

MC/21/0303

Date Received: 2 February 2021
Location: Land South Of Berwick Way, East Of Frindsbury Hill And North And West Of Parsonage Lane (known As Manor Farm) Frindsbury Rochester Medway
Proposal: Listed building consent for the part conversion and extension of Manor Farm Barn to a wedding venue and conference facility including conversion and extension of former cattle byres to provide overnight accommodation; detached building for management facilities and the construction of a new building to provide additional tourist accommodation with vehicular and pedestrian access from Berwick Way, car parking, landscaping and other associated works.
Applicant Agent: The Heritage Design and Development Team Ltd
DHA Planning Ltd
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Ward: Strood Rural Ward
Case Officer: Hannah Gunner
Contact Number: 01634 331700

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 2 September 2021.

Recommendation - Approval subject to the following conditions –

- 1 The development and works to which this consent relates shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

DHA/14019/11, 29654A_003 rev A, 29654A_199 rev B, 29654A_204 rev D, 29654A_205 rev D, 29654A_206 rev D, 29654A_207 rev D, 29654A_208 rev E, 29654A_209 rev G, 29654A_210 rev F, 29654A_211 rev G, 29654A_212 rev G, 29654A_213 rev G, 29654A_214 rev B, 29654A_220 rev D, 29654A_221 rev D, 29654A_222 rev D, 29654A_300 rev D, 29654A_301 rev D, 29654A_302 rev E, 29654A_303 rev E, 29654A_305 rev C, 29654A_307 rev B, 568-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-003 P02 - received 2 February 2021

568-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-0004 P01 - received 10 February 2021

DHA/14019/19 rev A , 29654A_200 rev K, 29654A_201 rev J - received 4 June 2021

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning and having regard to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Regulations 2017) against which the development has been assessed and that any material alteration to the design principles and development objectives may have an impact which has not been fully assessed.

- 3 Prior to the commencement of works above ground floor slab level drawings showing 1:20 Sectional Elevations of the Reception Building with 1:0 / 1:5 New Joinery details to both long elevations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings.

Reason: To ensure that the works are undertaken in a manner which is sympathetic and unobtrusive to the heritage asset in accordance with Policy BNE17 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 4 Prior to the commencement of works above ground floor slab level drawings showing 1:20 Sectional Elevations of the Guest accommodation - New Build with 1:0 / 1:5 Joinery details both long elevations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings.

Reason: To ensure that the works are undertaken in a manner which is sympathetic and unobtrusive to the heritage asset in accordance with Policy BNE17 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 5 Prior to the commencement of works above ground floor slab level drawings showing 1:20 Sectional Elevations of the Cow shed with 1:0 / 1:5 Joinery details both long elevations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings.

Reason: To ensure that the works are undertaken in a manner which is sympathetic and unobtrusive to the heritage asset in accordance with Policy BNE17 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 6 Prior to the commencement of works above ground floor slab level drawings showing 1:20 details of new roof junctions where the works are to join the existing roof shall as well as 1:10 / 1:5 eaves details (mostly at North Elevation from within The Manor House Garden) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be carried out in accordance with those approved drawings.

Reason: To ensure that the works are undertaken in a manner which is sympathetic and unobtrusive to the heritage asset in accordance with Policy BNE17 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 7 Prior to the commencement of works above ground floor slab level details of the perimeter enclosure to the site, including details of all entrance gates, is to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These works shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings.

Reason: To ensure that the works are undertaken in a manner which is sympathetic and unobtrusive to the heritage asset in accordance with Policy BNE17 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 8 Prior to the commencement of development, a Structural Engineers report which supports the design and function of the glazed screen shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be installed in accordance with the approved design.

Reason: To ensure that the works are undertaken in a manner which is sympathetic and unobtrusive to the heritage asset in accordance with Policy BNE17 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 9 No construction works above ground floor slab level shall take place at the barn until a materials palette from ground floor upwards (to be shown on sample boards and left on site for comparison) is viewed and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This board shall include all proposed pointing also.

Reason: To ensure that the works are undertaken in a manner which is sympathetic and unobtrusive to the heritage asset in accordance with Policy BNE17 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

Proposal

This is a Listed building application for:

- (i) The part conversion and extension of Manor Farm Barn to a wedding venue and conference facility
- (ii) Conversion and extension of former cattle byres to provide overnight accommodation;
- (iii) A detached building for management facilities
- (iv) The construction of a new building to provide additional tourist accommodation
- (v) Vehicular and pedestrian access from Berwick Way, car parking, landscaping and other associated works.

This application is for the extension and alterations to the existing renovated barn. There is also proposed a change of use to a wedding venue and conference facility, however this is incorporated and considered within the Hybrid application MC/21/0302 also on this agenda. The extension works proposed will form ancillary functions to the main barn which includes an element of overnight accommodation and office.

Access to this facility is from Berwick Way and utilises the road currently being used as access for the quarry infill. Until the infill is complete however access via this road is not viable, so a temporary access is proposed from Parsonage Lane.

The Barn itself is to be converted so that the main structure can be used as a wedding venue (sit down wedding breakfast area along with less formal area for drinks reception) which can accommodate up to 164 guests. These areas will be separated with a vast glazed screen with doors in them, that will sit within bay 5 of the building (counting back from the northern elevation). The existing main Barn entrance located in the south elevation is to be infilled with a new stone and flint dwarf wall, which is to match the existing walls whilst the existing central doors in the west elevation will be removed, and in the Eastern elevation the opening will be enlarged to be the full width of the bay in which it sits (bay 7). New openings will be formed in the east elevation of bay 1 and the west elevation of bay 4 to allow for easy flow of people between the Barn space and the newly proposed bar/kitchen area (link extension) and the dance hall extension. Alterations are proposed to the floor levels within the existing Barn; however areas of the historic cobbled floor (bays 6 and 7) and the historic timber floor (bay 11) are to be retained.

The new dance hall extension is to be accessed on the west side of the main Barn. The structure is to be flat roofed and contemporary with there being a secondary access/fire escape and a service point in the north elevation of this new build aspect and pedestrian access in the south of the building. The space should accommodate up to 200 guests.

The proposed new bar/kitchen area will be accessed at the northern end of the Barn (to the east side) and will link the Barn with the cow shed building. This will result in the Barn being directly linked to the guest accommodation block which runs parallel to the Barn. This new build link extension is designed to be sympathetic to the main Barn and is proposed to be constructed in similar external building materials. Internally it will accommodate the bar, a kitchen area to be used for preparation and the toilet facilities for public use. The roof of this element would be double pitched so that there is a hidden valley aspect to the roof. This is where the extract plant equipment is proposed.

The overnight guest accommodation block is shown to be within the area of the existing dilapidated cow sheds. In total there are to be 5 en-suite rooms within this part of the building. The building is to be pitched roof with barn style doors and modest windows. A significant amount of repair is required but the proposal involves refurbishment and repair rather than demolition. The roof structure is to be completely replaced but it is a low pitch and is considered modest in size. Its style will emulate that of the main Barn.

In addition to the alterations and extensions to the existing structures there are two new stand-alone structures proposed as part of the Barn proposals. The management suite and the detached accommodation block. The management suite will sit adjacent to the cow shed and will be the check in area for the accommodation as well as the main office for the wedding/conference bookings. The detached accommodation block provides a further 7 overnight guest accommodation rooms, which includes a bridal

suite. 3 of the rooms are slightly larger which would be wheelchair compliant. This block, as with the management suite will be designed to reflect the architecture of the Barn.

A courtyard area is proposed centrally between the Barn, bar and guest accommodation. This will be available for use as an outdoor ceremony as well as for guests to congregate for drinks/canapes following a church/indoor ceremony.

Site Area/Density

Site Area: 4.62 hectares (11.43 acres)

Site Density: n/a

Relevant Planning History

- MC/21/0302 Hybrid application seeking:
- Full planning permission for the construction of a new three-storey secondary school with sixth form and sports block with vehicular and pedestrian access from Frindsbury Hill, together with associated car parking and drop off area, multi-use games area, sports pitches, landscaping and other associated works.
 - Full planning permission for the part conversion and extension of Grade I Listed Manor Farm Barn and change of use to a wedding venue and conference facility, including conversion and extension of former cattle byres to provide overnight accommodation, construction of single storey detached building for management facilities and construction of a new building to provide additional tourist accommodation with vehicular and pedestrian access from Berwick Way, car parking, landscaping and other associated works.
 - Outline permission (with Frindsbury Hill access-detailed as part of the full planning permission for the school element) to be considered in detail and all other matters reserved for future consideration for the construction of up to 181 residential dwellings, together with Parsonage Lane access, parking, landscaping and associated works.
- On this agenda
- MC/20/2806 Variation of condition 1 (Time 6 years) on MC/20/0482 – To amend the requirement for the discontinuation of the infilling operation does not fall until 31st December 2024.
Decision: Approval with conditions
Date: 7 April 2021
- MC/20/0482 Variation of conditions 19 (hours infilling) and 20 (loading/handling etc) of planning permission MC/10/2068 – condition 19 to amend the infill activity hours and shall only operate between the hours of 08:00 to 17:30 Monday to Friday inclusive, 08:30 to

13:00 hours on Saturday and no works on Sunday or Bank/Public holidays and condition 20 no goods will be loaded/unloaded stored or otherwise handled and no goods vehicles shall arrive or depart, within the application site outside the hours of 08:00 to 17:30 hours Monday to Friday, 08:30 to 13:00 hours on Saturdays or at any time on Sundays or Public/Bank holidays.

Decision: Approval with conditions

Date: 17 July 2020

- MC/19/2979 Town and Country Planning Act (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 - request for a scoping opinion for the proposed development of a secondary school, up to 200 dwellings and restoration of a Grade I listed building to form a wedding and conference facility.
Decision: EIA Required
Date: 17 December 2019
- MC/18/3446 Variation of conditions 19 and 20 of planning permission MC/10/2068.
Decision: Approval with conditions
Date: 26 March 2019
- MC/18/3570 Details pursuant to condition 6 on planning permission MC/18/1235 - Listed building application for the reconstruction and restoration of fire damaged Grade I Listed Manor Farm Barn and an ancillary building (Cowshed).
Decision: Discharged
Date: 11 February 2019
- MC/18/1235 Listed building application for the reconstruction and restoration of fire damaged Grade I Listed Manor Farm Barn and an ancillary building (Cowshed)
Decision: Approved with conditions
Date: 29 June 2018
- MC/18/1234 Reconstruction and restoration of fire damaged Grade 1 Listed Manor Farm Barn and an ancillary building (cowshed) temporary containers for site storage, office and welfare facilities , 2.5m high palisade fencing and car parking area
Decision: Approval with conditions
Date: 29 June 2018
- MC/14/0606 Reconstruction and restoration of fire damaged Grade I Listed Manor Farm Barn and ancillary building (Cowshed), temporary containers for site storage, office and welfare facilities, 2.5m high palisade fencing and car parking areas.
Decision: Approved with conditions
Date: 16 May 2014

MC/10/2068	Application to infill the existing disused chalk pit and construct a temporary access road. Decision: Approved with conditions Date: 18 February 2015
MC/10/3905	Listed Building application for the reconstruction and restoration of fire damaged Grade I Listed Manor Farm Barn and an ancillary building (cowshed) (Resubmission of MC/10/2065). Decision: Approved with conditions Date: 28 January 2011
MC/10/2070	Reconstruction and restoration of fire damaged Grade I Listed Manor Farm Barn and ancillary building (cowshed), temporary containers for site storage, office and welfare facilities, 2.5m high palisade fencing and car parking areas. Decision: Approved with conditions Date: 26 January 2011
MC/07/2207	Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 1999 for a scoping opinion for the repair of Manor Barn and associated buildings for use as an educational centre; the creation of an ecological reserve in the former chalk quarry; enhanced community facilities and residential development. Decision: Scoping Opinion Required Date: 4 January 2008

Representations

The application has been advertised on site, in the press and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Historic England have also been consulted.

14 letters have been received by neighbouring residents. Of these, **13** are objecting to the application.

Those objecting to the application have raised the following objections:

- Given significance of barn seems criminal to extend and attach other buildings
- Bar etc should be in separate building
- Converting barn to different use is out of keeping
- Proposed new entrances to barn will have detrimental impact on the profile of the building
- Link building and cow sheds also detract from original profile of the barn
- Changes will have a detrimental impact on the environmental setting of the barn and conservation area
- Fails to comply with para 189 of the NPPF (2019)
- Application does not acknowledge harm to Conservation Area
- Kitchen area will omit smells to neighbouring residents
- Plant will disrupt private amenity space in terms of noise

- Disco will be noisy and affect neighbouring residents
- No alternative viable uses put forward

The Dickens' Country Protection Society have commented that the public should be able to view the barn in the context other than privately hired for functions.

Frindsbury Extra Parish Council supports the application which will guarantee the future of this Grade I Listed Mediaeval Building for the future.

Historic England's have stated that both the Barn and Conservation Area are considered to be impacted as the application causes a moderate level of harm. However, against the public benefit (Paragraph 202 of the NPPF) there are several heritage benefits which apply to the weighing exercise:

- Securing the optimum viable use and thus the long-term sustainable future of the barn as a wedding venue which provides for its ongoing management and maintenance
- Providing an enhanced level of public access and opportunities to enjoy and appreciate more of Medway's exceptional heritage through a new use for Manor Farm Barn
- Securing an enhanced understanding of the Manor Farm Barn through a programme of building recording

The proposed conversion of the barn to a wedding venue will contribute to creating a thriving place which celebrates Medway's heritage and its importance as a place in medieval England.

City of Rochester Society has written commenting on both the Hybrid and Listed building applications and in particular the applicants' assertion that the housing element is to secure the conversion of the Barn:

- There is very little work proposed to the barn itself and the extension works are a commercial venture and can stand alone
- No public financial information submitted to show link between housing and Barn
- Proposed sch and residential can only be justified by balancing public good against heritage harm
- Surviving original part of barn not should be given more positive re-use
- Current access to quarry should be removed as it is intrusion into green space

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan). The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the NPPF) and are generally considered to conform. Where non-conformity exists, this will be highlighted and addressed in the appraisal section below.

The Medway Landscape Character Assessment, 2011 (the MLCA) is also applicable.

Listed Building Appraisal

Background

Manor Farm Barn is a Grade I Listed Building and the entire application site is located within the Frindsbury and Manor Farm Conservation Area. Manor Farm Barn is one of the longest and best-preserved medieval barns in England, measuring approx. 64 metres in length. It dates from around the 14th or 15th Century and was primarily used for storage of crops, probably mostly corn, given its location, but such buildings were frequently used for threshing and maybe other farm work and also for housing animals.

Until recently, the Barn was in a state of disrepair having suffered substantial damage by a fire in 2003 due to antisocial behaviour. The northern end of the Barn that was damaged by the fire was recently restored following the granting of planning permission (ref. MC/18/1234) and Listed Building consent (ref. MC/18/1235) for the reconstruction and restoration of the fire-damaged building, back to its pre-fire condition. The works involved the use of traditional craftsmanship to ensure the restoration was authentic to its pre-2003 condition to help reveal its significance.

The currently proposed development would only undertake minor restorative and remedial works to the existing, original section of Manor Farm Barn which would ensure its long-term conservation.

The proposed development seeks to bring the Grade I Listed building back into use to secure its long-term future. The restoration and maintenance of a Grade I Listed building such as Manor Farm Barn has a significant cost and therefore it is essential that a viable, ongoing use for the building and site is delivered to ensure the building can be maintained for future generations. Without this investment the heritage asset could potentially deteriorate further before being lost altogether.

This Listed Building application is directly related to the larger Hybrid Planning Application that is also being considered for the Barn works and Change of Use as well as the proposed secondary school and housing development.

Conservation Area and Listed building setting

The site is within the Frindsbury & Manor Farm Conservation Area.

The Conservation area is principally significant as a good example of a medieval hamlet with a dual focus of the Parish Church of All Saints and a manor of which the Grade 1 Listed barn is the major surviving medieval element.

All Saints Church is located on the southern end of the conservation area, visible atop a chalk cliff in long views from the south and east. An impression of its once rural setting is heavily compromised by the growth of Strood and Medway City Estate, albeit remains as a prominent focal point in the townscape.

The remainder of the conservation area is largely to the north of All Saints Church and comprises the Manor Farm Barn, Grade 2 Manor House and grade 2 Oast (now converted to residential).

Fields to the north, west and east of the site are also within the conservation area. These help contribute to the significance of the conservation area as they help to explain the hamlet's rural origins and the barn's historic functional relationship with the surrounding land.

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard be paid to the desirability of preserving, among other things, the setting of listed buildings. Whilst no statutory protection is afforded to the setting of Conservation Areas, paragraphs 194 and 195 of the NPPF require an assessment of the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting its setting.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through the alteration or destruction of a heritage asset, or by development within its setting. Annex 2 of the NPPF defines setting of a heritage asset as "the surroundings in which the asset is experienced, recognising that elements of 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."

Policy BNE14 of the Local Plan relates to development in conservation areas or affecting their setting and states that such development should achieve high quality design which will preserve or enhance the area's historic or architectural character or appearance.

Policies BNE17 and BNE18 relate to listed buildings and require proposals to alter, convert or change the use of listed buildings to not be harmful to the architectural or historic character of the building and not to adversely affect its setting.

With regard to the significance and setting of the heritage assets affected by the proposal, the Council primarily relies upon the expert advice from Historic England, its own Senior Conservation Officer and KCC archaeology. In assessing this application, the Council also takes account of the information about the significance and setting of the heritage assets submitted by the applicant and the responses received from local groups.

Heritage England consider that the works to the barn AND development in its setting would cause a **moderate** level of harm to the significance of the Barn. The impact of the school and residential development on the setting of the conservation area and listed building is considered in detail in the hybrid application.

Heritage England consider that a NO CHANGE option would NOT generate any benefits for the barn and it would remain at risk, vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and with no realistic solution to safeguard its future.

The proposals to the Barn itself make good use of materials, and historically and archaeologically informed architectural consideration, made in consultation with Historic England and the Council's Senior Conservation Officer, means it will have as

little impact as possible, presenting no harm to original fabric. Changes to the setting of the historic Barn have been minimised by the buildings and extensions associated with the Barn making every effort to reflect the history of the place. Any impact on the setting is considered to be outweighed by bringing the building back into use and securing its future. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies BNE14, BNE17 and BNE18 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 194, 195 and 199 of the NPPF.

Change of Use of the Barn

The Grade I Listed Barn has incurred a number of issues over the years, most significant of which was the fire in 2003 as described in the background above.

It has always been the long-term aim of the developers/applicants to bring the Barn back into some form of use, to ensure that the future of the building is secured going forward and to enable the public to benefit from the building as a public space. This aim is something that is fully supported by the Council and Historic England as the importance of this building as a nationally significant building is firmly recognised.

Paragraph 120(d) promotes the use of under-utilised buildings and Policy BNE27 of the Local Plan relates the re-use or adaptation of an existing building in the countryside. The full justification and principle of the proposed change of use are set out and discussed in full in the main Planning Application (MC/21/0302).

In summary, there is no objection to the proposed use.

Impact on Listed Building and Heritage Considerations

The application has significant heritage considerations. This Listed Building application relates directly to alterations to the Grade I Listed Barn itself.

As a statutory consultee, Historic England have great knowledge and influence when it comes to assessing the overall impact that this proposal will have on the Listed Barn. Historic England have stated that securing the long-term sustainable future of the Barn can only realistically be achieved by providing the Barn with a new use that reduces the risk of anti-social behaviour and allows for increased public access and enjoyment of this important listed building.

Alongside the Council and the applicants, Historic England have been engaged in detailed pre-application discussions around the future use of the barn and the detailed design of the proposals for several years. During these pre-application discussions it has become apparent and accepted, that harm to the significance of the Barn cannot be entirely avoided altogether. A 'no change' option would not generate any heritage benefits for the Barn and thus it would remain at risk, vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and with no realistic solution to safeguard its future.

The Impact of the Proposals to the Barn

Policies BNE14 and BNE17 of the Local Plan relate to development in conservation areas and alterations to listed buildings respectively. Paragraphs 194, 195, 197, 199,

200 and 201 of the NPPF are also relevant. Collectively, these policies seek to ensure the value and significance of the affected heritage assets is understood and taken into consideration when determining applications for planning permission which may result in an impact. The relevant policies seek to minimise harm where possible but recognise that some harm might result in which case it is for the Council to assess and balance the harm against the benefits a proposal may bring.

Policy BNE14 (Development in Conservation Areas) of the Local Plan states:

Development within Conservation Areas, or affecting their setting, should achieve a high quality of design which will preserve or enhance the area's historic or architectural character or appearance. The following criteria will be applied:

- (i) materials, features and details of buildings or structures which contribute to the character or appearance of the area should be retained or reinstated; and
- (ii) traditional street patterns, building lines, open spaces and urban spaces, paving and roadway materials, boundary treatments and street furniture should be retained or reinstated; and
- (iii) the scale, height, mass, roofscape, materials, detailing, fenestration, plot width and depth, and visual appearance of new development should be sympathetic with existing buildings and their settings; and
- (iv) trees, hedgerows and open spaces should be retained and protected; and
- (v) hard and soft landscape elements and traditional materials which enhance the area should be utilised.

Proposals should be submitted as full applications when they are within, or would affect, a Conservation Area.

Policy BNE17 (Alterations to Listed Buildings) of the Local Plan states:

Alterations, extensions, conversions or changes of use affecting a Listed Building will not be permitted if they are

- (i) detrimental to the architectural or historic character of the building; or
- (ii) unsympathetic in design, scale, appearance and use; or
- (iii) do not retain original features and materials.

Paragraphs 201 and 202 of the NPPF state:

201. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- (a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- (b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and

- (c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- (d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

It is proposed to convert the northern 4 and a half bays of the Barn to a wedding venue and to divide these bays from the southern end of the Barn with a glazed screen. An extension against the north-west elevation, to house a function room, and against its northeast elevation, to provide a bar and kitchen area is also proposed.

Also proposed are a new floor down the centre of the unconverted southern bays, and the construction of a new midstray in bay 8. The curtilage listed Cattle Shed would be converted to ancillary accommodation.

The partial conversion of the Barn to a heated and insulated wedding venue would cause some harm to its significance. The reconstructed northern bays replicate the medieval framing and thus the Barn retains a strong agricultural character.

Although altering the character of the Barn from agricultural to partially domestic and so introducing some harm to the significance and understanding of the Barn's historic functional use, focussing the new uses in the Barn's northern bays, which were rebuilt in 2019, reduces any impact to the Barn's medieval frame.

Partial conversion is achieved by the installation of a glazed screen. This is to provide separation but in a manner that still allows visitors to the Barn an appreciation of the Barn's length. However, just the act of creating a division is considered to be a major intervention and whilst being glazed is still likely to harm the appreciation of the Barn's great length, a key aspect of significance and the architectural value associated with its Cathedral-like qualities. Reflections from the glazing would compound this effect.

The extensions to the western and eastern bays are also likely to add to the overall level of harm to heritage significance. However, the extensions have been sensitively designed to minimise harm to heritage significance.

The conversion of the cattle shed to overnight accommodation and the removal of key features in order to achieve this use, would also cause a low level of harm because this would give the former agricultural building a more domestic character.

The design of the proposed farmyard buildings draws on agricultural precedents and would be on the site of now lost farmyard buildings. However, their use and associated landscaping and a car park would cause a low level of harm to the setting of the Barn by contributing to the domestication of its setting.

The conversion of the Barn could also make a major contribution to place making and thriving communities by celebrating the area's heritage as a focal point for the community. In this regard it is concluded that this development is capable of making a

positive contribution to sustainable communities and their economic vitality (Paragraph 197 (b) of the NPPF).

The harm to heritage significance has been minimised and it is considered that the remaining harm is justified by the heritage benefits of providing a very significant capital receipt from the residential development to secure the future of the Grade I listed Barn by converting it to a wedding venue. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies BNE14 and BNE17 of the Local Plan and paragraphs 194, 195, 197, 199, 200, 201, 206 and 208 of the NPPF.

Design

It should be noted that the conversion and extension of the Barn and its proposed design is heavily influenced and led by heritage concerns. The design of the proposed extensions and alterations to the Barn are considered to be in harmony with the historical rural use of the area.

The end user has been the influence of the design from the start of the process. This has determined how the building and the proposed ancillary buildings will look and function. The wedding venue and conferencing centre proposal is something that has also been identified with Historic England as a good and viable use for this building as it will allow for the original Barn to remain in a state that shows off its original features and allows for the internal spaces to be as open as possible.

The contrasting design of the expansion building, and its placement related to the topography, is clearly separate from the Barn even with their physical connection. Other interventions made to the barn also show a high quality of design that seeks a clear visual separation of the old and the new.

The design of the surrounding buildings is considered to be in accordance with rural characteristics and as proposed, should be carried out in a way that does not overpower the barn in any way. The existing repair works that have been done to the barn in relation to the rebuilding of the fire damaged bays and essential works to the roof is of an exceptional quality and as a result was declared winner in the category of Best Commercial and Leisure project at the Wood Awards 2020 (one of the UK's premier competition for excellence in architecture and product design in wood). Established in 1971, the Wood Awards recognises, encourages and promotes outstanding wood design, craftsmanship and installation. This gives great comfort in relation to the proposed works within this application and there is every confidence that the exceptional quality of the existing work will continue.

The area in the centre of the Barn and cow sheds is shown to be mainly hardstanding to reflect the courtyard element of this area but will contain amenity planting (including Daisies, Globe Thistle, Goldsturm and English Lavender).

Overall, the landscape proposals associated with the Barn are considered to positively contribute to the final setting of the Barn and are acceptable. The final aspect of landscaping and setting to be considered is the area to the 'front' of the Barn – fronting Berwick Way, which is to remain as open/arable land. It is proposed that this area will not be farmed but will remain as important open space. The proposals show this area

to be rich grass and wildflower seed mix. This will allow for the main views of the Barn to be viewed within the context of meadows, ensuring the concept of the rural medieval Barn is retained as best as possible.

It is considered that the landscaping for the Barn area has been designed to ensure that the views of the building are enhanced whilst also ensuring that the future use as a venue for the public is also enhanced and viable with planting that will appear aesthetically appealing to guests.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

Overall, it is considered that the proposed physical works to the barn and the surrounding area in terms of the landscape proposals are acceptable. The advantages and significance of the proposed works to the Barn will secure the long-term conservation of this nationally important structure and will ensure the building is available to wider community and future generations who will be able to engage with the building and enjoy its rich history

The proposals are considered to comply with Policies S1, S2, BNE1, BNE14, BNE17, BNE18 and BNE21 and paragraphs 194, 195, 197, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206 and 208 of the NPPF 2021.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred for Committee determination due to the number of representations received expressing a view contrary to officer's recommendation and also due to the size, scale and complexity of the overall components.

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess1.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>