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Wiltshire Council

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**Draft Design, Access & Heritage Statement – Savernake Nursery,
Units 4 & 5, Warren Farm, Savernake, Marlborough, SN8 3UU**

INTRODUCTION

This Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of applications for planning permission and Listed Building Consent for a coordinated programme of external improvements to the existing nursery at Units 4 & 5, Warren Farm, Savernake.

The nursery occupies part of the Grade II listed Farm Buildings at Warren Farm (NHLE 1285672), a planned group of agricultural buildings dating from approximately 1830–40.

The proposed works comprise:

- Replacement of the existing air-conditioning equipment with four reversible air-source heat-pump systems providing heating and cooling, with six external condenser units positioned at high level around the perimeter of the building;
- construction of an additional treated-softwood pergola with translucent pitched roof, providing additional sheltered and shaded external play space;
- renewal and improvement of existing external play surfaces, including rubber-crumb safety surfacing and artificial grass;
- adjustments and renewal to existing timber play-area fencing and gates;
- reuse of suitable existing fencing to form internal play-area divisions;
- introduction of timber planter boxes and associated planting; and
- associated drainage, localised foundations, fixings, service penetrations and making good.

The works are intended to improve the environmental performance and year-round usability of the existing nursery accommodation and external play spaces while respecting the architectural and historic significance of the listed farm buildings and their wider setting.

The proposal does not involve an extension to the listed building, an increase in nursery floorspace or a fundamental alteration to its established architectural form.

SITE AND CONTEXT

Warren Farm forms part of the wider rural landscape at Savernake and comprises a substantial historic farmstead incorporating a number of Grade II listed buildings.

The nursery occupies Units 4 & 5 within the Grade II listed Farm Buildings at Warren Farm. The external nursery areas comprise a small courtyard associated closely with the nursery accommodation together with further existing external play areas.

The nursery spaces have previously been adapted from their original agricultural function and contain a range of modern interventions associated with their established use. These include existing external play surfacing, timber fencing, a timber pergola and external air-conditioning condenser units mounted at high level on the listed building.

The proposed works principally renew, rationalise or supplement these existing modern interventions.

The wider Warren Farm group includes the separately Grade II listed South House, Central House and North House, which together with the farm buildings form an important historic group.

The site also lies within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. It is not within a Conservation Area.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Farm Buildings at Warren Farm (NHLE 1285672) are Grade II listed and are described in the statutory list as planned farm buildings dating from approximately 1830–40, constructed principally in brick with slate and tiled roofs.

The complex is arranged broadly in an E-plan, with buildings historically accommodating a range of specialised agricultural functions including cattle stalling, milking, cart storage, straw storage, calf sheds, stabling and corn storage.

Its heritage significance therefore derives not simply from the age of its individual buildings, but from:

- the surviving nineteenth-century brickwork and other historic building fabric;
- the traditional agricultural architectural character, materials and detailing;
- the planned arrangement of buildings and yards;
- the legibility of the complex as a purpose-designed historic farmstead; evidence of its former agricultural functions; and
- its group relationship with the associated listed houses and wider Warren Farm complex.

The nursery occupies buildings which have subsequently been adapted to new uses. Previous planning and Listed Building Consents demonstrate an established history of conversion and adaptation of the former agricultural buildings, including their conversion to workshop/office accommodation.

The significance of the listed building nevertheless remains embodied in its surviving historic fabric, architectural character and the ability to understand the form and arrangement of the original planned farmstead.

The design approach to the current proposals has therefore sought to distinguish between this significant historic fabric and the various modern nursery installations and finishes, concentrating intervention principally within the latter.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

The Warren Farm buildings have an established history of sensitive adaptation and reuse.

Of particular relevance are:

K/31035 and K/31034/L (1995) – planning permission and Listed Building Consent for conversion of redundant buildings to five workshop/office units.

K/32120 and K/32117/L (1995) – planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the erection of a fire escape and glazed reception area at Unit 4.

K/42932 and K/42901/L (2002) – planning permission and Listed Building Consent for conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to Class B1 business units.

This history demonstrates that the listed agricultural complex has previously undergone adaptation to facilitate viable new uses.

A more recent decision at Warren Farm, **PL/2021/05821**, concerned a modern agricultural building elsewhere within the farm complex. The officer's assessment recognised both the presence of the nearby Grade II listed farm buildings and the site's location within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, now National Landscape.

The present proposal is substantially smaller in scale and concerns improvements associated with the established nursery use.

DESIGN APPROACH

The overarching approach is to retain the listed building as the visually and architecturally dominant element and to ensure that new nursery interventions remain lightweight, subordinate and, wherever practicable, reversible.

The proposals have therefore been designed around the following principles:

- minimise physical intervention into historic fabric;
- utilise existing locations and penetrations for building services wherever practicable;
- avoid unnecessary proliferation of external equipment;
- avoid fixing new play-area fencing and structures directly to listed masonry;
- locate new foundations within existing modern external surfaces;
- retain the established form, massing and principal architectural features of the listed buildings;
- use simple timber structures appropriate to the external nursery environment; and
- allow later removal of the new interventions without fundamental alteration to the listed building.

REPLACEMENT AIR-SOURCE HEAT-PUMP SYSTEMS

The nursery currently incorporates external air-conditioning condenser units mounted at high level on the external walls.

The proposal replaces these existing installations with six modern reversible air-source heat-pump systems, providing both heating and cooling to the nursery accommodation.

Six external condenser units will be positioned at high level around the perimeter of the nursery building. None will face into the principal Warren Farm parking courtyard.

Three units will face into the nursery's smaller external play courtyard, which is open

towards the south, while the remaining units will be positioned to the rear, facing towards the wider farm buildings.

Existing condenser units associated with the elevations affected by the works will be removed.

The replacement installation will utilise existing service routes and penetrations wherever reasonably practicable. Where new localised penetrations or fixings are unavoidable, these will be kept to the minimum necessary and carefully made good.

External units will be supported on appropriate brackets, with fixings designed to minimise intervention into historic masonry and installed with appropriate anti-vibration isolation.

The proposal therefore replaces existing conspicuous modern building-services equipment rather than introducing an entirely new category of intervention to previously unaffected elevations.

NEW TIMBER PERGOLA

An existing treated-softwood pergola measuring approximately 6.0 × 5.5 m already provides sheltered external play space within the nursery courtyard.

The remaining play areas are substantially open and exposed. An additional pergola is therefore proposed to increase the amount of external space which can provide both shade during warm weather and rain protection, increasing opportunities for year-round outdoor play.

The proposed structure measures approximately 4.855 × 7.150 m and will be constructed from pressure-treated softwood to match the existing nursery pergola in section, proportion and general appearance.

It will comprise a lightweight post-and-beam structure with a pitched translucent polycarbonate roof and black rainwater goods. Its overall eaves height will be approximately 2.4 m.

The structure will be supported on localised concrete pad foundations formed through the existing modern play surface. It will not rely upon the listed building for structural support.

This is an important aspect of the design: the pergola remains structurally independent and could subsequently be removed without affecting the structural integrity or architectural form of the listed building.

The pergola will therefore read as a lightweight and subordinate addition within an already adapted nursery play area rather than an extension to the historic building.

PLAY-SURFACE IMPROVEMENTS

The existing external play areas incorporate a combination of modern rubber-crumb surfacing, asphalt/tarmac and artificial grass.

The principal existing rubber-crumb play surface has deteriorated and cracked and there is evidence of failure within the underlying drainage/substrate construction.

The preferred approach is therefore to remove the failed rubber-crumb system, inspect and repair the underlying modern substrate and drainage construction as necessary, and install a new compliant wet-pour safety surface, rather than simply concealing the existing defects beneath an overlay.

Other works comprise:

- renewal of artificial turf to the babies' external play area over the existing asphalt substrate, including appropriate shockpad and drainage preparation;
- introduction of artificial turf and associated shockpad/drainage construction over an existing asphalt play area to form an improved games/play area; and

- local levelling and installation of rubber-crumb safety surfacing to existing modern concrete areas where required.

These works concern modern external finishes and substrates. No historic paving, cobbles or other identified historic farmyard surfacing is proposed to be removed.

The works therefore improve the safety, drainage and usability of the nursery's existing external areas without altering the fundamental historic arrangement of the listed farm complex.

TIMBER FENCING, GATES AND PLANTERS

The external nursery play areas are already subdivided and enclosed using modern timber fencing.

The proposals comprise rationalisation and adjustment of these enclosures, including reuse of suitable newer fencing to form an approximately 910 mm-high internal division and adjustment or replacement of perimeter fencing to provide a consistent height of approximately 1,000 mm.

New and adjusted fencing will comprise simple treated-softwood palisade panels and matching gates.

Posts will be mounted using base plates mechanically or chemically fixed into the existing modern tarmac surfaces. No below-ground foundations are proposed and the new fencing will not be fixed into the historic masonry of the listed buildings.

This allows the fencing to remain a readily identifiable, lightweight and substantially reversible nursery intervention.

Timber planter boxes, approximately 1,200 × 400 × 500 mm, will also be introduced in selected locations. These provide soft landscaping and screening to the nursery play areas while remaining freestanding and reversible.

Planting can provide additional visual softening without altering the listed building or historic farmyard fabric.

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The proposals have been assessed against the identified significance of the Grade II listed Farm Buildings and the wider Warren Farm group.

The works do not alter the fundamental E-plan arrangement, footprint, massing, roof forms or historic spatial organisation of the listed farm buildings.

Neither do they remove identified historic architectural features or historic external surfacing.

The majority of the works take place within areas already adapted for modern nursery use and concern replacement or improvement of existing modern interventions.

The replacement heat-pump installation succeeds existing high-level mechanical plant. The equipment is distributed away from the principal Warren Farm courtyard and will remain clearly identifiable as modern, functional building services subordinate to the listed architecture.

The proposed pergola is a lightweight timber structure within the nursery play area. It is structurally independent of the listed building and founded locally through modern external surfacing. Its only direct interface with historic fabric is the limited lead-flashing chase required to weather the junction with the existing gable.

The replacement play surfaces concern modern materials and substrates and do not disturb identified historic farmyard surfacing.

Likewise, the fencing, gates and planters comprise lightweight modern landscape/play-space interventions, fixed to modern surfaces rather than historic masonry and capable of future alteration or removal.

Collectively, the proposals retain the ability to understand and appreciate the listed buildings as a planned nineteenth-century agricultural complex, while facilitating the continued viable use of part of the complex as an established nursery.

Subject to careful detailing and execution of the limited works affecting historic masonry, the proposal is considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest and significance of the Grade II listed Farm Buildings at Warren Farm.

The proposal would also preserve the contribution which the listed farm buildings make to the setting and group significance of the associated listed buildings at Warren Farm.

LANDSCAPE SETTING

Warren Farm lies within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and within the wider rural and wooded setting of Savernake.

The proposed development is confined to the existing developed farm complex and established nursery external areas.

It involves no outward expansion of the developed site into the surrounding landscape and no substantial new built form.

The additional pergola is a low-level timber structure closely associated with the existing buildings and nursery play areas, while the remaining works predominantly replace or adjust existing modern installations.

The proposal would therefore have a negligible effect upon the wider landscape character of the National Landscape and would continue to be perceived as part of the established Warren Farm complex.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The replacement mechanical systems are reversible air-source heat pumps providing both heating and cooling.

They will improve controllable heating and internal environmental conditions during colder periods while also providing cooling during elevated temperatures and periods of overheating.

The additional pergola complements this strategy by providing increased external shade and weather protection, improving the resilience and year-round usability of the nursery's outdoor accommodation.

The proposals therefore combine improvements to the environmental performance of the existing building with passive improvements to the external play environment.

NOISE AND AMENITY

The proposed air-source heat-pump equipment replaces existing air-conditioning plant serving the established nursery use and will not result in any increase in the capacity or intensity of use of the premises.

The six external condenser units comprise modern inverter-controlled equipment providing heating and cooling. Manufacturer's technical information, including published acoustic data for the proposed equipment, is submitted with the application.

The units are positioned at high level around the perimeter of the existing nursery building. None face into the principal Warren Farm parking courtyard. Three face towards the nursery's smaller external play courtyard and three towards the wider farm buildings.

The equipment will be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements and incorporate appropriate anti-vibration mounting to minimise transmission of vibration to the listed building structure. Inverter-controlled operation allows output to respond to heating and cooling demand rather than operating continuously at maximum capacity.

The submitted manufacturer's data indicates that the proposed equipment is designed for quiet operation. Having regard to the replacement nature of the installation, the location and orientation of the units, their operational characteristics and the established nursery use, the proposed installation is considered capable of operating without unacceptable effects upon neighbouring amenity.

No acoustic enclosure is considered necessary as part of the proposed installation. However, should the Local Planning Authority identify a specific concern regarding either the acoustic or visual impact of an individual unit or group of units during its consideration of the application, additional mitigation could be incorporated if reasonably necessary. This could include an appropriately designed acoustic screen or enclosure in a discreet powder-coated aluminium finish, subject to agreement of its location, appearance and specification with the Local Planning Authority and consideration of the ventilation requirements of the equipment.

The applicant welcomes dialogue with the Local Planning Authority during determination and would be pleased to discuss any specific concerns raised by the Council's Environmental Health or Conservation Officers so that proportionate mitigation can be considered where necessary.

ACCESS

No changes are proposed to the principal pedestrian or vehicular access arrangements serving the nursery or Warren Farm.

The proposals improve the usability, safety and environmental quality of existing nursery spaces without altering the established means of access.

CONCLUSION

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent are sought for a coordinated programme of improvements to the existing nursery at Units 4 & 5, Warren Farm.

The proposals replace existing mechanical plant, renew failed and dated modern play surfaces, rationalise existing nursery fencing and introduce a lightweight timber pergola to provide additional shaded and weather-protected outdoor play space.

The design has been informed by the Grade II status and significance of the Farm Buildings at Warren Farm. New interventions are concentrated within areas already adapted for nursery use and have been designed to be lightweight, subordinate and substantially reversible.

Physical intervention into historic fabric is limited principally to the brackets and services associated with replacement building-services equipment and the localised flashing junction associated with the new pergola. No new fencing or pergola structure relies upon the listed masonry for structural support.

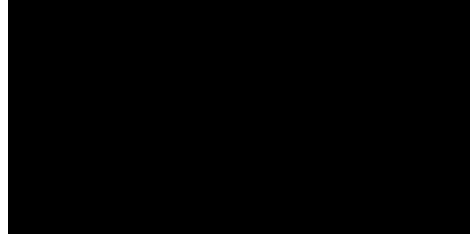
The proposal does not alter the historic footprint, massing, roof forms or planned arrangement of the farm complex and does not remove identified historic architectural features or historic farmyard surfacing.

The works therefore allow the continued practical and environmentally resilient use of the listed buildings while retaining their architectural character, historic fabric and legibility as part of the planned nineteenth-century Warren Farm complex.

The proposal is consequently considered to preserve the special architectural and historic interest and significance of the Grade II listed Farm Buildings at Warren Farm and the contribution they make to the wider listed group and landscape setting.

Should any detailed concern arise regarding the acoustic or visual effects of the replacement mechanical plant, the applicant welcomes dialogue with the Local Planning Authority during determination so that any necessary and proportionate mitigation can be agreed without delay.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Mitchell. Director