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**From:** Megan Belanger <megan.belanger@somerset.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 18 October 2024 13:07  
**To:** Gemma Webster <gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: 23/03070/FUL - Higher Farm - further ecology assessment

Hi Gemma,

**23/03070/FUL| Proposed renovation and subdivision of existing listed farmhouse, demolition of modern farm outbuildings, conversion of barns into dwellings and erection of two new dwellings (providing 8 dwellings on the site in total) alterations to access, creation of new garden curtilages and other ancillary works.| Higher Farm Higher Farm Lane Yeovilton Yeovil Somerset BA22 8JQ**

## Ecology

It looks like there was major habitat loss on this site. This is likely to have impacted a variety of species, namely commuting bats and birds (and possibly dormice – which is an offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981). The loss of species rich hedgerows is, in itself, a huge loss. I concur with the ecology report, which recommends a like-for-like replacement of all habitats. This is in line with the NPPF which states that the site needs to show a 'no net loss'. As such, they will need to submit a BNG metric showing the baseline habitats from the 2022 survey and the proposed habitats so that we can ensure a 'no net loss' is achieved. They don't need a 10% net gain, but they do need to show a no net loss. The baseline habitats have already been recorded, so this should be easy enough to put into the metric.

This will need to be submitted prior to approval.

Barn Owl was confirmed to be using the site, likely for nesting purposes. As such, a Barn Owl survey is required to determine the extent as to which the barn owls use the site (*Shawyer, C. R. 2011. Barn Owl Tyto alba Survey Methodology and Techniques for use in Ecological Assessment: Developing Best Practice in Survey and Reporting. IEEM, Winchester*). We will then need a mitigation strategy for Barn Owl which includes mitigation, compensation, licencing, and monitoring requirements, if applicable.

Until the above is provided, **I have an objection to this application.**

All other matters can be dealt with via condition. These include a lighting strategy, bat licence, CEMP for biodiversity, LEMP, and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.

Kind Regards,

**Megan Belanger**

Senior Ecologist

**Somerset Council**

E: [megan.belanger@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:megan.belanger@somerset.gov.uk)

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**Please note: I work Monday – Thursday.**



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**From:** Gemma Webster <[gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 16, 2024 2:55 PM  
**To:** Megan Belanger <[megan.belanger@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:megan.belanger@somerset.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** 23/03070/FUL - Higher Farm - further ecology assessment

Hi Megan,

Sorry to send so many through to you but just got them all through from the agents this afternoon.

This is one at Higher farm that you requested further ecological assessments on, these were undertaken earlier this year but never submitted.

Thanks

Gemma

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**From:** Matthew Kendrick <[matthew@grassroots-planning.co.uk](mailto:matthew@grassroots-planning.co.uk)>  
**Sent:** 16 October 2024 13:28  
**To:** Gemma Webster <[gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Tom Price <[tomp@orme-architecture.com](mailto:tomp@orme-architecture.com)>; 'Jenny McCracken' <[jenny@avalonplanning.co.uk](mailto:jenny@avalonplanning.co.uk)>; Nathan Hopkins <[nathan@hopkins.uk.net](mailto:nathan@hopkins.uk.net)>  
**Subject:** RE: SPAB Consultation Response <23/03143/LBC> CONS

Dear Gemma,

As we discussed we have completed additional bat surveys as per the attached report – this should cover the second part of the ecology comments.

In respect of the first points about phosphates, we are updating the relevant report to refer to the septic tank to be replaced (which is onsite) and how it discharges, and this will also confirm that chemical dosing is not to be used. This report and connected shadow HRA will follow next week.

In respect of the ridge and eaves height issue. Firstly, the eaves are the same as the rest of the house and given the buildings history, and fact it is not a longhouse we do not see the appropriateness of reducing the level of these. In terms of the ridge height, I have spoken to Orme who have explained why the plans look as they do.

They have highlighted the coping stones (water tabling) on the south and North gables that make the gables appear taller than the ridge when viewed on the elevations – as below. So basically, because the gabled extension is recreating something that was historically present on the site we wanted to recreate these coping stones to match the rest of the building. This was also considered to be important because it will create a more cohesive and seamless addition – the existing end gables are not contemporary with each other (i.e. one was built after the other) but they have subsequently been detailed to match (possibly when the roof was replaced), so we are continuing this approach. Furthermore, the building was not a longhouse style Farmhouse and therefore its linear typology is not integral to its special interest. One of the key elements of the special interest of the building is its multi phased evolution and that actually the loss of the original southeast wing, the addition of the modern chimney and loss of the original windows have all contributed to a sense of decline in the buildings status over time. The recreation of the SE wing to match the remainder of the house will continue the buildings long tradition of evolution, adaption and change.

Therefore, we consider that the coping stones are an appropriate design response but if it is considered to be essential, we can amend if needed - however we all feel that this feature reads correctly and takes reference from the existing house.

If you could get back to us on this point and reconsult on the ecology information it would be greatly appreciated as we are keen to get this referred to the committee chair to see if it is called in asap.



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Kind Regards,

**Matthew Kendrick**  
**Director**



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**From:** Gemma Webster <[gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** 10 October 2024 15:21  
**To:** Matthew Kendrick <[matthew@grassroots-planning.co.uk](mailto:matthew@grassroots-planning.co.uk)>  
**Subject:** FW: SPAB Consultation Response <23/03143/LBC> CONS

Hi Matthew,

Please see the SPAB comments below following reconsultation with them with the rebuttal and amended plans. You will note that a lot of their concerns are now alleviated, but they still have concerns in regards to the height and scale of the extension. If the overall height and scale were reduced it is likely that the objection from SPAB would be removed. Consequently the Conservation Officer is also not likely to object to the scheme.

Please let me know if you wish to review and submit amended plans showing a reduction in the extension on the farmhouse?

Kind regards  
Gemma

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**From:** Planning South <[PlanningSouth@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningSouth@somerset.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 9, 2024 4:28 PM

To: Gemma Webster <[gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:gemma.webster@somerset.gov.uk)>; PlanningAutoIndex <[planningautoindex@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:planningautoindex@somerset.gov.uk)>

Subject: SPAB Consultation Response <23/03143/LBC> CONS

Lettie

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From: Merlin Lewis <[merlin.lewis@spab.org.uk](mailto:merlin.lewis@spab.org.uk)>

Sent: Wednesday, October 9, 2024 3:08 PM

To: Planning South <[PlanningSouth@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningSouth@somerset.gov.uk)>

Subject: 23/03143/LBC Higher Farm, Higher Farm Lane, Yeovilton, Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8JQ our ref. 199209)

Your ref: 23/03143/LBC

Our ref: 199209

Higher Farm, Higher Farm Lane, Yeovilton, Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8JQ

Alterations to the farmhouse following initial comments on proposed renovation and subdivision of existing listed farmhouse into two dwellings and the conversion of Coach house to the rear (revised plans)

Dear Ms Webster,

Thank you for notifying the SPAB of the additional information and revised plans relating to this application which affects Higher Farm House.

The revised scheme retains the existing wall between the stair hall and proposed living room in Plot C. An assessment of potential locations of the original cross passage has been provided within the Response to Heritage Consultees, which is welcome. We agree with the conclusion that the existing stair hall is, on balance, the most likely location of the original cross passage and that the east wall of the stair hall holds significance, even if it is not original. We are therefore pleased to see that this wall is to be retained. As a consequence of the analysis of the cross passage, the full impact of the proposed party wall can also now be understood. The proposed location is shown to be well-reasoned, and sufficient information is provided to allow us to withdraw our objection to this element of the proposal.

We had previously raised concerns regarding the extension proposed to the south-east of Higher Farm House and the associated openings-up at ground and first floor levels. The design of this extension has not been amended, but additional information has been supplied which seeks to justify its form and construction. It has been convincingly demonstrated that this part of the south elevation was entirely re-built after 1796, which allays our concern that early fabric would be removed by the formation of new or larger openings there. However, we remain unconvinced that the height and scale of the extension is appropriate. The proposed south elevation drawing shows that the eaves of the extension would sit above those of the existing house. Even if these are reduced to match the house as suggested in the Response, the mass of the proposed extension would, in conjunction with the wide rooflights and taller windows, present a strong visual challenge to the primacy of the early range. We are unable to accept that the design would be *'authentic and true to the typology of the building'*, as the form of the pre-1838 wing is acknowledged to be unknown and the proposed fenestration differs substantially in design and position relative to the host building, perhaps excepting the proposed first floor gable window. It is also noteworthy that the roof of the historic range has been raised (see Response, p.7, 3.32), and that the original building would therefore have had lower eaves heights. Moreover, whilst a wing is known to have existed in the late C18, this has not been in existence for over 186 years, and the southern building line of the main range at Higher Farm House is now well established and contributes to the character of the listed building.

It is also unclear why such a large extension is necessary. If Higher Farm House is too large to be occupied as a single dwelling, we can accept reversible interventions which allow it to function as two smaller, more manageable dwellings. However, this is hard to reconcile against proposals which also seek to substantially increase the overall size of the house. We therefore maintain our view that the extension would not sit harmoniously against the historic house and would cause harm to its special interest. As this harm has not been justified, we are unable to withdraw our objection to this part of the application.

We would have preferred to see a greater amount of historic fabric retained at first floor level, but acknowledge that this fabric holds relatively low significance as evidence of C19 and later changes to the layout of the house. We may be able to accept the loss of this fabric as proposed, if amendments are made to address the concerns raised above.

We also note the applicants' position on ensuring viable use, and how important this is to securing the health and ongoing maintenance of historic buildings. It is inferred that the proposed changes are integral to the ongoing viable use of Higher Farm House, and therefore integral to its future health and delivering associated heritage benefits. In other words, it is implied that viable use cannot be achieved in less harmful ways. However, no evidence has been provided to support this position. We would bring to your attention the two recently dismissed Appeals (refs. APP/V0510/W/24/3339409 and APP/V0510/W/24/3339409, attached), and in particular Point 33 of the associated decision report. This point relates to heritage benefits brought about by interventions including the removal of inappropriate modern extensions, the replacement of incongruous modern fittings and fixtures, and the general repair and restoration of an historic listed building. Such benefits are similar to those described in relation to Higher Farm House, where it is posited that *'the scheme offers a significant enhancement to the aesthetic value through removal of detracting elements, such as the modern chimney breast, concrete block additions and internal partitions, replacement of modern windows with a more appropriate traditional style and general repair and refurbishment throughout'* (Response to Heritage Consultees, p.1, 3.2).

In these Appeals the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State concludes that *'the weight of these public benefits have been moderated because it has not been clearly demonstrated that the works would be significantly over-and above what any owner of a listed building in a similar condition would undertake'*. Whilst we acknowledge the comments made by the applicant in part 3.2 of their Response, we do not consider that the works described constitute convincing justification for the harm which would be brought about by the revised proposals. Our position is supported by recent, relevant Appeal case studies.

We encourage the applicant to reconsider the scale and form of the proposed extension, to ensure that it does not challenge the primacy of the host building and avoids causing harm to the special interest of the heritage asset. However, we are not yet able to withdraw our objection to this application.

Yours sincerely,

Merlin

**Merlin Lewis**

Caseworker

020 8148 4863

Normal working days: Monday-Thursday

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

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