

Heritage Statement

Lapford Mill group improvements : Planning Reference: PP-11662063

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References: Historic England list entries 1425004 & 1425005

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• Site History

Lapford Mill complex is comprised of a central courtyard surrounded by buildings on three sides, being Lapford Mill House, converted stables, and C19 water-powered corn mill and leat system (closed in 1948) rebuilt on the site of a much earlier two storey mill, restored in the late-C20. The mill house is the oldest building on this site and is believed to date from the late-C14/ early-C15 when the site was occupied by the Gater family for about 400 years. Extensive renovation carried out in 1971, adding a two storey extension with modern kitchen and shower room.

Today, the site is boasts two distinct Heritage assets, being two storey Lapford Mill House and three storey watermill, together with leat system, and have been used collectively as private residential dwelling by the current and previous owners for several decades.

Within the curtilage of these stands the old stables, converted to self-catering accommodation and used as a holiday letting with two bedrooms. A single-storey glazed timber porch joined at a right-angle to the south side of the main house connects the two, estimated to have been erected in the 1980s.

• Significance of Assets

The watermill is considered a good example of a water-powered corn mill and retains a significant proportion of historic fabric; with the mill machinery intact from the waterwheel through the gears propelling two tuns. The operation of the

mill remains evident in the surviving historic fabric of the building and intact machinery. Historic England record that there is a “strong group value and a functional relationship” across the group.

The main house and later additions are of particular architectural interest as a pre-1700s vernacular building housing original roof structure beneath the existing roof, an C18th muntin screen and inglenook fireplace. Historic interest is as the principal dwelling within a rural mill complex. The building’s early plan form and the subsequent alterations are still legible in the surviving fabric.

- **Condition**

The buildings are considered to be in reasonable repair as befits their age, however ongoing maintenance sensitive to their respective histories is undertaken by the owner. The flat roofs of the main house are cleaned annually and waterproofing refreshed. To the rear of the main house extension is a timber-glass wall, poorly executed and options for repair/enhancement are being considered for a future application. The watermill has been sensitively cleaned, revealing, amongst others, the original pencil marks from carpenters during its construction and today presents a wealth of historic legibility from its original purpose as a working Devon mill.

- **Works and Impact Analysis**

Mitigation and regularisation of three structures, being a timber logstore-platform and stairway to the first floor taking-in door to the west of the mill (structures 1 & 2), and timber link annex (structure 3) between the main house and the converted stables, known as Millstream Cottage.

Structures 1 & 2, Logstore & Stair

Works & Impact to assets: No loss of historic fabric. The impact is visual in respect to the Setting of a Heritage Asset. These connected structures are timber with clear toughened glass (compliance with Regulation K1 & K2) to mitigate the visual impact.

Impact to heritage asset is therefore considered as LOW.

Mitigation: Proposal to overpaint the staircase timber in gloss black to complement the neighbouring asset.

Value to Asset: The two structures permit safe entry & exit to the asset. The watermill is clearly an important part of Lapford’s history and is valued by the local community, many of whom have lived here for generations and can remember the mill in her ‘day’.

Subsequent to closure as a working mill in the last century, the asset has been used as private dwelling / storage by the owners. The present owners have completed a program of sensitive cleaning and have plans to manage public visitation by hosting occasional 'pup-up' events, safely managed, whilst maintaining the watermill as part of the private dwelling. These structures therefore enable the owner to share the asset and its history on occasions with the local community and other visitors with 'open days' in a sustainable way that can contribute to the maintenance of the asset.

A number of such 'open days' have been hosted in 2022 and have been warmly received by the local community, are supported by the Parish Council and also provided local employment for staffing during these open days and produced a taxable income that contributes to her maintenance.

Structure 3, Timber Link Annex

Works & Impact to assets: No loss of historic fabric. The impact is visual in respect to the Setting of a Heritage Asset. The structure is a like-for-like replacement of the pre-existing timber link building.

Impact to heritage asset is therefore considered as NO IMPACT.

Mitigation: Opportunity for possible enhancement may exist for consideration as and when may become necessary and financially viable. At present, no mitigation is proposed here.

Value to Asset: As a like-for-like replacement of the previous collapsed structure, it does not alter the value of assets or curtilage excepting insofar as this structure replaces the collapsed and poorly executed previous structure.

[END]
