



Heritage Assessment

Barn at Church Farm, Lower Seagry, Chippenham, SN15 5EP

On behalf of Mrs H M Waddington

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement ('HS') has been prepared to accompany a planning application for the conversion of a Class Q into Full Planning Permission for one new self-building dwelling at Church Farm, Lower Seagry, Chippenham, SN15 5EP.



Figure 1 – Application Building (Western Range)



Figure 2 – Application Building (Eastern Range & Byre/Stable Block)

- 1.2 This statement has been prepared as the host building(s) fall within the setting of 2No. adjacent grade II listed buildings, The Tithe Barn north-west of the site and that of St Mary's Church beyond, further to the north-west.
- 1.3 With the above in mind there is a need to comply with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (August 2026), policy HE5 (Assessing Effects on Heritage Assets) which states *"Development proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The relevant historic environment record should be referred to in making this assessment, and appropriate expertise employed where necessary."*
- 1.4 This report demonstrates and seeks to justify how the relevant heritage assets will be successfully preserved and the significance left unharmed, indeed enhanced, through careful design.
- 1.5 By considering the historic development of the site and its surrounding areas, this report will show the local planning authority that the conservation impacts of the proposed scheme have been properly and carefully considered as an integral part of the proposed development and the accompanying design process.
- 1.6 By taking such an approach the applicant can demonstrate that the advice as contained both in the Local Plan policies and those contained in the NPPF have been complied with

2. UNDERSTANDING THE SITE

Statutory Designations

- 2.1 There are no statutory designations which affect the site.
- 2.2 The host building is not listed and lies outside of the conservation area.
- 2.3 The site lies within the context of 2No. nearby grade II listed buildings, St Mary's Church to the west of the site and that of The Tithe Barn to the south-west of the site.
- 2.4 The Local Planning Authority ('LPA') has confirmed that the host building was constructed at some point between 1952 and 1992 and this, coupled with the fact that the host building is not attached to a pre-1948 structure means that it is not curtilage listed.

Context

- 2.5 The host building lies at the end of Church Lane, which leads to the former farmstead of Church Farm, together with that of the Tithe barn and St Mary's Church.
- 2.6 This grouping of buildings lies south of the main village setting of Lower Seagry and is somewhat divorced from the village in this respect.
- 2.7 The nearest residence to the host building, is that of Trey House, which lies approximately 100 metres north, north-west of the site. This property is largely concealed from view by substantial mature trees and hedges.
- 2.8 The grouping of buildings is surrounded by open countryside and is typical of a farmstead with a main farmhouse around which is grouped other farm buildings which have evolved and developed over time as part of the ongoing evolution and functioning of the farm.
- 2.9 Approx 300 metres south of the site flows the River Avon and a further 650 metres beyond this, the M4 Motorway corridor passes in an east/ west direction.

- 2.10 The surrounding land is flat and open agricultural land, the host building can be viewed at distance from the village to the north, as well as from the east. From the south and west, views of the host building are obscured by other buildings and mature trees which surround the site.
- 2.11 When one travels south along Church Lane to the site, the host building comes into view above the adjacent hedgerow from approximately 165 metres distant.

Context with Significant Adjacent Buildings

- 2.12 The host building(s) is situated near to the listed building of St Mary's Church and The Tithe Barn.
- 2.13 The Tithe barn lies 26 metres south of the host building, with its later single storey north wing extending closer. This north wing has significant elements of modern construction which would appear to be of a similar age to the host building, particularly on the east facade.
- 2.14 The churchyard of St Mary's church lies 19 metres west of the host building and the church itself 38 metres west south-west.
- 2.15 The churchyard is bounded by a low rubble stone wall with cock and hen capping; within the church yard, there are numerous substantial trees, which break up the view between the church and the host building.
- 2.16 When approaching the site travelling south along Church Lane, the Tithe barn is in full view, with its centre through-arch, centred on the lane, this forms the principal access to the farmstead of Church Farm.
- 2.17 St Mary's Church lies to the right of the lane, both the church and the churchyard are largely concealed from view by mature trees and hedgerow.
- 2.18 The host building lies to the left of the lane, and this comes into view as one nears the site, further north along the lane views of the building are broken by a mature hedge which extends alongside the road.

- 2.19 As one nears the site, the host building can be read with The Tithe Barn, but not with St Mary's Church, due to the mature trees and hedges.
- 2.20 The host building, along with a number of similar but more substantial out buildings lies to the left, east, of The Tithe Barn and then extend south of the Tithe Barn. Whilst of relatively modern origins (built within the last 30-70 years), the grouping of agricultural buildings can be said to be typical of that associated with a farmstead, set among other buildings of different ages, which have evolved over time as the farm has changed to meet various demands and that of changing working practices.
- 2.21 These relatively modern outbuildings have now become a significant feature of the grouping of buildings which make up the context of the host building and that of St Mary's Church and The Tithe Barn.
- 2.22 This can be seen in more detail in **figure 3** overleaf, where the post 1948 buildings, shaded orange makes up a significant part of the site.
- 2.23 It can also be seen that the north extension of the Tithe Barn is more recent with a large part of the east facing section appearing to have been constructed around the same time as that of the host building.
- 2.24 It is apparent from the site inspection and documentary research that the site has undergone considerable development and change post 1948, which has fundamentally changed the character and setting of the farmstead of Church Farm as well as that of St Mary's Church and The Tithe Barn.

St Mary's Church

- 2.25 The Church as it stands is by J.H. Hakewill built in 1849 as an Anglican Parish Church, however, as is often the case with such churches, they have much earlier origins.
- 2.26 In the case of St. Mary's, it is said to have been originally founded in 1172 by the knight W. de Clifford and there is a 13th century effigy of him in the south transept. The church has a 12th century stone font and 15th century 4 light timber screen either side of a Tudor arched centre.

2.27 In its current form, the church is typically Victorian in style.

2.28 Within the Churchyard there are a number of listed monuments/ gravestones.

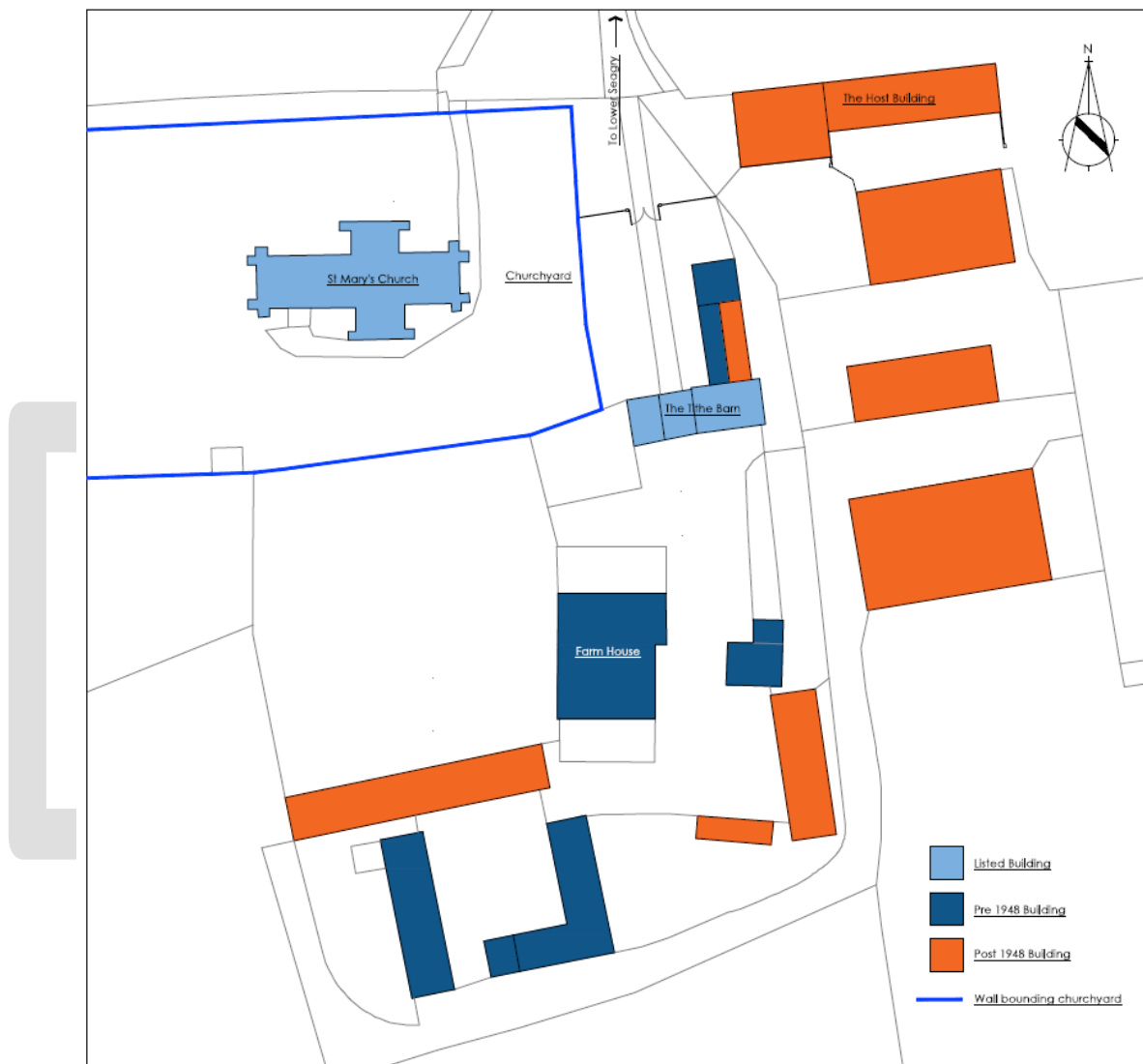


Figure 3 – Site Context

The Tithe Barn

2.29 Little is known of the history of the Tithe Barn, but it is thought to have originated in the 14th or 15th Century. Seagry was a grange of Bradenstoke priory, in medieval times.

2.30 The Tithe Barn is an historic agricultural building that dates back several centuries. Tithe Barns were commonly found in rural areas of England and other parts of Europe and were used to store and manage the tithes, a form of tax or rent paid to the church,

typically in the form of a tenth of the agricultural produce or income from the local community. The Church collected these tithes to support its activities and the clergy.

- 2.31 This would explain therefore the close proximity of the Tithe Barn and the adjacent St Mary's Church; it is likely that it had a functional and historical connection with the adjacent church which would have been responsible for overseeing the collection and distribution of tithes, and the barn would have been used to store the tithes collected from the local agricultural community.
- 2.32 While the barn's primary function was utilitarian, it also had cultural and historical significance, serving as a tangible reminder of the close relationship between the church and the local agricultural community in medieval and early modern England.
- 2.33 In its original form the building appears to have comprised a through-arch and a western section.
- 2.34 The building has been much altered over time, including an eastern extension together with a low-rise range which extends north off the later eastern extension.
- 2.35 There is a central carriageway entrance which to the north has a plain timber lintel whilst to the south elevation has a double chamfered stone arch which dyed into lateral imposts.
- 2.36 On both north and south elevations, the walls are buttressed. The listing describes the roof to have been replaced and internal floors removed.
- 2.37 There has clearly been a large degree of intervention into this modest building.

Site Photographs

- 2.38 **Figure 4** shows the access approaching Church Farm Farmstead. Note host buildings to the left, Tithe Barn straight on and St Mary's Church to the right concealed behind trees.



Figure 4

- 2.39 **Figure 5** shows the access approaching Church Farm. Note host building to the left, Tithe Barn straight on and St Mary's Church to the right concealed behind trees.



Figure 5

- 2.40 **Figure 6** shows view from Church car park. Note how the host building to the left forms part of the larger grouping of post war agricultural; buildings. The Tithe Barn is to the right.



Figure 6

- 2.41 **Figure 7** shows a view of the host building (to the left) from the churchyard. Note other agricultural outbuildings to the right and the low rise north wing of the Tithe Barn.



Figure 7

- 2.42 **Figure 8** shows the view of the Tithe Barn and Church from host building. Note the low-rise north wing of the Tithe Barn in the foreground and how 2/3 of this are of recent construction, of similar date to that of the host building. Note too that this modern section abuts The Tithe Barn.



Figure 8

- 2.43 **Figure 9** shows view of Church from the host building. Note how the actual churchyard is concealed from view by mature hedgerow. Note to the fact that there is an established vehicular route through, leading to other outbuildings and land.



Figure 9

- 2.44 **Figure 10** shows the view of north/east Facades of St Mary's Church.



Figure 10

2.45 **Figure 11** shows view of the north Facade of Tithe Barn.



Figure 11

2.46 **Figure 12** shows the view of south Facade of Tithe Barn. Note later extension to the right of the arched entrance.



Figure 12

2.47 **Figure 13** shows the view of west facade of north extension to Tithe Barn.



Figure 13

2.48 **Figure 14** shows the Host building, west Facade.



Figure 14

2.50 **Figure 15** shows the Host building, south façade.



Figure 15

3. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Criteria for Assessment of Site

- 3.1 The focus of this report is to examine and assess the effect of the proposals on the character and setting of the nearby listed buildings, those being The Tithe Barn and St Mary's Church.
- 3.2 The key findings include the following:
1. The building is not of historic significance and makes a neutral contribution to the wider area.
 2. The building forms part of an agricultural grouping of buildings, many of which were built at or around the same time as the host building.
 3. These buildings have significantly altered the character of the site and its locale.
 4. The grouping of buildings is typical of a modern post war farmstead comprising buildings old and relatively new, some of significance others less so.
 5. The grouping of buildings is extant and therefore is an integral part of the landscape and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings.
 6. Whilst surrounded by open countryside to the north and east, the host building nestles within the farmstead grouping of buildings and is obscured from wider views from the south and west.
 7. The proposals for the change of use of the building offer an opportunity to significantly improve the character and setting of the nearby listed buildings, whilst at the same time retaining its agricultural form and therefore integrity as part of the farmstead setting.

8. The setting of the adjacent listed Tithe Barn has already been affected by the post war agricultural buildings and, in particular the modern additions/alterations made to the north wing of this building.
9. It is apparent that the proposals will enable the building to be converted to residential use in a way which will enhance the context in which it is located.

Impact Assessment of the Proposed Works

- 3.3 Section 2 describes how the host building was developed and how the site has evolved over time and the fact that the post war buildings are a significant part of the site.
- 3.4 With regard to the host building, it is apparent that the building is entirely functional and of no significance either architecturally or historically.
- 3.5 Nevertheless, the building is extant and is capable of being converted to a residential dwelling.
- 3.6 This section therefore seeks to demonstrate that the proposals will cause no harm to the character or appearance of the setting of the nearby listed buildings. Indeed, if permitted, the sensitive enhancements offer a significant improvement to the setting of these buildings.
- 3.7 An assessment of the building and location including the surrounding areas was carried out as well as consideration of the location and the local environment, in order to understand the significance of the adjacent heritage assets in the context of the conversion of the host building, and whether that significance would be harmed or adversely affected by the proposals.
- 3.8 The assessment revealed that the host building is extant and forms part of a larger grouping of similar buildings mixed with older more traditional outbuildings and a farmhouse.
- 3.9 It can be said therefore that any harm to the character and setting of these listed buildings has already occurred and now represents the status quo.

- 3.10 The proposed change of use to the host building presents an opportunity to reverse some of this harm and enhance the character and setting of the locale. The proposals will improve the visual appearance of the host building whilst retaining its overall form.
- 3.11 There is the sparing use of new window and door openings in external walls of the host building. However, the size and proportion of these is appropriate to the building's former use, as too the limited quantity of new openings, thus preserving the ratio of solid to void, where the former should significantly outweigh the latter in this regard. The effect of this is 2-fold i) it preserves the agricultural character of the host building and ii) it preserves the character and setting of the nearby heritage assets.
- 3.12 As discussed in this report, the building has no architectural merit. The assessment has shown that it is the nearby listed buildings which are the heritage assets and as such, the improvement in the appearance of the host building enhances their setting and the wider landscape.
- 3.13 Throughout the design process, the design philosophy has been to respect those buildings of architectural interest or significance adjacent to the site whilst ensuring that the design would not cause them harm. In this respect, the applicant can demonstrate that the proposed design approach has sought to respond to the constraints of the site and location in which it is found and will improve the setting of the heritage assets.
- 3.14 The design approach has sought to respond to the constraints of the site and location in which it is found. Throughout the design process it has been recognised that the proposals for the application site could impact upon the wider setting of the heritage assets. In this regard the design has sought to respond positively to those concerns and respect those assets that are of significance within the immediate locality and thus not cause harm to or adversely impact upon them.
- 3.15 This assessment has highlighted that whilst the existing building lacks any architectural merit it does form part of the farmstead and landscape setting. The conversion together with the improvement and smartening up of the existing building elevations offers a positive improvement to the character and appearance of the area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

- 3.16 The proposals will also provide a greater public benefit in terms of the use of the site by providing a new dwelling unit which will be in the interest of the long-term conservation of the area.
- 3.17 The conclusion of this analysis is that the proposals will introduce positive change that is complimentary and enhances the locale in which the host building situated.
- 3.18 The primary purpose of this report is to focus upon the issues relating to the work in relation to the heritage policy implications contained within National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

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4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The proposals for the host building have been based upon a clear understanding of the historic significance of the site and an appraisal of the character and setting of the nearby listed buildings and complies with the aims of both national and local policies on the historic environment and heritage assets.

4.2 The research carried out for this report sets out a series of key issues that are important considerations when assessing the proposal to change the use of the building from an agricultural barn to a residential dwelling.

4.3 The key findings include the following:

- The building was constructed at some point post 1948;
- The building forms part of a larger grouping of buildings which now form a significant part of the character of Church farm and the surrounding area;
- The character and appearance of the building is of no architectural or historic significance;
- The design of the scheme is, well-mannered and considered and rather than harm the significance, character or appearance of the heritage assets, will enhance them.
- The proposed materials are in keeping with the character and setting of the area and a significant improvement on the current scenario;
- The proposed additional window and door openings have been used in a sparing way and of a size/ proportion which is in keeping with that of the host building and respectful of the nearby heritage assets;
- The design of the scheme takes full account of the significance of the site and the setting of the heritage asset and will result in positive change.

