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## HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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In respect of

**Stratfield Farmhouse, Kidlington,  
Oxfordshire**

On behalf of

**Manor Oak Homes**

**AHC REF: SW/9589**

**Date: May 2022**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared and written by Sarah Watt, MCIfA, Director of Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd. Its purpose is to consider the potential impact of, and provide a justification in heritage terms for, proposals for alterations to the Grade II listed Stratfield Farmhouse in Kidlington, Oxfordshire, and the redevelopment and conversion to residential use of a number of associated former farm buildings that are considered listed by virtue of curtilage.
- 1.2 These works are proposed in the context of the parallel submission of an outline application for planning permission for a residential development of the land surrounding the farm. A separate Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared and submitted in support of that application.
- 1.3 The site as a whole was identified as a strategic site allocation in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review – Oxford’s Unmet Housing Need (adopted 7th September 2020) (‘the LPPR’) for a residential development of 120 homes (Policy PR7b).
- 1.4 Policy PR7b sets out the key delivery and planning application requirements for the Site. Paragraph 28 of the Policy states that, *‘The character and appearance of the Grade II listed Stratfield Farmhouse and its setting is to be enhanced through appropriate building restoration and landscaping.’*
- 1.5 Cherwell District Council instructed Alan Baxter Associates to prepare a Development Brief for the site, in consultation with the landowner’s representatives, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and the Canal and River Trust. Both planning and listed building consent applications have been prepared in accordance with Policy PR7b and the Development Brief.
- 1.6 This Heritage Impact Assessment follows the preparation of a comprehensive Statement of Significance by Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd. in November 2018, which describes and assesses the heritage significance of the buildings.

- 1.7 The Statement of Significance was prepared (in line with the requirements of paragraph 194 of the NPPF, with the aim of gaining an understanding of the significance of the listed building and 'curtilage listed' farm buildings in order to inform the development of the application proposals. This Heritage Impact Assessment (which also addresses the requirements of paragraphs 194 and 195 of the NPPF) should therefore be read in conjunction with the Statement of Significance.
- 1.8 It should also be read in conjunction with the Design & Access Statement prepared by James Mackintosh Architects, which sets out the motivation and rationale underpinning the application scheme.
- 1.9 This two-stage approach, of analysing and understanding significance first and allowing this to inform the formulation of the subsequent proposals, is very much in accordance with the good practice advocated in documents such as English Heritage's (now Historic England's) *Conservation Principles* (2008) and formally expressed in the requirements of the government's policies on the Historic Environment set out in Section 16 of the NPPF and the accompanying advice provided by the PPG.

## **2.0 THE APPLICATION PROPOSALS: IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND JUSTIFICATION**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 This section of the report examines the proposed scheme in the context of the significance and 'special interest' of the listed building and its curtilage listed structures and setting, as revealed in the accompanying Statement of Significance, and provides it with a reasoned justification in heritage terms.
- 2.1.2 The proposed works comprise two principal elements: first, some relatively minor alterations to the listed farmhouse in order to reinstate and facilitate its use as a single private dwelling; and second, the conversion of the former farm buildings to its rear (including reinstatement of ruined buildings), resulting in the provision of four additional dwellings, with associated car parking and landscaping works.
- 2.1.3 The listed building is currently uninhabitable because of significant structural problems and deteriorated finishes such that it is considered to be 'at risk'. It requires substantial investment in repair in order to reinstate its optimum viable use as a single dwelling; this necessary repair and refurbishment work will need to be undertaken before any of the current proposals can be implemented.
- 2.1.4 The intention is that the listed building will be marketed for sale with a consent in place for the alterations proposed in this application. The elements of the works proposed to the listed building in this application are therefore intended to establish the acceptability of these key changes, leaving further detailed listed building consent applications to be made by the future owners of the building. It will also be for the future owners to prepare the specification/method statement that will be required for the repair work; it is expected that this will form a condition of consent for the current application
- 2.1.5 For the purposes of the present application therefore, the presumption is that all existing historic fittings, fixtures and decorative treatments will be retained, including (but not limited to) the staircase, windows and shutters, doors, fireplaces, floor finishes (floorboards and stone flags), fitted furniture, and the two historic coppers in

G8 (the redundant bread oven attached to this part of the building would be subject to repair as part of the programme of repair works to the rest of the building).

2.1.6 The works which are proposed at this stage are therefore for the principles of:

- the replacement of the concrete roof tiles with traditional stone slates;
- the removal of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick lean-to structure from the rear elevation;
- the formation of an opening in the wall between the kitchen (G7) and the proposed dining room (G3);
- the provision of a WC in G5;
- the rearrangement of the existing en suite in F7;
- the provision of a new en suite in F2; and
- the conversion of bedroom F4 into a family bathroom.

2.1.7 The former farm buildings are also in various states of disrepair. The Condition Survey undertaken by James Mackintosh Architects details the repair works that are required in order to be able to reinstate the buildings and convert them to the proposed residential use.

2.1.8 The two principal aspects of the proposals are addressed under separate sub-headings below, beginning with the proposed alterations to the listed building and then moving on to address the proposed works to convert the farm buildings.

2.1.9 For ease of reference, the Statement of Significance used room identifiers for the spaces within the listed building. For purposes of consistency these are also used here and are shown on the survey plans at **Appendix 1**.

2.1.10 The Development Brief for the wider site, prepared by Cherwell District Council identifies the listed building and the former farm buildings as Buildings A-G, which system is also followed here (see plan at **Appendix 2**).

## **2.2 Proposed alterations to the listed building**

- 2.2.1 The Development Brief states that the farmhouse is to be '*restored for residential or other appropriate use. It is expected that the front garden and traditional orchard to the west, the rear courtyard and garden, and ancillary building a1 will fall within the property ownership boundary...*'
- 2.2.2 The parallel outline planning application confirms that the front garden, rear garden and courtyard and the traditional orchard will all be retained with the ownership of the listed building, along with Block A1 (which is discussed below).
- 2.2.3 The proposed alterations to the fabric and plan form of the listed building are very few. The principal external change is the replacement of the concrete roof tiles with stone slates, thought likely to have been the original roofing material. This will offer an immediate and significant enhancement to the building's historic character and appearance.
- 2.2.4 It is also proposed to remove what in the Statement of Significance was termed 'Block 4', a small brick-built lean-to with corrugated-sheet roof covering which was built against the rear elevation of the building between 1922 and 1936. This can only be accessed externally, via a reused internal-type four-panelled door, and was probably used for ventilated storage. It is not of any particular significance and its removal will have the benefit of re-exposing the original stone elevation behind. This will not harm the significance and 'special interest' of the building.
- 2.2.5 Internally, on the ground floor, there are two proposed alterations. First, it is proposed to form an opening in the wall between the western front reception room (G3; which would become a dining room) and the kitchen (G7). The opening will have pocket doors fitted against the G3 side of the wall.
- 2.2.6 On the G7 side of the wall, there is an existing recess of door-like proportions and some other disturbance in the wall noted on this side, of unknown origin. While this suggests there was formerly communication between the two rooms, subsequently blocked, it is now intended to form a new opening centrally to the wall. This will necessitate some minor loss of fabric, noting that this spine wall is first in need of

significant repair as part of the resolution of the building's structural issues (at first-floor level there is significant cracking in the outer edge of the wall where it meets the western external wall, extending down into the ground floor).

- 2.2.7 In my view, this proposal will not affect the significance and 'special interest' of the building; it is not uncommon for such openings to be formed in this location in houses having this type of plan form (both historically and as part of more recent interventions to improve circulation). The impact arises primarily from the loss of fabric that will be required but this will be relatively minor and can be balanced against the obvious and substantial benefits to the building of the significant repair work initially required and the reinstatement of the use of the building.
- 2.2.8 The second proposal for the ground floor is the installation of a WC in G5, a former service room which is to become a cloakroom. This will simply involve the insertion of a new timber stud partition in the part of the room behind the staircase, a minor intervention that does not affect the principal elements of plan form.
- 2.2.9 Otherwise, the existing plan form is retained. The existing kitchen at the rear will remain as a kitchen, with the two main reception rooms at the front, as currently. The two rear service rooms become a cloakroom and an office respectively, while the bakehouse/laundry room in the rear wing will become a boot room, with the two historic coppers retained.
- 2.2.10 The proposals for the first floor all relate to the provision of bathrooms and WCs. There is currently only a single WC and bathroom in the whole of the house. These facilities are inconveniently situated in an en suite behind a wooden matchboard partition across the eastern end of F7, the bedroom in the furthest eastern end of the house; F7 itself can only be accessed by first coming through another room, F6, beneath the eaves of the rear catslide roof. This is clearly not a viable situation for the future use of a house of this size and nature.
- 2.2.11 The existing en suite is divided into two smaller and one larger compartment by further matchboard partitions, the smaller two containing respectively a WC and airing cupboard with a small lead tank and various pipes, and the larger containing a bath and wash-hand basin. It is proposed to retain an en suite in this location but to take



out the internal dividing partitions and renew the facilities on a reconfigured arrangement.

- 2.2.12 The division for the en suite is of uncertain date. The main partition (with two four-panelled doors) may be of late 19<sup>th</sup>-/early 20<sup>th</sup>-century date, perhaps originally inserted to provide cupboards or perhaps sanitary facilities that have since been replaced. Otherwise, this seems more likely to be a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century insertion. The works proposed will preserve the existing layout, remove the matchboard partitions that form the internal compartments and which are not of any particular significance, and install the necessary new services. The main existing partition against the bedroom will be retained and a new timber stud partition inserted behind it in order to form the necessary separation. These works will clearly have no impact on the building's heritage significance, but will improve the existing sanitary facilities, adding to the viability of the building's reinstatement in use.
- 2.2.13 A small new en suite is also proposed to be formed within the south-west corner of F2, the rear bedroom. There are no decorative features that would be affected by this proposal, and it could be reversed without harmful impact in the future.
- 2.2.14 The installation of a family bathroom in addition to this is clearly necessary in a house of this size. The use of the smaller bedroom at the front (F4) seems the obvious place to locate the bathroom. This would replace the fifth bedroom, leaving a four-bedroom house, for which a family bathroom is clearly required.
- 2.2.15 In summary, the existing provision of sanitary facilities is insufficient and sub-standard, and in order to make the house a viable prospect as a family home and secure its future in this use, there needs to be greater such provision. The proposals provide a proportionate solution, providing the master suite and second bedroom with their own facilities and a family bathroom for the other two bedrooms, alongside a new downstairs WC.
- 2.2.16 I do not identify any harm arising from this aspect of the proposed works. Although there will be some minor impact arising from introducing an en suite to F2 (altering the proportions of this space), this would be reversible work that is in my view more

than outweighed by the benefits of upgrading the facilities in the proportionate manner proposed.

## **2.3 The farm buildings**

### Introduction

- 2.3.1 Many farms with historic farm buildings fall out of use and become redundant, with no prospect of having an agricultural use reinstated. In such circumstances, a conversion to a residential use is often seen as a viable way of securing the future of such buildings. This is something that is recognised by Historic England in documents such as their *Farmstead Assessment Framework: Informing sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads* (April 2015) and *Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings: Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse* (October 2017).
- 2.3.2 HE's *Farmstead Assessment Framework* seeks to help secure sustainable development and the conservation of traditional farmsteads through the planning system. The guidance suggests a stepped approach which involves first, the identification of the historic character of the site in its setting; second, assessing the contribution of the site to local distinctiveness and the significance of individual buildings; third, a consideration of the capacity for change; and fourth, using the understanding gained to inform the design and development process, including opportunities to conserve and enhance the historic character and significance of the whole site in its setting.
- 2.3.3 The document provides brief guidance (amplified in much greater detail in *Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings*) on works to existing farm buildings, for instance with regard to the retention of existing openings; the minimising of alterations to significant external elevations; attention to the proportions and detailing of new openings; and the retention of historic features where possible. It also provides guidance on new buildings, including the advice to '*Site new buildings on the footprint of lost buildings or site them so that they respond and are sensitive to the historic plan form of the site and its wider setting in the landscape,*' and '*Use the historic character of the site to inform the scale, massing and form of new buildings. Ideally the new elements should not compete or be overbearing to the traditional farm buildings.*'

- 2.3.4 In line with this advice, the overarching approach to the reinstatement and conversion of the 'curtilage listed' farm buildings at Stratfield Farm is to reuse or reinstate existing footprints and to retain existing materials, subject to their structural condition. Where there is evidence of existing openings, these are proposed to be retained or reinstated as far as is possible and reasonable to do so. On the elevations facing into the courtyard, new openings and rooflights will be limited in order to retain the collective agricultural character and thus to preserve the legibility of the existing relationship between the farmhouse and its farm buildings.
- 2.3.5 In order to provide some flexibility for the conversion to residential use, greater freedom in terms of openings has been applied on the outward-facing elevations overlooking the respective new amenity spaces. This is necessary to provide viable and successful conversions that secure a sustainable new use for the buildings.
- 2.3.6 A number of the buildings are in a severely ruinous condition where little fabric remains standing. The proposed reinstatement of built form on their footprints, reusing existing fabric wherever possible, thus offers significant benefits; this is particularly so in terms of their contribution to the significance of the farmhouse through the reinstatement of a farmyard fully enclosed by built form - a key element of the setting of the listed building.

#### Block A1

##### *Existing*

- 2.3.7 Building A1, directly east of the farmhouse, was present on the site by 1876, with the single-storey lean-to element added by 1899. It should be considered a 'curtilage listed' structure.
- 2.3.8 The building is partly constructed off the stone boundary wall dividing the front garden to the farmhouse from the rear courtyard, using this as the back wall, with the rest of the ground-floor construction being of red brick, laid in Flemish Bond. The masonry walls support a timber-framed first-floor structure clad in weatherboarding. At the rear, the upper floor is built off a wall plate spanning the brick walls and not off the boundary wall, which continues upwards. The pitched roof is covered with corrugated metal sheeting.

- 2.3.9 The single-storey lean-to element is of stone construction with a corrugated sheet roof. To create this structure, the boundary wall appears to have been raised to form the southern lean-to 'gable' end. The eastern wall is formed by a continuation (and raising) of the eastern stone boundary wall to the farmhouse garden. The structure originally had an open front but now has a brick and weatherboarded infill with double-door opening to the yard.
- 2.3.10 The main part of the building is subdivided into two bays on the ground floor by a brick wall, floored with stone cobbles and concrete to the right and concrete to the left. The left-hand bay front is infilled with weatherboarding and a door opening and the right-hand bay has an open front. This latter bay has an upper floor (a former hayloft, with pitching door in the western gable end), albeit the floor timbers are now much decayed. The left-hand bay is now open to the roof structure internally, with only a few surviving timbers to indicate there was probably originally a first floor. The first-floor partition between the bays is timber-framed.

*Proposed*

- 2.3.11 The Development Brief indicates this building should be retained with the ownership of the listed farmhouse, which the proposed scheme confirms. In order to give the building a meaningful use and a purpose in relationship to the listed building, it is proposed to convert it for use as a residential annexe (its proportions are not sufficient for the provision of garaging).
- 2.3.12 As part of the proposals, the existing stone wall will be repaired, re-pointed and given new slate coping, and the brickwork quoins will be tied back to the stone wall. The western brick wall will be rebuilt using reclaimed bricks (laid in Flemish Bond to match existing) in order to provide structural integrity to the building (the wall currently leans inwards). The existing timber roof structure will be retained but the corrugated sheet roof covering will be replaced with plain clay tiles on the existing timber roof structure. The existing weatherboarding, in deteriorated condition, will be replaced with new horizontal timber cladding. Internal insulation will be provided to all the external walls and finished with lime plaster.
- 2.3.13 These are minimal alterations, working with the existing fabric, replacing like-for-like where necessary and repairing where this is possible. The renewal of the

weatherboarding and the new roof covering will both be enhancements to the building, improving its condition and waterproofing, enhancing its appearance and sustaining its longevity.

- 2.3.14 In order to convert the building to the proposed use, there is a need to enclose the open front while ensuring the provision of natural daylight into the building. To the front elevation, the open bay to the right is therefore proposed to be infilled with full-height double glazing set in a timber frame, intended to preserve the legibility of the existing open front.
- 2.3.15 The bay to its left will retain an entrance in the current position but the weatherboarded panel adjoining it is to be replaced with reclaimed brickwork, laid in Flemish Bond. To the left, the plywood currently closing off the front of the lean-to element will be replaced with full-height timber double doors, behind which will be a full-height double-glazed screen. This will retain (and enhance the appearance of) the current closure of the frontage while allowing the doors to be opened to provide natural light into the kitchen space to be contained in this bay.
- 2.3.16 The existing loft door opening on the west gable end will be retained but the badly decayed timber door will be removed and the opening will instead be glazed to provide natural light to the first-floor bedroom. A small window opening will be inserted into the eastern gable apex to provide light to the proposed stairwell and a new Conservation rooflight will be inserted in the lean-to roof of the single-storey element. These interventions, with the exception of the latter two, use existing openings (whether windows, doors or open fronts) to enable natural light into the building, preserving the existing character as far as is possible while ensuring the building has a viable use.
- 2.3.17 This approach to fenestration is, in my view, positively in accordance with the HE guidance *Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings*, which advises those planning change to farm buildings to maximise the use of existing openings by planning internal spaces around them, limiting the formation of new openings and inserting new ones with due care to their placing and design.

- 2.3.18 Internally, the conversion requires the construction of a staircase, allowing access to the proposed bedroom. This will be inserted into the eastern bay of the two-storey element where there is currently no surviving intact first-floor structure meaning that there will be little or no loss of historic fabric arising from this proposal. A new first-floor structure will be reinstated either side of the new staircase, arguably resulting in the benefit of the partial reinstatement of a first floor that has been lost.
- 2.3.19 On the ground floor, the proposals retain the existing bay subdivisions with an additional partition inserted across the southern end of the central bay to create a shower room with WC. Two new door openings will be made through the existing partitions to enable the required circulation throughout. This represents a minor loss of fabric that is not of particular significance.
- 2.3.20 The existing stone floor cobbles in the western bay will be taken up and re-laid in the adjoining bay containing the new staircase, in replacement of the existing concrete floor in there. The concrete floor in the eastern bay will be broken out and the floor will be lowered and re-laid with limecrete (as will that in the western bay). These proposals create viable new floors while preserving the stone cobbles for use in a part of the building where the proposed use (hallway) means they can be more appropriately retained rather than being removed or concealed.
- 2.3.21 The proposals altogether will preserve the external character of Block A1 as an ancillary building to the farmhouse, improving its structural integrity and appearance by repairing and rebuilding fabric like-for-like as necessary. The proposals represent a simple low-key conversion which uses existing openings to provide natural light into the building and which proposes the minimum of change in order to make the building viable as a residential annexe and thus secure its future. These benefits in my view outweigh the minor losses of fabric that will be incurred in achieving this positive outcome.

### Blocks B & C

#### *Existing*

- 2.3.22 Block B, a stone-built former stable block or cow house on the north side of the farmyard, was present on the site by 1876 and is probably of 1830s' date,

contemporary with the farmhouse. It should be considered a 'curtilage listed' structure.

2.3.23 The building comprises a single-storey range constructed of coursed rubblestone, with a pitched roof covered with corrugated metal sheeting (which is not of sufficient size). The front (south) elevation to the yard has a central stable-door entrance flanked by narrow unglazed window openings, slatted for ventilation. The rear elevation is blind except for a gabled dormer partway up the roof-slope.

2.3.24 The interior contains a wooden stall partition, a small area enclosed by boarded partitions in one corner, paved flooring and a row of partially collapsed wooden feeding troughs against the back wall with partial survival of a continuous hay manger above. There is a loft floor above. The external walls and internal first-floor structure have survived in varying condition, with damage arising from long-term lack of maintenance and vegetation growth, as detailed in the Condition Survey.

2.3.25 The building is abutted by another pre-1876 structure built against its western gable end (which it shares). This has stone western and northern walls, a pan-tiled hipped roof, an open front to the south, supported on timber posts, and an internal timber partition. It is in an advanced state of decay and dereliction. The stone-built north wall of this structure is also the southern gable end of Block C (also present by 1876) which extended northwards and which has been almost entirely lost; all that survives of this building are fragmentary remains of the west and north walls, significantly damaged by root growth and the elements. The historic maps show that this building had an open front to the east.

*Proposed*

2.3.26 The Development Brief indicates that Block B is to be retained and converted into residential use. It also indicates that a building could be reinstated on the indicative footprint of Block C in order to provide additional accommodation (and therefore to make the conversion of Block B to residential use a viable prospect).

2.3.27 Blocks B and C together are thus proposed to be converted to a three-bedroom dwelling with attached car port at the rear. This proposal will require the raising of the

existing eaves and ridge height of the main part of Block B by 700mm (while maintaining the existing steep pitch) in order to accommodate a bedroom and family bathroom on its upper floor. The existing footprint of the building is simply too narrow to accommodate these on the ground floor alongside the other living spaces. The element to the left (west) will remain at the existing height, as will the reinstated Block C.

- 2.3.28 The eaves of the main part of Block B will be raised by stone construction to match the existing, with the extended masonry to be finished with weathered timber cladding on both sides of the building; this is intended to clearly differentiate the existing fabric from the new.
- 2.3.29 The proposed replacement of the corrugated sheet roof with stone slates will be of significant benefit to the building's historic character and appearance. Stone slates are thought likely to have been the original roof covering (there is evidence of these on the ground in the vicinity of the building) and will match those proposed to replace the concrete tiles on the farmhouse roof.
- 2.3.30 Internally, the existing timber first-floor structure will be levelled and repaired or replaced as necessary, with new floorboards installed over. The fragmentary timber feeding troughs and hay manger against the back wall are not in good condition and are now redundant in use. These, and the timber stall partition, will need to be removed in order to convert the building to a residential use. There will also be a minor loss of fabric arising from the formation of an internal doorway in the western gable-end wall so that internal circulation can be achieved with the rest of the proposed dwelling.
- 2.3.31 The impact of these losses of historic fabric and fittings, and the change to appearance arising from the proposed raising in height, must be weighed against the benefits to the building's appearance from the replacement of the roof covering and of course the overarching benefit of achieving a viable new use for the building. The changes proposed are the minimum necessary in order to achieve this. In my view the impacts arising are relatively minor and are outweighed by the benefits of securing the future of the building in use; if it is simply retained as existing, without a suitable use, the physical condition of the building will further deteriorate and ultimately result in a



greater harmful impact, both on the building itself and on the overall character of the site and setting of the listed farmhouse.

- 2.3.32 The arrangement of the fenestration of the front (south) elevation of the main part of Block B will be preserved as existing with a new stable-type door to match the existing, and of course the provision of glazed window units in place of the unglazed slatted vents currently present. The raised timber-clad extension of this elevation will incorporate a new timber casement window positioned as an overlight above the entrance, providing natural light to the first floor. This is considered less intrusive to the plain agricultural character of the building than would be the insertion of rooflights on this yard-facing elevation.
- 2.3.33 On the rear elevation, which is currently blind apart from a gabled dormer (in deleterious condition) partway up the roof-slope, two new window openings will be formed; one will be of the same proportions as those existing to the front, the other of double the size. Both will have timber lintels, as do the existing openings, and will be positioned asymmetrically. A new gabled lead dormer with stone-slate roof will be rebuilt to the same proportions as the existing and in the corresponding position on the new roof-slope, and three new Conservation rooflights will be inserted to increase the otherwise poor level of natural daylight into the first-floor bedroom and en suite. The new windows to front and rear elevations are proposed to have 'Architectural Bronze' metal frames carrying double-glazed units without glazing bars. These are of simple and unfussy appearance to suit the character of the building.
- 2.3.34 The building's minimal existing fenestration makes it necessary to form new openings in order to achieve a viable and successful conversion of the building. The minimum number of new openings in order to achieve this is proposed; these are necessary in order to make the internal layout work (lighting a ground-floor bedroom and en suite respectively).
- 2.3.35 The western element of the building will remain subservient to the main part of the building, retaining its existing lower ridge height and preserving the sense of an open front. This will be achieved by inserting full-height glazed screens into the existing open front, separated by a central oak post on a staddle stone. To reduce the visual

impact of the glazing, and to provide privacy for the occupants, there will be a 'hit and miss' timber screen across the front of the majority of the glazing.

- 2.3.36 As with Block A1, the approach to fenestration is, in my view, in accordance with HE's guidance *Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings*, which advises those planning change to farm buildings to maximise the use of existing openings by planning internal spaces around them, limiting the formation of new openings and inserting new ones with due care to their placing and design.
- 2.3.37 In terms of materials, the same guidance says that, *'New openings can be expressed in a modern semi-industrial way without resorting to making them appear 'historic'...As an alternative to timber, steel window sections can often complement the industrial character of many farm buildings, provided that the balance of glazing to solid remains appropriate...The impact of new windows and doorways can also be reduced through the use of shutters or joinery screens.'*
- 2.3.38 To the rear, Block C (as encouraged by the Development Brief) will be reinstated over its original footprint, which is necessary to provide adequate living accommodation and parking space for two vehicles. The existing western wall will be rebuilt using limestone reclaimed from the site (the existing stone is too damaged to retain and reuse), leaving an opening at the northern end to form a double car port entrance. The pantiles to the existing roof will be replaced with plain clay tiles, with the existing hipped roof structure over the western part of Block B being continued over the rebuilt Block C.
- 2.3.39 The west wall will remain un-fenestrated as existing, with three new Conservation rooflights proposed to the western roof-slope to provide additional natural light into the main living spaces. These are sited on the outer roof-slope away from the farmyard. The new eastern wall of Block C (replacing an originally open-fronted elevation) will incorporate a full-height opening to contain bifold doors out into a rear courtyard garden. Further north along this elevation will be an opening with double timber doors into the car port, allowing access from the courtyard garden.
- 2.3.40 The northern element of Block C, which will be under the same roof, continued through from the southern element, will comprise a double car port, with open front to

the west to which access will be obtained from a road within the proposed residential development of the wider site. This follows advice given at pre-application stage by the Council's Conservation Officer, intended to ensure that previously proposed external parking bays do not encroach onto the retained woodland/wetland area to the north by bringing them within the footprint of Block C.

- 2.3.41 This also has the benefit of removing parking for this property from within the farm courtyard, freeing up parking here for other proposed properties which have less flexibility in this respect.
- 2.3.42 The length of the proposed Block C is the same as that of the previous building, as evidenced by the surviving remains of its north-west corner, which will be reinstated. As roughly measured off the historic OS maps (from the rear building line of Block B), this is roughly 80% of the total width across the frontage of the combined elements of Block B.
- 2.3.43 A concern was raised at pre-application stage that the reinstated Block C would have a very deep plan which is not of a traditional form. However, as the historic OS maps show, Block C, which had an open front to the east, was substantial. Similar rough measurements taken from the maps indicate that, in comparison to the total width across the frontage of the combined elements of Block B, Block C had a depth of c.48% of that measurement. The proposed rebuild is of the same or slightly less depth.
- 2.3.44 This consideration, alongside the need to provide sufficient depth of plan for the main living areas of the property and for the car port, results in a reinstated Building C that is proportionate and follows the historical footprint.
- 2.3.45 The external private amenity space for the property will be provided to the rear in the form of a garden in the angle between Blocks B and C. This will be bounded on the east side by a low-height drystone wall and to the north by a timber post-and-rail fence against the woodland/wetland area.
- 2.3.46 Overall, the proposals for Blocks B and C result in a sympathetic conversion of the building that retains its existing historic character and appearance. The absolute

minimum quantum of change is proposed in order to achieve these aims. While there will be some loss of historic fabric, which might be considered to result in some limited less than substantial harm, in my view this is wholly mitigated by the benefits to the building arising from its full repair, from the proposed new roofing materials, from the reinstatement of lost built form, from the overall sensitive design that retains character and, above all, from the securing of a sustainable future for the building through the establishment of a new and viable use.

#### Block D

##### *Existing*

- 2.3.47 Block D is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century steel-framed Dutch barn part-clad with corrugated sheeting and part open-sided, which replaced an earlier building on a similar footprint between 1936 and the 1970s. If it post-dates July 1948, it would not be considered 'curtilage listed,' but even if it were it is not of heritage interest.

##### *Proposed*

- 2.3.48 The Development Brief indicates that Block D is to be removed and that it could be replaced by a new building on the footprint of the historic barn that preceded it in order to provide additional accommodation.
- 2.3.49 While there is no available information on the type and appearance of the barn that stood here before the present Dutch barn was erected, its large rectangular plan form as shown on the 1876 map, in comparison to the other farm buildings present, suggests this is likely to have been the main barn on the site, which may possibly have been a threshing barn.
- 2.3.50 The proposal therefore seeks the demolition of the Dutch barn and its replacement with a new two-storey dwelling which is designed to have the character of a threshing barn that has been converted to residential use. The building will be constructed of rubblestone with ashlar quoins and will have a stone slate-covered pitched roof with stone coping to the gable ends.

- 2.3.51 This traditional design, utilising the existing footprint, requires the ridge height to be raised above that of the existing steel-framed structure by 1.85m. The existing modern agricultural building has a very shallow-pitched roof that is not a traditional form; given the steeply-pitched form of the other traditional buildings on the site, it is probable that the historic barn previously on this site would have had a greater ridge height than the existing.
- 2.3.52 In the centre of the elevation facing the yard, a large full-height weathered timber-clad panel in the masonry will suggest a threshing-door opening with the vertical cladding to either side emulating the barn doors, with an entrance in the centre. Fenestration is minimal, using timber casements with stone lintels and incorporating glazed ventilation slots and the minimum number of Conservation rooflights (two per elevation). Larger window openings are confined to the rear elevation, where there are timber bifold doors opening into the rear garden.
- 2.3.53 Although this will be a full two-storey building, the style of the building and its position facing into the farm courtyard, cheek-by-jowl with other reinstated and converted farm buildings, will ensure this building is 'read' as part of the farm building complex and not as a competitor in status with the listed farmhouse; the latter is clearly the principal building of the group, identified by its domestic appearance and its position facing away from the farmyard.
- 2.3.54 The threshing barn is historically the largest farm building type and can historically, in some cases, 'compete' with its associated farmhouse, but only in terms of scale and not in respect of architectural detailing or complexity of form. The two building types (farmhouse and barn) are of course easily distinguishable and here the 'converted threshing barn' style of the proposal, and its location within the farmyard setting alongside other agricultural building types, ensures that it will be seen to have a subservient relationship with the listed building. The height of the ridge will be 76mm below that of the farmhouse.
- 2.3.55 The garden to the property will wrap in an arc around its northern and eastern sides, demarcated by a timber post-and-rail fence and separated from the rear gardens to Blocks B and F by 1.4m high drystone walls.

### Block E

#### *Existing*

- 2.3.56 Block E is another 20<sup>th</sup>-century steel-framed open-sided Dutch barn with corrugated sheet metal cladding to the wide shallow-pitched roof. This appears to have been erected between 1922 and 1936 and therefore might be considered 'curtilage listed'. However, it is not of any heritage interest.
- 2.3.57 The steels forming the structural posts along the southern side of the barn stand on the south side of a stone yard boundary wall which runs parallel to the structure, which effectively therefore incorporates it as a partial south wall. This wall was in place by 1876, dividing the main farmyard from the yard to its south and the farmhouse garden.

#### *Proposed*

- 2.3.58 The Development Brief advises that Block E is to be removed, and its removal and replacement form part of the current proposals. An earlier iteration of the scheme proposed the removal of the structure and the provision of a row of eight residents' car parking spaces on its site, along the retained stone boundary wall. A revised iteration reduced this to four parking bays plus bin stores, but this raised further issues during pre-application discussions over the locations of the other four parking bays. Two of these have now been provided for in the double car port to Blocks B and C, leaving six bays (two per dwelling) plus bin and bicycle/garden stores for Blocks D, F and G to be located on the site of Block E.
- 2.3.59 The Development Brief requires that all overtly domestic paraphernalia, including garden storage, is to be integrated within the footprints of buildings.
- 2.3.60 In order to reduce the visual impact of open parking bays and bin stores, etc. on the setting of the listed farmhouse and the farmyard, it is proposed to place these under cover of a new open-fronted cart-shed type structure. This would have a longer but narrower footprint than the existing barn and would be constructed of oak posts with arched bracing supporting a pitched roof covered with plain clay tiles, of typical cart-shed style.

- 2.3.61 The outer end bays containing the storage areas would be enclosed with horizontal weatherboarding on a brick plinth, influenced by the materials of Block A1 to the south. Weatherboarding would also be used to screen the gap between the top of the stone boundary wall and the eaves on the south side of the building, to provide privacy to the amenity space associated with the farmhouse.
- 2.3.62 The ridge height would be 660mm higher than the existing structure in order to provide sufficient headroom for vehicles. This will be 448mm below the ridge height of the farmhouse, 201mm below the ridge height of Block A1 and 372mm below the ridge height of the proposed Block D.
- 2.3.63 The Development Brief stipulates the retention, repair and rebuilding where necessary of historic walls within the curtilage of the listed building. The existing stone yard boundary wall would be retained and rebuilt to address damage inflicted by cracking and previous poor-quality repairs. The existing gate opening in this wall will be fitted with a new timber gate that will be fixed permanently shut, so that the division between the farmyard and the amenity space for the farmhouse is maintained but so that the legibility of the original connection between the two spaces is preserved.
- 2.3.64 While the proposed new structure does not follow exactly the footprint of the existing Dutch barn (being longer and narrower than it), this is necessary in order to fulfil the proposed function. The proposed building nevertheless has a simple open-fronted form so that the existing agricultural character, and the transparency of the existing structure, is maintained. The benefit of the proposal in reducing the visual impact of parking is evident and is in line with the overarching stipulation of the Development Brief that seeks to avoid the introduction of an overtly domestic character (the Brief is silent on the parking options for the farmyard development). While it is usual to see vehicles (including cars as well as farm vehicles) on farm sites, these are often housed in open-fronted barns of this nature and the introduction of a replacement structure of this nature is therefore considered the best solution in this context.

### Blocks F and F1

#### *Existing*

- 2.3.1 Blocks F and F1 comprise two attached ranges in differing states of ruination, standing against the eastern boundary of the main farmyard. Both elements were present by 1876 and are considered listed by virtue of curtilage.
- 2.3.65 Block F1, the northern range, situated in the north-eastern corner of the main yard, was constructed of stone, but all that remains of it is the eastern wall (partially collapsed), the northern wall, concrete flooring with a drainage channel, suggesting past use as an animal shelter, and some staddle stones to indicate it originally had an open front supported on posts. The 1900 OS map shows a small enclosed yard in front of this range, which had gone by 1922.
- 2.3.66 Block F is a narrower rectangular range to the south. It has a rubblestone eastern wall, in poor condition, with the western elevation to the yard comprising timber posts on staddle stones, the bays between infilled with weatherboarding, with an open bay at the north end and a stone-built bay at the southern end. The north gable end (serving as a dividing wall with Block F1) is timber-framed, infilled with vertical boarding and with a door opening with plank and batten door. The range retains a queen-strut roof structure covered with corrugated sheeting. The interior is very overgrown and the building is generally in poor condition.

#### *Proposed*

- 2.3.67 The Development Brief requires Block F to be retained, with its northern section converted to residential use. It suggests that the southern section could be converted to garaging to serve the farmhouse, subject to an accurate survey and suitability. The Brief states that a building could be reinstated on the site of Block F1, *'perhaps retaining the open shed form and incorporating the remaining stones with glazed infills between the posts.'*
- 2.3.68 The proposals involve the retention of Block F and the reinstatement of a range on the footprint of Block F1, which together will form a single-storey three-bed dwelling. The existing roof structure and ridge height of Block F will be retained (although the



current lean to the east will need correcting), while that to Block F1 will be 350mm higher than this in order to accommodate its wider footprint. The roofs of both ranges will be covered with slates, a significant improvement on the existing corrugated sheet roofing.

- 2.3.69 The eastern elevation of both ranges comprises a continuous rubblestone wall; this is proposed to be retained and rebuilt as necessary using reclaimed stone from the site. The minimum number of window and door openings considered necessary for the use as a dwelling is proposed, using the locations of existing openings where possible. On Block F this will include two openings with flush two-light timber casements beneath timber lintels and a new stable-type door in the location of an existing opening in the masonry. On Block F1, two single-light timber casements are proposed, and a glazed door into the garden that will be formed along the eastern side of the building and demarcated against the woodland/wetland area by a timber post-and-rail fence.
- 2.3.70 The western elevation will be renewed but to a similar form as the existing, comprising new oak posts on staddle stones in the existing locations (the existing posts to Block F are in too poor a condition to successfully repair, while those to Block F1 have of course entirely been lost, along with the roof structure). In place of the present weatherboarded infill, it is proposed to install full-height glazed screens between the posts on a low plinth, with vertical 'hit-and-miss' timber screening in front, both for privacy and to reduce the visual impact of the glazing. This will preserve a similar character as existing, preserving legibility as an originally open-fronted building.
- 2.3.71 It is also in line with guidance contained in HE's *Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings*, which refers to the use of shutters or joinery screens to reduce the visual impact of new windows and doorways.
- 2.3.72 A single small Conservation rooflight is proposed to this side on Block F to enable additional natural light into a bedroom where the building will abut Block E. The interior of Block F1 will comprise a single-volume living-dining space, with Block F divided into an entrance hall, bedrooms and a bathroom.
- 2.3.73 This element of the proposals in my view represents an attractive and sympathetic restoration of Block F and a rational reinstatement of Block F1, which was probably

originally of similar appearance to Block F. The existing footprint and height is retained, surviving roof structure is retained and external fabric is repaired, rebuilt and reimagined in a sympathetic manner. The building will retain its agricultural character and its contribution to the farmyard setting of the listed building will be significantly enhanced.

### Block G

#### *Existing*

- 2.3.74 Block G represents the remains of ruined stone-built ranges standing along the western boundary of the farmyard. The 1876 OS map depicts different elements; the northern of these is shown as a solid-walled rectangular structure, its western wall forming part of the western boundary wall of the farmyard. This is now in ruinous condition, with three partially standing walls (including a north wall of gabled form), but no surviving wall onto the yard and no roof.
- 2.3.75 South of this was a structure of the same depth but comprising a narrow range with enclosed yard in front. All that survives of this range is the south wall and partial north and west walls wall and stone flooring. There is no surviving roof structure. The form of the end walls indicates a former lean-to roof to the narrow range (nothing of which survives) and suggests these were probably pigsties. Wooden frameworks against the three surviving walls indicate later modifications to the form of the building (which is shown as a single range with no differentiation for yards from the 1936 map onwards).
- 2.3.76 The southern end of the former pigsty range (minus any attached yard) extended south into the farmhouse garden. This element (former lean-to storage sheds) is the only part of the building to retain all four walls, plus an internal dividing wall and a partial lean-to roof, covered with stone slates, attached to the western boundary wall of the garden. There is a doorway out into the gardens west of the house and a door into the garden/service yard behind the house.

*Proposed*

- 2.3.77 The Development Brief states that Block G should be retained/reinstated to its original footprint for residential or ancillary use.
- 2.3.78 The existing footprint does not have sufficient depth to allow a successful conversion to an ancillary use such as garaging. A residential use could be accommodated on the existing footprint but a new building on this footprint would need to be built to a greater height than these buildings were originally.
- 2.3.79 In order to preserve the existing footprint, a 1.5-storey residential dwelling is therefore proposed, with a pitched roof at a height that is 300mm higher than, but matching the pitch of, that of Block B so that its eaves line is at the height of the ridgeline of Block E (the parking shelter). The ridgeline will be 186mm below that of the farmhouse.
- 2.3.80 The northern gable wall has been damaged by long-term vegetation growth and is proposed to be rebuilt and extended in height. The remaining walls will be rubble limestone cavity walls to match the gable wall. The east elevation overlooking the farmyard will be very sparsely fenestrated, giving it a plain agricultural barn-like character with an entrance and two single-light timber casements beneath timber lintels at ground-floor level but no windows at first-floor level. The majority of the fenestration is instead confined to the west elevation, overlooking the garden that will be formed for the dwelling, including two sets of bifold doors into the garden, and two dormers and four Conservation rooflights serving the upper storey.
- 2.3.81 The small lean-to element at the southern end will be repaired and reinstated to serve as a utility room to the property. The garden to the west will be enclosed by a low drystone wall and timber post-and-rail fencing.

## **2.4 Landscaping and boundaries**

- 2.4.1 The existing farmyard is typical of a historic former working farm that has been out of use for a significant length of time. The dereliction of the buildings has already been described and there is a substantial amount of overgrown vegetation in and around the buildings and in the farmyard generally. The surviving stone boundary walls in

part form integral elements of some of the buildings and are also in various states of disrepair. However, these survive sufficiently to indicate how the yard was historically enclosed.

- 2.4.2 The Development Brief requires that historic walls on the site are to be retained and repaired or rebuilt as necessary; that the historic character of the farmhouse gardens and historic orchard to the west, along with the courtyard immediately behind the farmhouse, should be retained; that garden sheds/greenhouses and other overtly domestic paraphernalia and boundary treatments must be avoided; and that private amenity space will need subtle demarcation.
- 2.4.3 The historic walls around and within the farmyard are to be retained and repaired or rebuilt where necessary and given new capping. New drystone walls will be built to divide the gardens to Blocks B, D and F from each other, with the outer garden boundaries comprising low-key timber post-and-rail fences where these back onto the woodland/wetland area to north and east and the orchard to the west. The farmhouse retains its gardens to front and side, a courtyard to the rear, and the historic orchard.
- 2.4.4 These are all key elements of the building's setting, as is the farmyard itself. The preservation of an agricultural character by limiting the alterations to the existing buildings on the farmyard-facing side and through the sympathetic design of buildings newly reinstated on historic footprints, maintains the legibility of this relationship.
- 2.4.5 The courtyard behind the farmhouse will largely be surfaced with gravel, with a small enclosed area directly behind the house to be surfaced with stone setts/cobbles and a small lawn. The farm courtyard will be surfaced with stone setts, sympathetic to the character of a former working farm, and therefore helping to preserve an agricultural rather than overtly domestic character. Pedestrian and vehicular areas will be demarcated by different colour tones to the setts.
- 2.4.6 The existing vehicular farm track access to the yard behind the farmhouse will be retained and upgraded. The new dwellings in the farmyard will be accessed separately from the farmhouse via a new access point on the west side of the yard, off the end of a new estate road proposed as part of the wider housing development. This will enter

the site between Blocks B and G where there is an existing vehicular access into the yard via a steel farm gate.

### **3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

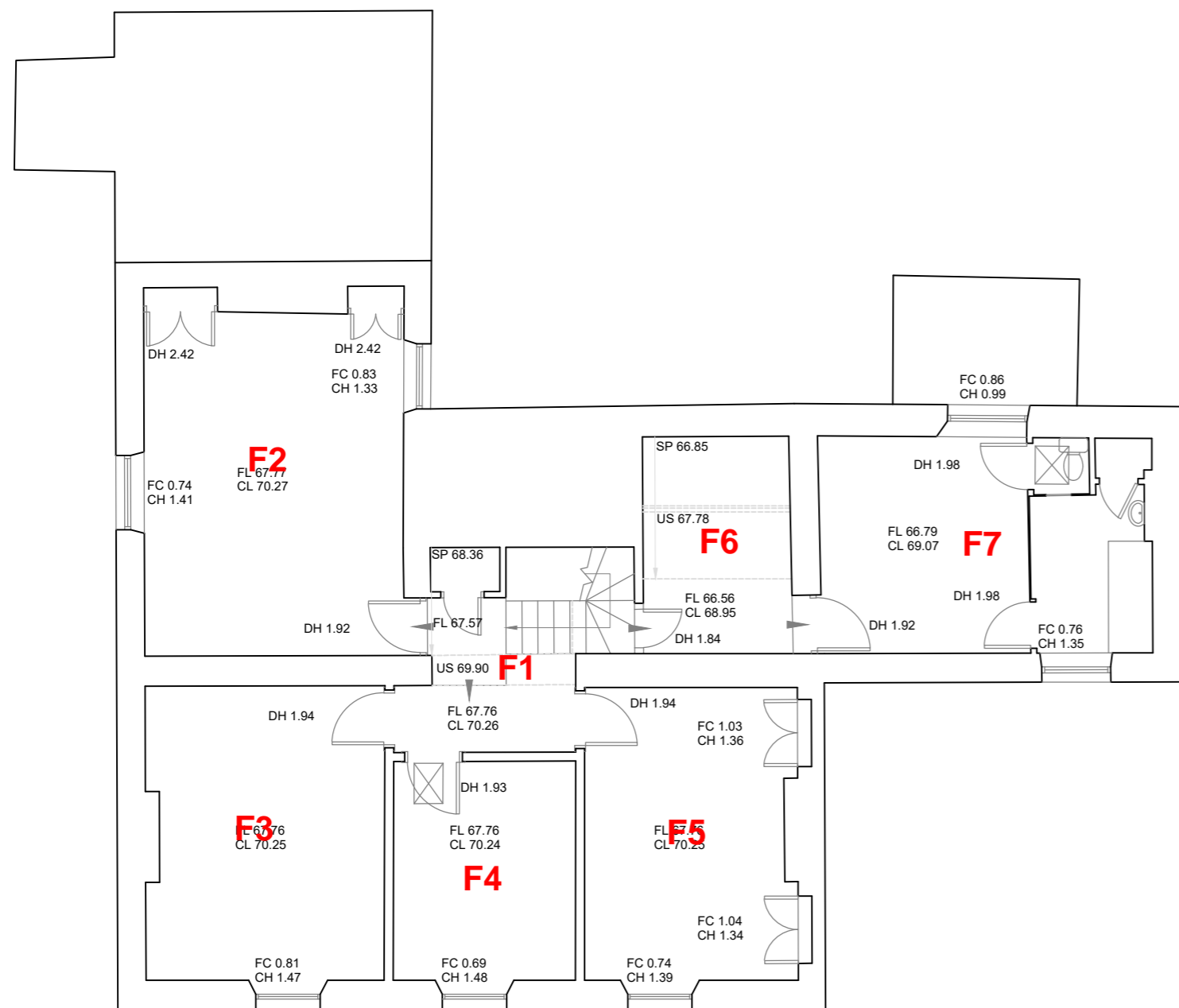
- 3.1 For all the detailed reasons set out in this report, informed by the Statement of Significance, it is my considered opinion that the application proposals will preserve and enhance the significance and 'special interest' of the listed building, and will preserve the significance of the 'curtilage listed' former farm buildings and the contribution they make to the setting of the farmhouse.
- 3.2 The first requirement for the farmhouse, in order to make it a habitable building, is that its structural stability is ensured and that its fabric is repaired. Following these necessary works, the proposals seek minimal alteration to facilitate its reinstatement as a single private dwelling, which works include the replacement of the existing concrete roof tiles with stone slates (a clear enhancement), the removal of a later brick addition at the rear, and minor internal changes, primarily the introduction of bathroom facilities which are otherwise lacking. The garden, rear yard and old orchard associated with the farmhouse will be retained within the ownership of the listed building.
- 3.3 None of the alterations proposed will in my view affect the significance and 'special interest' of the building. Rather, the full repair and refurbishment of the building, and the proposed replacement roof covering will be of clear benefit to its significance, while the alterations will facilitate the desired outcome which secures the building's future in its optimum viable use.
- 3.4 The former farm buildings are in various states of disrepair. Those which survive in a more complete state are to be retained, repaired and converted to residential use, while those which are in a ruinous state will be reinstated/replaced on their existing footprints with buildings of sensitive design, appropriate to their agricultural context. The two steel-framed barns on the site will also be replaced with new structures. The reinstatement of lost built form ensures that a farm courtyard fully enclosed by built form is retained, preserving this key element of the setting of the listed building.
- 3.5 The viable conversion of these buildings to a residential use requires some external and internal alteration, including changes to fenestration. On the inward-facing elevations, overlooking the former farmyard, the proposals seek to retain an

agricultural character, keeping fenestration to a minimum and using existing openings – where open fronted bays exist these are infilled with glazing to maintain an open appearance but partially screened by joinery so that the visual impact of large areas of glazing is reduced. The outward-facing elevations allow more flexibility but the general approach, using existing openings and only introducing new openings where necessary, has been followed.

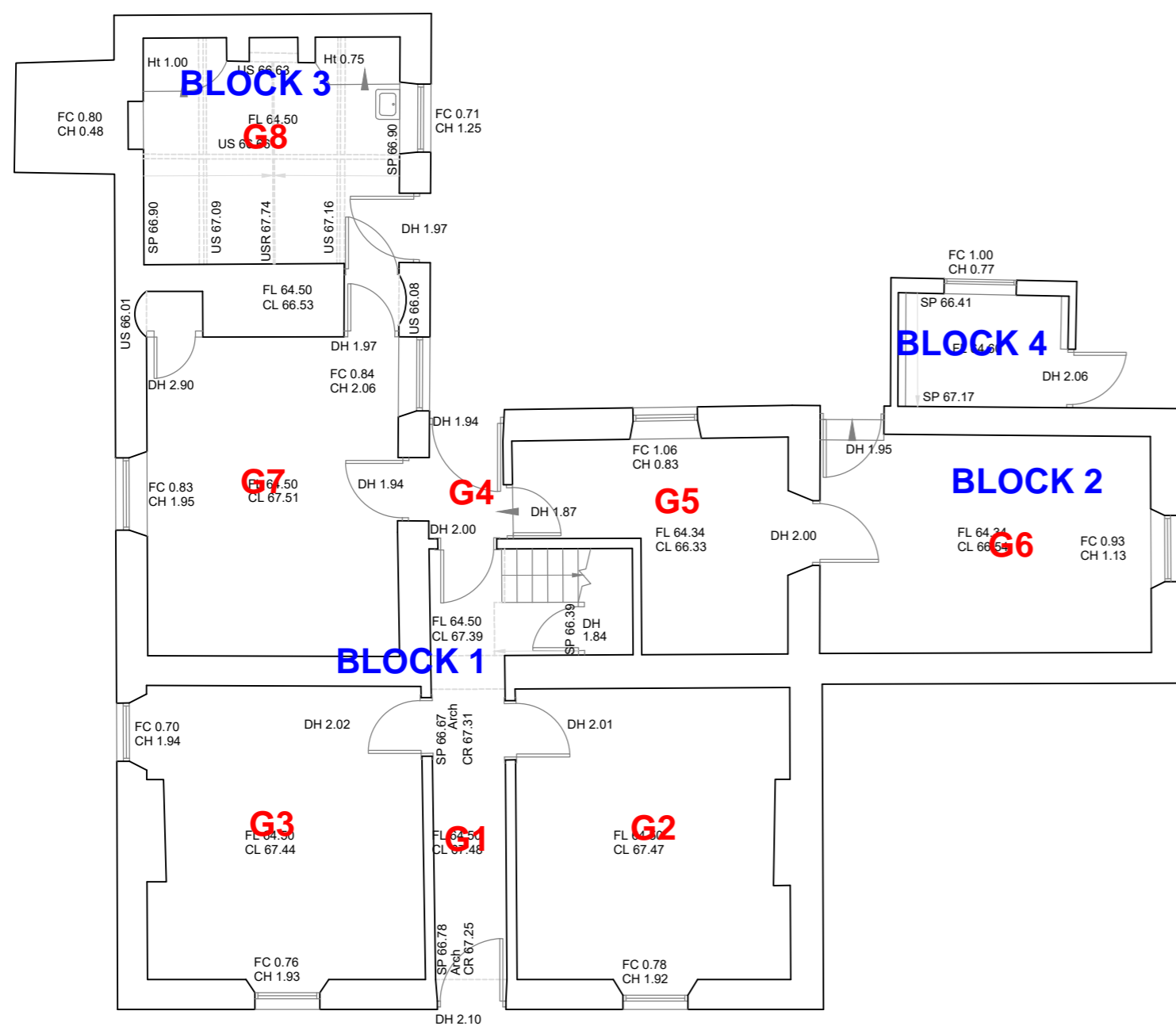
- 3.6 Private amenity spaces for the new dwellings are proposed to be provided to the rear of the buildings, away from the farmyard, and will have boundary treatments that are appropriate to the agricultural context. Existing access points are maintained, and the landscaping treatments will be low-key and appropriate to context.
- 3.7 There will inevitably be some changes to character and appearance resulting from the conversions from agricultural to residential use, but the current proposals in my view propose only those alterations necessary to make the conversions viable and to create desirable new homes that will secure the future use of these buildings. The works will preserve the heritage interest of the site as a whole and preserve the contribution made by the farm buildings to the significance and setting of the listed farmhouse.
- 3.8 In formulating the proposals, the requirements of the Development Brief have been followed and pre-application comments made by the Council's Conservation Officer have also been taken on board. The proposals are also in line with Historic England guidance on converting and adapting traditional farm buildings.
- 3.9 It is therefore my professional view that the application proposals comply with both local and national policies on the conservation of the historic environment (including the site-specific Development Brief), the advice contained in the NPPF and accompanying PPG and, most importantly of all, meet the statutory requirements set by Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

**Appendix 1:**  
**Annotated survey plans of Stratfield Farmhouse**

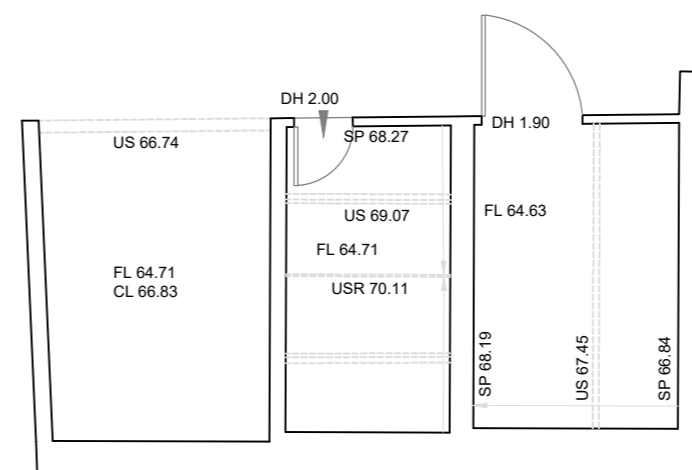
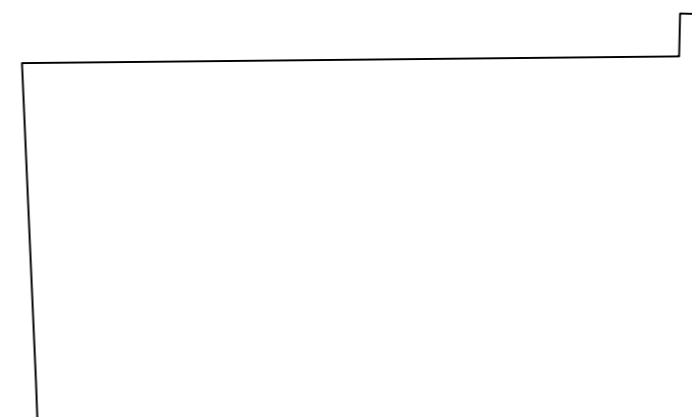




First Floor



Ground Floor



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Suffix	Revision	Date	Initial
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 your surveying solution  
 Rainsborough Barns  
 Charlton  
 Banbury, Oxon  
 OX17 3DT  
 Tel: 01295 814417  
 Fax: 01295 814410

client  
Manor Oak Homes

project  
Stratfield Farm, Kidlington  
Floor Plans

Drawn	Date	Checked	Date	Scale
JG	15/5/17			1:100 @A2

drawing no.  
1215/3047/4

**Appendix 2:**

**Plan of the farmhouse site included in the Development Brief, with building identifiers**

**Development principles:**

- The requirements for individual buildings and spaces within the farmhouse complex are as follows (please refer to Fig. 20 for locations) and are subject to the exploration of development options and detailed discussion with CDC Conservation Officer.

- A. The farmhouse is to be restored for residential or other appropriate use. It is expected that the front garden and traditional orchard to the west, the rear courtyard and garden, and ancillary building a1 will fall within the property ownership boundary. There are small outbuildings attached to the walls between the farmhouse and courtyard which should be retained for use as storage and repaired.
- B. Curtilage listed barn to the north to be converted into residential use.
- C. Indicative footprint of a former building. A building could be reinstated following the historic footprint to provide additional accommodation.
- D. Existing building in this location is a modern structure and is to be removed. A building could be reinstated on the original footprint of the historic barn to provide additional accommodation.
- E. Modern building E is to be removed.
- F. Building F is to be retained. The northern section of the building is to be converted to residential. The southern section could be converted to garaging serving the farmhouse, subject to an accurate survey and suitability. Area F1 is the location of a former open shed. The staddle stones remain and a building could be reinstated here, perhaps retaining the open shed form and incorporating the remaining stones with glazed infills between the posts.
- G. Building G to be retained / reinstated to the original footprint for residential or ancillary use.



Fig. 20: Heritage key plan

