

Statement of Significance

In support of

Application

-to-

Carry out alterations to include single-storey extension to farmhouse
and convert outbuilding to form additional accommodation

-at-

Lower Cowesfield Farm

Lower Cowesfield

Whiteparish

Wiltshire SP5 2QZ

On behalf of

Mr M Head

July 2026

Mr Diccon Carpendale
MA Dip (Arch Cons) MRTPI IHBC
Planning Consultant

Brimble Lea
Unit 3 Kingsmead Business Park
Shaftesbury Road
Gillingham
Dorset SP8 5FB
DC/26090

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement of Significance is prepared in support of an application for listed building consent (and planning permission) to carry out alterations, including the erection of a single-storey extension to Lower Cowesfield Farmhouse. It also deals with alterations and repairs to an adjacent outbuilding.
- 1.2 The statement is prepared on behalf of the Applicant, Mr M Head, and relates to the detailed drawings prepared by Paul Biddle of Landford Architectural Services.
- 1.3 The main purpose of the statement is to describe the significance (importance) of the buildings in terms of their architectural and historic interest, and to assess what (if any) harm could arise to significance because of the proposals. Should any harm be identified, the NPPF requires an assessment to establish whether there are any public benefits associated with the proposal which are sufficient to offset such harm.
- 1.4 A listed building comprises a heritage asset. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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).'*
- 1.5 Significance (for heritage policy) is defined as *'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.'*
- 1.6 Chapter 16 of the NPPF (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) states at paragraph 207 *'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. As a minimum, the relevant Historic Environment Records should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.'

1.7 At paragraph 210 the NPPF advises '*In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

(a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

(b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

(c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 Lower Cowesfield Farmhouse is Grade II listed. The list description suggests the farmhouse originated in the early C17 with later alterations c1800. It comprises a modest two-storey dwelling with rooms in the attic. It faces approximately south with the main (front door) entrance on this side.

2.2 Immediately adjacent, to the west, is a single-storey outbuilding – likely to be of a similar age - which appears to have been used for residential or farm-related purposes e.g. it includes fireplaces and areas of plastered walls.

2.3 To the rear (north-west) of the house is a (likely) C18 former threshing barn which is also Grade II listed (but not part of the current proposals).

- 2.4 East of this barn and directly north-east of the farmhouse are a range of late C19 model farm buildings – also of brick construction and understood to have been used in connection with dairy farming or for milling corn.
- 2.5 Lower Cowesfield Farm extends to 183 acres of land retained with the house and farm buildings. It has been in family ownership since 1959, and the current Applicant represents the third generation.
- 2.6 Unfortunately, there has been very little investment in the farmhouse and adjacent outbuilding, and some unsympathetic alterations (e.g. UVPC windows) have been carried out at some stage by the Applicant's parents – although such works could pre-date listing in 1985. Following inheritance of the farm, the Applicant is faced with a choice – either to keep the farm as a single entity with ongoing agricultural use of the land and to invest in upgrading/improving the house and outbuilding to make it suitable for occupation by himself and his family, or to sell the whole. If the second option was to be followed, it is likely to be preceded by applications for the conversion of the barns on the site where approval for separate residential accommodation would be likely to be forthcoming.
- 2.7 However, the Applicant feels passionately about trying to retain the farm in family ownership and to prevent its sub-division and disposal (which is likely to occur if it cannot be brought up to a condition/standard suitable for modern living).
- 2.8 When assessing the acceptability of any alterations as proposed under this application, it is considered the Applicant's desire (and determination) to keep the farm in family ownership and to avoid it being split up and individual buildings sold independently, should be afforded significant weight as a public benefit.
- 2.9 Wiltshire Council's Conservation department is urged to give the Applicant's desire to retain the site as a whole and to continue the land being farmed in association with the buildings, very significant weight when assessing these proposals. Whilst it is acknowledged the LPA must consider what is currently in front of them, this should be

with the clear understanding that if the site cannot be brought back into beneficial use to enable it to remain in family ownership, the inevitable outcome will be disposal and likely sub-division.

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The works proposed relate to 2 buildings: Lower Cowesfield Farmhouse and the adjacent associated single-storey outbuilding.

Description of Farmhouse

- 3.2 The Planning, Design and Access Statement prepared by Landford Architectural Services includes photographs of the farmhouse and outbuilding.

Farmhouse

- 3.3 The farmhouse (which the listing suggests dates from C17) is of two-storeys with attic. It is constructed of brick elevations in Flemish bond under a plain tiled roof. This exhibits a broadly symmetrical appearance – somewhat typical of houses of this period. The porch on the south side appears to be of later construction and it also appears that the western gable end may have been re-built because of structural issues. There are a series of buttresses incorporated within the later brickwork which makes the gable construction more substantial than the east end of the building.
- 3.4 It is the north elevation that addresses the farmyard and into which the dormer windows are set in the roof. This side has also been provided with (inappropriate) external shutters to all the window openings. Whilst the main access to the farm and farm buildings is from this side, there is no direct access into the house from the north. There is a side door within the west elevation into the kitchen.
- 3.5 In addition to the inappropriate UPVC windows and external shutters, there is also an unattractive metal flue rising on the outside of the west gable.

- 3.6 Internally, the building is unremarkable but does include a large chimney within the kitchen and some exposed beams within the main rooms.
- 3.7 The staircase from ground floor to first floor may well have been modernised, but the staircase from first floor into the attic space appears to be earlier.

Outbuilding

- 3.8 The single-storey outbuilding is also of brick construction under a plain clay tiled roof.
- 3.9 It exhibits a somewhat domestic character incorporating several timber framed windows with Crittall frames. It is possible these may represent a later alteration to the original fenestration.
- 3.10 The precise use of this building is unknown, but it incorporates a chimney towards the south end. As some of the rooms show evidence of having been plastered in the past, it is assumed that there was some form of domestic use of the building or that it was directly related to the farmhouse – perhaps in terms of preparation of food or processing of agricultural goods. The roof structure suggests its original construction is likely to be contemporary with that of the farmhouse.

Proposals – Farmhouse

- 3.11 It is necessary to bring the house up to a suitable standard to enable the Applicant and his family to live here and continue family occupation/oversight of the farm.
- 3.12 To do so, several alterations are proposed, including:
- Create new door opening with porch on north side of building and carry out minor modifications to internal layout
 - Add single-storey kitchen/dining extension onto east side of house. This will require (at ground floor level only) the removal of a 1930s fireplace (of no merit) and part of the gable wall. The proposed extension is of simple/modest proportions and can be added without detriment to the principal elevations of

the farmhouse echoing the form of the detached outbuilding to the west of the house

- 3.13 The proposal is to replace all of the modern/unsympathetic UPVC windows with appropriately designed sash and casement windows incorporating slim-line double glazing but with glazing bars to replicate the traditional/narrow joinery details suitable for a property of this age.
- 3.14 As part of these alterations/improvements to fenestration, it is intended to replace the existing kitchen window with a pair of French doors and to install a half-glazed front door (on the south side) to improve light into the dwelling.
- 3.15 At first and attic floor levels, the proposed alterations are limited to providing/creating ensuite bathrooms to serve the two first floor bedrooms and to provide a shared bathroom in connection with the formation of two children's bedrooms within the attic space. These changes can be undertaken by utilising/adapting existing spaces with minimal alteration to historic fabric (create access doors at first floor level to new ensuite bathroom and installation of studwork at second floor level).

4.0 IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON SIGNIFICANCE

- 4.1 The significance of the farmhouse is derived from its historic interest as a C17 farmhouse – somewhat typical of the local vernacular – and its attractive/symmetrical form.
- 4.2 Whilst it exhibits some interesting detailing, the relatively modern alterations to fenestration and additions of flues etc. have detracted significantly from the building's character.
- 4.3 Internally, the building is unremarkable and very limited in terms of the space/accommodation provided – particularly in terms of there being insufficient ground floor space to meet modern living requirements.

- 4.4 It is assessed that the alterations to the existing farmhouse, in terms of changes/improvements to doors and fenestration and the minor internal changes, will not result in harm to significance.
- 4.5 With respect to the most major alteration (addition of the single-storey extension), whilst the design of this element is considered restrained and sympathetic, it does require the removal of a portion of the ground floor east gable end, resulting in the loss of this historic fabric.
- 4.6 Plans show a retained nib returning on the north side showing the original position of the gable wall.
- 4.7 With respect to this alteration, alone, it is assessed this would result in less than substantial harm to significance. This means the proposed works would not result in significant harm. However, such harm must be balanced against the significant public benefits of the huge investment the Applicant wishes to make to secure the long-term preservation of the farmhouse and adjacent outbuilding and to retain the farm in family ownership (without disposal and subdivision). The LPA is urged to recognise this would be the most likely outcome if the current proposals were not able to be agreed, without which the Applicant and his family will not be able to move into the farmhouse or to invest in the improvement of the outbuilding (see below).

5.0 ALTERATIONS TO OUTBUILDING

- 5.1 The proposal is to undertake alterations and repairs to enable the outbuilding to be brought back into beneficial residential use. The building is currently used for purposes ancillary to the farmhouse. It could continue to do so (overflow accommodation) but in terms of securing sufficient financial return to make it viable to undertake the repairs and alterations to this building (to secure its long-term preservation) it may well be necessary to consider obtaining planning approval to let the building as holiday accommodation.

- 5.2 Whilst the brickwork appears to be in reasonable condition – albeit in need of appropriate re-pointing – very significant investment will be required to bring the building back into economically beneficial use.
- 5.3 The intention is to divide the building into two self-contained units working with the current room layout.
- 5.4 The chimney towards the southern end of the building will be retained, but the stack at ground floor level (which has suffered major structural failure) is proposed to be removed.
- 5.5 The plans indicate the proposal to create two pairs of French doors on the far west side of the building (away from the farmhouse) in lieu of existing window openings. With the building already exhibiting a somewhat domestic appearance, this will not result in any harm to significance.
- 5.6 The roof structure is likely to be C17, and whilst it needs some repair, the intention is to retain it and insulate from the inside in line with Historic England advice.
- 5.7 The tiles can be lifted, the roof re-battened and the tiles reinstated (with any needing replacement to match) whilst retaining any subtle undulations within the roof structure.
- 5.8 The proposals do show some minor changes to exterior fenestration (change of windows to doors and installation of windows within door spaces). But the overall (somewhat domestic) character of the building can be retained.
- 5.9 There is a need for some minor adaptation and alteration to the interior, but this is of no particular significance in terms of detail or features and already exhibits a domestic character.

- 5.10 Whilst the building is afforded protection by being within the curtilage of the main house, it is not listed in its own right.
- 5.11 Overall, it is assessed that the proposed works to the building have been carefully conceived and will be sympathetic in terms of retaining its semi-domestic character.
- 5.12 Should the LPA assess that such works do result in less than substantial harm to significance, again, it should be recognised that bringing this building back into beneficial use (which is clearly evident from the fact that it has had no investment/repair for very many years) is going to be extremely expensive.
- 5.13 It is therefore essential that the building secures an appropriate re-use sufficient to cover the large investment that will be required to ensure the long-term preservation of the building.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Lower Cowesfield Farm appears to date from C17 when other buildings (threshing barn and adjacent single-storey outbuilding) were also constructed. In late C19, a range of model-farm buildings was constructed creating a new farmyard to the north-east.
- 6.2 The farmhouse is somewhat typical of the local vernacular and has had several inappropriate alterations carried out prior to the Applicant taking control of the building.
- 6.3 The proposals to make the building suitable for modern living are generally low-key involving minimal internal change and the installation of appropriately designed replacement windows or new doors/porch.
- 6.4 To make the building suitable for modern day living (it has a very small ground floor area), it is necessary to create an additional kitchen/dining area. If this cannot be

achieved, the Applicant will not be able to move into the house and it is likely it will have to be sold, with a resulting sub-division of the farm and outbuildings. The Applicant is extremely keen to avoid this situation occurring.

- 6.5 Whilst the removal of part of the lower gable to enable such works to be undertaken they should not be considered significantly harmful. The overall benefits of the proposal - which will ensure its long-term preservation and it being retained in the same family ownership (without sub-division) - are considered to comprise significant public benefits that justify the works and are sufficient to outweigh any limited 'less than substantial' harm arising.
- 6.6 Similarly, in relation to the outbuilding, it is essential that this is brought back into beneficial (and economically viable) use. The works proposed are sympathetic and designed in a form that respects and reflects the building's former (semi-domestic) character.
- 6.7 Whilst the works will require some minor modification to doors/fenestration and the removal of a failing/collapsed chimney (internally), it is assessed that these alterations will not result in harm to significance overall. Should the LPA assess that these changes would result in less than substantial harm, then the public benefit of bringing the building back into beneficial use (and it being able to be retained in single family ownership) must be afforded very significant weight. In the author's professional opinion as a full IHBC member, there is sufficient public benefit to outweigh any such harm that may be identified.
- 6.8 Considering all the above, it is assessed that listed building consent should be granted for the proposed works.