



BARN AND STABLE AT LORDS FARM EYNSHAM

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT
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WORLLEDGE ASSOCIATES

We are a solutions-orientated heritage consultancy, committed to the effective management of the historic environment. We help our clients identify the heritage significance of their historic site, navigate legislative and policy frameworks, and find design resolutions. Our clients, who include public authorities, private individuals, community groups, and corporations, have praised our positive approach to managing change, and our eye for quality design.

Worledge Associates was established in 2014. Nicholas came to private practice with 35 years' experience working in heritage management for local authorities. This intimate knowledge and understanding of council processes, planning policy, and practice helps Worledge Associates support clients in securing positive outcomes.

Since 2014, Worledge Associates has advised on a range of development projects for domestic, commercial, military, and educational use. Now supported by a small team of dedicated researchers and specialists, Worledge Associates is ever-growing and has widened its remit to offer content development and training. Every member of our team brings a unique set of skills to the business, but we all believe in the capacity of the historic environment to contribute to our collective economic, social, and cultural well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The intelligent management of change is a key principle to sustaining and conserving the historic environment. Historic England and successive government agencies have published policy and advice that extends our understanding of the historic environment and develops our competency in making decisions about its management.

Paragraphs 4-10 of Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 2 (Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment) explains that applications (for planning permission and listed building consent) have a greater likelihood of success and better decisions will be made when applicants and local planning authorities assess and understand the particular significance of an asset, the extent of the asset's fabric to which the significance relates, and the relative importance of that significance.

The National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019), in paragraphs 189 and 190, expects that both applicant and local planning authority take responsibility for understanding the significance of a heritage asset and the impact of a development proposal. Local authorities should, the NPPF explains, consider the significance of the asset in order to 'minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal'.

It has never been the intention of government to prevent change or freeze-frame local communities. Current policy and good practice show that change, if managed intelligently, can be successfully accommodated within the historic environment. This not only sustains significance but can add to the way we experience and understand historic places.

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared to accompany a planning and listed building application for the adaptive reuses of the barn and adjoining stable at Lords Farm, Eynsham. It needs to be read in conjunction with the Heritage Report Statement of Significance March 2018 prepared by Worlledge Associate.

The report includes the brief description of the barn and stable; statement of significance, and an outline of National Heritage Policy and Guidelines. The proposal will be described, and its impacts, if any, assessed against the heritage significance of Lords Farm barn and its urban setting.

LORDS FARM HOMESTEAD

Lord's farm sits on a prominent corner position at the junction of Oxford Road and Queen Street. It comprises the farmhouse, barn, and stable, all included in the National Heritage List for England Grade II. The history of Lords Farm and evolution of the homestead is set out in detail in the March 2018 Report which is attached.

THE BARN AND STABLE

These buildings are the subject of the planning and listed building application. A detailed description of the buildings are included in the 2018 Report attached.



Image of Lords Farmhouse with the cottages fronting Oxford Road and the barn fronting Queens Street

SELECTED IMAGES



View from Queen Street showing the great barn doors



View from the rear garden with stables to the right



View looking north to hay loft with door to Queen Street to the left and garden to the right with a stone slab threshing floor



View looking north of the roof framing



View looking south



Roof framing looking south



Threshing floor



View of the south east corner of the former stable



The south elevation of the stables



The rear (east) elevation



The ground floor with the hay rack



The roof framing with new rafters and ridge plate

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Significance is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Annex as comprising:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”

Placing a building in its historical context and describing its characteristics and appearance is an important component of the evidence gathering exercise to inform understanding of a place’s significance and contribution of its setting. As Historic England explains in ‘Conservation Principles’ (2008) understanding how a place has evolved and how different phases add to or detract from its significance is a part of that exercise.

The Lord’s Farm farmhouse, attached barn, wall and stables are all Grade II listed buildings whose material construction evidence the vernacular traditions of the region and inform the local character of Eynsham. The unusual siting of the farm at the heart of the village and the physical survival of its buildings helps articulate the town’s settlement pattern and evidences of the changes in land tenure, ownership and farming practices. The heritage significance the site holds can be defined as follows:

FARMHOUSE

The house holds architectural interest with datable internal and external features that plot changes in vernacular architectural styles from the 17th to the 19th centuries. While its internal layout underwent significant alterations in the mid 20th century (c1957), the earlier plan form is still evident and helps articulate the house’s former function and the lifestyle of its previous occupants;

It has original features of evidential value. These include a number of windows such as the first-floor window casement possibly the oldest window on the Queen Street elevation; the basement opening onto Queen street; and the stone staircase to the basements;

The phases of change reflect how contemporary society adapts and extends existing buildings, to meet changing needs and aspirations, adding layers of history and contributing to the buildings’ historical interest.

BARN

The survival of the barn provides evidence of the early origins of the farmstead and the traditional location within the settlement;

The barn is characterised by a simple geometry that helps to explain its function and the threshing ‘system’;

This results in internal spatial qualities – tall double height space of the threshing bay for example, that holds aesthetic value as well;

The arrangement and sense of enclosure it provides to the rear yard contributes to its aesthetic appeal;

This aesthetic value is further enhanced by the barn’s material construction and layout with its rubble stonework and stone slates tiles and stone flooring.

STABLES

The stables evidence the 19th century changes to the site;

The survival of its features helps in our understanding of the building’s history of use. The external access door on the boundary evidences the previous use and land ownership while other features such as the ventilation holes and pitch paving floor inform our understanding of the building’s function.

NATIONAL HERITAGE POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Lord Farmhouse, the adjoining barn and stable are included in the National Heritage List for England, grade II, together with Lord Cottage. They lie within the Eynsham Conservation Area. See Appendix 1

Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. With the issuing of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in Feb 2019, the Government has re-affirmed its aim that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.

In relation to development affecting a designated heritage asset the NPPF (Feb 2019) states in paragraphs 193 and 194 that:

‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.’

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (March 2014) seeks to provide further advice on assessing the impact of proposals explaining that what matters in assessing the level of harm (if any) is the degree of impact on the significance of the asset. It states:

‘In determining whether works to a listed building (or its setting) 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 NPPF explains in paragraphs 195 and 196 the differences between ‘substantial’ harm and ‘less than substantial’ harm, advising that any harm should be justified by the public benefit of a proposal.

In cases where there is less than substantial harm, paragraph 196 states:

‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use’.

The PPG also seeks to provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes ‘public benefit’, as it is the public benefit that flows from a development that can justify harm. In weighing the public benefits against potential harm, considerable weight and importance should be given to the desirability to preserve the setting of listed buildings.

Public benefits can flow from a variety of developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social, or environmental progress as described in the NPPF, paragraph 8. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and should not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits. It explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits, such as:

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

Works of alteration, extension, or demolition need not involve any harmful impact and may be necessary to ensure a building has a viable future. Historic England explains its approach to managing the historic environment and how we experience places stating in in 'Conservation Principles' (April 2008) paragraph 88:

'Very few significant places can be maintained at either public or private expense unless they are capable of some beneficial use; nor would it be desirable, even if it were practical, for most places that people value to become solely memorials of the past'.

It also points out in paragraph 92:

'Retaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible'.

It also comments in paragraph 86:

'Keeping a significant place in use is likely to require continual adaptation and change; but, provided such interventions respect the values of the place, they will tend to benefit public (heritage) as well as private interests in it. Many places now valued as part of the historic environment exist because of past patronage and private investment, and the work of successive generations often contributes to their significance. Owners and managers of significant places should not be discouraged from adding further layers of potential future interest and value, provided that recognised heritage values are not eroded or compromised in the process'.

Amongst the Government's planning objectives for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are properly informed. Historic England's 'Good Practice Advice Notes 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets' (Dec 2017), paragraph 19, explains that, 'amongst the Government's planning policies for the historic environment is that conservation decisions are based on a proportionate assessment of the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset'.

From this summary of the national heritage management policy framework it is clear that there is a complex assessment decision-making process to navigate when considering change within the historic environment. Central to any decision is the recognition that history is not a static thing and that the significance of our historic environment derives from a history of change.



Window to the barn

S66 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

Sections 66 and 72 of the Act requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The policies and advice described above provide an essential framework to guide designers and decision makers. In this respect it is worth noting recent case law and the advice it offers on the application of policy and legislation as set out below.

Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants District Council, English Heritage and National Trust, 18th February 2014, and Sevenoaks District Council v The Forge Field Society, March 2014, have brought into sharp relief the weight and importance that decision makers should give to the duty under Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

In Jones v Mordue & Anor [2015] EWHC 539, the Court of Appeal explains how decision makers can ensure this duty is fulfilled: a decision maker will have complied with the duty under sections 16, 66(1) and 72 by working in accordance of the terms of the NPPF paragraphs 131-134. This report follows this advice to ensure consistency with the duty to preserve or enhance.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to link and adapt the barn and the stable to residential accommodation. It has been the subject of pre-application discussions with officers of West Oxfordshire District Council.

The principal elements of the proposal are:

- Construct a flat roof link between the barn and the stable to provide a kitchen. Extension to be fully glazed to the garden elevation.
- Create a door opening in the east wall of the barn to link through to the kitchen.
- Create a recessed internal entrance porch to the Queen Street frontage allowing the existing doors to be retained in-situ.
- Remove the modern timber doors and the timber boarding over to reinstate the original opening to the rear (garden) elevation and provide glazed double doors with a glazed skylight over.
- Install two conservation roof lights to the internal east slope of the barn roof.
- Install two conservation rooflights to the east slope of the stable. Install timber casement windows to the existing opening of the south elevation of the stable
- Internally, the hay loft at the northern end of the barn is retained, with an opening cut into the floor to insert a staircase to access a mezzanine bedroom. A contemporary balustrade is proposed along the edge for safety. A bathroom and utility room are proposed at ground floor under the hay loft.
- The rest of the barn remains open with the threshing floor area proposed as a dining space, with the flags retained, and the southern end of the barn as a living room.
- The existing timber window at the southern end, east side is to be repaired and secondary glazing installed.
- The internal walls and the roof to be lined for insulation to meet current building and energy efficiency requirements.
- A spiral staircase is proposed in the former stable building to provide access to a small bedroom. A bathroom is proposed on the ground floor. The pitched flooring to the ground floor of the stables is to be retained over a raised timber floor, with a glazed insert.
- The rear garden is proposed to be enclosed by a closed boarded timber fence with bin store.
- All external stone walls and stone roofs to be repaired, and where required, re-set to ensure structural adequacy.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON SIGNIFICANCE

The scheme has been developed to minimise physical and visual impacts on the barn and stable, and to preserve the internal spatial qualities and aesthetic character of the two buildings, and significant surviving elements such as the threshing floor to the barn and the pitching floor to the stable.

To allow a practical and viable residential adaption of the two buildings, a link using a contemporary design, is proposed. This will provide a kitchen, thus limiting the physical impacts that this high service area of the building required to the new structure.

Only limited areas of existing original fabric are proposed to be removed – stonework in the east (rear) elevation to provide access from the barn to the linking building and the stable building beyond; and part of the floor of the hayloft of the barn and the stable to provide for staircases.

The existing doors and timber details to the Queen Street elevation are retained in-situ, and the conservation roof-light to the barn are on the inner non-public elevation, ensuring no visual impact on Conservation Area.

Internal lining of the walls and roof are required to meet contemporary energy efficiency requirements. This is balanced, however, by the retention of the spatial qualities of the barn and the exposed timber roof framing.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

FARMHOUSE

The house holds architectural interest with datable internal and external features that plot changes in vernacular architectural styles from the 17th to the 19th centuries. While its internal layout underwent significant alterations in the mid 20th century (c1957), the earlier plan form is still evident and helps articulate the house's former function and the lifestyle of its previous occupants;

The proposal has no physical impacts on the farmhouse. The repair and adaptive reuse of the barn and stable will ensure its long-term preservation as part of the significant group of buildings within the farmstead, and preserve the setting of the house, both from Queen Street and within the rear courtyard. The proposal causes no harm to this aspect of significance, and by retaining the grouping enhance its significance.

It has original features of evidential value. These include a number of windows such as the first-floor window casement possibly the oldest window on the Queen Street elevation; the basement opening onto Queen street; and the stone staircase to the basements;

The proposal has no physical impacts on the farmhouse and thus no impact of harm of this aspect of significance of the house.

The phases of change reflect how contemporary society adapts and extends existing buildings, to meet changing needs and aspirations, adding layers of history and contributing to the buildings' historical interest.

The adaptation of the barn and stable to a residential use, a contemporary solution to ensure its long-term conservation as part of the setting of the house, and the Eynsham Conservation Area adds another phase and historical layer to the evolution of the farmstead.

BARN

The survival of the barn provides evidence of the early origins of the farmstead and the traditional location within the settlement;

The adaptation of the barn and stable will ensure its long-term conservation and preserve the evidence of the early origins of the farmstead

The barn is characterised by a simple geometry that helps to explain its function and the threshing 'system';

The proposal has no physical impact on the strong simple form of the building. It retains the doors the Queen Street elevation in situ; reinstates the original opening on the opposite rear elevation and retains the threshing floor between to ensure the original function of the barn can be read and understood. The retention of the hay loft floor at the northern end and the open spatial qualities of the barn will also ensure the historical function of the barn is understood. The proposals will result in no harm to this aspect of the barns significance.

This results in internal spatial qualities – tall double height space of the threshing bay for example, that holds aesthetic value as well;

The proposal involves the insertion of a small internal porch on the west side of the threshing floor to allow the doors to Queen Street to be retained. The size and height has been limited to ensure the open spatial qualities of the threshing floor can be read and understood. Given the overall scale of this space, it is considered this modest insertion will not harm this aspect of the barn's significance.

The retention and re-use of the barn and stable will preserving the historic relationship between the buildings and the farmhouse, preserving a sense of enclosure.

The proposal does introduce a new contemporary element – the linking building between the barn and the stable, but it is noted from the evolution of the farmstead set out in the 2018 Heritage Report, that there was previously a building in this location with a very similar footprint. The reinstatement of a building in this location reinstates the historical enclosure of this space, albeit with a contemporary structure which will add a new layer the historical development of the farmstead.

This aesthetic value is further enhanced by the barn's material construction and layout with its rubble stonework and stone slates tiles and stone flooring.

The proposal will retain the majority of the barn's fabric, with a single opening in the east wall of the barn to provide access to the new linking building. While this linking building will to some degree obscure part of the rear elevation, it is noted from the evolution of the farmstead set out in the 2018 Heritage Report, that there was previously a building in this location with a very similar footprint. The proposal involves repairs and maintenance of the stone walls and stone tiled roof and retention of the stone threshing floor. Some new elements are proposed, such as conservation roof lights to the barn and stable. These are a traditional detail found on agricultural buildings and involve minimal removal of fabric. It is considered the proposal which will ensure the long-term conservation of the barn, will result in no harm to this aspect of its significance.

STABLES

The stables evidence of the 19th century changes to the site;

The proposal ensures the retention and long-term conservation of the stables, and thus preserve this evidence. The proposal adds a new layer to the historical development of the farmstead of which this forms a key element. The proposal will result in no harm to this aspect of the stables significance.

The survival of its features helps in our understanding of the building's history of use. The external access door on the boundary evidences the previous use and land ownership while other features such as the ventilation holes and pitch paving floor inform our understanding of the building's function.



Interior of the stables

The proposal has been carefully considered. All existing openings are retained and uses, while the evidence of the opening on the boundary is retained. Part of the hayloft floor will be removed to provide stair access, but the spatial quality of the interior will still be able to be read and understood. The stone pitching floor is to be retained in-situ but floored over with a timber structure with a glazed insert to allow it to be seen and its historical role as part of the stable understood. While the proposed linking building will to some degree obscure part of the side elevation, it is noted from the evolution of the farmstead set out in the 2018 Heritage Report, that there was previously a building in this location with a very similar footprint. It is considered that while there will be some adaptation of the existing fabric, it is not considered the proposal will harm this aspect of the building's significance.

IMPACT ON EYNESHAM CONSERVATION AREA

Lords Farm lies within the Eynsham Conservation Area. The proposal, which retains the double doors in-situ will result in no external changes to the barn when viewed from Queen Street. The new link building and the insertion of conservation roof lights are to the rear elevation of the barn and stable. While there is a road running to the north of the site, Bitterell, it does not provide a view of the rear elevations of the barn or stable. It is therefore considered the proposal will not result in any physical or visual harm to the Conservation Area. The proposal which will ensure the long-term conservation of the building will preserve its contribution to Lords Farm and to this part of the Eynsham Conservation Area.



Timber noggings to the gable end of the stables

CONCLUSION

It has never been the intention of government to prevent change or freeze-frame local communities. Current policy and good practice show that change, if managed intelligently, can be successfully accommodated within the historic environment. This not only sustains significance but can add to the way we experience and understand historic places.

The Heritage Significance of Lords Farmstead, including the farmhouse, attached barn and stable is recognised by their inclusion in the National Heritage List for England and established in more detail in the Heritage Report, Worledge Associates, March 2018 which should be read in conjunction with this Heritage Impact Statement.

This Heritage Report together with National Heritage Policies and Guidelines, including advice on from officers of West Oxford District Council have informed the development of the proposal.

It is considered that it has carefully considered the historical and architectural significance of the barn and stables, including their internal fabric and spatial qualities. The insertion of new fabric -porch

and staircase to the barn, staircase to the stable, and removal of fabric – stonework to create a new opening in the east wall of the barn, has been kept to the minimum required to allow the buildings to function.

The new link building, on the footprint of a previous building, allows the two buildings to function together, while providing a modern kitchen, thus limiting the physical impact from the high level of services required for this use to a new building. The link is contemporary in design, as it the treatment of the rear door glazed opening, and approach supported by Historic England advice on making additions to listed buildings. It adds a new phase o—in the long development of the site, while retaining the existing evidence of this development.

It is considered that the proposals will cause no harm to the identified heritage significance of the Lords Farmhouse, barn and stable. It will add a further layer to its historical and architectural development and encourage continued investment in its long-term sustainable conservation of these buildings.