



Historic Environment Consultancy

Scope of work	Heritage Statement
Site address	Bank Top Farm, Dilhorne, Staffordshire
Client	Mr and Mrs Davenhall
Report Ref	HS/banktopfarm/AH1035/14/8/24V1
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Date	August 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION.

1.1 Project Background.

Avalon Heritage Ltd (*AHL*) has been commissioned by Mr. and Mrs. Davenhall (*the applicants*) to prepare a Heritage Statement (*HS*) in relation to a planning application to be submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (*the LPA*) for a proposed change of use from consented holiday lets to residential use of two conjoined ranges of a former barn at Bank Top Farm (Figure 1), Bank Top Road, Dilhorne near Stoke-on-Trent.



Figure 1. Location of the PDA.

- 1.1.1** The application site is not located within a conservation area but does contain a grade 2 listed farmhouse. In addition, the former barns are also listed at grade 2 level. As a result of the barn's listed status and its location within the setting of the listed farmhouse, the applicant has commissioned a HS to accompany the planning application.
- 1.1.2** The primary aim of this report is to assess the significance of any designated and non-designated heritage assets which may be affected by the proposals so that the LPA/decision maker is appropriately informed when assessing impacts on the significance of those heritage assets from the proposed scheme and when making their planning decision.
- 1.1.3** This report has been undertaken with reference to guidance prepared by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and Historic England including:

- Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment, Good Practice in Planning 2 Historic England 2015.
- Statements of Heritage Significance: Historic England Advice Note 12 2019.
- The Setting of Heritage Assets, Good Practice in Planning 3 Historic England 2017.
- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance April Historic England 2008.
- Standards and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists CIfA 2014, rev 2017.
- Code of Conduct, CIfA 2014. Rev. 2021.
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments, Historic England 2017.

1.1.4 This HS has also been written in accordance with Chapter 16, *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*, of the NPPF, particularly paragraphs 200 and 201

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) rev. Dec. 2023.
- Planning Practice Guidance 2023.

1.1.5 The following sources have been consulted in the preparation of this report:

- Online sources including British History Online.
- The National Heritage List (Historic England).
- Historic OS maps online.
- The Genealogist (thegenealogist.co.uk, for census and birth, death, and Tithe map info).

1.1.6 The Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (*SHER*) has been consulted to establish the presence and location of designated and non-designated heritage assets within a 1km radius search area of the application site.

1.1.7 A site visit was undertaken by the author of this report in order to assess the significance and condition of the PDA as well as to understand the wider historic environment in which it is located. Access into private properties, was not possible during the course of the site visit.

1.1.8 This report has been written by Helen Martin-Bacon, B.A., M.A., PgDip. She is the Founder and Principal Heritage Consultant at Avalon Heritage Ltd and has 30 years of experience working within the historic environment specialising in the preparation of Heritage Statements, Statements of Significance, Archaeological Assessments and Historic Building Assessments within planning led environments.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND BARNES.

2.1.1 Bank Top Farm is situated on a high promontory of land which provides panoramic views of rolling countryside stretching northwards towards The Roaches and eastwards towards the Churnet River Valley (Plates 1 and 2). The site is accessed via a driveway which leads directly off Bank Top Road before it begins its descent into the village of Dilhorne approximately 1km to the south of the site.



Plate 1. View southeastwards from north of the barn.



Plate 2. View looking north towards The Roaches.

2.1.2 The site itself contains a large brick-built farmhouse of late 18th century date set on a terraced garden and facing eastwards (Plate 3). The access track leads past the terraced garden into a courtyard which is enclosed to the north and east by the two ranges of the L-shaped application barn (Plate 4). The track continues to the north through the courtyard and then curves to the west, providing access to the fields along its corridor and eventually meeting Bank Top Road near its junction with Tickhill Lane. The site also contains several brick ancillary buildings.



Plate. 3 The eastern, front, elevation of the listed 18th century farmhouse.



Plate 4. The two ranges of the barn overlooking the courtyard. The unit between the redlines is in private ownership and is not included within the proposed scheme.

- 2.1.3** Both ranges of the former L-shaped barn have been converted inside and outside to create holiday lets. However, the consented conversion from farming use to holiday lets was done sympathetically and the agricultural character of the barn is still clearly legible on its exterior elevations. Previous openings have been used as doors and windows for the holiday lets and there has been no over domestication of the barn through the introduction of large numbers of additional openings or excessive rooflights.
- 2.1.4** The northern elevation of the northern range of the barn is adjoined at a right angle by a small, single storey brick extension (Plate 5) whilst the eastern elevation of the eastern range is adjoined by brick lean-to of likely mid-to late 19th century date (Plate 6). The gable ends of both ranges are constructed either partly, or entirely of coursed sandstone blocks and a set of stone steps, over a dog kennel, adjoin the western gable end of the northern range of the barn (Plates 7 and 8). The brickwork of both ranges comprises hand/clamp made bricks, laid down in English Garden Wall Bond, whilst there are segmental arched heads to the original openings.



Plate 5. The northern elevation of the barn showing a later extension.



Plate 6. Eastern elevation of the barn showing later adjoining lean-to.



Plate 7. Southern gable end of the eastern range of the barn.



Plate 8. Western gable end of the northern range with stone steps and dog kennel beneath.

- 2.1.5** The interiors of the barn ranges, at both ground and first floor levels, have been subdivided and altered to accommodate a series of separate holiday lets with living space, kitchenettes, bedrooms and bathrooms (Plate 9). However, where original features such as spine beams were present, they have been retained and exposed within the holiday let conversion (Plate 10).



Plate 9. Example of the modern modifications in one of the holiday lets.



Plate 10. Example of retained original chamfered spine beams with carved stops.

3 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.

3.1 Methodology for Assessing Significance.

3.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) glossary defines significance as the value of a heritage asset to present and future generations because of its heritage interest. It also states that within a planning context significance may arise from the archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic values of a heritage asset or a combination of those heritage values. The PPG accompanying the NPPF defines those values as follows:

- archaeological interest refers to a heritage asset holding, or potentially holding, evidence of past human activity.
- architectural and artistic interest are defined as interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art of science or design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
- historic interest is an interest in past lives and events (including prehistoric). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

3.1.2 NPPF also provides a definition of setting as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced and states that 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 the asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

3.1.3 In its publication *The Setting of Heritage Assets, Good Practice in Planning 3* Historic England also defines setting as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced but goes on to say that elements of a setting can make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, potentially affecting the ability to appreciate the significance of the asset or having a neutral effect.

3.2 Bank Top Farmhouse.

3.2.1 Bank Top Farmhouse is a grade 2 listed building of late 18th century date with minor 20th century alterations. It is constructed of hand/clamp made bricks with a tiled roof on cogged eaves. It has verge parapets to each gable and two end stacks and one ridge stack to left of centre. It is of two storeys with a gable lit attic and all openings are defined by segmental headed arches.

3.2.2 It is a well-preserved example of a late 18th century farmhouse of higher status, its significance being vested in the preservation of its original built fabric, its architectural form, using local traditional buildings, and the survival of its original planform.

3.2.3 In sum, the significance of the farmhouse arises from its archaeological, architectural and historic values.

3.3 The Barn

3.3.1 The barn, comprising two adjoining ranges set around a former farmyard, is grade 2 listed. The barn is late 18th century in date, with mid- to late 19th century additions and is constructed of red brick and random-coursed rough faced stonework to gable ends. It has a tiled roof with verge parapets and is L-shaped in plan. The barn was likely constructed as a multi-functioning agricultural building constructed in a single building phase with the later addition of the lean-to and small extension. Its form suggests it was used as a cowhouse, a cart shed as evidenced by the full-height cart entrance in the northern range and as a fodder store on the upper floor.

3.3.2 Although the internal modifications to convert the barn into a series of separate holiday lets has removed its interior layout, the built envelope of the barn retains its agricultural form, and its historic function is clearly legible. The barn is of archaeological, architectural and historic interest.

3.4 Group Heritage Value.

3.4.1 In combination the farmhouse, yard and barn represent a farmstead of late 18th century origin, laid out around a regular three-sided yard with a main L-shaped plan barn and additional detached outbuildings. The Staffordshire Farmsteads Survey notes that smaller farmsteads notably the L-plans are generally widespread across the county but that there are particular concentrations within the pastoral and dairying areas in the north and northwest of Staffordshire. Bank Top Farm is located in an area which the Staffordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation classes as early irregular enclosure which is generally assumed to have occurred from the post-medieval period. However, in upland areas it likely that this type of enclosure represents the earlier stages of

the enclosure of moorland which probably took place from the medieval period onwards or early encroachment into unenclosed land or assarts.

- 3.4.2** The planform of Bank Top Farm along with the extant former agricultural buildings, within their landscape setting, are collectively illustrative of the historic development of farming practices in this part of Staffordshire during the post-medieval period.

4 HERITAGE IMPACTS.

4.1 NPPF and Historic England Guidance.

- 4.1.1** Paragraphs 200 and 201 of NPPF state that it is for the LPA to judge the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset but that they can take account of evidence that has been provided by the applicant.

- 4.1.2** Paragraph 200 and 201 of the NPPF states that:

In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including the contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (para. 200).

Local Planning Authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking into account the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal (para. 201).

- 4.1.3** The different roles of the LPA and applicant have been reiterated in various appeal court judgements:

...the question whether a proposed development affects or would affect the setting of a listed building is very much a matter of planning judgement for the local planning authority¹.

... the assessment of whether any harm would be caused by the impact of the development on the heritage asset, or its setting is likewise a matter for the decision maker, not the author of the HIA...²

- 4.1.4** Therefore, the comments and observations by AHL in the Discussion Section 6.2 below, regarding the scheme are offered to assist the LPA in fulfilling its role of deciding:

- Whether there is or may be an impact on the relevant heritage asset/assets, both designated and non-designated, and their settings.
- Whether that impact is harmful, in the sense that it fails to preserve the significance of the heritage asset/assets and their settings and, if it is harmful,
- How substantial the harm may be.

¹ R (The Friends of Hethel Ltd) v South Norfolk District Council (2011) 1 1216 LJ Sullivan para. 32.

² Pagham Parish Council v Arun District Council (2019) EWHC 1721 (Admin) Mrs. Justice Andrews para.40.

4.1.5 The following section should be read in conjunction with any architect's plans and with any Design and Access Statement/Planning Statement submitted as part of the application.

4.2 Discussion.

4.2.1 AHL understands that the decision to change the use of the listed barn from holiday lets to residential units has arisen because the holiday let business at the farm has become financially unviable in the face of competition elsewhere within the area.

4.2.2 As the barn has already been converted to living space and altered accordingly, both internally and externally, the change of use to residential units will not require any physical changes to either of the two ranges. The change of use will, therefore, not require any modifications which might detract from the listed barn's special architectural and historic interest or adversely impact on the key architectural, archaeological and historic factors which are the reasons for its designation.

4.2.3 Similarly, as the scheme will require no changes to the barn's exterior appearance there will be no adverse impacts on the significance of the grade 2 listed farmhouse from development within its setting.

5 CONCLUSION.

5.1.1 To conclude, AHL considers that, based on the findings of our site visit, the proposed scheme would not compromise the ability to understand and appreciate the special architectural and historic character of the listed barn in its current form nor the key elements which make up its significance or those of the nearby listed farmhouse.

5.1.2 As the change of use from holiday lets to residential accommodation will entail no alterations to the barn which might affect its special interest, listed building consent would not be required for the proposed change of use application.

5.1.3 On behalf of the applicant, this HS has fulfilled its role of providing the LPA/decision maker with a sufficient and proportionate level of information for the decision-making process by describing the heritage and archaeological context of the application building and by assessing the significance of relevant designated heritage assets. It has also highlighted factors which should be considered by the LPA/decision maker during their assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed scheme.

5.1.4 It is anticipated, therefore, that the LPA/decision maker will be able to come to a balanced judgement about the proposed scheme as well as being able to form their view on whether the scheme will constitute no harm, less than substantial harm or substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets discussed in this report, as required by NPPF.

6 REFERENCES

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance, Historic England 2008.

The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3, Historic England 2015 London.

Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment, Good Practice in Planning 2, Historic England 2015.

Statements of Heritage Significance: Historic England Advice Note 12 2019.

Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments, Historic England 2017.

Standards and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists CIfA 2014, rev 2017.

Code of Conduct, CIfA 2014. Rev. 2021

National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF 2012 rev. Dec. 2023.

Planning Practice Guide, rev. 2023.

HERITAGE SERVICES.

- Constraints reports and heritage risk assessments for land acquisition.
- Heritage Impact Assessments.
- Statements of Significance.
- Setting Assessments.
- Listed Building Appraisals.
- Historic Building Survey and Recording.
- Places of worship.
- Historic agricultural buildings.
- Desk-Based Assessments.
- Historic Landscape Survey.
- Analysis of historic and designed gardens.
- Conservation Management Plans.

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