

Barn at Lower Abbott House Farm
Abbott Brow, Mellor, Lancashire:
Written Scheme of Investigation
for Archaeological Building Recording

Ribble Valley Borough Council, planning ref: 3/2023/0580, condition 4

1 Introduction

1.1 This written scheme of investigation (WSI) sets out the work proposed for the recording of the barn at Lower Abbott House Farm, as commissioned by the developers Mr & Mrs Sharp via their agent Lea Hough Chartered Surveyors. The work is required by condition 4 of planning permission for the conversion of the building to a dwelling and garage.

2 Location

2.1 The application site stands at NGR: SD 64917 31569, to the north of Abbott Brow, a minor road which links Mellor with Osbaldeston, and is one of numerous groups of buildings interspersed along both sides of the road, where the surrounding land mostly in use for grazing. Lower Abbott Bungalow, a separate property dating from the 20th century, stands close to the west.

2.2 The site comprises a single range of buildings, which include a traditional barn as well as former cottages. The range is aligned from south to north, is six bays long, of two storeys, and one room deep for the most part, but has an historic outshut to the rear at the south end. It also has a modern rear lean-to near the north end, and there are various, detached, modern farm buildings further north.

3 Present condition

3.1 The majority of the range is accessible and safe to enter. However, there has been recent vehicle damage to the east (rear) wall close to the road, resulting in some structural collapse. Emergency propping works with scaffolding have been undertaken, but the agent has advised that this part of the range is unsafe, which may restrict recording here.

4 Archaeological and historical background

- 4.1 A heritage statement was supplied by Stephen Haigh to support the planning application. The statement opines that the buildings date from the early 19th century and include three phases of domestic construction (all now in agricultural use), and an adjoining, three-bay, agricultural barn. All parts have been altered to some degree, though one former cottage does appear relatively little changed.
- 4.2 The local planning authority considers the barn to be a non-designated heritage asset.

5 Project context

- 5.1 Planning consent was granted on 24 November 2023 and is for "*Conversion of barn to one two-storey, three-bedroom house with attached double garage*".
- 5.2 In their consultation response¹ to the application, Lancashire County Council's Historic Environment Team noted that the buildings at the site may be earlier than the nineteenth century, and that the upper floor of 'Cottage 2' may have been a handloom weaver's workshop. They recommended that a condition should be attached to any consent, requiring a formal record to be made following the removal of stored objects and materials but prior to any demolition or construction.
- 5.3 Consequently, condition 4 of the consent stipulates:

No works to the application building, including clearance/demolition or preparation works shall take place until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological building recording to level 2-3 as set out in "Understanding Historic Buildings" (Historic England 2016). This must be carried out by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional contractor to the standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall result in the compilation and deposition of a formal report on the works undertaken and the results obtained. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details. A digital copy of the report and the photographs shall be placed in the Lancashire Historic Environment Record prior to the dwelling hereby approved being first occupied.

6 Aims of the project

- 6.1 The proposed conversion will lead to the loss or masking of some historic features, fabric, and character. The aim of the project is to identify, interpret and record significant evidence relating to the building's historic character and

¹ of 23 August 2023

development, and place this in the public domain by deposition with the Lancashire Historic Environment Record and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

7 Statement of recording standards

7.1 All work which forms part of this project will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant Standards and Guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

8 Methodology

8.1 The recording will be carried out to Historic England's Level 2 to 3; a Level 2 record is "descriptive", while Level 3 is "analytical"¹².

8.2 Recording will include drawn, photographic, and written records of the barn. Limited historical research, mainly concerned with historic mapping, will also be carried out.

8.3 The buildings will be recorded once the interiors have been cleared of stored items to a satisfactory degree.

8.4 In the interest of safety, the scope of the record may be constrained by restricted access to those areas considered unsafe. A dynamic risk assessment will be undertaken once recording is underway.

8.5 The drawn record will include ground and first floor plans at 1:100 scale, together with at least one cross-section at 1:50. These will be based on an existing measured survey, which will be enhanced to show all features of historic and architectural interest, such as additions to or insertions within the buildings, historic structural timbers, blocked openings, and significant fixtures and fittings. Conventions used in the drawings will be those specified by Historic England.

8.6 The photographic record will be made using a digital camera with a resolution of 12 mega pixels, in JPG format. It will comprise general photographs of the site and setting, and the exteriors and interiors of the buildings, along with detailed photographs of any structural and decorative features that are relevant to the buildings' design, development and use, and which are not adequately recorded on the general photographs. Such detailed photographs will be taken at medium to close range and framed in such a way as to ensure that the element being photographed clearly constitutes the principal feature of the photograph.

¹² Historic England 2016 *Understanding Historic Buildings*

- 8.7 Detailed photographs will contain an appropriately positioned graduated photographic scale (not measuring tapes or surveying staffs). A graduated ranging-rod, discretely positioned, will be included in a selection of general shots, sufficient independently to establish the scale of all elements of the building and its structure. The size, graduations, and any other relevant data relating to the scales and ranging-rods so utilised will be specifically noted in the methodology section of the written report.
- 8.8 A rapid desk-based study of the site will take place, which will examine historic maps and any other readily available documents which relate to the site.

9 Timetable

- 9.1 The site work is expected to take place during late winter or spring 2024, although the start date is obviously subject to prior approval of this WSI by the local planning authority.

10 Report preparation

- 10.1 Following all site recording, a report will be produced within two months. It will be illustrated appropriately, with location maps, extracts from historic maps, copies of the survey drawings, and selected photographs. Copies will be supplied to the client and the Lancashire Historic Environment Record. It will also be submitted to OASIS³, from where it is expected to be published to the ADS Library.
- 10.2 Given that the condition states only that the report and photographs need only be deposited prior to the converted barn being first occupied, it is clear that insofar as condition 4 is concerned, development at the site may proceed as soon as site recording has been completed.

11 Archive deposition

- 11.1 The project archive will be entirely digital. It will comprise a full set of photographs, and will be submitted to the ADS for long term curation. This will be linked to the full report containing a full set of drawings, which will be submitted via OASIS to the ADS as above.

12 Personnel

- 12.1 All work will be undertaken personally by Stephen Haigh MA, a buildings archaeologist with many years experience of investigating and recording historic

³ An online reporting form to provide information about archaeological investigations to Historic Environment Records, etc <https://oasis.ac.uk/>

buildings in Lancashire and elsewhere. He reserves the right to seek amendments to this project design where dictated by professional judgement or health and safety considerations for example, but any changes will be agreed with the planning authority as appropriate.

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