

*A National Amenity Society*

Adrian Dowd  
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Ribble Valley Borough Council  
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5<sup>th</sup> September 2022

**Lower Reaps Farm, Whinney Lane, Mellor, BB2 7EL. Application No. 3/2022/0727**

Dear Mr Dowd,

Thank you for notifying The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) about the above case. Based on the information supplied with this application, we offer the following observations and advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

## Summary

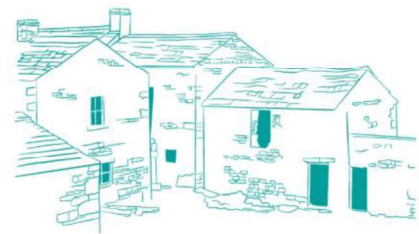
The CBA support the principle of renovating Lower Reaps Farmhouse and converting its agricultural curtilage to a series of domestic units. However, we object to aspects of the current proposals and recommend revisions and further details around a conservation led methodology should be required. This is necessary for the application to meet the requirements of paragraphs 199 and 200 of the NPPF.

## Significance

Lower Reaps Farm dates from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and has phases of development from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, all of which contribute to its significance as a typical agricultural holding in this area of north-west England. Its national importance as such is established by its designation as a Grade II Listed building (NHLE No. 1362343). The historic agricultural structures within the farmhouse's curtilage should be viewed as curtilage listed.

The principal barn is a highly significant structure within this agricultural range. The central core of the structure is likely to be roughly contemporary with the earliest phases of the farmhouse. The extensions and adaptations made to the original core hold evidential value about the agricultural practices in the area over hundreds of years and the economic fortunes of the site. This makes a considerable contribution towards the site's significance.

The site has suffered from a lack of maintenance and inappropriate alteration during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now in a dilapidated condition. Despite this the site has high evidential value in its



building materials, its phased evolution and the group value of the historic structures on site. A sympathetic scheme of renovation, conservation and consolidation could better reveal the site's significance.

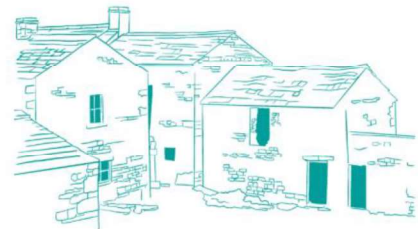
## Comments

Lower Reaps Farmhouse is in a very dilapidated condition. The CBA therefore welcome proposals to bring the site back into a habitable functioning condition and support the principle that the agricultural ranges would convert into domestic accommodation. However, we hold strong reservations about the current scheme and believe revisions are necessary to reduce the harmful impact on the site's significance.

The CBA understand why the applicants view the principal barn as large enough to accommodate 2 domestic units. However, the way in which the proposed division cuts across the horizontal linear planform of the barn would prevent any appreciation of the relationship between the structure's form and agricultural function. Proposals also seek to demolish a lot of the original wall to this central core. A lot of new domestic openings are proposed in the west elevation and a lot of roof lights. This is an intensive scheme that would cause a high level of less than substantial harm to the building. At present these plans are contrary to the requirements of paragraphs 199 and 200 of the NPPF. The impact of the subdivision, internal demolition and creation of new windows does not afford sufficient 'great weight' to the conservation of the barn's significance. This level of harm to the barn's significance also lacks 'clear and convincing justification'. We recommend that revisions seek to reduce this harm to the barn's agricultural character, significance, historical value and legibility of its phased development.

A single domestic unit that retains as much of the extant building fabric as possible would be preferable for conserving the site's significance. If your LPA are satisfied that there is adequate justification for subdividing the barn, then the CBA recommend the horizontal linear plan form of the building should be retained as legible. Ideally an area where the full height and historic volumes of the barn can be appreciated should be retained. The barn may divide more successfully into unequal sized dwellings. Paragraph 202 of the NPPF is relevant here regarding balancing the level of harm to the building against securing its optimal viable use.

The CBA are happy to see that the proposals for the house will have minimal impact on its plan form. Our concerns about the proposals for the house, and the other buildings on site, is that there does not appear to be a conservation-led methodology informing the proposed works. It is important that such a comprehensive scheme of works for Lower Reaps Farm uses an appropriate materials palette. Lime mortar should be used for the large amount of repointing work identified in the Structural Survey, for example. Also, significant historic fabric should be preferentially repaired rather than replaced. The structural engineer's report states "It is presumed that most or all of the



roof timbers elsewhere will be defective, and a new system of roof timbers will need to be installed to carry a roof covering of clay tiles or blue slate etc.” A suitably conservation led methodology should seek to strengthen existing roof trusses (where they are extant on site) wherever possible. The principal barn appears to retain a lot of its historic roof covering. These slates should be reused on site. Photographs of the house suggest the external walls have suffered from inappropriate rendering in places. This will require some remedial work alongside any repointing. A lot of poor 20<sup>th</sup> century internal finishes are visible from photos of the farmhouse’s interior, which will presumably be stripped out. It is important that the internal strip out is not overzealous – internal doors should be retained, for example. New internal finishes should be detailed to work with the historic fabric, rather than building in impermeable moisture barriers that create damp, mould and potentially infestation, locked into the old walls. We are concerned about the proposed cavity wall insulation. A strategy for dealing with existing damp issues is likely to be essential in a building like this which has been uninhabited for some time. The strategies that work in 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings are inappropriate and ineffective in old stone buildings like these. There is guidance available on line for dealing with damp in historic old buildings. For example, [Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating solid walls, Historic England, 2016](#). We strongly recommend that the applicants pursue a damp-proofing and energy efficiency strategy that will work in this type of old buildings. A condition to secure a conservation-led methodology for any permissions for this site would help meet the requirements of paragraph 199 of the NPPF.

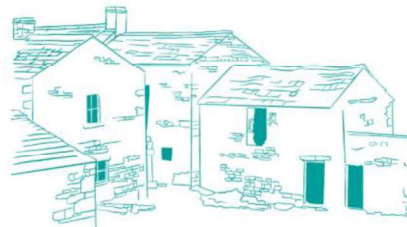
## Recommendations

The CBA object to the current proposals as they fail to meet the requirements of paragraphs 199 and 200 of the NPPF. We recommend that revisions are necessary to the proposals for the principal barn and that a conservation led methodology should be secured to accompany any works permitted at Lower Reaps Farm. The site will benefit from a comprehensive scheme of works, but only if they are carried out in line with the site’s significance and collateral harm is not caused to historic building fabric through inappropriate techniques and materials.

I trust these comments are useful to you; please keep the CBA informed of any developments with this case.

Kind Regards,

Catherine Bell. MA (cons), ACIfA  
Listed Buildings Caseworker



The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) is the national amenity society concerned with protection of the archaeological interest in heritage assets. Local planning authorities have a duty to notify the CBA of applications for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition, under the procedures set out in, **Arrangements for handling heritage applications – notification To Historic England and National Amenity Societies and the Secretary of state (England) direction 2021**.

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