

3 2 0 1 3 0 4 9 9 P



HERITAGE ASSET STATEMENT

MERRYBENT HILL FARM, SLAIDBURN, CLITHEROE

Revised May 2013

1.0 Introduction

1.1 As a Grade II listed building, Merrybent Hill Farm is considered to be a Heritage Asset, as defined by Chapter 12 of the NPPF. It is a requirement that any planning application involving a Heritage Asset is supported by a description of the significance of the Heritage Asset affected and the contribution to its setting of that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and this information, together with an assessment of the impact of the proposal on the asset should be submitted with any planning or listed building consent application (normally within the Design & Access Statement). It is therefore imperative that the Local Planning Authority understands that significance of any Heritage Asset before it can determine any planning or listed building consent application.

1.2 Chapter 12 of the NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposal on a Heritage Asset, Local Planning Authorities should take into account the significance of the asset itself and the value it holds for this and future generations. A detailed description of the proposed development and its site characteristics are all included within the Planning Documents, indicated on the proposed plans and within the design and access statement. An archaeological heritage statement is also prepared by Stephen Haigh Buildings Archaeologist.

2.0 The Nature of the Significance of the Heritage Asset

- 2.1 In accordance with the Planning Practice Guide which accompanies the NPPF and prepared by DCMS, DCLG and English Heritage, it is necessary to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a Heritage Asset and the contribution of its setting in order for the Local Planning Authority to make a decision on any application. The site is described within the Statutory List as follows:

'SD75 NW SLAIDBURN 5/117 Merrybent Hill 16.11.1954 (Formerly listed under General) - II House, possibly early C18th. Slobbered rubble with slate roof. 2 storeys, 2 bays. Windows rebated and chamfered with mullions, all of 3 lights. A central one-storey gabled porch has a plain stone door surround with '1688 AV' roughly carved on the lintel. Chimneys to the right of the porch and to the left of the 1st bay. At the far left is a unit now with a modern garage entrance on the ground floor and a modern copy of a 3-light mullioned window on the 1st floor. There is an outshut to part of the rear of the house, which has windows with plain reveals.'

- 2.2 The farmhouse and barn are shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map, surveyed in 1844-46 and given the description within the statutory list record it appears to date from significantly earlier than this. Whilst there is a date stone of '1688AV' carved on a lintel above the door, the listing description estimates that the house was constructed in the early 18th Century. It appears that the barn and additional buildings were added to the original smaller farmhouse in the 18th Century to create a linear plan farmstead. Around the same time it appears as if the farmhouse itself was extended to the south.

- 2.3 The linear plan of farmsteads often evolved as a result of gradual development as and when the needs of the farm holding arose. It is unlikely that the farm was an original medieval longhouse, as evidenced within the listing description which makes it clear it is much later than this; however, such arrangements were used in the northern Uplands into the 18th and 19th Centuries. English Heritage's document entitled 'Historic Farmsteads (Preliminary Character Statement: North West Region)' confirms that:

"...linear layouts are now more strongly associated with the hill farms of northern England (north-east, north-west and Yorkshire and the Humber). A major reason for the persistence of the layout in Northern England was that it was suited to smaller farms (of 50 acres or less) needing fewer buildings – other than for the storage of subsistence levels of corn for the household and livestock, and the housing of some milk cattle, poultry and pigs. The close proximity of farmer and livestock during the winter months was another factor, cattle being stored indoors from October to May. It was also ideally suited to building along the contours of the hillside, so this farmstead plan remained in use in Upland areas of England until the 19th Century".

- 2.4 It is clear from this evidence and research that the plan, form and layout of Merrybent Hill Farm are not unusual or of particular significance. The building (which was formally listed under 'general' for the District) appears to be listed for historic value rather than architectural value given its origins in the 17th or 18th Century. The farmhouse and the barn itself can therefore be considered to have some material limited significance as a Heritage Asset.

3.0 Extent of the Fabric of the Building

- 3.1 When Merrybent Hill Farm was listed in November 1954 the description was and still is limited to the farmhouse itself. This is clearly the principal building within the group which has since been extended by a single bay to the left-hand side of the front elevation, whilst at an earlier period the combination barn appears to have been added at a more subservient scale than the original farmhouse. Further additions by way of the lean-to sheep pen/workshop and the more recent machinery store have extended the linear plan form of the farmstead.
- 3.2 The principal elements of the fabric of the site that hold interest are primarily the external features of the farmhouse and, to a lesser extent, its plan form. The application proposal seeks to conserve the existing farmhouse through the use as a family dwelling and thus for a use for which it was originally constructed. Internally the plan form will not be altered; save for the insertion of a small amount of studwork to what is currently the master bedroom which will allow for a new en-suite. Also the existing 20th century bedroom/ bathroom dividing stud wall is to be moved to enlarge the proposed bedroom.
- 3.3 The main stair in the dwelling is a modern installation, suspected early 20th century. The proposal includes the repositioning of this stair into its suspected previous historical position in the outshot. The door at first floor level into the outshot has been identified as being of historical merit by the conservation officer. This door is to be retained and held open so as not to obstruct the stair. At ground floor in the outshot, the door to the proposed family bathroom is also identified to be of historical value and is to be retained in its existing location.

3.4 To include the barn as a part of the habitable accommodation, the previously approved opening at ground floor from the dining room is retained. However the previous scheme included a new bedroom and associated opening at first floor level over the barn area. This has been omitted to retain the existing internal two storey open form of the barn, with the underside of the roof exposed internally.

The barn at present has an existing hay loft. The revised proposal retains this form, with a new opening carefully punched through at first floor level into the loft above the sheep pens. A similar personnel door opening is formed between the barn and sheep pen at ground floor. A new stair in the sheep pens shall allow access to this mezzanine without interrupting the internal form of the barn and also provides a means of access to the existing first floor above the sheep pens.

Externally, there are no alterations to the existing approval.

None of the features mentioned within the listing description will be adversely affected and indeed will be conserved for future generations.

- 3.5 The adjacent combination barn appears to have remained unused for a considerable number of years and was last used for agricultural purposes. The barn is of traditional Pennine Upland construction and design, with a slate roof supported by two king posts which together create three bays. The roof trusses themselves all appear to be replacements constructed of machined timber rather than hand sawn. They appear in sound structural condition, the point to the roof being replaced in the last century or so. However, the stone flags which sit on the timber purlins are in a poor state of repair, whilst the random local stone walls appear to be in a sound condition apart from a small portion of the western façade of the barn which has been subject to some movement, whilst there is some cracking at either side of the lintel which supports the masonry over the large door opening. Full details of the structural condition of the building can be found within the structural appraisal submitted with these applications by Booth King Partnership Ltd.
- 3.6 Internally, the barn has a pitching loft (proposed as library mezzanine) within the right-hand bay beneath which three timber stalls are located pointing to the use of the barn for housing livestock, as well as feed/machinery etc. Whilst the stalls may be of some age, it is clear that they have been reinstated following the construction of a concrete floor beneath them. The walls of the stalls have been rendered approximately 1.2 metres above this concrete floor, whilst the building has both water and electricity supplies which point to its use for agricultural purposes within the 20th Century.
- 3.7 The adjacent sheep pen/workshop also contains a number of stalls (four), again on top of a concrete floor, whilst at first floor there are the remains of a pitching loft which appears to have been accessed at first floor through the external high level door opening.

3 20130499 P

- 3.8 Elsewhere within the interior of the building it is clear that a number of openings, particularly on the western elevation, have been consolidated with new stone lintels inserted. The lintel above the barn door opening remains timber which has been supplemented by an additional timber structure. The only other feature of any interest is a small nook within the northern gable which abuts the adjacent workshop.

4.0 Level of Importance

- 4.1 The farmhouse and attached agricultural buildings are relatively unspoilt examples of a typical linear Upland farmstead within the Ribble Valley. The farmhouse itself has special historic interest given its origins from the late 17th or early 18th Century and is listed (Grade II) for this reason. The intrinsic character of the farmhouse is its slobbered rubble finish (painted white) and the symmetrical positioning of window and door openings. The barn and associated agricultural/residential buildings are not mentioned within the description within the Statutory List but are intrinsic to the character and appearance of the farmstead as a relatively unspoilt linear planned steading.
- 4.2 As a designated Heritage Asset, there is a presumption in favour of its conservation which this application proposal seeks to achieve. There would be no substantial harm or loss to the designated Heritage Asset and therefore the proposal is entirely compliant with Chapter 12 of the NPPF. The proposed improvement and extension of the residential use into the adjacent barn and sheep pen is considered to be the least intrusive mechanism by which the barn can be conserved and re-used in a sustainable manner, thus securing the future of this important Heritage Asset in the long term.