farm evidently do not meet the criteria for national listing. The main farmhouse is included on the local list, however, and other outbuildings – in particular the threshing barn – may also meet the criteria for local listing.
- 3.14 However, the greatest value of the buildings lies not in their significance as individual structures but in their value as a group. Together they are associated with, and illustrative of, a modestly sized 18<sup>th</sup> century farmstead. Rising grain prices in the period 1750-1880 may be reflected in the size of the threshing barn, indicating a reasonably substantial scale of agricultural activity here.
- 3.15 Midland counties also saw the final phases of the post-medieval enclosure of farmland, especially from the 1790s-1815, which created the setting for the developing farmstead at Arbour Tree. The farming ‘heyday’ of the 1840s-1870s probably coincides with phases of alteration and extension to the outbuildings and the farmhouse itself.
- 3.16 Together, this group of agricultural buildings provides a narrative about the changing scale and nature of farming at Arbour Tree Farm and, perhaps, the farm’s changing wealth and viability, that is not told by any individual building on its own.
- 3.17 Increased post-war regulation together with increased demand for productivity was often reflected in the scale and nature of farm buildings, especially following the 1937 Agriculture Act. However, at Arbour Tree, such 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion seems to have been restricted to the area south of the main entrance, meaning that the more traditional layout and buildings on the north side of the entrance have been allowed to retain much of their original quality and character.



## 4 SWOT Analysis of the Application Site

- 4.1 The perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the component buildings of the application are summarised here.

### Strengths

- 4.2 Together, the buildings on the north side of the entrance are legible as a farmstead that has evolved throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Despite the removal or replacement of some buildings over time, the integrity of the existing layout of Arbour Tree Farm, as an introspective arrangement of outbuildings round a courtyard with nearby farmhouse off-set in its aspect, is historically important. The level of survival of historic fabric of component buildings, the use of local materials and vernacular style are also of value and worthy of retention.
- 4.3 That the site has a sufficiently large critical mass for redevelopment and that the buildings have not been allowed to deteriorate beyond the point where re-use is no longer economically viable, are important factors in determining their future. There is good access by road and sufficient space for provision of car parking.

### Weaknesses

- 4.4 The fact that the farm is no longer operating is probably a valid indicator that the site is not economically viable as an agricultural business. Alternative uses for the buildings (such as artisan workshops, farm produce outlet etc) would be predicated on wider issues such as a sufficient local customer market as well as other planning policies.
- 4.5 Residential conversion is probably one of the only economically viable options for the site although transport between new homes and schools/places of work would be necessary.

### Opportunities

- 4.6 Constraints on the housing land supply in the Solihull area mean that the conversion of former farmsteads to residential use may be a realistic opportunity for the sympathetic retention of traditional structures.
- 4.7 Residential redevelopment as part of a cohesive and carefully designed scheme means that the essential character of the former agricultural buildings *as a group* can be preserved and even enhanced for the future enjoyment and understanding of the buildings by a new audience.

## Threats

- 4.8 The site is currently not fully occupied or in use and a number of outbuildings are vacant. As such they are no longer being maintained and are starting to fall into a state of disrepair.



*Figure 3 South end of the L-shaped range is in particularly urgent need of repair.*

- 4.9 Presumably it remains a possibility that the site could be divided into plots and sold to separate owners for different uses. This would be to the detriment of the *group* heritage value of the former farmstead.
- 4.10 Planning policies surrounding the residential redevelopment of more remote rural sites means that the options for adaptive re-use of historic farm buildings needs to be rigorously justified, for example in terms of the heritage benefits offered by a scheme.

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The heritage significance of the component buildings at Arbour Tree Farm has been reviewed and found to be attributable in no small part to the group value of the buildings as an illustrative collection of traditional inter-working and inter-dependent farm buildings that for centuries formed a single farmstead set in courtyard arrangement in a wider landscape of enclosed fields.
- 5.2 It is therefore desirable to preserve not only as much historic fabric of the individual buildings as possible, but also the legible relationships between the buildings (and spaces) within that group in terms of their physical and functional connectivity.
- 5.3 The site is currently partially vacant and is starting to suffer from a lack of investment in repair and maintenance. It is difficult, however, to see how further investment in the non-designated historic buildings will be made whilst they continue to lack any beneficial re-use.
- 5.4 The most sympathetic and least invasive use of the buildings would be to continue their role as traditional agricultural buildings operating as part of a traditional farmstead. But presumably if this were a viable option the farm would still be operating, so it must be presumed that it is not viable.
- 5.5 Residential redevelopment, while inevitably resulting in some level of change to the buildings, would seem to offer one of the least damaging options for the site, and one that presents numerous advantages in terms of preserving the group value of the farm buildings under one cohesive scheme.
- 5.6 It is therefore concluded that sufficient heritage benefit is offered by the current scheme to not only comply with legislation and planning policy on the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment but also, on balance, to outweigh restrictions contained in Local Plan policy P7 in regard to the location of new residential development.
- 5.7 It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted in regard to the proposed adaptive residential re-use of Arbour Tree Farmhouse and associated outbuildings.

## Appendix 1: Sources

### Published

*Agricultural Buildings Listing Selection Guide*, Historic England, December 2017

*Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*, English Heritage, 2008

*Farmstead Assessment Framework: Informing sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads*, Historic England, April 2015

*Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statement - West Midlands region*, English Heritage August 2006

*Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning:2 Historic England, 2015

*National Farmsteads Character Statement*, English Heritage October 2014. *The Adaptive Reuse of Traditional Farm Buildings*, Historic England October 2017

*The Warwickshire Historic Farmstead Characterisation Project*, August 2010

### Online resources accessed October 2020

<https://historicengland.org.uk/>

<https://maps.nls.uk/>

<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>

<https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/>

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>

### Maps

Arden/Balsall Tithe Map and apportionment 1843

Ordnance Survey 25 inch map 1887

Ordnance Survey 25 inch map 1905

Ordnance Survey 25 inch map 1917

Ordnance Survey 25 inch map 1925

Ordnance Survey 6 inch map 1945

Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map 1963

# Keystone Heritage



© 2022

---