

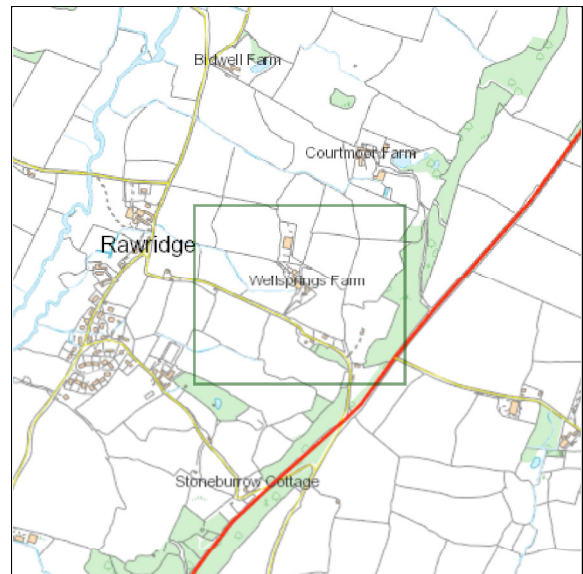
**Ward** Dunkeswell And Otterhead

**Reference** 20/0425/FUL

**Applicant** Mike Drew

**Location** Wellsprings Farm Pound Lane Uptonery  
Honiton EX14 9QB

**Proposal** Construction of replacement farmhouse and  
conversion of existing farmhouse into walled  
garden



**RECOMMENDATION: Refusal**

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		<b>Committee Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020</b>
<b>Dunkeswell And Otterhead (Upottery)</b>	<b>20/0425/FUL</b>	<b>Target Date: 28.05.2020</b>
<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>Mike Drew</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Wellsprings Farm Pound Lane</b>	
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Construction of replacement farmhouse and conversion of existing farmhouse into walled garden</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**This application is before committee because the officer view differs from that of one of the Ward Members.**

**Wellsprings Farm is a rural farmstead located on the eastern side of the Upper Otter Valley, just to the east of the hamlet of Rawridge and within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site comprises of the existing farmhouse and a number of traditional barns/outbuildings as well as a more recent farm buildings at the western end of the site.**

**The application seeks permission to demolish the existing farmhouse, one of the traditional barns and a number of redundant more modern farm buildings. A new farmhouse would be constructed on the site of the existing farm buildings with some further earthworks proposed to create a levelled terrace.**

**The supporting information concludes that the existing farmhouse probably dates from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and is 'unremarkable' from an architectural point of view, having been subject to alterations over the years. However, there is some evidence of earlier origins to the building and together with the traditional outbuildings it forms an attractive vernacular group. The limits to the extent of survey work carried out means that a full understanding of the building's significance has not been possible and this, in turn restricts the ability to properly balance the loss of the building against any potential benefits of the scheme.**

**The applicant suggests that the proposal would enable a more energy efficient dwelling house to be erected; would remove the existing damp problem (caused by the existing farmhouse being constructed into the slope), and; would represent an overall enhancement by removing unsightly and decrepit farm buildings.**

**However, officer view is that the proposal would result in the loss of the traditional farmhouse, where the historic significance (and therefore value) of this is not fully understood and that the proposed replacement farmhouse, would have a greater and more harmful landscape impact than the buildings it would replace. In addition, the replacement farmhouse is considered to fail to reflect the key characteristics and special qualities of the area in terms of its scale, design, layout and external appearance. As a result the proposal fails to provide any clear planning or environmental benefit and is recommended for refusal.**

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Local Consultations**

#### **Dunkeswell And Otterhead - Cllr David Key**

03/04/20 - I fully support the application for a replacement dwelling on this holding. The existing house is totally inadequate for present day occupation with the floors of the rooms on different levels ranging to approximately seven feet different in the lowest to the highest room floor levels plus nothing has been spent on the interior to make it habitable.

Further comments 27/04/20:

I still fully support this application with a partly stone faced front elevation, the rest of my previous comments remain.

Further comments 30/04/20:

Having received the amended application I fully support the application as before. This old farmhouse is not fit for present day occupation due to the floor levels differ over a distance of 7 feet from the sitting room to the kitchen and so certainly not disabled friendly. The present roof was replaced in the late 1970s early 1980s when 90 percent grants were available and this was done by a local builder. The windows are of plastic and wood together with a plastic entrance door to the house.

The only thing that is old are the four walls which are to be made into a walled garden and so preserved, with quite a bit of attention as wall ties are at present holding them together further attention will be needed to hold them in place.

To rebuild on the same site would need a large excavation to level the site for building.

I fully support the design and position of the proposed dwelling.

#### **Clerk To Upottery Parish Council**

The parish council reviewed the amendments made to the application at a virtual meeting on 4 May. As the parish council said previously they do not object but feel the finish of the final building needs to be in keeping with the old farmhouse. It was felt

that the exterior of the new house needs to be blended into the valley. The parish council would like final approval of the finish of the build before the plan is approved.

### **Technical Consultations**

#### Devon County Highway Authority

Observations:

The proposed development would not result in a net gain of residential dwellings in the open countryside and therefore the number of likely traffic movements will remain similar to those that already exist.

Therefore the CHA does not oppose the development or request any conditions.

Recommendation:

THE HEAD OF PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENT, ON BEHALF OF DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL, AS LOCAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY, HAS NO OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

#### Devon County Archaeologist

23/04/20 - I refer to the above application. The proposed development involves the demolition of a historic farmhouse. The farm is shown as "Wells Springs" on the mid-19th century Tithe Map and it is possible that it may have earlier origins. The ecological survey submitted with this planning application suggests that the building is 17th century in date but does not indicate how this date has been determined. The images within the ecological survey suggest that there may be a cruck frame which extends into the rooms on the first floor and, as such, may indicate the building does have some antiquity. However, the information submitted in support of this application is not sufficient to enable an understanding of the significance of the farmhouse as a heritage asset.

Given the potential for the extant farmhouse to have early origins, that the proposed development involves the complete loss of this historic farmhouse and the absence of sufficient heritage information, the Historic Environment Team objects to this application. If further information on the impact of the development upon the heritage asset is not submitted in support of this application then I would recommend the refusal of the application. The requirement for this information is in accordance with East Devon Local Plan Policy EN8 Significance of Heritage Assets and their Setting, and paragraphs 189 and 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018).

The additional information required to be provided by the applicant would be the results of a historic building appraisal undertaken by an appropriately experienced historic building specialist to enable the significance of the farmhouse as a heritage asset area to be understood as well as the impact of the development upon it, and enable an informed and reasonable planning decision to be made by your Authority.

I will be happy to discuss this further with you, the applicant or their agent. The Historic Environment Team can also provide the applicant with advice of the scope of the works required, as well as contact details for historic building specialists who would be able to undertake this work. Provision of detailed advice to non-householder developers

may incur a charge. For further information on the historic environment and planning, and our charging schedule please refer the applicant to: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/development-management/>.

## EDDC Landscape Architect - Chris Hariades

05/05/20 –

### 1 INTRODUCTION

This report forms the EDDC's landscape response to the full application for the above site.

The report provides a review of landscape related information submitted with the application in relation to adopted policy, relevant guidance, current best practice and existing site context and should be read in conjunction with the submitted information.

### 2 LOCATION, SUMMARY PROPOSALS, SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

#### 2.1 Location and brief description of proposals

The site is situated to the north side of Pound Road above and 500m northeast of the small village of Rawridge in the upper Otter Valley. The proposals comprise demolition of the existing farmhouse and a number of out-buildings, the construction of a new farmhouse and associated engineering and landscape works. Access is from the existing track off Pound Road.

#### 2.2 Site description and context

The site covers the farmyard and buildings of Wellsprings Farm and comprises a stone fronted farmhouse to the north eastern end with a small barn and linhay in front and a stone built cowshed and main barn to the west. The latter has been extended southwards by erection of a steel clad lean-to structure. Two further open modern but dilapidated barns are situated west of this.

The farm complex stands at the head of a dry valley on a west facing, steeply sloping hillside, just below the springline, at an altitude of 170-175m AOD. Land to the east rises to the A30 which follows a northeast-southwest running ridge at an altitude of 230m AOD.

There are a number of trees and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site to the north, east and west. The southwest boundary is open and drops away steeply with yard levels retained by approximately 1-2m high retaining structures. A clump of mature pines growing in front of this has recently been felled.

Surrounding land use is agricultural, predominantly pasture on the higher slopes with mixed arable/ pasture lower down and scattered isolated farms and occasional dwellings. A belt of woodland runs along the steep scarp slope to the east.

There is no public access within the site or its immediate vicinity, the nearest public access being Pound Lane itself 70m to the south.

#### 2.3 Conservation designations

The site lies within the Blackdown Hills AONB where, in accordance with NPPF policy

great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty.

Furzy Cottage is situated further up Pound Road 130m to the east and Rawridge Farm, lies 420m to the southwest. Both are grade II listed.

The grade II/ II\* listed Mohun's Ottery is situated 2km to the southwest.

#### 2.4 Views

The site affords extensive views down the Otter valley to the south and across it towards Hartridge to the west. Views to the north and east are much constrained by landform and tree cover.

There are short distance views of the site from sections of Pound Road in the vicinity of the existing access and below it.

There are clear views of the farm from roads and footpaths on higher ground to the west side of the Otter valley, in particular Luppit footpath 58 (1km distant) and 23 (1.2km distant), most of the length of Luppit bridleway 25 (1.8-2.1km distant) as well as the higher sections of New Road (1-1.6km distant) and numerous locations from access land on Hartridge (2-2.7km distant). In these views the farm complex is an attractive and clearly visible feature of the landscape.

The site is visible from the grade II/ II\* listed Mohuns Ottery and grade II listed Rawridge Farm.

#### 2.5 Landscape character

The site lies within East Devon Landscape Character Type (LCT) 2A Steep wooded scarp slopes key characteristics of which relevant to the site are:

- A narrow band of steeply sloping land immediately below the plateau edge
- Mixed woodland and semi-improved or unimproved pasture
- Pastoral cultivation, with small scale irregular field pattern
- Springline mires
- Lightly settled
- Narrow winding lanes with well treed banks
- Occasional long views out over adjoining valleys
- Many patches of semi-natural habitats, including springline mires and scrub

Relevant management guidelines for this LCT include:

- Encouraging the planting of oak as a hedgerow tree.
- Maintaining the inherent sparsely settled character.

The boundary of the adjoining LCT, 3A: Upper Undulating Farmed and Wooded Slopes, lies just to the west of the site Distinctive characteristics of LCT3A relevant to the site are noted as:

- Small to medium size fields with irregular boundaries
- Very wide, usually low, species-rich hedges with many hedgerow trees
- Dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farms and small villages
- Very winding narrow lanes
- Remote and with little 20th century development

#### 2.6 Site landscape character

The site and its immediate landscape setting largely conforms to the LCT types noted above. The existing farm complex is widely visible and an important component of the local landscape character by virtue of its setting, scale and materials (ref figure 1 below).

### 3 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

#### 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2018

para. 172 - Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in [inter-alia] Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas.

The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Para. 180 - Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and
- c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

#### 3.2 East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031

##### Strategy 3 Sustainable Development

The objective of ensuring sustainable development is central to our thinking. We interpret sustainable development in East Devon to mean that [inter-alia] the following issues and their inter-relationships are taken fully into account when considering development:

- a) Conserving and Enhancing the Environment - which includes ensuring development is undertaken in a way that minimises harm and enhances biodiversity and the quality and character of the landscape.

##### Strategy 46 Landscape Conservation and Enhancement and AONBs

Development will need to be undertaken in a manner that is sympathetic to, and helps conserve and enhance the quality and local distinctiveness of, the natural and historic landscape character of East Devon, in particular in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Development will only be permitted where it:

1. conserves and enhances the landscape character of the area;
2. does not undermine landscape quality; and
3. is appropriate to the economic, social and well-being of the area.

#### H6 Replacement of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside

Proposals for the replacement of an existing dwelling outside the defined Built-up Area

Boundaries will be permitted, provided that all the following criteria are satisfied:

1. There is an existing, permanent, habitable dwelling located on the site, which is not a dwelling specifically granted planning permission under the agricultural or forestry exceptions policy.
2. The replacement dwelling is located on, or adjacent to, the footprint of the existing dwelling, or elsewhere within the curtilage of the building where a clear planning or environmental benefit will be achieved.
4. The replacement dwelling does not detract from the appearance and character of the landscape, and within the East Devon and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty harm the natural beauty of the landscape.
5. The dwelling to be replaced is not of architectural importance (whether Listed or not) or important in terms of contributing to landscape character or quality or local distinctiveness.

#### D1 Design and Local Distinctiveness

Proposals will only be permitted where they:

1. Respect the key characteristics and special qualities of the area in which the development is proposed.
2. Ensure that the scale, massing, density, height, fenestration and materials of buildings relate well to their context.
3. Do not adversely affect inter alia:
  - Important landscape characteristics, prominent topographical features and important ecological features.
  - Trees worthy of retention.
4. Have due regard for important aspects of detail and quality and should incorporate inter alia:
  - Use of appropriate building materials and techniques respecting local tradition and vernacular styles as well as, where possible, contributing to low embodied energy and CO2 reduction.
  - Appropriate 'greening' measures relating to landscaping and planting, open space provision and permeability of hard surfaces.

#### D2 Landscape Requirements

Landscape schemes should meet all of the following criteria:

1. Existing landscape features should be recorded in a detailed site survey, in accordance with the principles of BS 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Construction' (or current version)
2. Existing features of landscape or nature conservation value should be incorporated into the landscaping proposals and where their removal is unavoidable provision for suitable replacement should be made elsewhere on the site. This should be in addition to the requirement for new landscaping proposals. Where appropriate, existing habitat should be improved and where possible new areas of nature conservation value should be created.
3. Measures to ensure safe and convenient public access for all should be incorporated.
4. Measures to ensure routine maintenance and long term management should be included.
5. Provision for the planting of trees, hedgerows, including the replacement of those of amenity value which have to be removed for safety or other reasons, shrub planting



and other soft landscaping.

6. The layout and design of roads, parking, footpaths and boundary treatments should make a positive contribution to the street scene and the integration of the development with its surroundings and setting.

### D3 - Trees and Development Sites

Permission will only be granted for development, where appropriate tree retention and/or planting is proposed in conjunction with the proposed nearby construction. The council will seek to ensure, subject to detailed design considerations, that there is no net loss in the quality of trees or hedgerows resulting from an approved development. The development should deliver a harmonious and sustainable relationship between structures and trees. The recommendations of British Standard 5837:2012 (or the current revision) will be taken fully into account in addressing development proposals.

No building, hard surfacing drainage or underground works will be permitted that does not accord with the principles of BS 5837 or Volume 4 National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees – Issue 2 (or the current revision or any replacement) unless, exceptionally, the Council is satisfied that such works can be accommodated without harm to the trees concerned or there are overriding reasons for development to proceed.

The Council will as a condition of any planning permission granted, require details as to how trees, hedges and hedge banks will be protected prior to and during and after construction. The Council will protect existing trees and trees planted in accordance with approved landscaping schemes through the making of Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate or necessary.

Planning permission will be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

### 3.3 Blackdown Hills AONB Management plan

The Blackdown Hills AONB draft management plan 2019-2024 sets out a number of policies aimed at protecting landscape character within the AONB amongst which, of particular relevance to the application are:

PD2 – All necessary development affecting the AONB will conserve and enhance natural beauty and special qualities by:

- Respecting landscape character, settlement patterns and local character of the built environment.

- Being sensitively sited and of appropriate scale.

- Seeking to protect and enhance natural features and biodiversity.

LC3 – Promote high levels of peace and tranquillity with dark skies by minimising noise, intrusive development and light pollution.

## 4 REVIEW OF SUBMITTED INFORMATION

## 4.1 Issues supporting information

### 4.1.1 Ecological assessment

It is noted in the assessment of potential bat roosts that there is no access to the roof void of the dwelling. The conclusion that no bats are present is based on daytime inspection of the exterior of the building only and should have been verified by dusk and dawn field observation and the placement of detectors.

Pine trees noted in the report as landscape and ecological value have since been felled.

### 4.1.2 Tree survey

No tree survey is provided with the application. There is a possibility that proposed grading works to the north of the site will impact RPAs of existing trees and hedgerow and as required by EEDC policy D2 the application should therefore be supported by a tree survey prepared in accordance with BS 5837 2012: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

### 4.1.3 Location plan

The accuracy of the red-line to the southwest application boundary is questioned. The submitted sections indicate that this should be extended outwards a further 4m or so (refer section 3.1.5 below).

### 4.1.4 Topographic survey

No topographic survey is provided with the application although some spot levels are indicated on the existing and proposed site plan. Given the significant level changes across the site and the extent of proposed earthworks a full topographic survey of the application site should be provided which should include accurate levels contours across the site at intervals of 0.5m and identify sudden level changes and slopes greater than 1:3, the extent and height of existing walls, retaining structures and fences and the location and extent of steps, pavings, grass, shrubs, hedgerows, trees, overhead powerlines and any other structures and noteworthy features.

### 4.1.5 Proposed site layout and sections drawings

The proposed site layout plan should clearly show the limits of proposed areas of cut and fill earthworks in order to ascertain their full visual impact and whether they would impact tree and hedgerow root protection areas.

The plan should clearly differentiate between existing trees, hedgerow and scrub to be retained and proposed new planting.

The area to the south of the main barn appears to be shown on the layout plan as a parking area although this is unclear and should be clarified.

A low, rendered masonry wall is marked to the south of the main barn. It should be clarified whether a parapet above it and the proposed finished height of the wall. A suitable local stone facing would be more appropriate than render.

A note on the plan refers to the construction of a ha-ha feature with stock fence. The location and extent of this should be indicated on the plan.

A modern barn is situated at a higher level to the northwest of the site and is presently

accessed through it. The proposals seem to sever this route and the applicant should confirm how the barn will be accessed in future should the proposed development go ahead.

The following discrepancies are noted between the submitted proposed site layout plan and sections which should be clarified and corrected:

-The extent of the proposed terrace area to the southwest of the new dwelling shown on the proposed site layout plan differs from that shown on the sections. Whereas the plan shows the terrace extending 8m and 10.5m measured along section lines 2 and 3 respectively, the sections themselves show these to be 5.4 and 8m.

-The plan indicates a berm forming the southwestern edge of the terrace which is not shown on the sections.

-The sections show a parapet wall forming the outer edge of the terrace which is neither reflected on the existing or proposed ground levels profiles.

The vertical levels bar on the sections does not tally with the actual section levels and should be adjusted accordingly.

#### 4.1.6 Landscape strategy

No landscape details are provided with the proposals apart from a note on the layout plan indicating a single feature native tree. A landscape strategy plan should be provided indicating proposed surfaces and planting structure and habitat/ bio-diversity enhancements.

### 4.2 Design

#### 4.2.1 Site layout

The proposed site layout places the new dwelling 28m to the west of the existing farmhouse where it is prominently set to take full advantage of the fine views to the west and south. The consequence of this is to make the proposed dwelling much more conspicuous in from views to the site.

The new access drive to the north of the site ends in a large turning circle which seems unnecessary and if omitted would enable the proposed dwelling to be set further back into the site, reducing its prominence and allowing some tree planting around the edge of the terrace to the south elevation that would provide screening without over shading and further reduce its visual impact.

#### 4.2.2 Dwelling scale and design

The plan form of the proposed dwelling is in the shape of a shallow 'V' and is much bigger than the existing one with an 80% increase in footprint and approximately double the internal floor area and stands 8m to ridge. By comparison the open barn to be demolished on part of its footprint is 6m high while the adjacent main barn is 5m high to ridge. Neither its form or scale reflects local vernacular building style and, with the proposed fenestration on the outward facing southwest elevation, the building presents a rather barrack-like appearance.

No details appear to be provided of proposed roof, walls, windows, doors and

rainwater goods materials and details should be confirmed.

A note on the proposed site layout plan and sections 1-4 indicates the creation of a ha-ha feature with stock fence through the proposed embankment below the main site. Aside from the cost of creating the necessary retaining structures for this within the made up embankment, its purpose is questioned as the stock fencing would not be seen in any case in views from the house or terrace areas in front. Money would be better spent providing a stone facing to the retaining wall to the south of the main barn instead.

#### 4.3 Landscape and visual impact

The surrounding landscape is of high value as recognised by its AONB status. The landscape retains most of its historic field patterns and hedgerow and is of high quality being remote and sparsely settled with few modern detractors and a high degree of tranquillity. As such it is considered to have a moderate to high sensitivity to change of the type proposed.

While the existing farmhouse is discretely set within the landform and an attractive feature in views of the site the proposed dwelling is of much larger scale and more prominently set forward and to the west of the existing farm complex where it would be a much more noticeable feature in views from Pound Lane and from across the valley to the west/ southwest including at night when the many windows to the southwest elevation may be lit up.

In themselves the demolition of the sheet metal clad lean-to structure to the south side of the main barn and the demolition also of the open barn to the west would enhance the site. However, their relative low height and weathered materials help to reduce their visual impact (ref figure 2 below).

A lack of detail in the submitted information makes it difficult to assess the extent of the proposed earthworks and the impact this may have on existing trees and hedgerow making it difficult to assess the full landscape and visual effect of the proposals. Notwithstanding this, overall the proposals are considered likely to have moderate adverse landscape and visual impact.

#### 4.4 Heritage impact

The historic farm buildings appear on the 1841 Upottery tithe map and form an interesting grouping which contributes to local landscape character. The proposed demolition of the dwelling and cowshed seems regrettable and the opinion of the District conservation officer should be sought in this regard.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Acceptability of proposals

The demolition of the existing farmhouse is subject to EDDC policy H6 which sets out 4 conditions that must be met for an application to replace an existing dwelling to be acceptable. The application does not meet condition 2 as the replacement dwelling is sited some distance apart from the one and provides no clear planning or environmental benefit. The proposal also fails to satisfy conditions 3 and 5 (there is no condition 4) as it will give rise to adverse landscape and visual impact and result in the

loss of buildings which are important contributors to local landscape character.

The submitted information also has a number of shortcomings as noted at section 4.1 and 4.2 above.

As such the proposals are considered contrary to NPPF para. 172 and 180 c); EDDC Local Plan Strategy 3, 7 and 37 and Policy D1, D2 and D3; and Blackdown Hills AONB management policies PD2 and LC3. As such the application should be refused.

However, notwithstanding the above, if the LPA decides that replacement of the existing dwelling is acceptable, amendments to the submitted scheme should nevertheless be sought as noted at sections 4.1 and 4.2 above in order to minimise adverse landscape and visual impact.

## 5.2 Conditions

In the event that satisfactory amended information as noted at sections 4.1 and 4.2 above is provided prior to determination and approval is granted, the following condition(s) should be imposed:

1) No development shall take place until a landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; such a scheme shall include the following:

- A Green infrastructure statement describing the various types of proposed planting and features, and how they tie into the local landscape character and other elements of the proposed development.
- Detailed layouts providing the following information:
  - Planting proposals
  - Hard or soft boundary treatments
  - Hard surface treatments
  - Proposed external lighting scheme incorporating recommendations from the Ecological Impact Assessment and in compliance with Guidance note 08/18 – Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK, Institute of Lighting Professionals/ Bat Conservation Trust, 2018.
  - Proposed earthworks
- Soft landscape proposals shall be accompanied by a specification detailing the proposed species, their planting size, the density at which they will be planted, any specific planting matrices, the number of plants of each species and notes describing how the scheme will be implemented.
- Hard landscape proposals shall be accompanied by a material specification.
- If the scheme has significant level changes, sections shall be provided showing how the proposed development will integrate into the existing context.
- Construction details of any proposed walls, fences and other boundary treatments
- The various tree pits and/or Devon bank construction details.

The landscaping scheme shall be carried out in the first planting season after completion of the groundworks and the building construction works or prior to first occupation whichever is the earliest unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the landscaping shall be maintained for a period of 5 years. Any trees or other plants which die during this period shall be replaced during the next planting season with specimens of the same size and species unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

(Reason - In the interests of amenity and to preserve and enhance the character and

appearance of the area in accordance with Strategy 3 (Sustainable Development), Strategy 5 (Environment), Policy

D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness) and Policy D2 (Landscape Requirements) of the East Devon Local Plan. The landscaping scheme is required to be approved before development starts to ensure that it properly integrates into the development from an early stage.)

### Conservation

20.05.20 - The property is located north of Pound Lane and to the north east of Rawridge and appears on the 1889/90 historic OS map. At that time the site comprised the farmhouse, and several barns/outbuildings grouped informally to the south, west and north-west of the farmhouse. Today only some of the barns/ outbuildings remain, see below. Several modern outbuildings have now been constructed on the site.

In addition, the 1947 aerial photograph clearly shows the farmhouse and the wider farm group, although it appears that the range to the south west may have already been lost or removed by that time. Later aerial photographs still show the farmhouse and remaining wider group in situ including a large modern agricultural building to the north.

Farmhouse: two storey stone rubble (chert) with asbestos cement slate roof and 2no. brick chimneys, set into the hillside. Two and three light upvc casements some with timber lintels over. Two upvc doors to the front elevation. Single storey lean-to at the rear and small lean-to structure. There is evidence of structural intervention in the form of ties on both the front and rear elevations.

Barns: originally four stone barns, there are now only three remaining and named as on the submitted plans as Main Barn, Dairy and Barn for consistency. See below for more detail.

Non-Designated Heritage Asset: I was asked to look at this application to assess whether the Farmhouse was considered to be a Non-Designated heritage asset. To clarify, these are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. I certainly consider that the farmhouse and wider farm group is of local significance and within the rural landscape of Upottery. On the basis of comments made by Devon County Council Archaeology an Historic Building Evaluation by Luxton Chartered Surveyors has now been submitted, see below. This has strengthened the case for the farmhouse to be considered an NDHA.

The NPPF specifically states that:

Para 197. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

The significance of the farmhouse derives from its age, visual appearance and the use of traditional local vernacular materials, its prominent location above the lane within the local landscape, and its juxtaposition and association with the wider farm group. The farm buildings are also considered to be worthy of NDHA status. These factors therefore require consideration in terms of the proposed development to demolish the farmhouse, retaining the walls as a walled garden and the replacement of the farmhouse with a new dwelling.

Listed buildings: Furzy Cottage, Rawridge Farm, Chapel Cottage, and Rose Cottage are all in relatively close proximity to Wellsprings and are listed Grade II. Mohuns Ottery is Grade II/II\* and is some distance away, but there is some visibility between the two. It is considered that there is no impact on the immediate settings of the listed buildings, but that the wider views from the listed buildings, in particular Rawridge Farm and Mohuns Ottery will be affected by the proposals in terms of the agricultural landscape setting (see Landscape comments).

#### HOW WILL PROPOSED ALTERATIONS AFFECT HISTORIC CHARACTER OF BUILDING AND ITS SETTING:

This application is for the construction of a replacement farmhouse and the conversion of the existing farmhouse into a walled garden. In association with the works a new access route and turning circle is envisaged and two of the existing farm buildings are to be retained.

The comments below relate to the status of the farmhouse as a NDHA, the submitted Historic Building Evaluation and the proposed plans:

Historic Building Evaluation: this has now been provided as a result of comments raised by Devon County Council Archaeology. This is a relatively detailed document, but there are a number of concerns relating to the assumptions made and perhaps the need for a more comprehensive inspection which includes gaining access to the roof structure. Not all of the photographs are labelled and it would have been useful to have seen far more interior shots. Comments relating to the content of the document are set out below:

It is accepted that the farmhouse appears on the 1841 Tithe map, but there are certainly indications that the building maybe a lot earlier, perhaps even C17 as indicated by the Ecological survey, but the lack of access into the roof has not provided much needed evidence of the earlier structure. The report refers to re-roofing in the 1970's, and that no structural works were undertaken at that time, but again there is no clear evidence of this. To fully understand the building an evaluation of the roofspace and roof structure would have been expected.

The plans show what appears to be a 3 room cross passage, but there is also an indication that the Sitting room was either added or altered and updated at a later date, as seen by the stepped layout/floorplan and the roof slope at the rear. Certainly, its location, set into the hillside, indicates an earlier building. Further investigation of the layout and in particular looking at the modern rear lean-to might help. Could this have

replaced an earlier structure? A stair turret for instance which wouldn't necessarily have had a rear access.

There is evidence of a range of joinery, some indicating C18 work and the under part of the stairs suggests C18-19. There is evidence of lathe and plaster ceilings and some beams within the ground floor. The removal of the modern ceiling in the kitchen might reveal an earlier ceiling. The photographs of the first floor are not as clear as those within the Ecology report, but certainly indicate an earlier roof structure with possible changes in ceiling height. Again, this indicates a need for access into the roof.

The chimneys have certainly been altered and again access into the roof will assist in dating the overall structure. The inglenook and the fireplace in terms of their location and size indicate an earlier building and warrant further investigation.

Barns: see above for general points.

Main barn: constructed in stone and slate, it has been the subject of modern alteration and extension with cattleyards. Likely to have been a threshing barn, it has an original 'A' frame pegged roof structure and was probably originally thatched. This structure seems exceptionally well preserved;

Dairy: stone with corrugated roof, this has undergone some alteration, but its loss within the proposals is still unfortunate. Could this be incorporated into proposals to retain and extend the farmhouse?

Barn: this appears to be a small stone building with 'A' frame trusses, but has been re-roofed. As indicated in the report this is likely to have been the stone and tiled wash house and store and has a number of interesting features and is an important historic structure within the group.

Cart shed: open fronted, but currently boarded with stone wall to rear and corrugated asbestos roof. This is to be removed as part of the proposals.

To summarise, the plan form of the farmhouse is itself a 'medieval feature' and by the late 18th-century the three room and cross passage plan was very rarely, if ever used. (Lobby entry and other symmetrical plans were common from the mid-17th century and were almost ubiquitous by the 'end of the 18th'). The house may occupy the site of and incorporate part of a medieval or post- medieval house. It has just been much modified, but not so much as to destroy all its significance. The location of the house, built deep into the hillside, is again a clear indication that this house is likely to be much older than the 'late 18th century' as states in the report. Without further investigation of the roof and other exploratory work, the date of the building remains unclear.

The house is 'modest', but not necessarily 'unremarkable' as described in the report. Whilst an internal inspection has not been undertaken by myself it appears to be in relatively sound condition and capable of improvement to modern standards. The recent Estate Agent particulars suggested that it has 'potential to be improved and potentially extended (subject to the necessary consents)'. It may not contain any exceptional architectural details, but this vernacular building is typical of the Blackdown Hills and just as worthy of preservation as less 'unremarkable' buildings.



The whole complex appears to have been improved in the 18th century, including the farmhouse (by the reconstruction of its service end) with the provision of a complete set of new farm buildings, most of which, except the cart linhay, are of 18th century. It is a good example of well-preserved traditional farm buildings which seems to have been re-planned around a much earlier house, possibly after it was acquired by the Uppottery estate. If this interpretation is correct then the importance of the complex as an example of mid-18th century agricultural planning, pre-dating the usual run of 'model farms' needs to be recognised.

It is considered that the submitted report does not go far enough in establishing the historical background of the property or its date of construction. There are a number of questions still unanswered or set aside within the report and the conclusion fails to provide sufficient justification for its lack of significance and therefore subsequent demolition. Further investigation is therefore required.

Structural Survey: the Design Statement (Additional Information) contains an indication of the structure and concerns relating to some historic movement and damp issues. However, there is no detailed Structural Assessment of the farmhouse or the barns. There is a presumption for demolition, but nothing to support or substantiate the fact that it is capable of improvement and extension as the existing farmhouse, see above;

Demolition of the farmhouse: this is certainly regrettable and is based on insufficient justification for its loss. The farmhouse is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset, see above and in conjunction with the historic barns contributes to the local landscape as a significant and visible farm group. Its date of construction has not been fully established and neither its historical importance as a farm group within the local community and wider Blackdown Hills;

Walled garden: whilst this provides evidence of the form and layout of the original farmhouse and utilises the existing stonework, this option, is only appropriate if it is deemed acceptable to demolish the farmhouse and to construct a new dwelling;

Replacement farmhouse: setting aside whether it is appropriate or not for a replacement dwelling, the proposed new dwelling is too large, and will dominate this sensitive and visible rural setting. The form and overall design and appearance is inappropriate with grandiose central doorway and porch/portico and regimented fenestration out of keeping with the rural vernacular. The large hard surfaced patio and surroundings will have considerable impact on the landscape. Any scheme needs to be much reduced and further thought given to retaining the farmhouse, subject to further survey and investigation;

New access drive: this is to the north of the proposed new dwelling and requires the removal of the existing Dairy and has a large turning circle which seems inappropriate and unnecessary for this rural setting. The loss of the Dairy building is also unfortunate and an alternative route should be sought;

Open modern barns: no objection to their removal as this will enhance the setting of the farm group and the wider landscape

Historic barns: the Main Barn and Barn, are to be kept as part of the scheme, with the Dairy being removed, see above. There are no details of how the barns are to be repaired and maintained or any future use to ensure their longterm care;

Conclusion: as it stands, I cannot support the current scheme and have concerns relating to the loss of the farmhouse, which is considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset including the barns. Based on the lack of and insufficient conclusive supporting documentation, in terms of the heritage assets, I would recommend refusal.

**PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATION - PROPOSAL  
UNACCEPTABLE**

**REASONS FOR REFUSAL:** see above

### Other Representations

2 no. representations have been received offering support for the proposal as follows:

- The current buildings do not add anything to the area of outstanding natural beauty and the proposal seeks to rectify this.
- The new farmhouse will help the environment by meeting current building regulations and enable a modern way of living whilst the walled garden helps retain the essence of the original farmstead

## **POLICIES**

Adopted East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 Policies  
Strategy 3 (Sustainable Development)

Strategy 7 (Development in the Countryside)

Strategy 46 (Landscape Conservation and Enhancement and AONBs)

Strategy 48 - (Local Distinctiveness in the Built Environment)

D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness)

D2 (Landscape Requirements)

D3 (Trees and Development Sites)

EN5 (Wildlife Habitats and Features)

EN7 (Proposals Affecting Sites which may potentially be of Archaeological Importance)

EN8 (Significance of Heritage Assets and their setting)

H6 (Replacement of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside)

### **Site Location and Description**

Wellsprings Farm is a rural farmstead located on the eastern site of the Upper Otter Valley just to the east of the hamlet of Rawridge and to the southeast of Upottery. It is accessed via a private drive from the local road to the south of the site and which links between Rawridge and the A30.

The site comprises of the existing farmhouse and a number of traditional barns/outbuildings as well as a more recent farm building at the western end of the site. The farmhouse and traditional barns are largely of random stone wall construction. The farmhouse has a slate roof and other buildings have a mix of slate or corrugated sheeting roof coverings. The building group is constructed on a platform cut into the slope and there are concrete block retaining walls to the southwest side of the group, with in the site and again on the northwest side. There are a number of further modern farm buildings to the northwest of but outside the application site.

The access drive that serves the site runs in a straight line from the local road to the farmhouse before turning tightly to run between the traditional farm buildings to the modern farm buildings and concrete yard area at the northwestern end of the site. The access track continues passed these to serve the larger barn to the north.

There are a number of trees and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site to the north, east and west. The southwest boundary is open and a clump of mature pines forward of the retaining wall has recently been felled.

Surrounding land use is agricultural, predominantly pasture on the higher slopes with mixed arable/ pasture lower down and scattered isolated farms and occasional dwellings. A belt of woodland runs along the steep scarp slope to the east.

There is no public access within the site or its immediate vicinity, the nearest public access being Pound Lane itself 70m to the south.

The site lies in open countryside forming part of the designated Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### **Proposed development**

The application proposes the demolition of the existing farmhouse and the construction of a replacement dwelling on a site to the northwest currently occupied by a modern farm building which it is proposed to remove.

The replacement dwelling would have a shallow V shaped footprint. It would be of two storey height featuring rendered elevations under a slate roof with brick detailing. A two storey gabled entrance projection is proposed to the northeast side of the building featuring random stonework. To the southwest side of the building a level garden/patio

area is shown with as steep slope down to a proposed 'ha-ha' providing a division to the adjoining field. At the rear of the proposed dwelling it is proposed to level the existing yard area and create a turning/parking area to serve the dwelling.

To the northwest of the parking area a further existing barn is shown for removal but this lies outside the application site. The traditional 'main barn; between the existing and proposed dwellings is indicated to be outside of the site but the lean-to, to its southwest side is proposed for removal creating a further parking area.

A smaller barn 'Dairy/Cow Shed' to the rear of the main barn is shown for removal to enable a revised access track to serve the new dwelling.

On the site of the existing farm house it is intended to retain/rebuild the lower part of the walls to form a walled garden.

## **ANALYSIS**

It is considered that the main issues in the determination of the application are as set out below:

- Principle of development
- Design and Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Heritage Issues
- Ecological Impact
- Other Issues

### **Principle of Development**

The site lies in open countryside where development is only supported by Strategy 7 of the Local Plan where it is in accordance with a specific Local or Neighbourhood Plan policy that explicitly permits such development and where it would not harm the distinctive landscape, amenity and environmental qualities within which it is located.

In this case the application site, along with the whole of Upottery Parish was formally designated as Neighbourhood Area on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014, however since that time there has been no made neighbourhood plan and no consultation draft produced. This being the case there are no neighbourhood plans which offer specific support to the application.

In relation to the Local Plan, policy H6 deals specifically with applications for the replacement of existing dwellings in the countryside.

Policy H6 permits such replacement dwellings subject to meeting 4 no. specified criteria as follows:

1. There is an existing, permanent, habitable dwelling located on the site, which is not a dwelling specifically granted planning permission under the agricultural or forestry exceptions policy.

2. The replacement dwelling is located on, or adjacent to, the footprint of the existing dwelling, or elsewhere within the curtilage of the building where a clear planning or environmental benefit will be achieved.

(There is no criteria 3).

4. The replacement dwelling does not detract from the appearance and character of the landscape, and within the East Devon and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty harm the natural beauty of the landscape.

5. The dwelling to be replaced is not of architectural importance (whether Listed or not) or important in terms of contributing to landscape character or quality or local distinctiveness.

Although the application highlights a number of deficiencies with the existing dwelling there is no reason to consider it uninhabitable and there is no evidence that its occupation is restricted in any way, criteria 1 is therefore met.

With regard to criteria 2, in terms of siting it is proposed to construct the new dwelling on a new site approximately 30 metres to the northwest of the existing dwelling on the site of an existing barn. Whilst there are no objections to the removal of the barn as proposed, the chosen site would be in a more prominent location, elevated above the natural ground level on an artificial terrace. This site has been made more visible by the recent felling of a group of pine trees to the southwest.

The supporting statement at para. 1.3 states that the reasoning for the proposed development is two-fold, these being that, *"...the current dwelling is not suitable for long-term conversion without the need for repeat maintenance and repair, and that the site of the current property is on a surface water 'desire line' (with the building having been built into the hillside, and reaping the effects of the subsequent ingress of surface water and associated problems)."*

The desire to replace the existing building with a new building requiring less maintenance is noted and may provide some limited environmental benefit if the replacement dwelling is better insulated, or otherwise requires less use of non-renewable energy to run. However, this does not provide justification in itself for the revised location. The reference to damp ingress relating to surface water run-off at the rear of the building is noted and provides some limited benefits, although there are also alternative solutions that could be undertaken to deal with this problem. It is not considered that on their own the justification put forward for re-locating the building would be sufficient to represent a *'clear planning or environmental benefit'*. This point appears to be recognised as the submitted Design Statement acknowledges that rebuilding on the same site would be *'more acceptable in planning terms.'*

Whilst the justification offered for the revised location is considered to be limited it is also recognised that the proposal involves the removal of a number of existing buildings on the site and that their removal coupled with landscaping proposals has the potential to provide planning or environmental (landscape) benefits that could weight in favour of the scheme, these are considered below. Considered in isolation however, a strong justification to re-locate the building 30m to the northwest does not

appear to have been made, although there is further consideration of the visual impact from this below.

In relation to criterion 4 and 5 (there is no criteria 3) these matters are considered separately below in the landscape and heritage impact sections of the report.

### **Design and Impact on the character and appearance of the area**

The proposed replacement dwelling represents a significant increase in scale over the existing dwelling. A shallow 'V' shaped plan form is proposed with the wings either side of the central entrance area set at a slight angle, the reasons for this are not explicitly made and whilst not in itself overly harmful represents a change from the more traditional and linear layout displayed by the existing farmhouse and cannot be said to be characteristic of the AONB. The narrow depth of the building is however noted. The two storey form is also reflective of the existing dwelling and other residential development in the area and there is no objection in this respect, albeit to afford full first floor internal ceiling height there would be an overall height increase compared to the existing dwelling house.

In terms of external appearance the proposal indicates the use of rendered elevations under a hipped slate roof. Windows are shown with brick detailing and the full height gabled projection on the north elevation is shown in natural stonework. Policy D1 of the Local Plan requires that development respects the key characteristics and special qualities of the area in which it is proposed and to ensure that the scale massing, density, height, fenestration and materials of building relate well to their context.

The proposed dwelling is of considerably greater scale than the existing dwelling but that is not of itself necessarily a concern provided that the landscape and visual impact is acceptable, particularly as in this location there are no immediate neighbouring properties that the dwelling would be viewed in context with. In terms of materials the use of render and slate is noted on the traditional properties within the area, albeit the use of render/cob elevations under thatched roofs appears more prevalent. The submitted Design and Access statement refers to Exeter's historic brick industry as justification for the use of brickwork, however the use of brick detailing to the window cills does not appear to be locally distinctive.

Although it is evident that elements of the design have, individually, sought to respect traditional local design characteristics, overall this is not considered to be particularly successful. The proposal is of greater scale than the building it seeks to replace and the regimented fenestration arrangement and lack of articulation to the principal elevation does not assist in grounding the building in its rural setting. Given the prominent hillside location and sensitive nature of the landscape how the building would sit within its landscape setting, is an important consideration. The building does not therefore appear to have been designed taking into account the rural location and these design shortcomings are detailed in both the Landscape Officer and Conservation Officer comments.

The surrounding landscape forms part of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and as such its conservation and enhancement needs to be given great weight. Strategy 46 of the Local Plan states that development should only be

permitted where it:

1. conserves and enhances the landscape character of the area;
2. does not undermine landscape quality; and
3. is appropriate to the economic, social and well being of the area.

The existing farmhouse is discretely set within the landform and together with the traditional farm buildings on site represents an attractive feature in views of the site, characteristic of the landscape type. The proposed replacement is sited on an existing terraced area of land to west of the existing farmhouse and currently occupied by a redundant and dilapidated farm building. A group of pine trees to the south of the building have recently been removed exposing this farm building and making it more visible in public views from the south/southwest. In terms of public views the site is visible in close range views from Pound road to the west/southwest of the site. More distant views are afforded from public roads/footpaths on higher ground to the west of the site and from where the exiting traditional farm group is seen distinct from the main group of buildings that form Rawridge.

The supporting information suggests that the removal of the dilapidated farm buildings would offer an opportunity for enhancement of the site and in this regard there are no objections to their removal, however for enhancement to occur the impact of any replacement development must be less (harmful) than that being replaced. In this respect it is recognised that the existing farm buildings, to be removed, with the possible exception of the small dairy building, are of no historic or architectural merit and their removal would not be a loss. Nevertheless, these buildings are not uncharacteristic and indeed representative of the agricultural character of the landscape and have a weathered and organic appearance that reduces their overall landscape impact. They also display some variety in height and form that assists in breaking up their massing. Overall, these buildings are of lower height and width than the proposed replacement dwelling (which is also considerably larger than the existing dwelling) and are considered to be less visually prominent, as their elevation materials are more recessive in appearance than the render (presumably light in colour) proposed for the replacement dwelling's elevations.

Aside from the replacement dwelling itself, landscaping works are proposed to rep-profile the land forward of and to the rear of the dwelling. The works would look to provide a banked slope to the south of the proposed patio area using soil cut from the rear of the site where a level parking/turning area to serve the dwelling is proposed. In order to provide this new access the existing 'dairy' barn would be demolished. It is understood that it is proposed to provide a continuation of the realigned track to the northwest in order to maintain access to a further farm building. This track extension however does not form part of the current application.

There are discrepancies between submitted plans in relation to the extent of earthworks proposed. However, it appears that the development has the potential to impact on trees/hedgerow to the north of the site and which are indicated to be retained and which themselves form part of the landscaped setting of the farm. The proposed site layout plan does indicate some replacement planting but lacks detail as to what is proposed.

There is also missing information on how the excavation to the rear of the site would be retained.

On the basis of the submitted information, it is considered that the scale, layout and external appearance of the replacement dwelling, together with its more prominent location would have a moderate adverse landscape and visual impact even when the buildings proposed for removal under the application are taken into account. Criteria 4 of policy H6 would not therefore be met and the proposal would fail to conserve or enhance the quality and local distinctiveness of the surrounding landscape as required by Strategy 46 of the Local Plan.

### Heritage Issues

The buildings on site are not listed and do not lie within a designated conservation area, as such they are not designated heritage assets. Nevertheless, the farmhouse together with the traditional barns within the building group form an attractive group of traditional farm buildings which individually and collectively are of some merit. It is unfortunate that the potential heritage value of the group had not been formally recognised prior to the submission of the application but nevertheless it is necessary to consider this in the determination of the application.

Devon County Council's Historic Environment Service initially identified the site's potential and subsequently EDDC's conservation team has reviewed the submitted and other available information, as a result of which the building group is considered to represent a non-designated heritage asset. In this regard Para. 197 of the NPPF states that,

*“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”*

Criteria 5 of policy H6 also requires consideration as to the architectural importance and/or contribution to the landscape character of the area when determining whether or not a replacement dwelling should be permitted.

The farmhouse and a number of the outbuildings appear on the 1889/90 historic OS map and the submitted Historic Building Evaluation identifies the farmhouse as appearing on the 1841 Tithe map. There are some indications that the building could be older still but lack of access to the roof void has affected the ability to carry out a full survey of the building and therefore a full investigation of the building's evolution. Whilst the building is described in the submitted Historic Building Evaluation report as 'unremarkable' it is considered to represent a vernacular building with some interesting features that potentially hint at much earlier origins than the late 18<sup>th</sup> century date attributed to it.

The proposal would result in the loss of the farmhouse (and dairy barn), albeit with a proposal to retain/rebuild the lower elevations of the dwelling house to form a walled garden and which would serve to identify and reflect the historic building layout. There



are concerns that the limits to the extent of investigation carried out means that it is not possible to fully understand the significance of the buildings. The lack of a structural survey, for example, means that it is not possible to determine whether the farmhouse is capable of being brought back into everyday use or the degree of renovation/reconstruction required to enable this. This leads to a concern that the proposed demolition is not fully justified, particularly where such demolition is of, what is considered to be, a non-designated heritage asset which is important in its contribution to landscape character and local distinctiveness. On this basis, and given the objections from the County Archaeologist and Conservation officer, it is not possible to fully determine the significance of the asset and therefore to balance the harm that would result against any benefits that might arise from its demolition and replacement.

### Ecological Impact

Policy EN5 of the Local Plan requires development to take into account the potential impact on wildlife and their habitats. Where such potential harm is identified appropriate mitigation is required and in all cases biodiversity enhancement is encouraged.

The application is accompanied by an ecological assessment report that considers the potential impact of the development on protected and other species using the site. The report found limited evidence of use of the site by protected species and concludes that there would be no harm arising subject to replacement planting to compensate for the loss of Pine trees that have been removed. In addition, a number of enhancement measures including provision of bat boxes and bird nesting boxes are proposed. The provision of these measures could be secured by condition.

### Other Issues

The proposal would give rise to some recognised benefits amongst which would be the support for construction and related employment during the construction phase of the development. The development would also involve the removal of some modern farm buildings which are in themselves of no value and in the case of the lean-to the south of the main barn screen views of the traditional barn.

Although the original plans have been supplemented by further/amended information there are though still some discrepancies between submitted plans and a lack of information in other respects.

## **CONCLUSION**

The application proposes the demolition of the existing farmhouse and several outbuildings both modern and traditional. A new farmhouse is then proposed for construction on the site of some redundant farm buildings approximately 30 metres to the northwest of the original site.

The existing farmhouse is considered to have some heritage significance forming an attractive vernacular group with the remaining traditional barns to its northwest, west and southwest. Whilst some investigation into the significance of the building has been

undertaken there are limits to the extent of this and as such it is not possible to determine the full significance of the building and therefore to be able to determine the degree of harm that would arise from its removal. However, the building is considered to represent a non-designated heritage asset and as such its proposed loss needs to be balanced against any benefits arising from the scheme. In addition, the farmhouse and group of traditional buildings are considered to be important in terms of their contribution to landscape character and local distinctiveness and their loss, in this respect weighs against the proposal.

Although there is the potential for some landscape and visual improvement through the removal of dilapidated modern farm buildings, any benefit in this regard is outweighed by the harm arising from the replacement farmhouse which would due to its scale, layout, external appearance and associated hard landscaping would result in a more prominent building within the landscape and one which pays little heed to local vernacular design. In balancing the limited benefits that would arise from the scheme, these are not considered to outweigh the identified landscape, visual and heritage harm that would arise and the proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development by virtue of the layout, scale, external appearance and detailing of the replacement dwelling together with proposed earthworks would result in a building which would fail to reflect the key characteristics and special qualities of the surrounding area; would result in a more prominent form of development that would detract from the character and appearance of the landscape, designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and harm the natural beauty of the landscape, and which overall fails to demonstrate any clear planning or environmental benefit. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Strategies 7 (Development in the Countryside) and 46 (Landscape Conservation and Enhancement and AONBs) and policies D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness) and H6 (Replacement of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside) of the East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 and the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The historic evaluation work undertaken is limited and as such it is not possible to fully understand the significance of the asset and to carry out the required balanced judgement relating to its loss. Nevertheless, the proposal would result in the loss of a traditional farmhouse and adjoining barn which together with other traditional barns on the site form an attractive historic group which are considered to represent a non-designated heritage asset, which make an important contribution to local landscape character and where their loss would result in harm which has not been fully justified or demonstrated to be outweighed by other benefits, the proposal is therefore contrary to Strategy 48 (Local Distinctiveness in the Built Environment) and policy H6 (Replacement of Existing Dwellings in the Countryside) of the East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 and the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Plans relating to this application:

2020_073_01 rev 0 : cross section proposed reshaping 002	Other Plans	27.04.20
2020_073_01 rev 0 : cross section proposed reshaping 1 + 2	Other Plans	27.04.20
2020_073_01 rev 0 : cross section proposed reshaping 3 + 4	Other Plans	27.04.20
P2 A : proposed (amended)	Layout	27.04.20
P5 C : (amended)	Proposed Elevation	27.04.20
P6 A (amended)	Proposed Elevation	27.04.20
amended	Location Plan	27.04.20
P3	Proposed Floor Plans	25.02.20
P4	Proposed Floor Plans	25.02.20
P9	Layout	25.02.20

List of Background Papers

Application file, consultations and policy documents referred to in the report.