

BRIEFING NOTE

DATE:	02 September 2021	CONFIDENTIALITY:	Public
SUBJECT:	Heritage Impact Assessment		
PROJECT:	Land South of Great Barford High Street	AUTHOR:	[REDACTED]
CHECKED:	[REDACTED]	APPROVED:	

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In relation to the promotion of the Land south of the High Street, Great Barford as a deliverable housing site, an initial heritage impact assessment has been carried out. The assessment has been mindful of concerns raised by Bedford Borough Council in their site assessment which reviewed the potential harm to heritage assets by the proposed development of this piece of land.

Heritage context

The site, comprising of an open field, lies immediately to the south of the High Street, to the west of no 104 High Street and is bound by agricultural land along its south and west boundaries. The site contains no listed building however, the northern half of the site is located within Great Barford Conservation Area. There are several designated heritage assets in close proximity to the site; for ease of reference these are plotted and listed below:

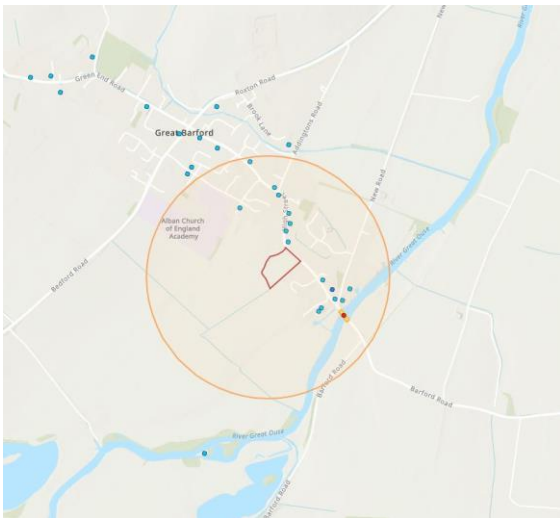


Figure 1: Listed buildings within 0.5km of the site



Figure 2: Great Barford Conservation Area boundary.

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Table 1. List of heritage assets

Asset Name	Grade/Type	Location in relation to the proposed site
Barford Bridge	Scheduled Monument, Grade I listed building	30 meters to the east of the site
Bridge cottage	Grade II	25 meters to the east of the site
The Anchor Public house	Grade II	25 meters to the east of the site
Bridge House and Granary at Bridge House	Grade II	25 meters to the east of the site
Parish Church of All Saints	Grade II*	20 meters to the east of the site
The White Hart Public House	Grade II	20 meters to the east of the site
61 High Street	Grade II	10 meters north of the site
College Farmhouse	Grade II	15 meters north of the site
The Old Vicarage	Grade II	15 meters to the north of the site
Pound Farmhouse	Grade II	20 meters to the north of the site
Rose Cottage	Grade II	40 meters to the north of the site
Saville Cottage	Grade II	40 meters to the north of the site
The Gardens	Grade II	30 meters to the west of the site
27 High Street	Grade II	50 meters to the west of the site

SETTLEMENT CHARACTER AND SURROUNDINGS

The historic settlement pattern of Great Barford shows development concentrated along the High Street and Green End Road, creating a linear built form. Great Barford has managed to maintain much of its rural character, particularly along the eastern part of the High Street where detached houses front the road, separated by greenspaces, with outbuildings located along access roads to the rear. Great Barford has seen gradual development and unsympathetic building which primarily occurred in the 1960s and 1970s and as a result, the settlement pattern has moved away from a linear form to a more nucleated settlement



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pattern. A recent development within the wider setting of the site is Woodpecker Close, accessed from New Road; this development consists of a series of Closes accessed from a singular road. This development is located to the rear of the single dwelling depth linear development along the north side of the High Street.

The site is located within the eastern side of the settlement, which has retained more of the linear plan form than the west. Specifically, the immediate setting of the site consists of loose knit development including a mix of cottages, thatched houses and newer small developments from a variety of periods as well as green open space and farmland. The proposed site is open land and contributes to the agricultural land located along the south of the High Street. It is recognised that the combination of green agricultural spaces, individual dwellings and farmhouses with agricultural buildings in a loose linear form creates the character of the Great Barford Conservation Area. The northern part of the site is located within the conservation area with the open land and the break in built form considered to contribute to the character of the area.

The local vernacular within the village highlights the range of house building styles used during the growth of the village. They range from two storey detached farmhouses fronting the road to bungalows set back from the street edge by generous gardens. The primary materials include the use of red brick with symmetrical sash windows, white render and thatched roofs and the later addition of buff brick and bay windows. Dotted through the village are black clad timber barns. The modern developments, including Woodpecker Close, have responded to the local vernacular in a simpler fashion, referencing the primary materials and general form, but they lack the detailing and individuality of the architecture found along the High Street and which positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

As identified above, the site lies within the setting of a number of designated heritage assets, as well as being located within the Great Barford Conservation Area. All Saints Church (Grade II*), Barford Bridge (Grade I) and The Anchor Pub (Grade II) are all landmarks in this area. These assets are experienced in sequence when approaching the village from the east along Barford Road. The tower and spire of the church are notably prominent on approach before and on the Barford Bridge, whilst the Anchor Pub obscures the nave of the church but actively fronts the village green and River Great Ouse. The setting of these buildings contributes to their special interest as they demarcate the entrance to the village and maintain the historic relationship of the village core. In views from the west the church tower remains prominent from the High Street, however views of the Anchor Pub and Barford Bridge are lost owing to the position of the pub and the curves in the road. This is particularly evident when stood on the boundary of the site which fronts the High Street.

A number of Grade II listed individual dwellings are located close to the site, the nearest being 61 High Street and College Farmhouse, High Street. These buildings date from the 17th century, with their



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significance found in their evidential and aesthetic values namely their method of construction and their architectural detailing. Whilst their location as part of a rural village contributes to their significance, their immediate setting has been compromised by unsympathetic modern development, particularly to the west. The open fields opposite these buildings are considered to contribute to their setting.

The listed buildings further west are visually separated from the site owing to the curve of the High Street and the buildings between them.

Impact of the proposed housing site

The village and the area the site forms part of has maintained its rural character. It is recognised that the village contains a wide variety of buildings and there are visual sensitivities including views of the All Saints Church and the Grade I Listed and scheduled monument, Barford Bridge.

The development of four houses to the rear of the site will not result in harm to the setting of the identified listed buildings. The site will not be visually apparent upon entering the village from the east and therefore the primary view of Barford Bridge and the Church will not be impacted upon. The new buildings will be visible obliquely in long views through the village towards the church, but owing to the prominence of the church tower and spire, the layers of development within its wider setting and the scattered placement of farm buildings in the foreground of this view, the houses are unlikely to be visually dominant in these views. Furthermore, owing to the distance between the proposed buildings and the bridge and church the development is not considered to impact on the immediate setting of these heritage assets, particularly as the existing buildings create a natural separation and visual barrier.

In relation to the Grade II listed dwellings located along the High Street and identified above, the proposed development is likely to result in no harm or a very low level of less than significant harm to their setting. The existing relationship with public open land along the High Street will be retained, with any impact coming from the appreciation of development in long views of the heritage assets. This is likely to affect no61 High Street the most as the open fields are appreciable directly to the south of the site, however owing to the distance of the new development, the scale of development and the existing open fields directly opposite unaffected by the proposals, the impact on setting will be limited.

In relation to heritage impacts of the development, the most affected asset is likely to be the Great Barford Conservation Area. However, the proposals seek to retain and enhance the public open space which is considered to contribute to the character and appearance of the area, with the only interventions being a new access road and alterations to the public realm including a new bus stop. The new houses will be located outside of the conservation area and owing to their siting, they will appear as detached dwellings, in keeping with the traditional pattern of development. They will be visible in long views south from within the conservation area, however the low density and placement of the houses is unlikely to result in the buildings detracting from the rural character of the area. Furthermore, owing to the topography of the land it



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is likely only the rooftops will be appreciated from the public realm. As such any harm is considered to be less than substantial and in the context of the character and appearance of the conservation area as a whole the impact will be low level less than substantial harm.

At present the site has a harsh front boundary treatment, is overgrown and, when visited, was used for grazing sheep. The proposals seek to enhance the offering of this space by creating a publicly accessible open space, that will have greater openness. There will be the opportunity to address the boundary treatment and to introduce wildflower planting to increase local biodiversity. Paragraph 206 of the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to better reveal their significance. Additionally, it states '*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*'. The retention and enhancement of the front of the site accords with paragraph 206 as the openness of the field will be better revealed.

In response to the Council's position that the development of the site for housing has the potential to cause harm to heritage assets, assessment of the site and surrounding heritage assets has shown that any harm would be low in level. There are also heritage benefits to the scheme, including the enhancement of the public open land, which can be weighed against the identified harm, in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF. There are options to avoid and mitigate harm, which are explored below.

Proposed Mitigation

The indicative development proposals recognise and respond to the contribution of the site to the character and appearance of the Great Barford Conservation Area, the setting of the listed buildings and the wider context of Great Barford. Much of the site will remain as open space for the use of the village, therefore the area included within the conservation area and fronting the High Street will remain as existing. Through incorporating the green area into the development proposals, an improved offering to the village is proposed by opening the area up and addressing the boundary treatments that make the site hard to access currently. Therefore, the development proposals recognise the publicly accessible land and wider open agricultural land form part of the character of Great Barford and will ensure this is retained.

The introduction of an access road will result in the loss of some open space, however access roads to the rear of the historic linear development is not atypical, with Orchard Way immediately adjacent to the application site providing access to the outbuildings behind the principal buildings facing the High Street. Further west, School Lane provides similar access to a 21st century development from the High Street. Landscaping can be used to screen the depth of the access road from the primary route through the village and the use of local paving materials would prevent visual distraction. Therefore, the introduction of an access road is not considered to meaningfully detract from the character of the open space



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Whilst the wider topography of the area is level, the site rises gently from the High Street and therefore any taller buildings would be visible. This has sought to be mitigated by locating the houses to the rear of the site and through siting them with a generous amount of space between them. This will allow for views out to the wider countryside to be maintained, with only the roof tops visible from the public realm. The positioning of the buildings is reflective of the organic placement of the heritage buildings in the village and therefore responds to the linear but individual development of the buildings in the conservation area. Furthermore, the appreciation of detached buildings through a village green/open green land is a traditional relationship found within Great Barford, for instance the rear of the houses in Goodwins Yard are visible from the High Street across an open field. It is also noted that the site boundary currently contains mature trees which will aid in screening any new buildings, with additional landscaping a possibility.

Whilst the architecture and design of the houses is indicative at this stage, referencing the site context to ground the buildings within the village is a priority. The design proposals will take cues from the positive elements of the historic local vernacular to form an exemplar new development. Seeking to build upon the layers of architecture found locally, a contemporary approach is preferred, however the material palette will reflect the old village using brick, stone, timber and tiles and traditional craftsmanship will be displayed through architectural detailing.

Other mitigation measures being considered as part of the scheme are wildflower planting to increase biodiversity, increased public parking and a new covered bus stop. These would be benefits for the village.

Summary

The concern that development of the land south of the High Street could impact on designated heritage assets and their settings is recognised, however a review of the listed buildings, the scheduled monument and conservation area, and the contribution of the setting of these heritage assets to their significance, in relation to the proposals has found that any harm would likely be low levels of less than substantial harm.

There are also heritage benefits to the scheme and harm can be mitigated through the detailed design of the buildings, the material palette, and the design of new public open space; and the public benefits offered which currently include new housing, a new bus stop, increased public parking and increased biodiversity planting, will also need to be weighed in the planning balance. It is therefore concluded that the inclusion of the site for the purpose of redevelopment in the Local Plan would not cause significant harm to heritage significance, nor conflict with heritage policies, subject to a sensitively designed and high quality scheme.

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