



Heritage Report

Old Mill House, Cowfold Road, Bolney, RH17 5SE

Report prepared by Chilcroft Heritage Planning
January 2026



Corporate members of:
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Historic Houses Association
The Georgian Group



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1) INTRODUCTION

- 1.1) I am Haig Dalton, founder of Chilcroft Heritage Planning, an established independent heritage consultancy since 2006. Formerly, I was a Conservation & Design Officer within development control departments in the South-East of England. I have worked on a wide range of projects throughout the United Kingdom, predominantly (but not exclusively) for private sector clients.
- 1.2) I hold a masters degree in Historic Building Conservation (MSc); a postgraduate qualification in Architectural History from the University of Oxford (Oxon); I am an Affiliate member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).
- 1.3) Over the last 22 years I have specialised in the historic environment, both in terms of understanding and analysing physical fabric, and in terms of policy application, specifically by assessing impacts, providing advice and supporting development proposals. My experience includes a diverse range of cases relating to the assessment of physical changes to, and development affecting all manner of heritage assets, and their settings.
- 1.4) I have undertaken numerous impact assessments where I have considered the impacts of new development on the historic environment (dealing with physical impacts, setting, townscape, views and inter-visibility), including dealing with the effects of development on heritage assets in rural contexts.
- 1.5) I have provided expert evidence at appeals, including public inquiries, on behalf of both appellants and local planning authorities.
- 1.6) I understand my role in producing this heritage report; to give independent and objective evidence on matters within my expertise, based on my own independent opinion and uninfluenced by the instructing party. I confirm that I have stated the facts and matters on which my opinion is based, and that I have not omitted to mention facts or matters that could detract from my conclusions.

- 1.7) I believe that the facts stated within this Heritage Report are true and that the opinions expressed are correct. I have drawn attention to any matters where I consider I lack sufficient information to reach anything other than a provisional conclusion. I have adhered to the standards and duties of the professional bodies I am a member of, and will continue to adhere to those standards.
- 1.8) I was first approached in September 2025, when I was asked to provide a heritage report in relation to the proposed development on behalf the applicant. My quote was based on several stages/elements, the first of which was an initial case review, including a site visit in October 2025. I confirm that I am able to act as the applicant's heritage expert following this initial work and a site visit.
- 1.9) As an independent professional, I have formed my own opinions and have come to my own conclusions about the effects of the proposed development.
- 1.10) I have included in my heritage report photos taken on my original site visit. The photos were taken with a compact digital camera and they have not been digitally altered, aside from cropping superfluous areas of sky and/or foreground. This visual assessment is intended to be informative, but it is not intended to be exhaustive.
- 1.11) This statement will describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by the setting, as required by Para.207 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2024). It will assess the significance of the heritage assets by way of Historic England guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017) in accordance with their preferred five-step procedure, identify, assess and explore the significance of their setting and consider the applicant's scheme in relation to them.

2) LEGISLATION AND POLICY

- 2.1) Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act place a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.
- 2.2) Section 72 of the Act places similar duty on the decision maker with respect to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas, however this does not extend to the setting of conservation areas.
- 2.3) The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** constitutes the Government's current national guidance and policy regarding development in the historic environment. It is a material consideration and includes a succinct policy framework for local planning authorities and decision takers. It relates to planning law by stating that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.4) Paragraph 203 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment with emphasis on “significance”, defined in Annex 2 as:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.”

- 2.5) Annex 2 of the NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

“The surroundings in which a heritage 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.”

2.6) Paragraph 207 of the NPPF places a duty on the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, providing a proportionate level of detail. The effects of any development on a heritage asset therefore need to be assessed against the four components of its heritage significance: its archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interests.

2.7) Paragraph 208 of the NPPF notes that 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 account of 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.

2.8) Paragraph 212 states with regard to heritage assets, that great weight should be given to their conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial or less than substantial harm.

2.9) Conservation (for heritage policy) is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:

“The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.”

2.10) The importance and relevance of this definition is that it does not suggest conservation to be the same as preservation. Indeed, what sets conservation apart is the emphasis on proactively maintaining and managing change and not on a reactive approach to resisting change. In its simplest interpretation conservation could amount to a change that at least sustains the significance of a heritage asset.

2.11) Paragraphs 214 to 215 describe two levels of potential harm that can be caused to the significance of designated heritage assets, namely substantial harm and less than substantial harm. These effects are to be weighed in the planning balance according to the guidance set out within the paragraphs, bearing in mind the statutory provisions above. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including grade I and II* listed buildings should be wholly exceptional.

2.12) Paragraph 215 deals with cases of less than substantial harm and notes that any such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Heritage protection and the conservation of heritage assets are recognised as of benefit to the public.

2.13) Harm is defined by Historic England as a change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.

2.14) Paragraph 219 of the NPPF notes that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

2.15) **The National Planning Practice Guidance** provides advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment in accordance with the NPPF. The PPG currently relates to the 2019 version of the NPPF but will be updated in due course to reflect NPPF 2023.

2.16) In regards to the setting of heritage assets the PPG notes:

“The setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage.”

2.17) The guidance notes that a thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

2.18) In relation to harm the guidance states:

“Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.”

2.19) Paragraph 020 of the document notes that public benefits can be heritage based and can include:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset; and
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset for the long term.

2.20) The **Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning** Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017) is a document published by Historic England as a second edition in December 2017, replacing the earlier 2015 setting guidance. The document provides for a thorough understanding of the setting of a heritage asset and the relationship of the setting to curtilage, character and context.

2.21) The guidance document notes, in paragraph 18, that the protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change. The document recognises that not all heritage assets are of equal importance and states that the contribution made by their setting to their significance will also vary. Not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without causing harm to the significance of the asset.

2.22) As per earlier Historic England guidance, the document advocates a stepped approach to assessing the impact of change within setting on the significance of heritage assets. This stepped approach is:

Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;

Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);

Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance;

Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and

Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

2.23) Guidance under Step 2 notes that the asset's physical surroundings and how the asset is experienced (such as views, noise, tranquillity, sense of enclosure etc.) should be taken in to consideration.

2.24) Step 3 is also important in making it clear that a proposed development should not be assessed in terms of its impact on setting; instead it should be assessed in terms of the impacts on significance. That is to say, what matters is not the extent of visibility of the development or change to the setting of an asset, but the extent of change to its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest. In some circumstances, this evaluation may need to extend to cumulative and complex impacts which may have as great an effect on heritage

assets as large-scale development and which may not only be visual. At the very least the assessment should address the key attributes of the development in terms of its location and siting, form and appearance, additional effects and permanence.

- 2.25) Paragraph 39 notes that options for reducing the harm arising from development may include the relocation of elements of a development or changes to its design. It notes that good design may reduce or remove the harm.
- 2.26) **Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** requires great weight to be given to preserving the setting of a heritage asset. In *Jones v Mordue [2015] EWCA Civ 1243* the court confirmed that if the decision-maker has worked through the relevant heritage paragraphs in the NPPF, they will have complied with the s66 duty.
- 2.27) In *Barnwell Manor [2014] EWCA Civ 137* the court confirmed that great weight should be attached to the desirability of preserving the setting of a heritage asset.

3) ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

3.1) The proposed site is situated to the north-west of Old Mill House and accessed via an existing separate entrance just beyond the northern curtilage boundary, with the public footpath between the two. The proposed site is situated in a rural environment and presently contains an existing cluster of three equestrian buildings, which appear well established. These buildings are timber frame with timber clad weather boarding and face forwards Old Mill House (**see Fig 8**). Subject to appropriate design, they are considered capable of replacement.

3.2) The proposed site is partly self-contained by existing hedgerows and trees along its western border and could benefit from additional planting, subject to appropriate design. The proposed site sits at the rear of Old Mill House with a public footpath running between the two (**see Fig 10**). Whilst there is some awareness of the existing cluster of equestrian buildings on the proposed site from Old Mill House, this is largely filtered by the well-established vegetation that sits between the two. It is set back from the forward northerly aspect from Old Mill House, leaving this open and providing long ranging views over the land beyond (**see Fig 9**). Subject to appropriate design, this is likely to leave the experience of the proposed site largely unchanged.

3.3) Old Mill House is a Grade II listed building (**List No. 1193216**), recorded as The Old Mill House. It is a timber framed late 16th Century dwelling with limewashed render with the most original and unmodified elevations to the north and west (**see Fig 4**). It is from here that the listed building is arguably best appreciated. The building was updated in the Victorian period of the 19th Century with brick infill and tile hung elevations, which are most evident on the principal elevation to the south (**see Fig 3**). Built over two storeys with gable ends and a Horsham slab stone roof, it has two large brick chimney stacks to each side. Historically Old Mill House was a farmhouse known under the name of Oldmill Farm and Colwood Farm at the time of the 1879 and 1934 tithe maps (**see Fig 1 and 2**). The historic curtilage of the dwelling sits to the southern side with a large pond to the east. This historic curtilage layout remains evident today, with vehicular access from the north-west corner of the curtilage, as it was historically.

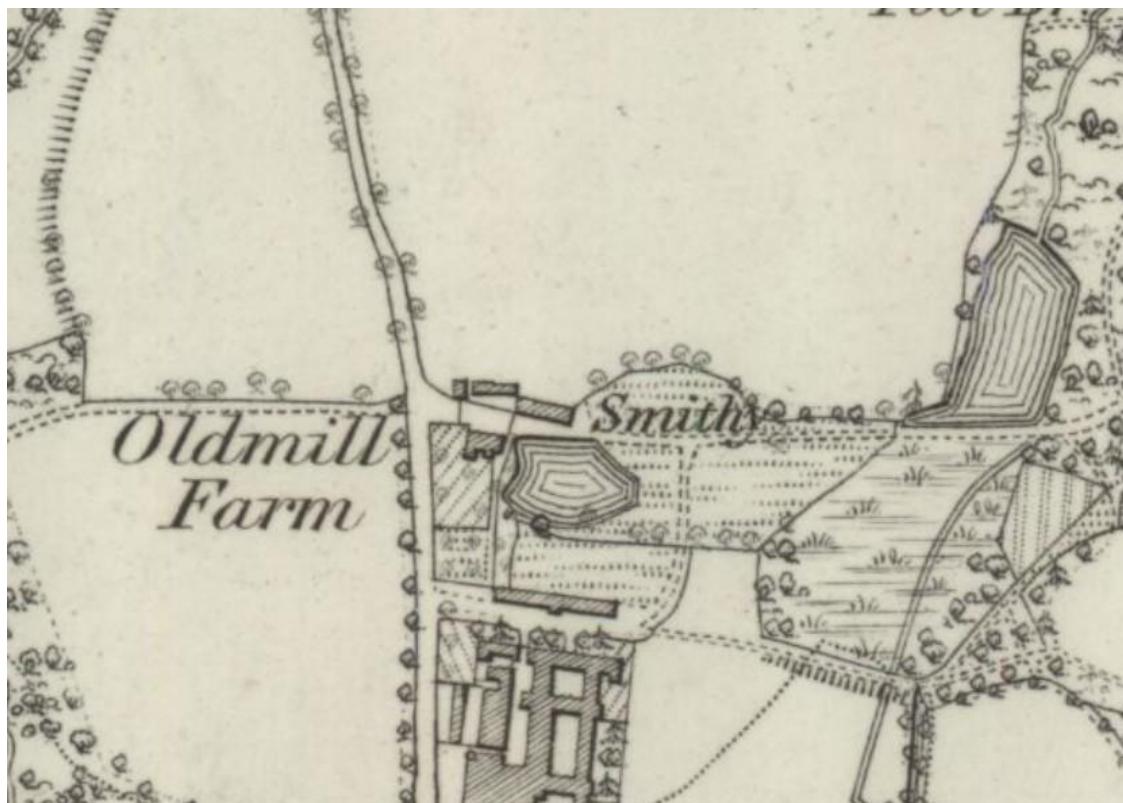


Fig 1: The former farmstead housed a range of buildings directly north of the listed building of Old Mill House which created a level of self-containment and left the land beyond largely screened from the farmhouse.

© Ordnance Survey 1879

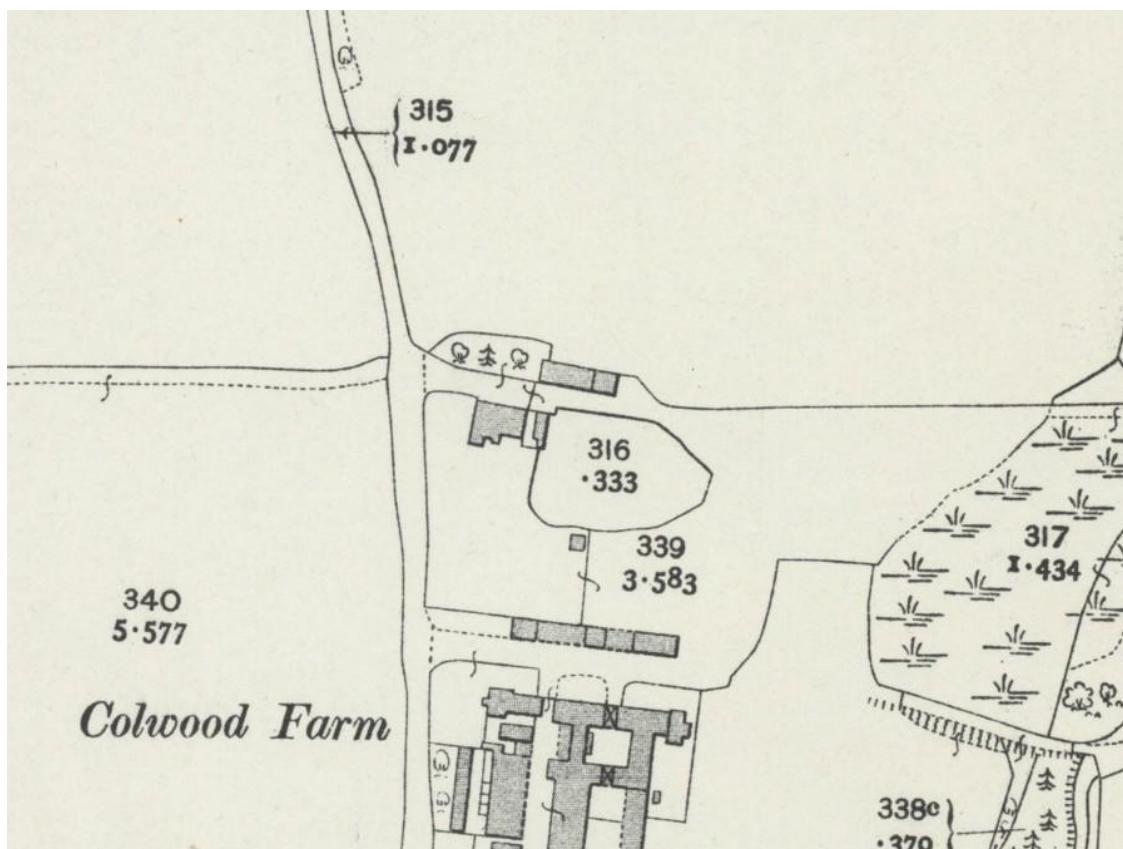


Fig 2: By the early 20th Century, two of the buildings north of the farmhouse had been demolished and were replaced by a bank of trees, that would have continued to screen the proposed site from the farmhouse.

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3.4) The 1879 tithe map shows that historically, there were a range of three outbuildings directory opposite the north elevation of the listed building, that stood along what is now the public footpath. Unlike many historic footpaths, this footpath is not identified on any of the tithe maps pre 1950 and so we may assume that it was added in modern times, in the late 20th Century. This is reinforced by the presence of these three outbuildings, which prior to this, dominated this part of the setting of the listed building and would have denied access to this area of the land. The largest of these three buildings still remains and at the time of the 1879 tithe maps, comprised the Smithy. This building is believed to date from the 17th Century if not earlier and comprises a timber frame tithe barn with the principal elevation facing north-east (**see Fig 5**) with double height doors and a gable end to the east. On the western side, the former gable end has been extended into a catslide roof to accommodate a side extension. A brick base was added to the barn in the 19th Century and a brick built extension added to the eastern side. The rear of the building overlooks the pond and sits closest to Old Mill House (**see Fig 6**). Due to its age, the former tithe barn is considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA).

3.5) The two outbuildings that once sat beside it have subsequently been lost and no evidence of their footings now remain in situ. Historically these former buildings, which overlooked the rear elevation of Old Mill House, created an insular courtyard that would have comprised a working area of the farmstead. Due to the elevated nature of the land here, these former buildings would have sat in an elevated position, well above the ground height of Old Mill House to the south of them, and this topography remains today (**see Fig 7 and 10**). In taking this into account, these former buildings would have largely closed off and obscured northerly views over the wider land beyond, which reads quite differently from how we imagine the landscape today. Indeed, looking out to this landscape today, there are some scattered planted trees in the open field to the north that could almost be seen as a form of parkscape, however these are recent additions from the late 20th Century, planted to commemorate the birth of the owner's children and therefore do not form part of the historic context of the land. Views to this northernly field were historically questionable given the range of historic outbuildings and later bank of trees that once stood there, which would have largely have obscured wider views of this area of land.



Fig 3: Old Mill House is a Grade II listed building and dates from the late 16th Century. Its principal elevation shown here was refaced in the Victorian period and overlooks the main curtilage to the south.

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Fig 4: The rear elevation faces north and reveals the historic timber framing of the former farmhouse, with 19th Century Victorian brickwork added below. A public footpath passes between it and the proposed site and the proposals will leave this experience of the heritage asset unchanged, with no loss of appreciation.

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Fig 5: To the south-east of the proposed site sits a former tithe barn which is believed to date from the 17th Century if not earlier and is therefore considered a NDHA. Here, its principal elevation faces north-east. Although there will be an awareness of the proposal from the heritage asset, it is considered to be of a design and material quality that reflects the former farmstead vernacular.

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Fig 6: The rear of the former tithe barn overlooks a large pond and was once one of three buildings that stood to the northern side of the listed building, including the Smithy which was housed in this building.

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Fig 7: From the side of the former tithe barn, the proposed site and cluster of existing equestrian buildings can be seen in the backdrop. The tithe barn has always had other buildings around it, including two historic barns directly to the west, and the proposed design will emulate the vernacular and the materials that most reflect the buildings of the former farmstead, whilst utilising an existing developed site.

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Fig 8: The view looking south-east with the existing cluster of equestrian buildings in the foreground, with the former tithe barn to the left and Old Mill House hidden in the backdrop.

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Fig 9: Historically the former farmhouse of Old Mill House did not enjoy far reaching views over the land to the north. This aspect has historically always had a range of buildings clustered around it, in close proximity to the listed building and NDHA. The proposed dwelling will be set back further way than the historic buildings were and replace an existing cluster of equestrian buildings, of no quality. The modern day views over the open field to the north will be maintained, with the proposal set to one side.

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Fig 10: The view from the listed building looking north with a glimpse of one of the existing equestrian buildings to the far left. The raised bank historically housed two buildings that sat parallel with the brick wall, which stood in an elevated position obscuring views to the open land beyond, including the proposed site.

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4) IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 4.1) The proposal would see the existing three equestrian buildings demolished and replaced with a detached 1.5 storey, 3-bedroom dwelling. The proposed site would be self-contained, and at our direction, retained within a small portion of land that would be sighted to one side of the listed building, so as not to interfere with the outward outlook from the north elevation (see Fig 9).
- 4.2) The proposed design would adopt a building of a timber frame design, with timber weather boarding and a tile hanging. The principal elevation that sits closest to the listed building would be of a 1.5 storey design, with a low eaves line and porch overhang, giving it a more modest appearance. The use of clay hung tiles would be used throughout the upper elevations, which is considered to be of a local vernacular consistent with that of the listed building of Old Mill House. The proposed dwelling would use gable ends as a nod to the architecture of the listed building. The scale of the building would appear smallest from the eastern side with a single storey timber weather boarded portion, and if views of the new dwelling from the listed building are possible, this smaller end of the new building would have the greatest awareness. When taking account of the additional landscaping that would be planted in the south-east corner of the proposed site, this awareness would be further diminished.
- 4.3) Although the listed building now enjoys far reaching views over the field to the north, historically this was not the case and the former farmhouse was hemmed in by a range of historic outbuildings that straddled the northern curtilage boundary, creating a sense of containment. The northern side of the farmhouse was a working part of the farm along with the Smithy, quite different from the more formal principal elevation to the south. No doubt it is for this reason that the south elevation of the listed building was facelifted and modernised by the Victorians in the late 19th Century, to ensure that the focus remained on this principal side of the building, rather than the working areas at the rear. Nevertheless, the north elevation of the listed building remains of considerable heritage significance to the listed building given its exposed original timber framing, allowing for the true age of Old Mill House to be best appreciated. The way in which this northernly aspect of the listed building is best appreciated, including from the public footpath, would be preserved.

4.4) Before coming to any wider conclusions, it should be noted that the significance of Old Mill House and its historic interest linked to its age, its presence in the former farmstead, architectural form and historic fabric, and its place within the context of the wider setting – will not be affected. These components of the significance of the building, and the areas from where they can be best appreciated, will be preserved.

4.5) The former tithe barn is considered to be a NDHA and sits to the south-east of the proposed site. Like the design of the proposed site, this building also sits to the side of the north elevation of Old Mill House, leaving a clear view between it and the open field to the north. The barn complements our understanding of the former farmstead and adds to the appreciation of its setting. The proposed design would leave the broader appreciation of this building unchanged and would not obscure the way in which the former tithe barn is experienced as part of the setting of the former farmstead (**see Fig 9**). Whilst there would be an awareness of the proposed dwelling from the NDHA (**see Fig 7**), the proposed design and material finish would accord with the vernacular of the former farmstead and on balance, would preserve its setting.

4.6) As historic building consultants, we have lead in the design of the proposed new dwelling, from its sighting to its use of architecture and material finish. The proposed dwelling is of a style that reflects the humble nature of Old Mill House and responds to it architecturally. Although it evokes a modern interpretation, the broad design and use of materials is taken from the setting of the listed building and former farmstead and considered to be capable of preserving the setting of the listed building by replacing an existing cluster of poor quality buildings. The 1.5 storey dwelling would have timber weather boarding and a tile roof, typical of farm buildings. The building would adopt a modest footprint and be subservient in scale, bulk and mass to the listed building and NDHA beside it. This design approach is in accordance with Historic England guidance which states that there should be a clear distinction between old and new. On balance, the proposed design is considered to be proportionate and would not push beyond a comfortable form of development. The proposed dwelling is of a design and material quality that is reflective of the local vernacular and will respond to the listed building and NDHA in a positive way and preserve their setting.

5) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 5.1) The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 contains a statutory duty to give considerable importance and great weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building in the planning balance. Preserving means to do no harm.
- 5.2) The NPPF lays down an approach that corresponds with the statutory duty of the 1990 Act. In cases where harm occurs, the NPPF requires balancing the benefits of a proposal against harm resulting from it.
- 5.3) The Mid Sussex District Council's adopted Development Plan policies require development proposals to conserve heritage assets (such as listed buildings), and their settings.
- 5.4) The guidance in Historic England's GPA3 provides a framework for considering and assessing effects on the setting of heritage assets.

Conclusions

- 5.5) The existing cluster of equestrian buildings on the proposed site are considered to be capable of replacement, subject to appropriate design.
- 5.6) The proposed design is of a modest appearance and does not push beyond a comfortable scope of development. The proposed design, by virtue of its scale, bulk and mass would remain subservient to the listed building and NDHA.
- 5.7) Historically the land to the north of the listed building, including the proposed site, was screened behind a range of buildings that sat between it and the site, quite differently from how we experience the land today. Historically, the former farmhouse would not have enjoyed uninterrupted views over this land.
- 5.8) Although the proposal would bring about a level of change, on balance the proposal is considered to be of a design and material quality that would reflect the farmstead vernacular of the heritage assets and preserve their setting.

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