

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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Fiona Webb
Senior Conservation Officer (Consultant)
Wiltshire Council Conservation (Central)

Officer's Name: Lucy Rutter Dowd
Officer's Title: Planning Officer

Application No: PL/2026/00595
Conversion of curtilage-listed redundant agricultural buildings to form four residential dwellings, including the demolition of modern farm buildings, the formation of a new vehicular access, and associated landscaping, drainage and ancillary works.
Old Manor Farm, High Street, Wedhampton, Devizes, SN10 3QE

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

☐	Comment
☐	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
☐	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
☒	Object (for reasons set out below)
☐	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 16 requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 214-216 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the

significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

Site and assets considered: The farmstead is a range of curtilage listed farm buildings associated with Old Manor Farm which is a Grade II listed building. The site is also located within Wedhampton Conservation Area.

Proposal: The proposal seeks the conversion of the curtilage-listed redundant agricultural buildings to form four residential dwellings, including the demolition of modern farm buildings, the formation of a new vehicular access, and associated landscaping, drainage and ancillary works.

Relevant planning history: None

Issues: impact on the curtilage listed building, impact on the setting of neighbouring listed building, impact on the conservation area.

Information considered/provided: Paragraph 207 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, the application is accompanied by a "Heritage Statement" which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposals and is proportionate to their scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

However, paragraph 208 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting: The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological**, **architectural**, **artistic** or **historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

In this case the significance of the site lies largely with the collection of traditional farmstead buildings, their historic fabric and architecture - form, layout and architectural expression/detailing

and use of vernacular materials and features which have significant aesthetic and architectural interest and which contribute to the character of the conservation area and the agricultural origins of the settlement.

Assessment: The site contains seven barn buildings. None of these are individually Listed however a number are curtilage listed and are noted in the Wedhampton Conservation Area Appraisal and being of local significance and making a positive contribution to the conservation area. To the immediate north-east of the site is the Grade II Listed Old Manor Farm Farmhouse. The site is located within the Wedhampton Conservation Area.

The proposed works are as follows:

- The residential conversion of Barns 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, with Barn 6 to be subdivided and expanded to form two units (Barns 6 and 8);
- The demolition and removal of Barns 3 and 7; and
- Associated soft and hard landscaping works to form driveways, parking spaces and garden areas

Barn 1:

This is a curtilage listed brick built single storey stable building under a slate roof. The western elevation is adjoined by Barn 2. It shares a close spatial relationship with Grade II Listed Old Manor Farm Farmhouse and encloses part of the courtyard grouping.

Barn 2:

This is a curtilage listed open-fronted brick and timber shelter with a pitched slate roof. The barn's northern elevation is arranged across five open bays that are supported by timber posts and lintels. Two of the columns are braced and appear to be hand-cut. The older posts are showing signs of significant rot and damage. Internally, it possesses an imprinted raised concrete slab floor with integrated gulleys.

Barn 3:

This is a modern steel portal barn with concrete block plinths and clad in asbestos sheeting. It is of no heritage significance.

Barn 4:

This is a large open-faced, brick and timber barn with a slate pitch roof. On the northern elevation of the barn four timber posts support the five open bays. The eastern end (outside the site and in separate ownership) is enclosed by brickwork. On the eastern elevation of the barn there is an upper boarded loading door, along with four modern window and doorway openings, supported by concrete lintels. The rear elevation of the barn is entirely of brick construction with no openings. A public right of way runs behind the building. Barn 4 appears to predominantly post-date 1948, albeit integrating some potentially earlier fabric.

Barn 5:

This is a large brick and timber weatherboarded barn. The northern elevation is clad in weatherboarding. There is a large floor-ceiling opening on the elevation's eastern side, and a large opening in the centre of the elevation. The north-eastern and north western corners of the barn are elevated on staddle stones. A corrugated projecting range adjoins the western elevation of the barn. The southern elevation of the barn is constructed of brick. The barn adjoins Barn 4 at its eastern elevation via a modern link addition. Barn 5 does integrate remains of earlier farm buildings. Barn 5 is considered a curtilage listed building.

Barn 6:

Barn 6 has origins dating back to the late-19th century and is regarded as curtilage listed. Externally, the barn is a long brick-built range with a slate pitch roof. Much of the eastern and western elevations of the barn are screened by Barns 3 and 7. The brickwork and segmental arches of the barn are consistent with its original construction date, albeit there is evidence of some rebuilding (including concrete blockwork additions) and the barn has been re-roofed. Internally, the barn is subdivided into three sections. In the north, there is a small room and an opening to the rest of the barn that is partially filled in by concrete cinder blocks. In the middle section of the barn the eastern elevation is open-fronted, providing an access point to Barn 3. At the southern end of the barn there is a filled in doorway. Much of the internal partition brickwork appears to be of late 19th-century origin, however, it appears to have been rebuilt at various points.

Barn 7:

This is a modern steel portal barn with concrete blockwork and corrugated metal cladding. It is of no heritage significance.

Assessment of Impact and Suitability of Design of Proposed Works:

Barns 1 and 2:

It is proposed to amalgamate the barns into a single, two bedroom unit. In principle there is no objection to the proposed internal layout. However, the strong preference is to restore the external character of barn 2 by removing the deep concrete plinth and reinstating saddle stone to the lower portion of timber uprights/bays.

There are design concerns regarding the proposed elevations as these are considered too suburban in form with domestic casement windows inserted into openings. The simplicity of the traditional farm buildings should be retained in any conversion and as such contemporary windows with full height single glazing are more reflective of the original openings. The image below is the type of detailing that may be appropriate for the open bays of barn 2:



It would also be the preference to have full opening contemporary windows to Barn 1. If there are concerns regarding privacy to bedrooms, the bottom half of the stable doors could be maintained in the fixed position.

Barn 3:

There is no objection to the loss of this structure.

Barn 4 and 5:

As with Barn 2 there are concerns regarding the infilling of the bays of the cart shed and infilling with weatherboard and suburban domestic casement windows since this would not maintain the simplicity of the traditional farm building. There are also conservation concerns regarding the insertion of casement windows in the front elevation of Barn 5 since the window design would not respond to the building character. Agricultural buildings are characterised by a few window and door openings.

Barn 6:

The Barn is curtilage listed and maintains its historic form. Extending the barn as proposed is not acceptable. This would be alien to the historic linear form and composition of this traditional agricultural building and would unduly domesticate the character and appearance with four wings at the rear, an infill flat roof section, lanterns etc. Conversion to a single dwelling house is preferable to the creation of more than one dwelling since this requires fewer new window and door openings. Historic England have produced extensive guidance on the importance of farm buildings and their sensitive repair and conversion, such as 'Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse' (2017). Historic England in their publication state that – a key principle is to 'Avoid the construction of extensions that compromise the character and setting of the farm building'.

The strong preference is also to contain car park within the existing open cart sheds of the building rather than have these in the courtyard of the farmstead grouping. In order to maintain its original form and appearance.

The design is also peppering the elevations with suburban casement windows and not working with the original character or openings of the building.

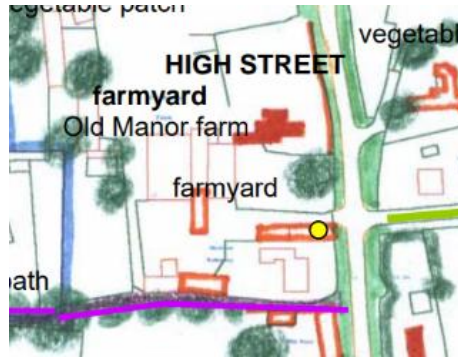
Overall this proposed scheme for barn 6 would be highly detrimental to the heritage assets and would destroy its agricultural character.

As well as the above comments for each building, this proposal lacks essential information and details for the proposed conversion of the buildings in the farmstead grouping:

- schedule of repairs and repairs for each building (including timber frame);
- drawings showing proposed insulation and thermal upgrading of the structures;
- drawings showing proposed installation of modern services; and
- details evidencing the retention and encouragement of wildlife habitats.

Layout:

No justification has been given for moving the historic farm access into the farmstead grouping, or the loss of trees in the conservation area. The Wedhampton Conservation Area Character Appraisal shows the trees and landscape at the front of the site boundary as being a significant feature of the conservation area, see snip below from the appraisal map:



The proposed internal courtyard is unduly dominated by parked cars and would be cluttered by areas of suburban garden, rather than maintaining its 'yardscape' character.

Proposed boundary treatments need to be better shown on the site plan. Surfacing should be holistically treated not a combination of blacktop and block pavements which would create a patchwork effect.

No assessment has been made of the boundary wall to the farmstead grouping and this also appears to be a curtilage listed building and an important feature of the site. In addition, no justification has been given for the loss of this significant feature.

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms 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). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

No Listed Building Consent has been submitted for this proposal and this should be an accompanying application.

Whilst the principal of conversion may potentially be acceptable, there are significant design changes and information needed to make this scheme acceptable in conservation terms. At the current time this would unduly domesticate this range of curtilage listed agricultural barns and would be harmful to their significance and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The proposals will result in harm to the curtilage listed buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation area via the loss of historic fabric and character and via change to the farmsteads layout and original external form. The proposals involve only part of the buildings and the farmstead grouping and could therefore be considered as causing 'less than substantial harm' for the purposes of interpreting the NPPF. Indeed, the wording of the NPPF and the 'special regard' by Sections 16 and 66 of the Act and 'special attention' by 72 of the Act requires that any level harm caused should be taken seriously.

Whilst paragraph 208 allows that a level of harm may be offset by public benefits, which could include conservation benefits, in this case no objective justification has been provided for the works and the proposals are articulated as being primarily for the benefit of the owner i.e. a private benefit. As a result, the proposals fail to meet with the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance and I therefore recommend refusal.