

OLD MILL BARN, MIDDLE WOODFORD, WILTSHIRE

Heritage Statement



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**OLD MILL BARN,
MIDDLE WOODFORD, WILTSHIRE**

Heritage Statement

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July 2026

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Heritage Statement

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Old Mill Barn is a late 20th century house standing on the west side of the road which runs along the valley of the River Avon, and which passes through the village of Middle Woodford, Wiltshire. The owner of the property is seeking to replace the existing house with a new house and a detached garage (2026/02622). Conservation objections have been raised on the basis of a lack of adequate assessment of the significance of Woodford Mill and its setting or of Old Mill Barn. However, whilst the lack of such an assessment is highlighted, the Conservation Officer still identified harm to the Grade II listed Woodford Mill which is located c.40m to the south-east on the opposite side of the road due to impact on the setting of the listed building.

1.2 Forum Heritage Services has been commissioned to make an assessment of the extent and importance of the setting of the listed building and its contribution to its significance, and to consider the potential impact of the proposals upon the significance of the listed building and to prepare a Heritage Statement in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services visited the site in July 2026 and subsequently prepared this report.

1.3 This report will present:

- A brief background to the proposed development site using historic mapping
- A description of the setting of Woodford Mill
- Policy and guidance background
- An assessment of the importance of the setting of Woodford Mill and the potential impact of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage asset following Historic England guidance on assessing the importance of setting in *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition, December 2017)
- Conclusions

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The sequence of historic maps dating from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century (Figures 1 – 4) show that in c.1840 there were no buildings on the west side of the north – south valley road south of Church Bottom which leads to the west from the valley. By 1879 a pair of cottages had been built and between 1879 and 1901 a small L-plan range of buildings had been built on the site now occupied by Old Mill Barn. By 1925 this L-plan range had been joined by several small structures and additions

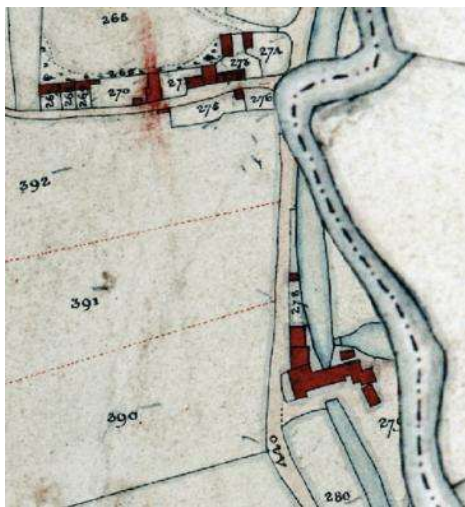


Figure 1 Woodford Tithe Map, c.1840
© WSHC

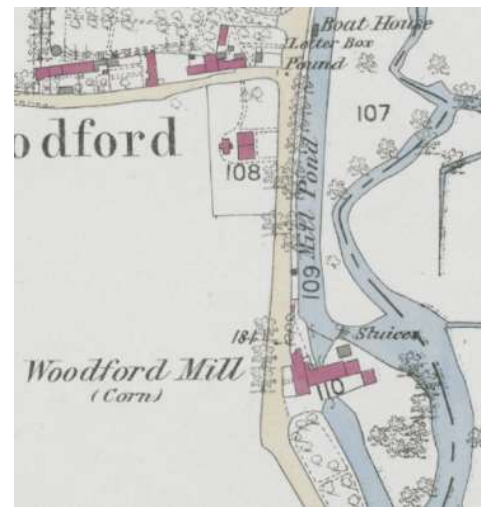


Figure 2 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25"
map, 1879. © WSHC



- 2.2 An historic photograph of the farm buildings shows that they were either cow houses or stabling constructed in brick with gabled slate roofs (Figure 5). By 1939 a group of four local authority houses and a private house were built on the west side of the road to the south-west of the mill (OS 25" map published 1941, not illustrated).

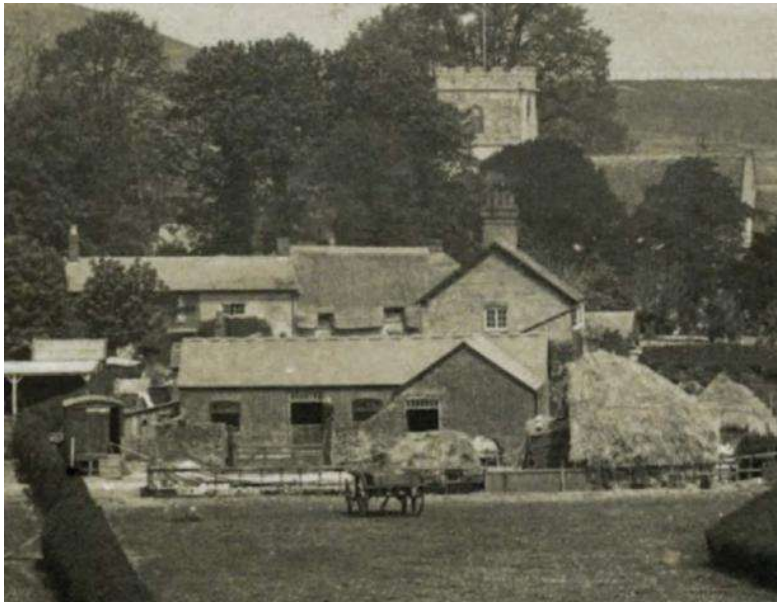


Figure 5
Early 20th century
photograph showing
the farm buildings that
occupied the site of
Old Mill Barn.

- 2.3 In 1989 planning permission was granted for the replacement of the redundant farm buildings with a single house with an integral double garage (S/1989/1233). This house was originally called Beauchamp House, the current owners changing the name to Old Mill Barn when they purchased the building approximately six years ago.

- 2.4 Woodford Mill (Figure 6) was added to the *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic interest* at Grade II in 1988. The building is described as:

House and water mill. Mid to late C18 and C19. Knapped flint and chalk stone chequerwork, with limestone quoins and brick dressings to openings, tiled roof. Two storeys and attic, 3 bays. Central fielded and panelled door with wreath knocker and square fanlight. Dentilled canopy over on cut brackets. Flush chalkstone plat band. Sixteen-paned sashes with moulded boxes, but one window blind. Brick dentilled eaves. Paned hipped dormer. Roof half hipped with stack on rear wall. To left, a late C19 two-storey red brick extension, now containing kitchen. Wide eaves and pitched roof over first floor window and gable stack. To rear, long range containing early C19 water mill, brick laced flint with tiled roof. Two storeys. Disused at time of survey (June 1987).



Figure 6 Woodford Mill house with the former mill range to the rear.

- 2.6 In 2007 planning permission was granted for a large ancillary range including garages and a pool at Woodford Mill, this L-plan building being set immediately south of the mill house (S/2007/0413).
- 2.7 In 2011 planning permission was granted for the demolition of the pair of late 19th century cottages and their replacement with two detached houses (Field House and Greystones) (S/2011/0765).

3.0 DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 Old Mill Barn is a two-storey brick house under a slate hipped roof which is carried forward as a catslide to the east elevation (Figure 7). This catslide is broken by a taller 'threshing bay porch' feature which is largely glazed under a hipped roof and set back from the elements to either side. To the north is a double garage. To the south of the 'threshing bay porch' and in the south gable end there are uPVC domestic style casement windows and a door. The brickwork below the eaves of the catslide includes a decorative pattern which returns to the south gable.



Figure 7 Old Mill Barn.

- 2.2 This description of the setting of the Grade II listed Woodford Mill will be presented as a series of captioned photographs which will examine how the listed building is experienced and its relationship with the proposed development site.



Figure 8 The view along the valley road effectively entering into the village of Middle Woodford marked by the presence of the former local authority and private housing on the west side of the road. The cob boundary wall to the Woodford Mill curtilage can be seen to the right of the road, with the tiled roof of a modern garage building rising above the wall, but the mill itself cannot be seen from this position. In the centre of the view a glimpse of a tiled roof and chimney can be seen indicating the presence of further housing within the village – this being one of the houses along Church Bottom.



Figure 9 Moving northwards, passing the cob boundary wall to Woodford Mill, as the road bends to the right Old Mill Barn comes into view. Woodford Mill house remains hidden from view.



Figure 11 As Woodford Mill comes into view to the right, Old Mill Barn is largely screened by the substantial hedge to the left side of the road. The rendered gable of Field House is seen, with the upper part of the roof of Old Mill Barn confirming that one is moving into a settlement.



Figure 12 From opposite Woodford Mill looking south, a private house adjacent to the former local authority houses can be seen, the relationship shows that whilst the density of development may be lower than in the core of the village, the mill is clearly part of Middle Woodford. The modern garage and pool building to the mill is also seen in this view.



Figure 13 Approaching the proposed development site from the north, after the junction with Church Bottom, the two modern houses Greystones and Field House are visible, both clearly relatively large modern houses, Field House being of 2½ storeys. Old Mill Barn is largely hidden from view until level with Field House at which point there is a glimpsed view to the north gable.



Figure 14 The view south from adjacent to Old Mill Barn looking towards Woodford Mill. The mill range to the rear of the house is the main part of the building that can be seen, the mill extending out into the flood plain and served by the mill leat. The only part of the mill house that can be seen is the later red brick addition – the architectural interest of the house conveyed by its chequer-work and brick and flint masonry cannot be seen or appreciated.



Figure 15 From opposite Old Mill Barn, Woodford Mill can be glimpsed beyond the tall cob wall, hedge and trees, the mill range being the most visible part of the building, the house presenting its gable to the north.



Figure 16 As Church Bottom climbs the valley side there are occasional glimpsed views to the south-east in which the modern houses and Old Mill Barn can be seen. The tiled roof of Woodford Mill can be partly glimpsed to the right.

4.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE BACKGROUND

4.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach to the management of historic buildings and areas and requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses, and its setting, under Section 66 – a matter the Courts have held should be afforded considerable importance and weight.

4.2 The statutory approach is reflected in Policy CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted January 2015 (CS) and Policy 99 of the Draft Local Plan Review: Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment which has ‘weight’ following submission to the Secretary of State in late October 2024.

4.3 Paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) states that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. 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.

4.4 Paragraph 212 advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation whilst para. 208 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (Annexe 2 Glossary) defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

'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.'

- 4.6 The Historic England Guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition, December 2017) states that:

'Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate that significance' (p.4)

- 4.7 The HE guidance sets out a staged approach to the assessment of understanding the significance of setting:

- 1 Identification of heritage assets and the extent of their settings
- 2 Assess whether, how and what degree the settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage assets
- 3 Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful on the significance
- 4 Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm
- 5 Record the process

- 4.8 The guidance also states that views which particularly contribute to the significance of heritage assets include those where the relationship between the asset and other historic assets or places or designed views.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SETTING TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LISTED BUILDINGS

5.1 This assessment will follow the approach as set out in the Historic England guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* to identify the importance of the setting of the listed buildings and to assess the potential impact of the proposed development on their significance.

Step 1: Identification of heritage assets

5.2 The heritage assets to be considered in relation to the proposed development within their settings are:

- Woodford Mill

Step 2: Assessment of contribution of setting to the significance of the heritage assets

5.3 The most important aspect of the setting of Woodford Mill is its relationship with the River Avon and the mill leats created to channel water through the mill. The location of the mill extending out into the flood plain allows the understanding of the historic function of the building and thus, its significance in terms of its illustrative historic interest.

5.4 In terms of how the building is primarily experienced, the mill house faces the road and was clearly designed to present its principal elevation towards public view – the house element of the mill group actually has minimal relationship with the river. The extent of the setting in terms of the ability to meaningfully experience the mill house is relatively limited – the boundary wall to the south of the house screens the house until one is upon the house, and from the north the approaching views are to the gable end of a later red brick addition of limited architectural interest. The mill element to the rear of the house is primarily experienced from the road when travelling south where the mill is seen in the context of the river and mill leat. The views to the north elevation of the mill commence from opposite Field House and are progressive until just past Old Mill Barn from where the cob boundary wall largely screens the mill range from view. This part of the setting is of high importance to the experience and understanding of the significance of the listed building. These views also have an aesthetic quality. The modern houses including Old Mill Barn are neutral elements

in these views – the houses are peripheral at best and they are not seen as having an important relationship with Woodford Mill.

- 5.5 The wider setting of Woodford Mill includes its relationship with the village of Middle Woodford. Historically, at least as far as mapping from the 19th century illustrates, the mill was slightly detached from the village core to the north. However, by the mid-20th century the construction of the former local authority and private housing to the south effectively brings Woodford Mill into the recognised area of the village. This has been further reinforced by the construction of the three houses to the north of the mill including Old Mill Barn. Whilst the density of settlement is lower, it is clear that Woodford Mill is within the settlement, not detached from it. A bus stop has been provided towards the southern end of the cob wall emphasising that this is part of the village. The relationship between the mill and the village makes a minimal contribution to the way the building is experienced or understood and so adds little to the actual significance of the listed building.

Step 3: Assess impact of the proposed development on significance

- 5.6 It is proposed to replace Old Mill Barn with a new two storey house on the site of Old Mill Barn with a garage and ancillary building to the south which will accommodate a hydrotherapy pool and a multifunction space at loft level (Figures 17 and 18). The house will be constructed in banded brick and flint under a plain clay tile roof. The house will have a marginally higher ridge height than the present building, but will remain notably lower than the adjacent Field House to the north.

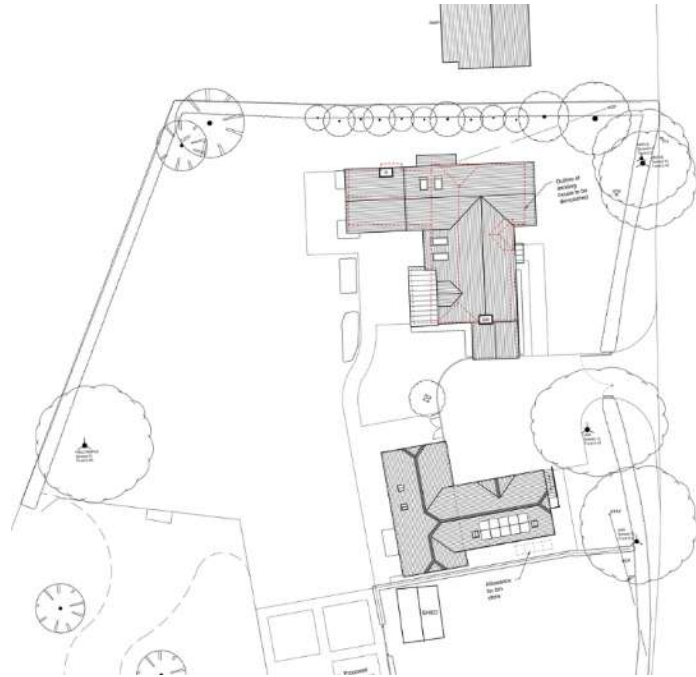


Figure 17 Proposed site plan.



Figure 18 Proposed east elevation.

5.7 Taking the NPPF definition of setting as set out in 4.5, above, it follows that the test for whether a development within the setting of a heritage asset will affect significance must be based on the impact on the ability to:

- Experience the heritage asset or
- To appreciate or understand its significance.

Further potential aspects of potential impact on setting include:

- Whether the proposed development would be harmful aesthetically when seen in combination with or adjacent to a heritage asset
- Impact on tranquillity, appearance though light pollution or the experience of a heritage asset through the introduction of smells.

5.8 The application has been met with a conservation objection on the basis of harm to the setting of Woodford Mill. The Conservation Officer's concerns will be addressed. With regard to the relationship between Woodford Mill and the site of Old Mill Barn, the Conservation Officer stated:

'The Mill's plot extends some distance to its north to include the mill pond, and is bounded to the roadside by an historic (and curtilage listed) 2m cob wall. The wall's northernmost point is level with the existing access to Old Mill Barn. As far as I can tell from historic maps, there have never been any buildings on the west side of the road south of this point.'

This statement is largely factually correct – but whilst historically there were no buildings south of The Old Barn Mill plot – there are partridge rearing sheds in the field immediately to the south and the former local authority housing further to the south, all within Middle Woodford. The curtilage of Woodford Mill extends along the roadside to the northern end of the section of cob wall to the north of the mill. There is a narrow sliver of land between the cob wall and the mill leat, with a narrow 'island' between the leat and the main course of the river. However, what this statement does not demonstrate how the site of Old Mill Barn contributes to the importance of the setting of the listed building and thus the significance of the designated heritage asset, or how it impacts the experience of the listed building. As described in 5.4, above, the views to the mill range with the mill leat leading up to the mill are important, but the modern houses to the west of the road do not contribute to the importance of this part of the setting of the listed building. Old Mill Barn is a neutral element in this aspect of setting, and the fact that the house stands across the road from the curtilage of the mill has no bearing on the experience of the listed building.

5.9 In relation to the significance of Old Mill Barn, the Conservation Officer describes the evolution of this site:

The existing building, Old Mill Barn, is a circa 1990 rebuild of a small cluster of early C20 farm buildings, using salvaged bricks and presenting something deliberately reminiscent of what it had replaced, albeit larger. Although two-storeyed, it has a catslide to the east and presents as a one-and-a-half storeyed building, allowing it to sit comfortably in the transition between the core of the village and the open countryside to its south west, and have little direct impact on the setting and outlook of the listed building. The 1989 plans are rather

ambitiously titled 'conversion of existing barns' but it is clear that its agricultural appearance was considered desirable to the LPA.

Much of this statement is factually correct in terms of the development of the site. No evidence is presented to support the supposition that the loose agricultural character of Old Mill Barn was the 'desirable' approach to the redevelopment of the site rather than just being an acceptable solution. It must be remembered that when the application for the redevelopment of the site was made, the two Victorian semi-detached cottages were still standing to the north and so retaining an agricultural character may have been seen as the most appropriate way of redeveloping the site. The subsequent construction of Field House and Greystones changes the context of the Old Mill Barn site.

5.10 Old Mill Barn is a modern building of very limited architectural quality. Although it incorporates a 'threshing bay' and a catslide roof, overall this is a poorly designed building – the decorative brickwork and domestic uPVC fenestration runs contrary to an agricultural character, and it is evidently a house rather than reading as a possible conversion of a farm building.

5.11 The key question in terms of the setting of the listed building, Woodford Mill, is whether Old Mill Barn contributes to the importance of the setting of the mill. The assessment of setting set out above suggests that there is no important link between the mill and Old Mill Barn, and that the house is at best a neutral element in the setting, and does not contribute to the significance of Woodford Mill. As the Conservation Officer notes, there is little impact on the setting and outlook of the listed building. Therefore, it is considered that the loose 'agricultural' form of Old Mill Barn is not a factor that contributes to the significance of the listed building through providing an understanding of the former use of the site, and the limited quality of the architecture of Old Mill Barn means that there is no positive contribution in terms of the aesthetic qualities of the setting of the listed building.

5.12 The Conservation Officer raised concerns about the form of the proposed development:

'The proposed replacement, at two full storeys plus occupied attic with dormers, and a very substantial cross wing, would present very differently in the streetscene, having no legible expression of the former agricultural use of the site, and be a much larger presence in the

setting of the Mill... I am not convinced that a building of any size could be erected in this location without having a similar effect, which is compounded by the elevated levels to the western side of the road.'

As discussed above, the expression of an agricultural character in the appearance of Old Mill Barn is not considered to contribute to the setting of the listed building. The change in the street scene from an aesthetically weak building to a house that better reflects the local vernacular is not considered to be a harmful change. The house will be marginally taller than the present building, but the description of the house as being '*two full storeys plus occupied attic with dormers*' is incorrect – the house is of two storeys but there is not an attic level with dormers, as on Field House, although there is a dormer to the rear roof slope serving a first-floor bedroom. The reference to the '*very substantial cross wing*' is also rather misleading – the expression of a gable to the northern end of the front elevation is not an inappropriate feature in vernacular architecture. Whilst there is a longer range to the rear than the present rear range, this will have minimal visibility from the street, and will not harm the experience of Woodford Mill or be an aesthetically discordant feature that would impact on the importance of the setting of the listed building. The relatively small increase in height as seen from the road will not result in a mass that results in harm to the listed building.

- 5.13 The proposed garage and ancillary building has also been the focus of concern for the Council due to its size:

In addition to the replacement house, a large outbuilding incorporating indoor swimming pool and garages is proposed at the southern boundary of the domestic curtilage. This building would be about 15m from the NW corner of the Mill and create a strongly domestic presence in its setting, bringing the built form of the application site much too close to the listed building.

The proposed building has been revised so that it is lower and the garage range has been reduced in length. The building presents little that can be considered to be a 'strongly domestic presence' – the building is to have weatherboarded walls above a brick plinth and natural slate half-hipped roofs. It will have two ranges at right angles creating a L-plan appearance as seen when approaching from the north where the garage doors indicate the function of this part of the building. The pool range will present a largely blank,

weatherboarded elevation with no 'domestic' features. The single-storey plus loft form is reflective of traditional, vernacular stable or cart shed with loft over type buildings.

- 5.14 The objections to this building raise concern about its proximity to Woodford Mill. Whilst it is suggested that the building would be 'about 15m' from the corner of Woodford Mill, this is not an accurate measurement – the distance between the two buildings will be 23m. Regardless of the precise distance, the garage/ancillary building will be on the opposite side of the road and will have no impact on the ability to directly experience the listed building. The building will be seen in the views south along the road, but it is not considered that the presence of a building of vernacular ancillary/agricultural character represents a harmful change to the significance of the listed mill. The screening provided by the roadside boundary to the south means that the garage/ancillary building will be mostly screened from view when passing the mill from the south and so the development will not introduce a harmful new feature into the street scene.

Step 4: How to maximise enhancement or avoid or minimise harm

- 5.15 In response to the particular concerns about the size of the garage/ancillary building, the design has been revised to reduce the size of this building.

Step 5: Record the process

- 5.16 This report presents a record of the process of the assessment of the importance of the setting of the listed buildings and its contribution to their significance, together with the assessment of the potential impact of the proposals.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Old Mill Barn (the name being a recent change) is a modern house built on the site of a small late 19th century L-plan range of farm buildings. The present house has some token 'agricultural' features but overall, the design is of limited architectural quality, and it is clearly a modern house rather than convincingly conveying the character of a converted farm building. No value is attributed to this attempted architectural link to the historic agricultural use of the site as there is no known functional relationship between the site and Woodford Mill that would contribute to the significance of the listed building. The loss of Old Mill Barn, which is no more than a neutral element in the setting of the listed building, will not harm the designated heritage asset.
- 6.2 The proposed house is of a traditional design: its success will partly depend on the quality of the materials and detailing, all of which are within the control of the local authority through the use of appropriate planning conditions should consent be granted. The scale of the house is slightly larger than the present building but remains lower than the neighbouring Field House and so steps down in scale when seen leaving this part of the village. The proposed house, largely standing on the same footprint as the existing house, will not appear overly large or over-bearing and will not alter the experience of the listed mill, or impact on the ability to understand or appreciate the significance of the designated heritage asset. Additionally, it the traditional form and use of vernacular materials means that the house will represent an aesthetic improvement to the wider setting of the listed building.
- 6.3 The revised design for the garage/ancillary building has reduced the height of this building and the length of the garage range, which will have a vernacular/agricultural character. This building, whilst bringing built form closer to the listed mill than at present, being set back from the street frontage, it will not result in any harmful impact on the experience of the listed mill or be seen as incongruous or aesthetically harmful in this context. As seen from near the mill to the south the building will be largely screened from view and will not harm the designated heritage asset.

6.4 Accordingly, I can find no conflict in the proposed development with the statutory duty in Section 66 of the Act, National Policy in the NPPF or and Policy 99 of the Draft Local Plan Review: Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and conclude that the application should be allowed.