

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	25/03184/FP
CASE OFFICER:	TR
APPLICATION SITE:	Mill Farm, High Street, Whitwell, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 8AG
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Conversion and extension of existing barn/outbuilding to create one two-bedroom dwelling.

RECOMMENDATION:

I raise **NO OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will neither harm the setting of any of the listed buildings mentioned below or harm the character or appearance of Whitwell Conservation Area. The proposal satisfies the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of para 135(c) and Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on the setting of several listed buildings nearby and upon the character and appearance of Whitwell Conservation Area.

The proposal will have a limited impact upon the above designated heritage assets.

SITE CONTEXT:

Although located off the High Street and behind frontage buildings, this is a sensitive site and one which contributes positively to the setting of several listed buildings (see links below) and contributes towards the character and appearance of the Whitwell Conservation Area. The listed buildings and the WCA are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF.

Number 18 (Mill House), Wall of Mill Dam Extending to North and Wheelpit and Iron Water Wheel:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103260?section=official-list-entry>

The Tun House, 16A High Street:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103258?section=official-list-entry>

Barn on Roadside to East of the Tun House

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103259?section=official-list-entry>

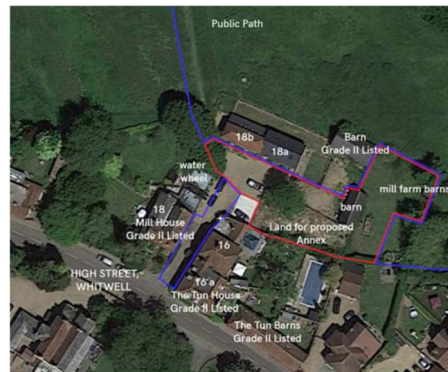
Barn in Former Mill Yard 50 Metres to North East of Number 16

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1103261?section=official-list-entry>

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

I previously commented under ref: 24/01509/PRE on 29/10/2024 for the 'Erection of one 2-bed dwelling. New porch to Mill Barn and new walled and gated entrance.'

Whilst that proposal related to an adjoining site what I said at the time is to an extent pertinent here.



Back in March 2015 under ref: 15/00134/1LB, I commented saying that:

To the north east of Mill House stand a group of barns/outbuildings of which one is grade II listed and is referred to as 'Barn in former mill yard 50M to NE of no.16' and with the exception of the cow shelter in the field to the north, the other buildings (including the two-storey red brick with single-storey section subject of this proposal) are curtilage-listed, having been dealt with as such on previous applications.

In 1995 and with regard to an appeal relating to appn ref: 93/1219/1, the Planning Inspector stated that: "The barns on the appeal site are a group of old and redundant farm buildings of pleasing traditional character and appearance. Barn B, the listed building, has an impressive timber frame....". With the exception of the cow shelter, the other buildings in this courtyard grouping make a very positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and to the setting of Mill House and no.16 High Street. Historically and even as recent as the 1960's the on-line old map repository indicates that there was an even more significant complex of buildings on this site but by 1973 the site was very similar to what exists today.

The proposed site is part enclosed by timber post-and-rail fencing and a 5-bar field gate with a view afforded of the high brick boundary wall at the rear of 16 High Street and The Tun Barn. The site provides some openness within what is a pleasing small building group including two weatherboarded barns (below left – grade II whilst below centre & right is neither listed or curtilage-listed but still considered worthy of retention).

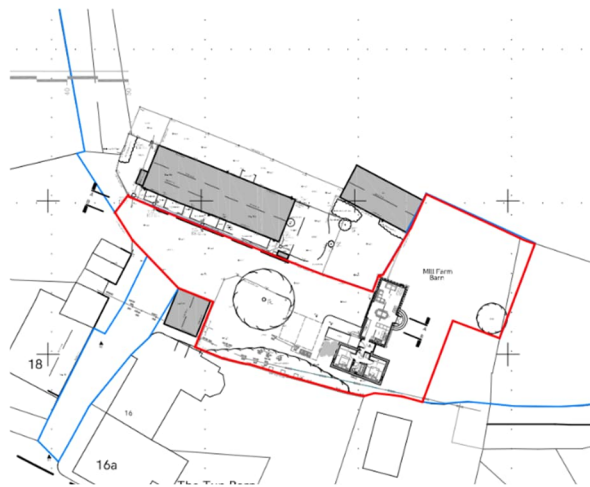


I raised an objection to the scheme considered under appn ref: 24/01509/PRE but I went on to say:

In my view, there is perhaps opportunity here to integrate the unlisted barn with a more modest extension in place of the current proposal to still form a two-bed residential unit (see blue footprint on the block plan below). Not being listed or even curtilage-listed, and although the next suggestion would result in the loss of fabric, there is perhaps scope to form a link access through the south gable end of the barn. Coupled with this, I suggest that consideration is given to allocating either all or a large portion of the land behind the unlisted barn (edged green) as a more generous garden curtilage.



The current proposal is broadly in line with advice offered in 2024 and sits much more comfortably on site when compared the previous iteration.



The following matters are particularly noted in the ***Design and Access Statement – December 2025 (Rev February 2026)***

Due to the close proximity of the river Mimram a Flood Risk assessment has been carried out. A copy has been included in the planning application documents. The recommendations to create floor levels a minimum of 300mm above the existing floor levels have been included within the proposals for both the converted barn and new build section of the dwelling.

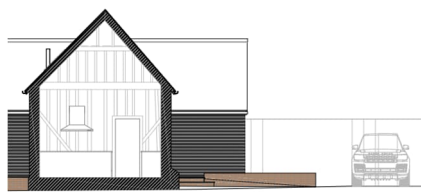
The scale of the new extension has been kept subservient in both width and height to the main barn. We have designed the extension to have a modern barn style with contemporary elements to avoid creating a pastiche of the existing barn.

The windows are proposed with slim dark frames to match the colour of the timber and not detract from barn image. The roof lights are conservation style and the roof itself is due to be standing-seam stainless steel. The metal roof was encouraged by the structural engineer as opposed to slate or tile to reduce the weight for the existing structure.

I have not inspected the frame internally to either note its condition or quality of the frame. However, the proposed alterations have been kept to a minimum. I note on page 6 of the Design and Access Statement – December 2025 (Rev February 2026) the following

Following a survey of the existing barn timbers. The proposed openings to the barn have been positioned to limit the cuts through the existing timber struts within the barn. Although a large number are modern timber repairs, so hold little historic fabric relevance.

Drawing no.024 Rev B does at least indicate the relationship of the opening through to the link with the timber frame.



Overall, the proposed development would create a pleasing aesthetic that will secure the long-term use of a positive building within the Whitwell Conservation Area. A small concern are the two pairs of roof lights on the rear roof slope and whether all four are justified. If for instance, two are omitted in favour of small single windows on the rear elevation, one window could serve the kitchen (perhaps directly in front of the sink) and one could perhaps serve the lounge space (although I appreciate that there is already a gable window performing this task to the living area so perhaps one roof light is simply omitted and not compensated for). My comments on rooflights should not be seen as an objection to justify refusal but are offered in the spirit of perceived modest improvement. I raise no objection to the proposed standing seam stainless steel roof covering.



Note: Incidentally, do we know what the future of the small, listed barn is? Should there be a proposal to also convert this building in the future, the current application site would impact upon any potential curtilage should a residential use be considered.

Suggested conditions.

1. Standard time condition.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. The barn and extension roofs shall be covered using Catnic Urban Standing Seam Roof (colour: Anthracite Matt) as stated in the application form unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to character and appearance of the Whitwell Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

4. The extension roof shall have an open eaves (exposed rafter feet), unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to character and appearance of the Whitwell Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

5. Prior to occupation, the timber cart doors to the front elevation shall be fixed in place and shall remain in situ thereafter unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to character and appearance of the Whitwell Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

6. The windows shall receive aluminium dark grey frames as stated in the application form, and the external doors and glazed screen shall receive the same unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to character and appearance of the Whitwell Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 66(1) & 72(1)

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

Policy HE1

NPPF (December 2024):

The following paragraphs are relevant:

- **135 c)** (*sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment*),
- **207** (*local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting*)
- **210** (*desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*),
- **212** (*great weight should be given to the asset's conservation*),
- **213** (*clear and convincing justification*), and
- **215** (*harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*).

CONCLUSION:

The proposal is considered **UNOBJECTIONABLE**.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 25/03/2026