

# C J Richards Heritage Services

## Heritage Impact Assessment

### Denver House Farmstead Acton Burnell Proposed Residential Conversion of Outbuildings

#### Background Context

Denver House farmstead was developed in the mid 19thC on the western Edge of Acton Burnell developed as a small model farm complex utilizing the most efficient building layout of the time.



The main farmhouse is a simple brick built cruciform plan vernacular house with plain clay tile roof and steeply pitched gables and sash windows, each light consisting of two panes of sheet glass.



The older windows were constructed in the earlier style of rectangular frame whereas later replacements have projecting horns at the corners to provide greater strength to support the heavy panes of glass.

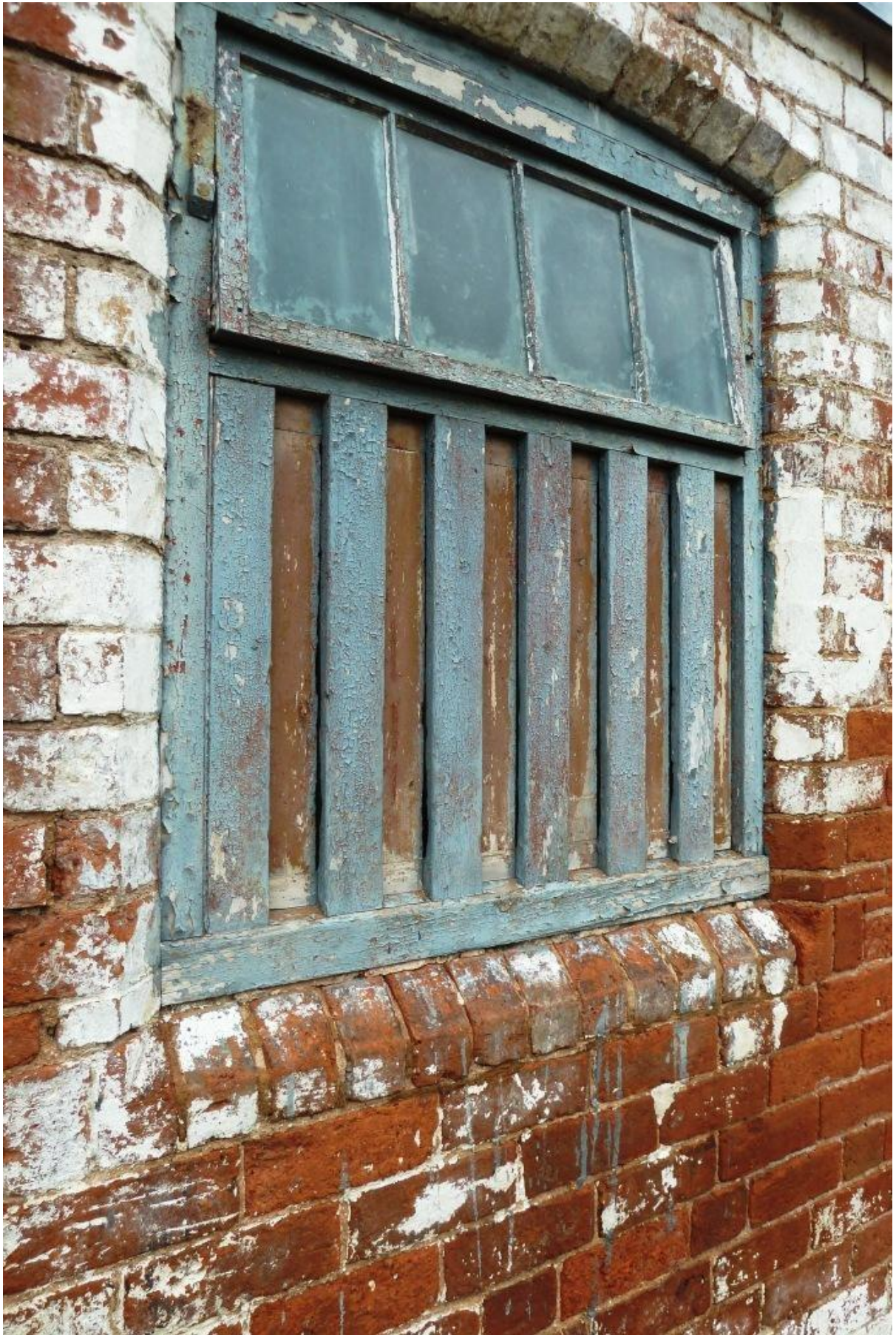
Immediately to the rear of the farmhouse is the U-shaped single-storey range of animal accommodation set around a sunken courtyard which would have been used as the midden. This area was used to collect the valuable dung during the winter months when the animals were housed to provide protection from harsh winter weather and provide ease of access for milking.



etc.



The buildings are simplistic in form and detail but designed to embrace the contemporary practice of minimizing the labour input of managing the stock to gain maximum efficiency and yields. It was a style evolved from the great agricultural improvers of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century which influenced many of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century writers such as JC Loudon producing technical manuals and guides to setting out 'improved' farmsteads. The purpose designed stabling and cow sheds were dry and well ventilated to ensure optimum living conditions and thus health of the stock. Windows have pivot windows and lower slatted panels for ventilation.



Purpose made paviors and cobbles are laid to drain liquid manure into the midden thus allowing dry bedding to remain useable for longer periods.



The midden is contained by low stone retaining walls with bull nose blue copings. The 'U' shape layout of buildings ensured cleaning out of manure required minimum travel distance onto the tump and its sunken form reduced strain in throwing onto higher stacks in the Springtime.



Clearing of the manure onto the nearby fields was provided by the entry gateway on the eastern range.

Stable doors allowed animals, particularly horses, to remain contained yet content by being able to see outside.

Evidence of the use of the buildings survives in the form of feeding racks and troughs with blacksmith forged hooks and brackets used for halters, saddles and the butchering of animals etc.



In the northwestern corner a large oven was used to cook pork pies and other pastries from animals reared and slaughtered on the farm supplementing the basic farm income.







Facing away from the courtyard the cart/trap shed on the eastern range has a cast iron column typical of the mass-produced building items available from the heavy industries of Victorian Britain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



In this building range the differing uses of the accommodation can be evidenced reflecting the evolution of farming practice from construction through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that at some stage the upper level was used as a granary and hay loft. The lower-level pitching window suggests it could also be used for winter fodder storage, particularly root vegetables such as mangles and beet. Within the building old equipment includes a milk cooler. It was most likely to have been used as a dairy from the 1930's onwards to conform with the improved hygiene regulations required by the government agency The Milk Marketing Board.



Construction of the buildings utilized the regular shaped bricks of the period probably made in the brickworks at Lebotwood locally. Joinery timber is mostly milled softwood with oak used for key structural items.

Adjacent to the brick-built farm buildings two Dutch barns are situated contiguous with the farmstead representing an important development in the farm evolution during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when prefabricated iron framed buildings first became available and provided inexpensive rapidly erected storage for the increasing yields of hay and straw which improved farming practice achieved. Increasingly Dutch barns are recognized as an important element of agrarian history and securing an alternative beneficial use will retain these structures which are in remarkably good order.

Adjacent to the entrance driveway the brick built former butchers' shop has a long-established presence within the building grouping containing the site between the

main house and the stream beyond. It is a utility structure of low architectural merit, and it was constructed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The buildings have been redundant for many years and have suffered extensive dilapidation and structural weakness. The southern ranges of shelter sheds are completely lost, and the western range has lost part of its roof.

### **Significance of the Site**

Denver House and its associated outbuildings represent a period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the old, landed estates established during the medieval period were being broken up and new independent farm units created embracing the then latest best practice in animal husbandry and crop management and processing. The model farm type plans for accommodating animals were adapted to the topography of the site but maintained in close proximity to the main farmhouse for ease of access and supervision. It was a time when mechanization of tilling, planting, harvesting and animal foodstuff processing required dedicated buildings for specific tasks, plant rooms for new power units and large volume barns to store increased yields of hay, straw and fodder.

The butcher's shop is a further development where farm products are directly marketed to the local community.

On one site Denver House constitutes a visual display of Shropshire farm buildings evolving over a 150-year period when farming changed from small scale animal and human powered activity to an era of machine domination.

### **The Proposal**

The proposed conversion scheme seeks to give a new use for all the redundant farm buildings associated with Denver House respecting their vernacular detail, scale and proportion, and the story of past use whilst securing the investment required, to avoid further dereliction and total loss. Existing openings have been reused to provide light and access into the accommodation with period character reinforced by reinstating window shutters, replicating joinery details and using a palette of materials as existing on site.

The proposal is subdivided into three individual elements.

1). The brick-built farm building range is set around the former midden.

This scheme, which includes the Top Barn, and the Lower Barn has been designed to maintain the existing spatial divisions within the structure, reusing existing window and door openings and repairing/reinstating a traditional pitched tiled roof. In order to retain as much of the original building of the Top Barn an additional glazed link has been added following discussions with Planning Officers on site.

Glazing has also been used to maintain the character of the cart shed opening on the east elevation of the two-storey barn.



## 2). The Dutch Barn 1

This barn is repurposed to form a two-storey dwelling set inside the steel structure of the barn so that its original form can be readily interpreted. The walling envelope of the new dwelling has been deliberately kept plain metal sheeting and robust industrial type windows to maintain the simple rugged character of the structure.

## Dutch Barn 2

This barn will form garaging and a utility store for Dutch Barn 1.

## 3). The Former Butchers Shop and Abattoir

It is proposed to convert this building into a two-bedroom dwelling orientated to the rear. Because of its limited footprint and single storey configuration it is proposed to add a simple lean to the rear but maintaining its original form facing the farmhouse.

### **Impact of the Proposals on the Farmstead.**

It is considered that this composite scheme of conversions has been designed and detailed in a manner where their history and inter relationship remains clearly legible and maintains a contribution to the understanding of agricultural history in the Acton Burnell area and central Shropshire. It gives full and beneficial use to an unlisted rural building group and by repurposing this redundant range of buildings additional accommodation is provided in the key settlement of Acton Burnell reducing the need to build on green field sites.

### **Reference of Proposal to National Legislation**

In an attempt to coordinate the fragmented legislative control of planning applications the Government issued new guidance published in March 2012, updated July 2021—the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)—which replaced all other separate Planning Policy Guidelines and Planning Policy Statements. The NPPF referred to ‘heritage assets’ as ‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.

In terms of how the legislation affects applicants proposing works to historic buildings and sites, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should require applicants: ‘...to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail provided should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance’ The NPPF dictates that approval for development proposals should normally be granted unless ‘any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’.

The NPPF is in Shropshire cross referenced to the SHROPSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

The Strategy outlines the Spatial Vision of the Council towards development within the outstanding historic and natural landscape of the County. It describes the character, quality and diversity of Shropshire’s natural and historic environment as the County’s greatest asset which must be protected, restored and enhanced through the consideration of proposals for conservation and development which impacts on this environment.

In particular as Policy CS 17 outlines, it requires that the quality of the landscape, geodiversity and core areas of biodiversity such as the Shropshire Hills AONB, Meres and Mosses, and Severn Valley corridor must be maintained and managed in a proactive and sustainable manner.

Both designated and non-designated historic buildings, sites and landscapes are recognised for their importance to Shropshire’s character, its communities, its economy, its culture and its sense of place.

## Policy CS6: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Sets out how this may be achieved: -

To create sustainable places, development will be designed to a high quality using sustainable design principles, to achieve an inclusive and accessible environment which respects and enhances local distinctiveness, and which mitigates and adapts to climate change. This will be achieved by:

- Requiring all development proposals, including changes to existing buildings, to achieve criteria set out in the sustainability checklist. This will ensure that sustainable design and construction principles are incorporated within new development, and that resource and energy efficiency and renewable energy generation are adequately addressed and improved where possible. The checklist will be developed as part of a Sustainable Design SPD;
- Requiring proposals likely to generate significant levels of traffic to be located in accessible locations where opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport can be maximised and the need for car-based travel to be reduced.

And ensuring that all development:

- Is designed to be adaptable, safe and accessible to all, to respond to the challenge of climate change and, in relation to housing, adapt to changing lifestyle needs over the lifetime of the development in

accordance with the objectives of Policy CS11

- Protects, restores, conserves and enhances the natural, built and historic environment and is appropriate in scale, density and design taking into account the local context and character, and those features which contribute to local character including scale, pattern and density, having regard to national and local design guidance, landscape character assessments and ecological strategies where appropriate.
- Contributes to the health and wellbeing of communities, including safeguarding residential and local amenity and the achievement of local standards for the provision and quality of open space, sport and recreational facilities.
- Is designed to a high quality, consistent with national good practice standards, including appropriate landscaping and car parking provision and taking account of site characteristics such as land stability and ground contamination.
- Makes the most effective use of land and safeguards natural resources including high quality agricultural land, geology, minerals, air, soil and water.
- Ensures that there is capacity and availability of infrastructure to serve any new development in accordance with the objectives of Policy CS8.

Proposals resulting in the loss of existing facilities, services or amenities will be resisted unless provision is made for equivalent or improved provision, or it can be clearly demonstrated that the existing facility, service or amenity is not viable over the long term.

The approach is reasoned in the EXPLANATION:-

Sustainable design reflects peoples changing needs over time and requires the consideration of different needs within the local community.

Development should take into account changing needs over the lifetime of the development, incorporating specific accessibility and design features, such as Homes for Life and Lifetime Home Standards to ensure the needs of Shropshire's ageing and disabled population are addressed, as outlined in

Policy CS11.

The quality and local distinctiveness of Shropshire's townscapes and landscapes are important assets. They have a direct impact on quality of life and are an important influence on the local economy in terms of attracting investment and boosting Shropshire's image as a tourist destination.

The Council will ensure new development complements and relates to its surroundings, not only in terms of how it looks, but the way it functions, to maintain and enhance the quality of Shropshire's environment as an attractive, safe, accessible and sustainable place in which to live and work.

There are a substantial number of designated heritage assets in Shropshire. This reflects the special architectural and historical interest of the county and means that such assets require careful consideration and management where change is proposed.

Development should be sensitive to these valued features and make a positive contribution to the overall appearance and environmental quality of the area through the use of appropriate good quality locally sourced materials; the support and encouragement of traditional skills; the protection of heritage assets and the protection of important buildings, trees and environmental networks. Particular regard should be paid to Village and Town Design Statements and Conservation Area Appraisals.

High quality design will be expected in all new developments to ensure that the development is appropriate to its setting and surroundings and to ensure that local character is reflected. Appropriate landscaping and tree planting will form an integral part of any proposal to ensure that development is better assimilated into its surroundings. Developments should also include room for appropriate vehicular access (including for waste and emergency vehicles), suitable provision of car and cycle parking as well as footpaths and cyclepaths (where appropriate) and linked where possible, to the existing network.



These principles are further emphasised in the Shropshire Council Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) Plan Adopted Plan 17th December 2015

In particular policy MD2

Sustainable Design Further to Policy CS6, for a development proposal to be considered acceptable it is required to:

1. Respond positively to local design aspirations, wherever possible, both in terms of visual appearance and how a place functions, as set out in Community Led Plans, Town or Village Design Statements, Neighbourhood Plans and Place Plans.

2. Contribute to and respect locally distinctive or valued character and existing amenity value by: i. Responding appropriately to the form and layout of existing development and the way it functions, including mixture of uses, streetscape, building heights and lines, scale, density, plot sizes and local patterns of movement; and ii. Reflecting locally characteristic architectural design and details, such as building materials, form, colour and texture of detailing, taking account of their scale and proportion; and iii. Protecting, conserving and enhancing the historic context and character of heritage assets, their significance and setting, in accordance with MD13; and iv. Enhancing, incorporating or recreating natural assets in accordance with MD12.

3. Embrace opportunities for contemporary design solutions, which take reference from and reinforce distinctive local characteristics to create a positive sense of place but avoid reproducing these characteristics in an incoherent and detrimental style.

### **Conclusion**

This proposal relates to a site which occupies a key location along the entrance to the conservation area of Acton Burnell. It preserves a vernacular group of buildings which characterises a key stage in the evolution of Shropshire agricultural history and creates attractive additional residential accommodation to help sustain local services thus making a significant contribution to reinforcing a viable population base for this important heritage centre.

It is considered to be a proposal worthy of support in the continued evolution of the Shropshire landscape.

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