

Heritage & Conservation

Application consultation response

Application reference:	24/02814/fp
Site:	Land At Mill Farm Charlton Road Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 2AB
Proposal	Conversion and extension of existing barns to create two dwelling following demolition of shed/outbuildings/silos. Alterations to existing vehicular access.
Action required prior to determination:	Yes (see below)

Summary

The impact of the proposal is considered to be supportable with some minor amendments a robust recording exercise as put forward in the Heritage Statement. In essence a recording exercise would be required for the entire site at Level 1 (Historic England Guidance 2016).

The proposal will need to demonstrate public benefit and a robust recording exercise before a scheme will be supported.

Mill Farm House

The proposed is considered to be cause less than substantial harm to Mill Farmhouse due to its separation from the barns.

Overall site layout

A level 1 recording exercise would be required.

Barns and Silos

Demolition of Barns 2a,2b, and 3 and silos would only be supported if a recorded at Level 2.

The redevelopment of barns 1 and 2 record level 3

The loss of Barn 4 is considered regrettable, and effort should be sought to incorporate this structure with the redevelopment of plot 1.

Recordings exercise at levels 1-4 (Historic England) should be undertaken as stated above prior to any work commencing so as to record the existing arrangement and fabric of these buildings and development of agricultural buildings in this Conservation Area over time.

This is required as the proposal is considered to cause less than substantial harm at a moderate level and the recording exercises together with the retention of Barn 4 would mitigate this harm.

Heritage Assets

Listed Building
Conservation Area

Discussion

Agricultural buildings by their nature are working structures and derive their significance from the use and contribution they make to the life of the rural community (historic and evidential significance) and as stated in the Heritage Statement would have evolved with changes to agricultural practice and land use.

The proposed demolition of the barns 2, 2a and 3 do have evidential value to how the farm evolved over time and that evolution would be a contribution to the character of the conservation area.

As result any loss on intervention that diminishes or degrades in other words harm to that character and/or significance will need to be weighed against benefit flowing from that development.

The proposed development of barns 1 and 2 will see the domestication of these agricultural buildings but it is accepted that a residential use could be suitable. Although there is introduction of fenestration by way of doors and windows this seems to have been kept to a minimum without the introduction of rooflights which is welcomed.

The proposed construction of two right-angled extensions to the eastern elevation of Barn 1 to replace Barn 4 would as per comments above need to be re considered.

As stated in the summary section above the redevelopment of this group of farm building is considered to cause less than substantial harm at a moderate level due to loss of barns 2,2a and 3, silos and the domestication of barns 1 and 2 and the overall site. To mitigate this clear public benefit will need to be demonstrated or a comprehensive recoding exercise as already detailed will need to be undertaken.

Heritage Policy Assessment

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 26H of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 or Sections 16 (1) & 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and as supported by the aims of the NPPF.

The Local Plan and NPPF

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and the policies contained within it i.e., Policy HE1. The plan was adopted November 2022.

The relevant paragraph numbers at Section 16 of the July 2021 version of the NPPF have been changed as follows:

197. 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.*

199. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

200. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.....

202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

206. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) – December 2017

At para 14 under the sub-heading 'Landscape Assessment and Amenity' it states that "*Analysis of setting is different from landscape assessment. While landscapes include everything within them, the entirety of very extensive settings may not contribute equally to the significance of a heritage asset, if at all. **Careful analysis is therefore required to assess whether one heritage asset at a considerable distance from another, though intervisible with it – a church spire, for instance – is a major component of the setting, rather than just an incidental element within the wider landscape.***"

At para 17 it states (my emphasis in bold): "*All heritage assets have significance, some of which have particular significance and are designated. The contribution made by their setting to their significance also varies. **Although many settings may be enhanced by development, not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without harm to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate it.** This capacity may vary between designated assets of the same grade or of the same type or according to the nature of the change. It can also depend on the location of the asset: an elevated or overlooked location; a riverbank, coastal or island location; or a location within an extensive tract of flat land may increase the sensitivity of the setting (i.e. the capacity of the setting to accommodate change without harm to the heritage asset's significance) or of views of the asset. This requires the implications of development affecting the setting of heritage assets to be considered on a case-by-case basis.*"

Conclusion

This assessment will be made once the requested additional information/amendments (see above) have been received.

From	Tricia Craggs
Date	5.3.2025