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HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed external silo and vessels

Kingstead Barn, Fonthill Bishop - Witchmark Distillery

1.0 INTRODUCTION & SCOPE OF REPORT

1.1 This statement has been prepared and written by Baxter Green Architects on behalf of Witchmark Distillery in order to provide an independent assessment of the impact of the change in the external silo and vessels adjacent to the Barn at Kingstead Farm, Fonthill Bishop, SP3 5SH.

1.2 The Kingstead Farm comprise a collection of barns several modern steel frame buildings, a number of stone and brick farmstead buildings and a C17 barn, which is the only statutory designation affecting the site at Grade II. Kingstead Farmhouse is outside the application site.

1.3 The conversion the listed Kingstead Barn to a distillery and the Upper Kingstead Barn (Formerly known as the Granary) into offices and a small information / visitor centre was approved on 11th February 2022. The distillery has been in operation for over 5 years recently winning a number of spirit awards including Gold Outstanding at the International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC), Gold at the World Drinks Awards and Gold at The Gin Masters 2025. In addition, it has achieved a B Corp Certification: Achieved B Corp status in 2025 with a high score becoming England's top-rated distillery for meeting rigorous standards in social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.

1.4 This report falls into two distinct parts: the first sets out the historical background to the development of the site and its surroundings, focussing on assessing the heritage significance of the site in its current form.

1.5 This statement complies with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the onus it places on those planning changes to historic assets to include a clear description of the significance of the assets affected, albeit that the requirement in the NPPF is only such that, *'The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'*.

1.6 This second part of the statement focuses on an assessment of the effects of the proposed works on the significance of the site in built heritage terms.

1.7 This two-stage approach of understanding 'significance' before moving on to assess the impact of potential change on that 'significance' has for some time been regarded as good conservation practice in the design and application process (see, for instance, English Heritage's, now Historic England's,

‘Conservation Principles’, 2008) and the NPPF is now effectively a standard requirement for most applications affecting heritage assets.

1.8 Within the objectives are noted that planning has a key role in conserving our heritage assets and utilising the historic environment in creating sustainable places enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. This overriding aim of conserving historic assets through managed change will enable the continuing use of, in the case of this application, a Listed Building to benefits of heritage conservation.

1.9 Policies state that the application should clearly provide a level of detail proportionate to the heritage asset and to ensure sufficient understanding of the impact the proposals will have on that asset. Local planning authorities should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage asset and the value that it holds for this and future generations.

1.10 For the reasons set out more fully in the body of this statement, it is our considered view that the application proposals would result in a low degree of ‘harm’ to the significance of the application site; however, in my view this ‘harm’ is clearly justified by the provision of a long-term, sustainable use for this historic building, securing its future conservation and maintenance.

1.11 This is a compelling heritage-related public benefit, which the Council must weigh alongside other, non-heritage related benefits when undertaking the balancing exercise required by the NPPF.

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

2.1 The farmstead is located approximately 100m from B3089 within the village of Fonthill Bishop. The listed barn is located within a complex of barn forming a farmstead including modern barns used by the Estate, including the village heating system. Kingstead Farm has been in the ownership of Fonthill Estate since the mid C19 through the Morrison family and has been maintained in good order.

2.2 The Heritage Assessment submitted in support of Listed Building Consent for the conversion of the Grade II listed Kingstead Barn to a distillery included historic map evidence illustrating the barn’s setting and external evolution. While minor changes have occurred over time, the farmstead layout shown on the 1923 map closely reflects the present arrangement, with two clearly defined courtyards formed by three barns.

2.3 As this application is for external freestanding plant equipment associated with the established business, this assessment has deemed that no further discussions on the historic farmstead are required.

The approved application PL/2021/10629 included two external silo's located within the eastern courtyard behind the Estate bio-massing heating building. The application is for similar equipment in the same location.

2.4 Due to the topography, mature planting and close proximity of modern farm buildings the site is not prominent in the landscape, being enclosed within its immediate surroundings. Even views from the adjacent fields are minimised by vegetation and changes in ground levels. Lower Kingstead is the most prominent from the public realm where it presents a stepped elevation with no openings concealing the other historical barns.

2.5 FONTHILL BISHOP SALISBURY ROAD, ST 93 SW (off north side), Bishops Fonthill

1/84 Barn at Kingstead Farm

GV II

Barn. Probably late C17, altered mid C19 for Fonthill Estate. Dressed limestone and rubble stone, tiled roof with coped verge to south and half-hip to north. Eight bays. West side has corrugated iron doors and segmental-headed doorway to right, two gabled loft doors to left. North gable has double planked doors and planked loft door over, both are C19 insertions. South gable has stone buttress with two offsets. East side has double sliding doors, C19 inserted segmental and semi-circular openings to left, attached C20 implement shed. Interior has 8-bay collar and tie-beam roof with two tiers of through purlins, some curved windbracing retained in south bays, timber partly renewed to north. North bay and a half divided off with C19 brick partition wall. A pre-1700 barn surviving amongst a group of C19 and C20 estate farm buildings.

Listing NGR: ST9350233061



Photograph 1 – aerial photograph of the site showing the modern additions and change to Upper Kingstead Barn. The conversion of the barns to form the distillery utilised the existing buildings without requiring any extensions or significant alterations to the landscape.

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 The purpose of this section of the report is to assess the significance of the site in heritage terms. This will provide a 'baseline' against which the application proposals can be assessed.

3.2 From the discussions above the listed barn forms part of collection of buildings within a farmstead and holds particular historic standing. The barns have been sensitively converted, as approved under application PL/2021/10629 and PL/2021/10196, to a successful distillery.

3.3 As will be clear from the discussion at section above, Kingstead Farm represents a traditional farmstead and its agricultural history remains clearly legible. Despite changes to the individual structures, the general layout of agricultural buildings set around well-defined courtyards follows the arrangement of the site by 1877 and certainly earlier.

3.4 The main exceptions are the large modern barns to the north outside the courtyard arrangement and the modern single storey lean-to addition to the East Elevation of the listed barn. That said, the site remains legible as a historic farmstead, incorporating traditional farm buildings of a variety of ages and scales in a courtyard arrangement.

3.5 Taken as a group, this courtyard farmstead assemblage is therefore of clear heritage interest. Indeed, using the criteria specified in Historic England's March 2015 'Farmstead Assessment Framework', this assemblage can reasonably be considered to correspond to fall between the two characterisations of '*minor change and/or loss to historic form*' and '*no change to the historic form with a high retention of buildings and internal/external features*'

3.6 The form and layout of the farmstead courtyards are largely unaltered from its mid-19th century arrangement and this application for external freestanding plant equipment

3.7 As Historic England's 'Farmstead Assessment Framework' sets out, '*The greater the survival of the historic form of the group and the detail of individual buildings, the greater will be its significance as a traditional farmstead*'.

3.8 Of the individual structures, the middle barn is individually listed at Grade II, which clearly identifies it as the single most significant structure on the site. It is of high significance as a late-17th-century stone structure. This assessment concentrates on the impact of the external plant equipment and the setting of the listed building as these are not physically connected to the building.

3.9 Returning to the Historic England's 'Farmstead Assessment Framework', this sets out a number of criteria that may render a traditional farmstead of 'special significance in a local or national context'. This includes demonstrable relationships with significant archaeological remains/parkland/estates/common land, the retention of early buildings (particularly minor 18th-century or earlier structures, as these survive less commonly than barns), rare surviving material (such as doors, stalls etc.), or demonstrable and discernible relationships with either landed estates or common land.

3.10 As such, it would be reasonable to consider the farmstead at Kingstead to be significant in a local context and to have some limited significance in a national context (consistent with the listing of the barn at Grade II), providing a recognisable example of a traditional farmstead on a site that has incorporated a farmstead of some form since at least the 16th century and possibly earlier.

3.11 The assessment criteria for this application would be whether the proposed external freestanding plant would alter the setting to the listed barn. Consideration should be given to the two external silos, shown on drawings 10298_P01 and P03 revision A listed on the decision notices. These 6m high silos are located behind the bio-mass building and adjacent to a modern metal extension to the listed barn.

4.0 THE APPLICATION PROPOSALS AND THE HERITAGE ISSUES

4.1 Section 3.0 established the significance of the site in built heritage terms, drawing on the historical background and description set out in Section 2.0. Having considered this, the purpose of this section of the report is to analyse the application proposals against that significance in order to establish the likely effects of the scheme in heritage terms.

4.2 As part of the approved conversion to form the distillery, two 6m high silos were sited to avoid visual intrusion on the main aspect of the barn. This courtyard already has a modern lean-to addition to the rear of the listed barn, and two silos are in appearance of an agricultural character and can be removed quite easily.

4.3 The application seeks to change the approved, two 6m high silos, for two 6.8m silos and two 5.7m high fermenting vessels to be in the same location along with alterations to the modern lean-to roof allowing the Mash Vessel funnel to project through. The tanks are encased with an outer protective layer coloured to match the Witchmark green, used for the joinery on the converted buildings.

4.4 The proposed tanks are all freestanding that can be removed without impacting the existing buildings and would not result in any loss of historic fabric. The silos do not require the removal or alteration of

historic fabric and do not disrupt the established layout of the farmstead. As agricultural structures, they are consistent with the ongoing use of the site and reflect the natural evolution of a working farm.

4.5 The proposals are contained within the traditional farmstead curtilage on land that is not used and will not impact on the wider landscape due to being screened by the existing building, boundary walls and vegetation. Development effects impact in various degrees of magnitude on the fabric and character of the landscape, moderated by its sensitivity and capacity to accommodate change. The significance of adverse and/or beneficial visual effects results from identifying principal viewpoints, assessing the degree of change in view, and consideration of the sensitivity of the viewer. As externally the site will remain predominantly unaltered to that approved, the impact to the viewer will be low. Particularly when considering the relative heights to the surrounding buildings and the historical use of the area.

4.6 The magnitude of the impact of the development on the landscape should be considered negligible as none of the characteristic landscape features will be altered or lost. Similarly, the proposals would have a low-negligible impact on the sensitivity of the landscape due to the design and siting of the plant equipment and enclosed landscape with low visibility. The Development would therefore have little impact on the character of the area due to its elevation, physical and visual enclosure.

4.7 Furthermore, the NPPF notes the importance of areas retaining the character with sympathetic design with appropriate materials, which this development has carefully considered is the detailing, approach and overall scale and appearance. The appearance of the tanks are of an agricultural nature and as such in keeping with the character of the area.

4.8 In visual terms, while the silos introduce modern elements, such features are common within contemporary farm environments. Their scale and siting ensure that any visual impact is localised and does not detract from the overall understanding or appreciation of the farmstead's historic role.

4.9 The proposals will require an additional two members of staff, but this small increase will not have any impact on the number of vehicle movements. The proposed tanks are essential to the growth of the business and will enable a significant reduction in vehicle movements:

Currently the distillery operates as follows:

- a) One Delivery HGV articulated lorry per week that then requires 16 - 24 forklift movements at current capacity of 48 at full capacity.
- b) Waste generates 16 - 24 plastic bulk sacks, full capacity 48 per week.
- c) Grain out for collection, 16 forklift movements for 4 pick up and 3.5 t trailer return movements from Fonthill to Hindon.

- d) Total; 1 HGV delivery, 264 forklift movements, 48 pickup plus trailer movements, 48 waste plastic bulk sacks and associated pallet wrap and 24 Pallets to be returned 0.5 HGV collection.

The proposed scheme would allow the distillery to operate as follows:

- e) Total; 1 HGV delivery
12 tractor and trailer movements
Zero waste

4.10 The amenity of the neighbouring land and residence will not be affected by the proposals, and the tanks will not increase any noise from the current operations. With the reduced commercial traffic movements this will offer some benefit to the neighbouring properties.

4.11 This is consistent with Historic England's published advice on 'Adapting Historical Farm Buildings' (September 2017), which notes that, *'Without a regular stream of income to support their upkeep, most traditional farm buildings will not survive'* Indeed, this published advice notes that, *'In the majority of cases adaption, or an appropriate use within a sympathetic development scheme, will be the only means of funding maintenance and repair, the lack of which will lead to further deterioration and eventual loss of heritage assets'*

4.12 In this regard, one of the principal impacts of the scheme, to secure a long-term future for the farmstead assemblage and its constituent buildings, represents a substantial heritage-related public benefit.

4.13 In terms of its layout and design, the scheme is an appropriate response to the historic character of the site, retaining the existing buildings and, crucially, the historic layout of barns and smaller buildings set around a yard.

4.14 While the listed barn is clearly a significant historical building it does not, in our view, fall within the small minority of buildings that the PPG describes as being, *'so important and sensitive to change that alterations to accommodate a viable use would lead to an unacceptable loss of significance'*

4.15 As such, while I identify a low degree of 'harm' to the significance of this listed building through the addition of additional external plant, I am of the view that Historic England's guidance on this matter is appropriate and, by following this, the scheme offers a reasonable balance between retaining legibility of the barn's historical character and enabling a successful business to evolve and grow.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 As noted in the PPG, *'The vast majority of heritage assets are in private hands. Thus, sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation'*.

5.2 The external freestanding silos respect the historic agricultural character of the site and its surroundings without adversely affect the significance of any designated or non-designated heritage assets and are appropriate within the context of a working farmstead.

5.3 The nature of the proposed would not adversely affect the character or setting of the listed building or cause any loss or damage to the historic fabric. It is proposed this scope of works will not have any detrimental impact on the character of the property and will be undertaken in a sensitive and appropriate method.

5.6 The works would not alter the character of the property or remove / damage any features intrinsic to the listing of the property but seeks to ensure the business continues to be successful enabling the listed buildings to be maintained and enhanced for future generations. Advice has been sought to ensure all works will be completed in accordance with all traditional technical guidelines.

5.7 In conclusion, most significantly, the provision of a long-term, viable use for this historic building, securing its long-term conservation and maintenance, represents a substantial heritage-related benefit. The proposed works meets the criteria identified in the planning policies for Listed Buildings has a clear public benefit and accordingly permission should be granted.

APPENDIX



Photograph 1 – The converted barns as approved under applications PL/2021/10629 and PL/2021/10196.



Photograph 2 – the bio-mass building and entrance into the lower courtyard.

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Photograph 3 – The siting of the external freestanding silos and vessels.



Photograph 4 – The lower courtyard with the modern extension to the listed building and the rear of the bio-mass building.

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Sources

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