

**OUTBUILDINGS,
at MANOR FARMHOUSE, WORTON**

Heritage Assessment



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*Carefully managing change
in the historic environment*

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 I have been asked to prepare a Heritage Assessment of outbuildings at Manor Farm House, 63 High Street, Worton, Wiltshire, SN10 5RU. The structures may form part of a former farmstead located near the heart of the village. The buildings in question are redundant for their original purpose and the owner is considering seeking planning permission to convert the structures to a home office and hobbies space.
- 1.2 The structures are not listed as having architectural or historic interest but they are closely associated with Manor Farm House which is subject to statutory protection. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places an obligation on planning applicants to provide information on heritage significance to help Local Planning Authorities make decisions on the impact of any proposals for changeⁱ. An appropriate level of specialist expertise is expected to be applied in assessing the significance of the heritage assets involved. I propose to draw on the framework recommended in *Statements of Heritage Significance* - an Advice Note issued by Historic Englandⁱⁱ. This advocates a staged approach which starts with understanding the significance of affected assets, before moving on to understanding possible impacts on that significance while avoiding, minimising and mitigating them when pursuing opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance, all therefore leading to the justification for any unavoidable harmful impacts.
- 1.3 The level of detail in a statement of heritage significance is expected to be proportionate, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of any proposals on the significance of the building.
- 1.4 I am a retired chartered town planner with over 40 years experience of appraising development proposals in the historic environment. I am a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and a past member of the Central Council, and Chairman of the South West Branch. In 2021 I joined the Disciplinary Panel of the Institute. The assessment has been carried out in accordance with *Conservation Professional Practice Principles*ⁱⁱⁱ published by the IHBC.
- 1.5 The report is largely based upon research, and an inspection of the building and surroundings, undertaken during February 2023.

2. Identifying which heritage assets are affected

- 2.1 As noted above Manor Farm House is a designated heritage asset. The outbuildings lie about 5m to the east of the Farm House, and its setting is therefore a relevant consideration.
- 2.2 Manor Farm House is listed with Grade II status with the following accompanying description:

Farmhouse, C16 timber-frame encased in C18, rendered front and red brick elsewhere with hipped Bridgwater tile roof and stack to rear of ridge. Two storeys. Three-window front with painted brick plinth, timber moulded eaves cornice and exposed-box 12-pane sashes. A door to left of centre has been removed. Roof is carried down lower to rear, rear door. Chequered-brick rear wing with plain tiles and converted early C19 brick outbuilding beyond. During repair work front timber-framing was exposed, three tiers of angle braces each end. Interior: heavy chamfered beams in room to east of stack, C18 plaster cornice in room to west. Upstairs centre room with mid C18 fielded panelling to overmantel.



Photo 2. Manor Farm House from High Street, with the outbuildings on the extreme right

- 2.3 The subject structures are not the outbuilding referred to in the list description. The outbuilding mentioned is of two stories and is attached to the main dwelling. However, although the subject outbuildings are not referred to in the list description, freestanding structures must be considered to be subject to control as a consequence of S1 (5) (b) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 which indicates that any structure within the curtilage of a listed building, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948 shall be treated as part of the building. The Conservation Officer of the Local Authority has stated “The building clearly served as an ancillary building to the farmhouse and is considered to be curtilage listed” and this is not disputed.
- 2.4 The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record notes “Manor Farm, Worton. Partially extant medieval farmstead of loose courtyard plan. One side of the loose courtyard is formed by working agricultural buildings. The farmhouse is detached with side on to the yard. Located within or in association to a village. There has been a partial loss (less than 50%) of traditional buildings”.
- 2.5 The main house, which has not been associated with farming for many years, also lies within the Worton Conservation Area.
- 2.6 From the perspective of the historic environment, therefore, the subject buildings, the setting of Manor Farm House, and the Worton Conservation Area are the relevant heritage assets that need to be taken into account.

3 Beginning to Understand the Building

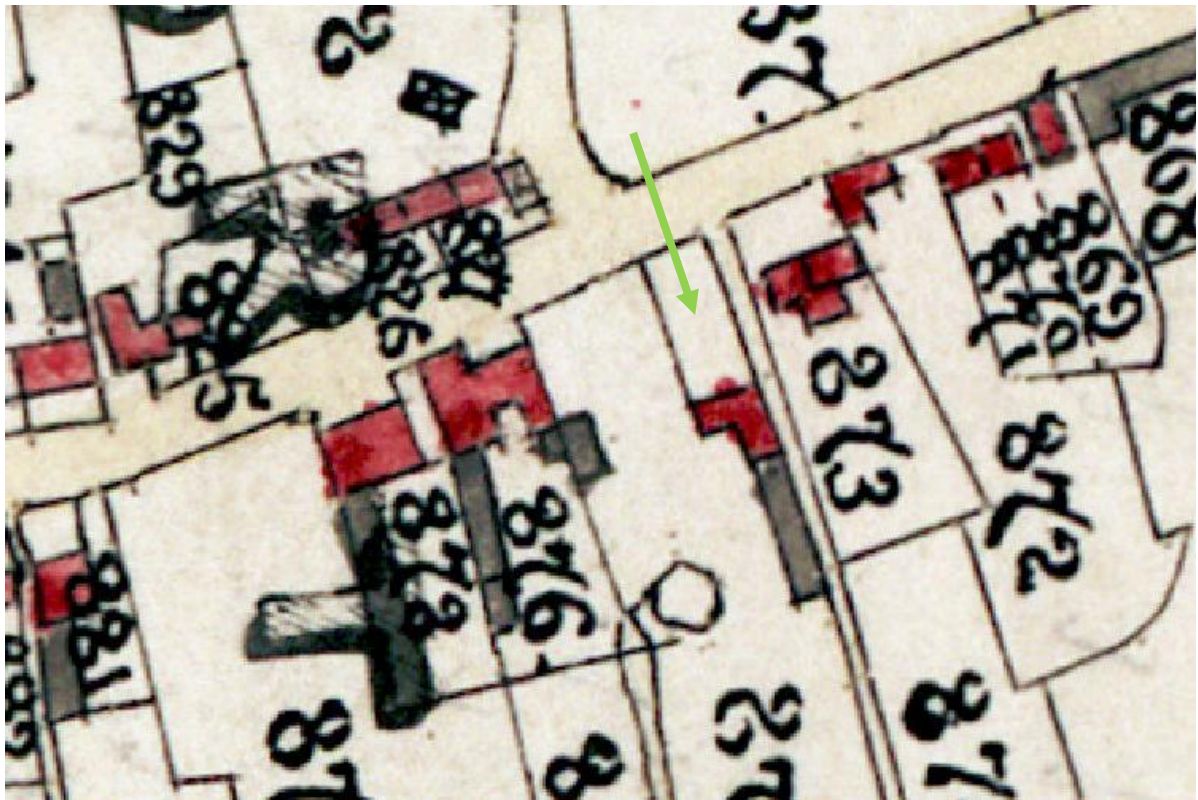
- 3.1 Historically Worton was never an independent parish. Rather, it was a tithing belonging to Potterne. Neither was Worton a separate manor; being part of the Bishop of Salisbury’s manor of Potterne. Worton and nearby Marston only identified as separate civil parishes from 1894.
- 3.2 Worton originally developed as a small agricultural community although it is known that a number of textile workers were present in the 16th and 17th centuries ^{iv}. According to the list description it was around this time that Manor Farm House was first built. It is likely that there would have been a head farmer at Worton, and it is just possible his property would have had the status of a Manor House. It is more probable, however, that the property known as the Manor Farm was an indication that it *belonged* to the manor based at Potterne.

- 3.3 There is no sign of agriculture apparent at the site today. The outside space is put to use as attractive gardens, mainly laid to lawns with ornamental trees. Historic mapping has been consulted in order to better understand any relationship the outbuildings may have once had to local agriculture. The outbuildings, however, are not shown on the earliest available large scale mapping. The tithe map of c 1840 (Map1 below) shows the house with a footprint identifiable with that found today. The mapping also shows a small structure to the west but this seems too far away to be the subject buildings. Furthermore, the small structure is shown abutting Worton House which eliminates the possibility that it could be the outbuildings in question.



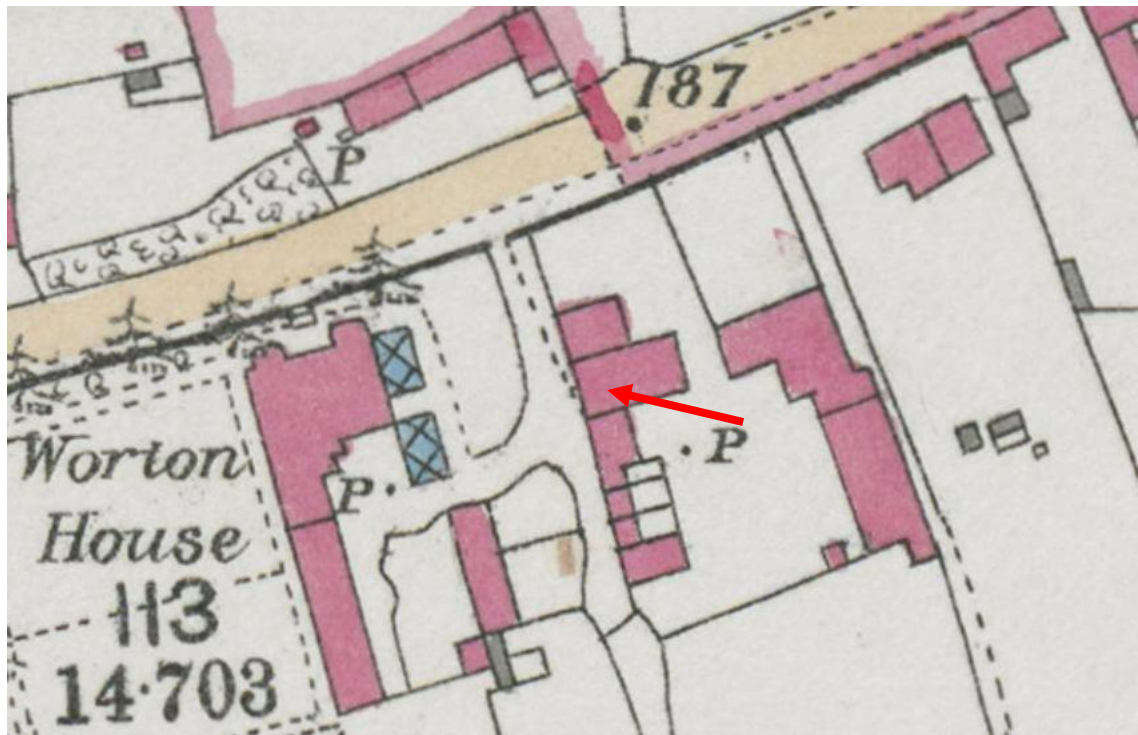
Figure 1. Aerial image of Manor Farm House and its grounds, with the outbuildings arrowed

- 3.4 The map of 1840 does not show or suggest that a medieval farmstead had survived at the site, thus casting some doubt on the information held in the Historic Environment Record. The present owner of Manor Farm House believes that land running with the property was located on the north side of High Street where, possibly, the main farm buildings would have been located.



Map 1. Tithe Map of 1840 with Manor Farm House arrowed

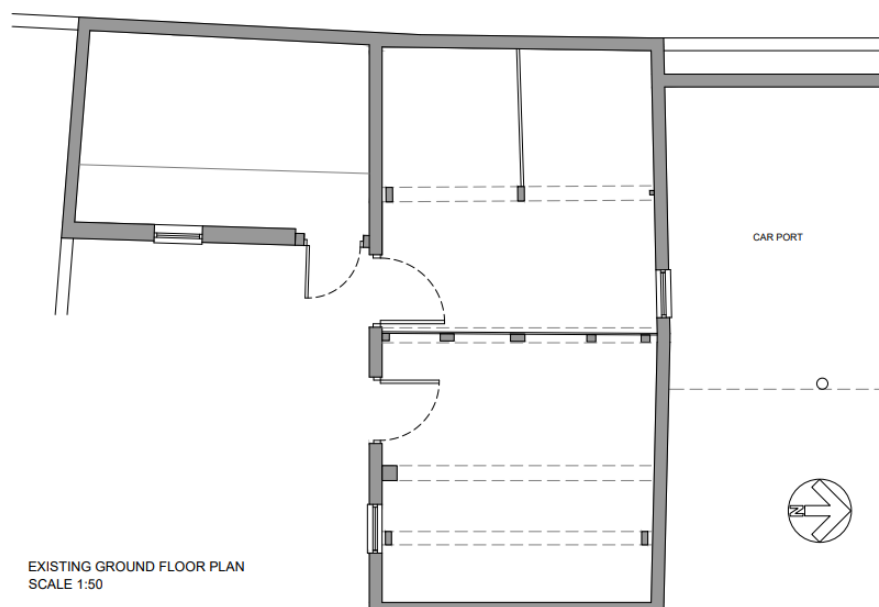
- 3.5 The next available large scale mapping was as a result of the First Ordnance Survey published c1888. By this time the subject structures had arrived. It consists of three cells - plus smaller outbuildings to the south that only partially survive today.



Map 2. First Edition Ordnance Survey map with the subject of this report arrowed

- 3.6 The surviving outbuildings are currently used for general storage of household items. They however demonstrate former use as a stable with one section containing stalls and a more open loose box or storage area in the other half.
- 3.7 The existing ground floor footprint of the outbuildings is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Survey of the ground floor by Dolman Building Surveyors with the main range of the outbuildings in the centre, a single storey structure with a mono pitch roof to the left, and an open-fronted structure to the right.



- 3.8 The main range of the outbuildings is of one and half stories with brick walls beneath a clay tiled roof. This contains the hallmarks of a stable. A timber ground floor partition sub-divides the floor plan. The western half has a roughly cobbled floor with a crude drainage channel, and a timber hayrack and trough against the west gable end. There is a low stall divider and a narrow hatch leading up to a loft where hay would have been supplied through a pitching hole in the eastern gable. The hay would have been swept into the hayrack through a gap in the floor or a trap door. The structure seems too small to have housed shire or cart horses and it was probably used by domestic ponies or nags. A trap is likely to have been housed within the adjacent open-fronted structure. The eastern half of the main range has a dirt floor and may have been used as an occasional loose box.



Photo 3. The hayrack and manger (partly obscured by a mirror)

- 3.9 The mapping evidence, and character of the brickwork, suggest that the outbuildings were built during the second half of the 19th century. The main range is the central element and both secondary elements appear to have been built up against it. The

mono pitched left hand structure is a crude affair with a concrete floor and flimsy roof structure covered by corrugated iron sheets. Its original purpose is not entirely certain, but may have been used as a small workshop, or garden shed. The open-fronted structure nearest to High Street has its rear wall plate supported by cast iron columns which tends to confirm its construction during the Victorian age. It was probably built for the purpose for which it is currently used - a cover for personal vehicles. Other than basic repairs, the owner has no plans for this section of the outbuildings and it is therefore not considered further in this report.

4. The Significance of the Building

- 4.1 The fact that the outbuildings fall within the curtilage of a listed building does not automatically imply that they will have heritage significance. It is important therefore to explore what status should be attributed to the structures. Annex 2 to the National Planning Policy Framework defines a Heritage Asset 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. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)”.
- 4.2 Where heritage assets are involved the NPPF requires the applicant to describe their significance, including the contribution of their setting to that significance. Significance is defined in the NPPF as ‘the value of a heritage assets to this and future generations because of its heritage interest’.
- 4.3 The NPPF identifies four types of heritage value that an asset may hold : archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interest. This is simply a way of analysing significance. Understanding the extent of that significance is important because this can, among other things, lead to a better understanding of how adaptable the asset may be to change.
- 4.4 The outbuildings are constructed mainly from locally sourced building materials. The bricks and clay pantiles were available in the nearby Lavington and Cheverell areas. These tends to place the building firmly in the vernacular zone. Indeed, there is little sign of architectural or artistic intent. Historic England has commented generally : “..... that stables were generally well built and often given a certain level of architectural and decorative treatment.”^v The top of the brick walls of the main range have been given a simple coggled appearance. That is to say, there is a course of

projecting bricks laid diagonally to give a saw-like effect in a form of a cornice. However, there is little other evidence of any attempt to lift the appearance of the subject buildings above commonplace. For example, the ceilings of stables were sometimes plastered but here the ceilings and walls are bare, with minimal architectural embellishment.

- 4.5 Alterations to the original structure have further weakened its character. A pole beam and a number of posts formed by railway sleepers have been inserted to support the first floor structure. Furthermore, the structure of the partition within the ground floor of the main range is formed with timber posts that are not correctly jointed into the oversailing beam. The timber stall divider in the western half was also cobbled together by an unskilled craftsman.



Photo 4 (left) an original floor beam with inserted pole beam both supported by posts that have been added, and Photo 5 the ground floor partition with posts seemingly wedged into position.

- 4.6 The general condition of the building is structurally poor. Steel straps and pattress plates have been added at mid height to arrest the outward lean of external walls, and window casements are in an advanced state of decay. The outbuildings are redundant from their original functions and a lack of investment over a prolonged period is now evident.
- 4.7 Setting can also contribute to significance although setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation. However it is generally accepted that its importance can lie in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance. The setting of a heritage asset is defined in

the Glossary of the NPPF: “The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

4.8 The outbuildings are approximately 150 years old. They seem to relate to a period when the farmhouse had become gentrified. Although their appearance contrasts sharply with the character of the dwelling house they have a time-honoured appearance that makes a small positive contribution to the setting of the principal building and the appearance of the wider Conservation Area. They represent evidence of an ancillary use that was needed to support the main house at a time before the invention of motor vehicles. As very modest utilitarian structures, however, they never had a planned setting of their own. They were sited for the convenience of the occupiers of the main house rather than any higher motive. There are no significant views or vistas that need to be respected.

4.10 In summary, the main items of heritage significance are

- * Surviving evidence of the role horse transport played before the invention of motorised vehicles
- * A small but positive visual role within the immediate setting of Manor Farm House and the Conservation Area in which it is located
- * The external shell of the main range consisting of the brick walls, roof structure, and clay tile roof covering
- * The hayrack and manger within the former stable

4.11 The NPPF acknowledges that some heritage assets will have greater significance than others. Para 199 points out that the more important an asset, the greater weight it should receive in the decision-making process. It is possible to identify a continuum with World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and Grade I listed buildings near the top, other nationally designated assets somewhere near the middle, and locally listed buildings, conservation areas and damaged archaeological sites at the bottom. Grade II listed buildings are often attributed medium to high heritage significance. In wrapping up, the outbuildings are worthy of consideration as a heritage asset but due to the absence of any special architectural treatment or

craftsmanship, a rank at the low end of heritage significance spectrum seems an appropriate classification for these former stables and associated structures.

5. Impact of Proposals on Heritage Significance

- 5.1 The above fulfils the obligations under para 194 of the NPPF. Subsequent steps are normally undertaken by the Local Planning Authority. However, it can be helpful if an applicant for planning permission is aware of potential impacts so they can be minimised.
- 5.2 This report comes at a time before final proposals for the future of the outbuildings are concluded. However, informal discussions have taken place previously with the Local Planning Authority, when the possibility of converting the outbuildings into an annexe to the main house was tabled. The provisional scheme provided ancillary accommodation including; Home Office, Sitting Room, Dining/Kitchenette and two Bedroom spaces.
- 5.3 Concerns were expressed that the preliminary scheme was tantamount to a separate residential dwelling. This was considered unacceptable as it may give rise to further works to subdivide the garden leading to a fragmentation of the historic entity, which will harm the character and appearance of the listed building.
- 5.4 This report is intended to outline the historic context of the outbuildings allowing significance to be taken fully into account in advancing the proposals. Hopefully this will lead to a better outcome by influencing the final design by mitigating harmful impacts, enhancing significance where possible, and showing how any remaining harm is justified.
- 5.5 A revised scheme will follow and the main advantage of a proposal to find a new purpose for the outbuildings is that it will circumvent the possibility of demolition or a continuation of slow decay of the building fabric. A new use could breathe new life into the structures and create a positive reason for repairs and on-going maintenance. As a heritage asset, however, it is important that the important aspects of significance are respected. Thus a balance needs to be struck. How a suitable compromise might be achieved is explored in the following section.

6 Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

- 6.1 Historic England's Advice Note *Statements of Heritage Significance* continues with an open-ended approach to determine if there are any possibilities of improving the situation. Understanding heritage significance should inform designs, both traditional and contemporary, that reveal, enhance and retain their significance.
- 6.2 There will inevitably be a need for a degree of alteration and useful help is given for this type of structure in *Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings - Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse*^{vi}. The overriding aim should be to identify opportunities for changes which conserve, enhance or better reveal the distinctive character of the building in its setting.
- 6.3 The final scheme should avoid the introduction of overtly domestic features such as porches and conservatories. An equally important objective, however, should be the retention of as much significant historic fabric as possible, together with the use of compatible materials and methods of repair. The tiled roof and the brickwork walls should be retained, and the ground floor hayrack and manger should be kept as a feature.
- 6.4 A reduction in the extent of new accommodation, as requested by the Local Planning Authority, would also minimise the risk of possible knock-on impacts. It is fully understood, however, that the owner of the property has no plans to separate or sub-divide the existing curtilage. Omission of the originally suggested conversion of the loft area would reduce the amount of habitable accommodation, and avoid the need for a new large opening for a full size stair, and the need for new rooflights. There could be advantage, however, in using the un-heated loft for low-key storage for which only a small-scale stair access would be required.
- 6.5 A detailed scheme of conversion should also take account of the provision of insulation suitable for the new use. Upgrading the roof or attic floor should not present a particular difficulty, and it should be noted that exemptions and 'special considerations' apply for historic and buildings of traditional construction. The internal faces of the walls of the main range, and the mono-pitched single storey structure, will however need to have their thermal efficiency improved. The provision of vertical timber boarding to the lower levels of the external walls could provide a convenient means of hiding thermal insulation. The boards could emulate the appearance of kickboards often found in stables and animal housing. The vernacular character of

the structures could be further respected if the walls above the level of the new boards were covered by insulating plaster, rather than plasterboards. Insulating plaster can respond to the profile of the walls and openings thus retaining some of the utilitarian character of the outbuildings.

- 6.6 Consideration will also need to be given to how damp can be controlled. Fortunately ground conditions are generally favourable, and the repair of rain water gutters and downpipes is likely to be sufficient. The use of lime pointing where repairs are necessary will also mitigate future harm from damp within the substrate. The use of breathable limecrete, or similar, for new ground floors will also minimise the risk of rising damp within the walls.
- 6.7 The new ground floor accommodation will also require a heating system to deal with colder periods. The provision of electric powered radiators would avoid the need for extensive new plumbing works.
- 6.8 There will be limited opportunities to improve day-lighting within the building. Ideally existing window opening will be retained at their present size with new traditionally designed timber casements replacing existing rotted joinery. The north facing window (onto the 'car port') however, contains square vertical staves in fair condition which should be retained if possible, perhaps with a new glazed window planted over.
- 6.9 There is also a need to be mindful of the rural scene in detailing the external areas. It is unlikely that resources will be available in the short-term to break-up and remove adjacent concrete slabs but if the opportunity arises replacement with gravel surfaces may be an appropriate treatment that assists in allowing surrounding ground to dry out. This may also present an opportunity to enhance ground drainage in the form of French drains around the outbuildings. These are simple trenches filled with gravel, perforated pipes and a geotextile lining, that can be particularly effective in maintaining dry walls within traditional buildings. External lighting should also been minimised to avoid light pollution beyond the site boundaries and ensure the setting of the listed farmhouse, and the outbuilding itself, is maintained.
- 6.10 Old and under-used buildings have the potential to be habitats for protected species, particularly bats, and it may be necessary to obtain specialist advice

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The subject structures once provided accommodation for domestic animals, and have a low level of heritage importance. However, they make a small contribution to local history and local distinctiveness. A sympathetic new use is required if the main attributes are to survive into the future.
- 7.2 It is worth noting that only works which affect the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building require listed building consent. In the case of a structure within the curtilage of a listed building it is the interest of the principal building – Manor Farm House - that is critical. Protecting the character of the Farm House complex, not the character of the outbuildings, is the overriding aim. Safeguarding of the freestanding outbuildings must inevitably have a 'lighter touch'. Thus, internal works within the outbuildings that have no impact on the character of the listed building are unlikely to require listed building approval. This point may be somewhat academic if a sympathetic scheme for re-use of the outbuildings can be evolved.
- 7.3 A detailed scheme based on an understanding of the original purpose and character of the site, and taking the preliminary comments of the Local Planning Authority into account, should result in a scheme that is regarded as positive. Where minor changes and alterations are proposed any minor negative impacts should be balanced against the beneficial effect of giving new life to the redundant structures; conservation in its truest sense.
- 7.4 Although agricultural operations at the site ceased a long time ago it is relevant to note The Wiltshire Farmsteads Project (sponsored by Wiltshire Council, The Wiltshire Buildings Record, and Historic England) stated :

Traditional farmsteads and buildings are heritage assets which make a significant contribution to both landscape character and local distinctiveness. They are also, through a diversity of uses, assets for local communities and economies. Future change in historic farmsteads is inevitable if they are to be retained as a distinctive part of the rural landscape: otherwise, they risk decay and dereliction.

8 The main References and Sources used

- 8.1 The following outlines the framework of research and documents consulted considered in the preparation of this assessment:
- i) The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) MHCLG 2021
 - ii) Statements of Heritage Significance - an Advice Note, Historic England 2019

- iii) Conservation Professional Practice Principles, IHBC 2017
- iv) Victoria County History of Wiltshire, Vol 7
- v) National Farm Building Types Historic England 2014
- vi) Wiltshire Farm Buildings 1500-1900, Pamela M Slocombe 1989
- vii) Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings - Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse, Historic England September 2017
- viii) Change of Use – the conversion of old buildings, Pamela Cunington, 1998

Photo 10. The west flank of the outbuildings with the access drive to 65 High Street in the foreground.

