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Heritage Setting Assessment for Extension to Packaging Store at Sefter Farm, Pagham Road, Pagham

Introduction

This assessment has been prepared by the Douglas Briggs Partnership on behalf of Barfoots of Botley to assess the impacts of proposals for extensions at Sefter Farm that might be considered to affect the setting of the adjacent two Listed Buildings at the heart of a large agricultural enterprise.

The Douglas Briggs Partnership are an integrated Architecture and Town Planning practice with expertise in the assessment, alteration and conservation of Listed Buildings and other Heritage Assets and the proposals have been assessed by experienced members of the team who are long standing members of the RTPI, RIBA and IHBC.



Photo: Google Earth Image of Sefter Farm.

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Heritage Setting

While the NPPF has replaced Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment, the definition of the setting of a heritage asset has not substantially changed from that defined in PPS 5 as "the surroundings in which [the asset] is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral." (PPS 5)

While "the extent and importance of a setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations...its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration." (EH 2010 p4) However, "setting is not a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset" (EH 2010 p7) it is therefore important to not only consider the extent of the setting, but also the special qualities of the heritage asset and what role the setting plays in their significance and ability to appreciate them.

"Most of the setting within which people experience heritage assets today have changed over time. Understanding this history of change will help to determine how further development within the asset's setting will contribute to its significance" (EH Guidance p7) this demonstrates that it is important to understand the evolution of a setting and the presence of a heritage asset does not preclude development and change may have a negative, neutral or positive effect on the significance and appreciation of the heritage asset that is entirely separate from the extent of the asset's setting.

The following sections therefore consider the historic associations, visual and environmental aspects of the setting of the Sefter Farmhouse and Sefter Granary and the affect the proposals will have on their setting using the stepped approach recommended by English Heritage's guidance: 'The setting of Heritage Assets' 2010 (EH 2010 p15) with;

Step 1, identifying the heritage asset's affected from their listed descriptions and proximity to the proposals and limits of their immediate and wider setting.

Step 2, Assessing whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset by looking at, their physical surroundings both visually and environmentally, considering the way the asset is appreciated, historical associations of the asset's patterns of use.

Step 3, Assess the effect of the proposed development on the significance of the asset, looking at the range of circumstances in which the setting may be affected by the location, siting, form, appearance and operation of the proposals to consider the impact (both beneficial and/or detrimental) the development has on the setting and thereby the significance and appreciation of the heritage asset.

Step 4, Maximising enhancement and minimising harm, by considering amendments and/or mitigation proposals that may be included in the proposals to avoid, reduce or remove harming factors or may enhance the appreciation of the significance of the heritage asset.



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Existing Heritage Asset and Setting

I. Listed Buildings

The following is an extract of English Heritage's National Heritage List Map

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A single building split into two parts is the only Listed Building on the farmbase and the listed on the 20th September 1984 with the following description;

List Entry No: 1027579

Safter Farmhouse and Safter Granary

Grade II

One building. C18. Two storeys. Four windows. Stuccoed. Tiled roof. Vertical glazing bars only intact. C19 castellated porch. Modern addition behind.

Listing NGR: SZ8924399800





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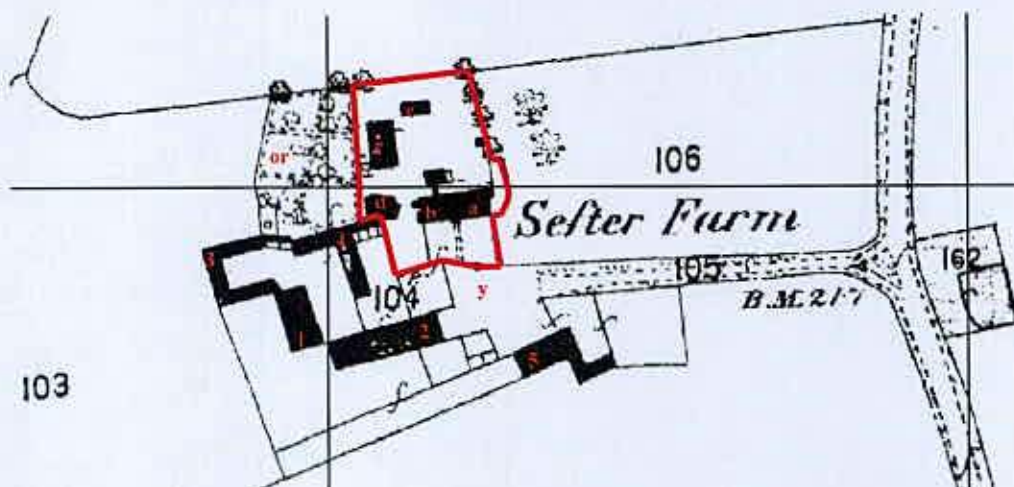
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The above photo of Sefter Farmhouse appears on the Images of England site courtesy of Mr Paul Bailey 2001 and was taken from within the front garden of Sefter Farmhouse.

2. Historic Evolution and Associations

The following sequence of OS maps describe the changes to the site over time.



1875-77 OS Map

The two listed buildings appear on the 1875-77 OS maps of the site as a single building (a+b) with rear addition and a large outbuilding to the West of the garden (c) and smaller out building to the North (e) a range of farm buildings a building to the West of the Listed buildings (d) and range of farm buildings to the South West (1-5) with an Orchard (or) to the West and what appears to be the working farmyard due South (y).

The apparent likely residential land related to the farmhouse is enclosed by the red line.

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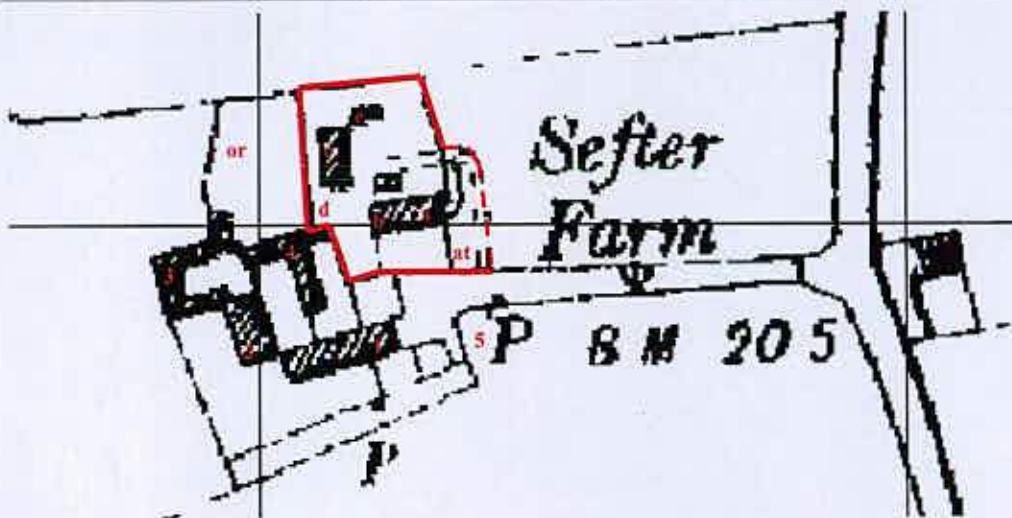


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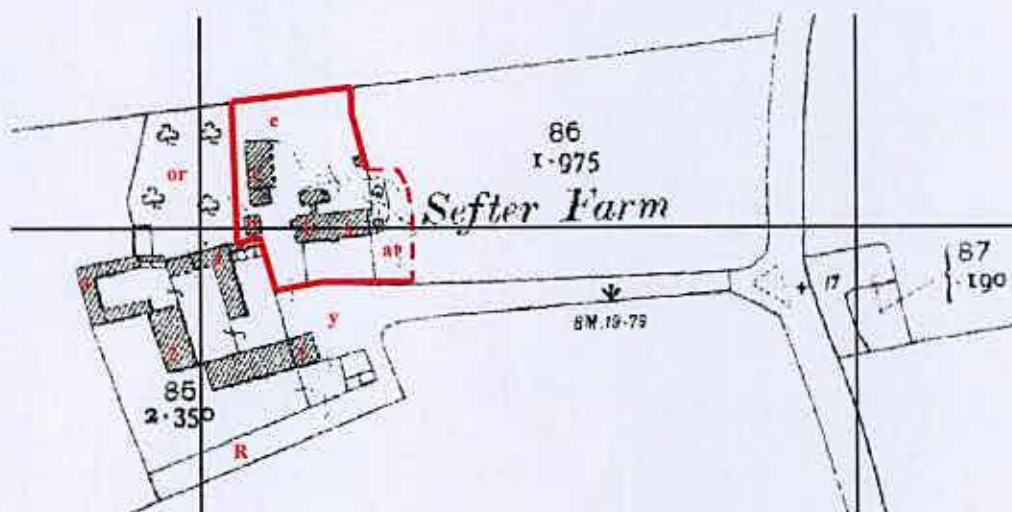
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1899 OS Map

On the 1899 OS map the building at the end of the range of farm building (d) West of Sefter Granary (b) a building on the South side of the access track (5) are missing and a new track (at) on the East side of Sefter Farmhouse (a) has appeared.



1933 OS Map

On the 1933 OS map a new separate building (d) West of Sefter Granary (b) appears in the garden and the small building to the North of the garden (e) is missing a track passes (shown dotted) north of the Listed Buildings (a+b) still shown as one to the large building in the garden (c) possibly already used as a garage and the end of one of the farm buildings is shown divided (l) and a new road (R) to the South.

The red line enclosing the apparent residential land related to the farmhouse is increased to enclose the track (at) to the East but is otherwise unchanged.

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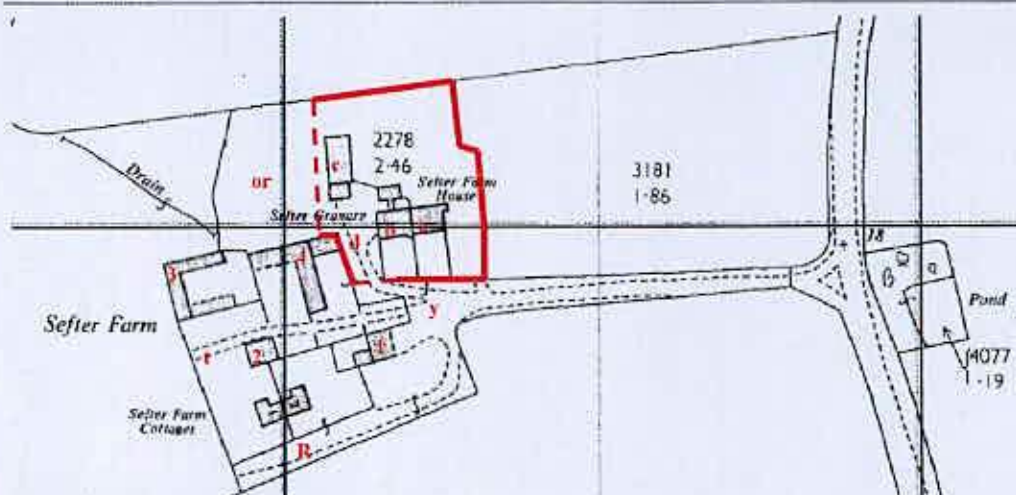


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1965 OS Map

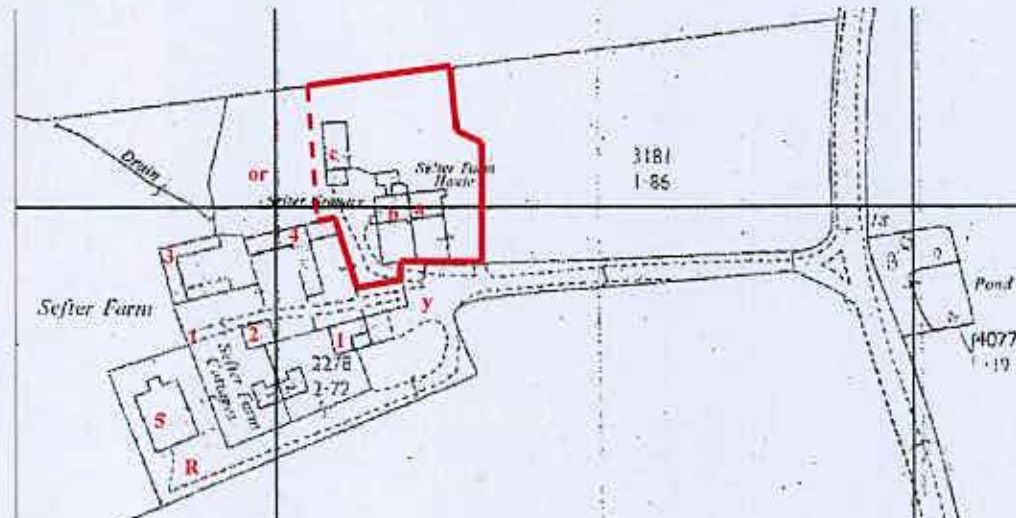
On the 1965 OS map the Listed buildings are shown separated as Seftor Granary (b) to the West and Seftor Farm House (a) to the East and shows an access between the Granary and the farm buildings to the West, leading to the large outbuilding (c) where there was a building on the previous map (d).

The South range of farm buildings is gone with only the two ends remaining (1+2) to make way for the gardens to 1 and 2 Seftor Farm Cottages and an access track (t) with the road (R) in front of the cottages suggesting that these cottages were built soon after the 1933 map.

Strangely the access to the East of the Farmhouse is only shown as a spur of the road and division between orchard (or) and garden missing (red dotted line) but the residential land (enclosed in red line) is unchanged from the 1899 map.

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1975 OS Map

The 1975 map shows a new large building (5) in the South West corner of the farm base and associated yard (R) at the end of the road in front of this building where the main farm activity appears to have relocated, suggesting the reason for the track (t) with a gate enclosing the track to the garage (c) in line with the end of track (t).

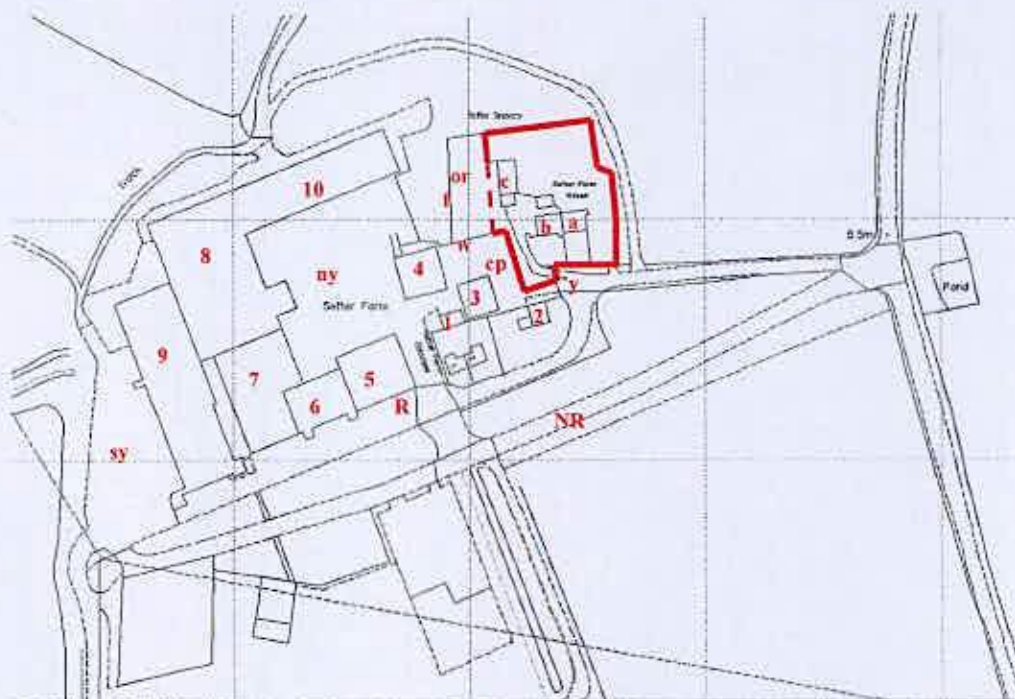


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OS Map 2014

The 2014 OS map brings us up to date, Sefter Farmhouse (a) and Sefter Granary (b) appear unchanged with the large outbuilding to the North West (c) now a garage.

The North end of the division between the orchard and historic garden appears to have survived on the OS plan North of the garage (c) but does not continue southward and a close boarded fence (f) roughly bisects the former orchard (or).

Sefter Cottages are also still there but only 'the two ends' or the original farm buildings directly North of the cottages appears to have survived, Used as a machinery store (1) and farm office (2)

The old farm buildings to the West of Sefter Granary have been replaced with a car park (cp), Machinery Shed (3), and Drizzle Store (4) and while farm buildings have not survived a single wall (w) that forms the North boundary of the small car park (cp) appears to originate from these buildings.

The remainder of the agricultural buildings developed to the West surrounding the new working yard (ny) with a separate yard (sy) serving the Sweetcorn building (9). The old yard (y) now only a junction and (R) hard standing South of the new buildings. The planning records reveal the sequence numbered as above.

(5) agricultural cold store, replacing the building seen on the 1975 plan (6) packaging shed to the West of 5 (7) extension to agricultural packing shed, (8) successive extensions to packing shed, (9) dedicated Sweetcorn packaging shed (10) goods distribution wing

Sefter Farmhouse and Sefter Granary have always been at the heart of the operational farm base, being the original farmhouse and this association has survived; as the farm manager still occupies the listed farmhouse.

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The operational farm yard, together with new and replacement farm buildings have steadily moved further away from the Sefter Farmhouse over time, reducing their impact on the residential use of the listed farmhouse.

When the applicants embarked upon considerable investment at Sefter Farm, their development plan included the relocation of the main access (NR) into the expanding farm group to protect the setting and amenity of their farm manager and the students that occupy the Granary.

Extensive tree planting between the old (y) and new (NR) access ways into the farm were part of the development plan and significantly enhances the setting of the listed building.

The historic linkage of farmhouse to farming operations based at Sefter Farm is unbroken, the context of the farmhouse and its significance to farming is clearly identifiable at close quarters but not visible or appreciated from outside the perimeter of the farm.

3. Current Physical Setting

The farmhouse and supporting modern farm buildings sit on open low flat farmland adjacent to the Pagham Rife, 800m before it enters Pagham Harbour.

The listed farmhouse is surrounded by intensively farmed high grade agricultural land and isolated from other heritage assets.

The whole farm is private land and there are no public rights of way from which the farmhouse is visible. The farmhouse is surrounded by mature trees which work to hide the prominence of the farm buildings in the wide flat landscape of the Pagham Harbour hinterland.

Substantial hedging along the South side of the Pagham Road screen the farmland and buildings from passing traffic.

Sefter Farm House and Sefter Granary remains within their long established residential curtilage that abuts farmland on its North and East, by Industrialised farming operations on the West and a wide concrete HGV access beyond a tree screen to the South.

The busy operational farm yard to the West is lower than the Farmhouse garden, with a bank and close boarded fence constructed across a former orchard.



Photo from working farmyard (ny) looking North East.



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4. Current Visual Setting

The listed farmhouse is not readily visible, except from a private road on part of a large agricultural enterprise that prohibits access to the farm without prior appointment.



Photo: Sefter Farmhouse Access (at), looking North West.

Existing trees and hedges allow glimpses of the farmhouse from the private access way and small car park.



Photo: Small Car Park (cp) looking North East.



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The farm manager lives in the eastern end of the listed building, known as Sefter Farmhouse, adjacent to open fields to the North and East.

The western end, known as Sefter Granary has long established use as a hostel for agricultural students working on the applicants farm. The students use a separate drive and small parking area at the western end of the Granary, crossing what was originally the front garden on the South side of their hostel.



Photo: Hostel car parking West end of Sefter Granary, looking East, taken from within the garden.

The garden land of the farm manager's dwelling extends across the North side of the Granary to a garage building.

The intimate close setting of the building is enclosed by established trees and hedges that visually separate the building from the farm operations.



Photo: Sefter Farmhouse garden, looking South West, taken from within the garden.



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5. Current Environmental Setting

The heritage asset cannot be viewed by the general public.

The farm manager's ability to see through the tree screen around the farmhouse is limited to gaps between trees and planting.

The manager's garden and garage building together with evergreen trees between the West boundary of the Farmhouse and the Granary visually screen the mass of the large modern farm buildings from outward view from the student hostel.

There are no public rights of way to enable public views of the heritage asset or that affect the privacy of the residents.

The heritage asset has over time been separated from the surrounding land to protect the resident's amenity and isolate it from disturbance caused by farm activity.

Consideration must be given to the environmental effects of the operation of the farm yard and agricultural buildings on the occupation of the heritage asset.

While Sefter Farmhouse has historically always been associated with the farm, where some degree of disturbance is likely to have been always present and to that extent accepted, the farmhouse and its garden would traditionally have formed a 'sanctuary' from the workings of the farm, offering some privacy to the occupants and ability to 'get away from work'.

The existing operational farmyard is located to the North West of the Sefter Farmhouse and Sefter Granary. The presence of this noise disturbance in the existing heritage setting is likely to have an adverse effect on the Listed Building's appreciation.

Historically a close boarded fence and earth bund have been constructed in the former orchard to mitigate this disturbance by screening the farmhouse and its amenity land from the disturbance and noise generated by farming activities.

However, at present, low level noise generated by farm vehicles, machinery and plant can be detected in the areas around Sefter Granary.

The application proposals address this issue more positively by using the mass of the proposed (and previously approved) farm building to attenuate noise and disturbance for the residents with vehicular movements and entrance points located in the West side of the new and replacement agricultural sheds.



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6. Proposals

The proposals leave the historic curtilage of the farmhouse intact.

The proposals extend the existing agricultural buildings to the West of the Farmhouses with a 'wing' extending North South from the existing distribution wing to the North of the farm yard, Southward, replacing an existing 'Drizzle Store' (of modern construction) adjacent to the machinery workshop, enclosing the farm yard on its East side.

The existing floor level of the farm buildings is continued through the proposed buildings where the lorry docks and ramps are located along the proposed building's West side (away from the Farmhouses) fronting onto the existing farmyard which is lower than the farmhouse garden, from which lorries deliver supplies and depart with agricultural produce.

The change in level between farm buildings and farmhouse garden is maintained with the existing wall between the car park and former orchard relocated along the East boundary adjacent to an access path that serving pedestrian only fire exits.

The relocated wall screens the lower part of the new building, and extends the farmhouse garden into the former orchard, allowing for new tree planting to be incorporated with the existing established trees to further screen the new building.

To the South East side of the proposed building, where the 'Drizzle Store' is replaced, sits a machinery shop, also of modern construction that fronts onto the small car park, (adjacent to the Farm Office) that lies at the end of the drive to the Farmhouses.

Affects on Association and Patterns of Use

The proposals have no affect on the use of the listed farmhouse, it remains most appropriately in its original Farmhouse use.

The functional relationship between the heritage asset and its productive land and farming activities is preserved.

The private enclosed nature of the farmhouse garden amenity is protected and enhanced and while there is some reduction in the visual association of the farmhouse from the working farmyard, this is not experienced by anyone other than the occupants and outweighed by the benefits of reduced disturbance from farm activities, positively enhances the living environment for the farmhouse and hostel occupants, increasing the feeling of seclusion and adding to the garden's traditional role as a 'sanctury' from the workings of the farm.

Affects on Visual Setting

The public perception of the heritage asset is unchanged.

Small but significant changes to the disposition of existing and new adjacent buildings increase the visual separation between the industrialised farming activity of the farmyard enhancing the sense of enclosure while leaving the curtilage of the farmhouse intact.

Additional tree planting incorporated with the existing established trees further screen the new and replacement building and enhance the integrity of the visual setting.



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Affects on Environmental Setting

The application proposals replace an earth bund and close boarded fence, erected across the former orchard to attenuate disturbance and noise generated by farming activities in the active farm yard.

By designing and siting the new and replacement buildings as visual and sound attenuating screens the proposals operate in a more positive way using the mass of the proposed (and previously approved) farm building positively enhancing the living environment for the Farmhouse occupants and increasing the feeling of seclusion and sanctuary from the surrounding farming activities.

Tree planting in the former orchard adds to the visual and environmental amenity benefits of the proposals and increase the privacy, sense of enclosure and tranquillity of the farmhouse garden.

7. Potential Mitigation and Enhancement

Part of the applicant's objectives in providing on site accommodation for the company's director of farming and his family in the listed farmhouse has been to maintain the connection between farmhouse and farm, while at the same time remain aware of the need to protect residential amenity and retain the setting of the heritage asset.

The sense of seclusion and 'escape' from the activities of the farm are a key aspect of the farmhouse garden's use and while the existing tree screen around the heritage asset is presently effective at reducing visual impact, the proposed siting of the building has been designed to address environmental disturbances that affect the enjoyment of this garden.

Due to the relative levels, distance from the curtilage of the listed building and the location of the garage, the existing trees would be effective in screening the new building from the farmhouse.

However, the applicants accept that it would be prudent to foresee the need for succession planting and take the opportunity to enhance the visual setting of the heritage asset by restoring a more wooded nature to the West boundary of the farmhouse garden.

The existing wall that forms the boundary between the garden and the small car park to the South is also relocated with stone reclaimed from the existing to form a retaining wall along the West boundary adjacent to the proposed building, replacing the fence and bank (see drawing 6807-104).



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8. Conclusion

Previously approved planning applications for development anticipated and successfully resolved potential conflict between modern farm activity and the setting of this heritage asset.

The implementation of a new farm access and extensive tree planting mitigated the harm from 20th century farming requirements for HGV access and ensured the preservation of the setting to the South of the listed farmhouse.

Notwithstanding that there is no public access to the farmhouse and their appreciation is limited to occupants of the Farmhouse, Granary and agricultural buildings around them, the ability to read the historic association of the farmhouse and its working landscape is preserved.

Disturbance from the existing farm yard affects the largely unused western end of the farmhouse garden where fence and earth bunds have been previously used to address the problem with only limited success.

This application uses the opportunity of further essential farm development to address the detrimental effect this disturbance has on the setting of and occupants appreciation of the heritage asset by utilising the mass of the replacement building and taking opportunities to introduce further planting.

The proposals have significant benefits to the setting by reducing the intrusion of noise and providing a more secluded tranquil nature to the rear gardens and retaining and enhancing their traditional character as a sanctuary from the working day.

While the existing trees form an effective visual screen, any negative effect on the visual setting can be successfully mitigated by taking the opportunity to provide further landscape planting and the slight loss of visual association is easily compensated for by the benefits due to noise separation that improve the environmental setting and appreciation of the heritage asset.

In conclusion, while the proposals change the setting of the listed building to a limited extent, it is reasonable to conclude that these changes have a net beneficial effect on the setting and appreciation of the significance of this heritage asset.



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