



- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) comprises the farm buildings and open paddock area associated with Church Farm. Church Farmhouse is excluded from the application site area but is within the ownership of the applicants. The site is located on the northern edge of Lewknor and adjoins open agricultural land to the north and east.
- 1.3 The applicant has referred to ongoing problems associated with the use of the farm complex for modern farming. These problems include the narrow nature of Church Lane for access by modern machinery and the disturbance to neighbouring residential occupiers, particularly within Church Lane, due to the noise, dust and general disturbance associated with the farm activities. The farmer has stated an intention to relocate the farming operations to Field Farm, which is located in a relatively isolated position off the B4009 to the south of Lewknor. Indeed in relation to this proposed relocation planning permission has been granted for the conversion of an existing building at Field Farm to an agricultural dwelling under application P07/E1168. This dwelling would be occupied by the farmer, who is currently residing in Church Farmhouse.
- 1.4 As well as comprising several modern agricultural buildings, the application site also includes a magnificent Grade I listed barn. This building dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century and visually dominates the farm complex, indeed the building is clearly visible in views from the north of the site including views from the M40 motorway. Church Farmhouse has also recently been Grade II listed.

## **2.0 THE PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The proposal is embodied within three separate but evidently linked applications. The application for conservation area consent is to demolish the existing modern farm buildings, which lie within a conservation area. The demolition of the buildings would facilitate the proposed development as outlined in the planning application, which consists of the erection of two detached dwellings and two semi-detached dwellings and the substantial rebuilding of a brick built stables building to provide office space. The original submission also proposed the change of use of the Grade I listed barn to an office use, however, this part of the proposal has now been withdrawn from the application.
- 2.2 The proposed detached dwellings would be constructed on an area of open and undeveloped land on the western side of the site. Each of these two storey dwellings would comprise four bedrooms and would be provided with a triple garage. The design and materials of the dwellings seeks to reflect that of vernacular rural buildings. In terms of the materials it is proposed to use facing brickwork with areas of flintwork and timber weatherboarding, plain clay tile roofs, and timber windows and doors. In terms of dimensions House 1 would be 26 metres long, 7 metres deep and 9 metres high whilst House 2 (excluding the

garage and proposed 'playroom' above) would be 27 metres long, 7 metres deep and 9 metres high. Both houses, but especially House 2, would be provided with generous rear gardens, which would utilise the remaining paddock space on the western side of the site. Each house would have garaging for three vehicles as well as space for further vehicles within the curtilage.

2.3 Houses 3 and 4 are semi-detached and would each comprise 2 bedrooms. These dwellings would be constructed alongside the northern boundary of the site where they would be sited within the footprint of an existing barn to be demolished. The building relating to these dwellings would be 17 metres long, 8 metres deep and 8.5 metres in height. The dwellings would be provided with a shared detached garage providing one space for each unit and the modest gardens for the dwellings would be south facing.

2.4 The building proposed to be partially demolished and rebuilt to provide an office is a traditional stables and storage building currently attached to the listed barn. The building is single storey of red brick construction under a slate roof. The conversion would entail re-roofing the building and raising its roof pitch and therefore height. The new roof would be in plain clay tiles. The building would also become detached from the listed barn and shortened in length also in respect of its western elevation to provide a greater degree of space between it and a detached granary, which is to be retained. The southern wall of the building would be removed and rebuilt to provide a deeper building. Internally, the building would consist of an open plan office, a meeting room and associated facilities. The listed barn is now to remain in agricultural use in association with the surrounding agricultural land.

2.5 A copy of the proposed plans and Planning Supporting Statement is **attached** as Appendix B.

### 3.0 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

3.1 **Lewknor Parish Council** – The Parish Council considers that the application should be approved. However, permitted development rights should be removed for the dwellings. In addition encouragement should be given to using an alternative access to Church Lane for construction traffic. Following withdrawal of the conversion of the listed barn, the Parish Council also considers that the occupation of the new dwellings should be conditional upon the completion and restoration of the barn.

3.2 **Conservation Officer** – The proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and would harm

the setting of the Grade I listed barn and the Grade II listed farmhouse. There is no full methodology for the removal and conservation repair of the listed barn following the removal of the attached farm buildings. As there are no acceptable plans for the development of the site, the demolition of the existing buildings is premature and it is not appropriate to grant conservation area consent.

### 3.3

**English Heritage** – Whilst the withdrawal of the conversion of the listed barn overcomes one of the major objections, English Heritage continue to object to the proposals. The special character of the part of the conservation area within the application site relates to its position on the edge of the village with adjacent open fields. The pair of semi-detached dwellings would intrude on views from the north and east and would have a damaging impact on the setting of the listed barn introducing an overly domestic character to this part of the site. The development would also damage the setting of the listed farmhouse by encroaching too close and confusing its farmstead context. Overall the replacement of the existing agricultural buildings with four dwellings would have a more damaging impact than their retention.

3.4 N.B The full response from English Heritage is **attached** at Appendix C.

**Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings** – Concerns are expressed regarding the conversion of the barn, however, no further comments have been received since the withdrawal of this aspect of the scheme.

3.5

**Ancient Monuments Society** – Objects as there appears to be no justification for the dwellings and the works to the existing stables.

3.6

**OCC Highways** – Objects based on the conversion of the barn to office use being unsustainable. If permission is granted, the Highway Authority would wish to secure contributions of £10000 towards public transport service improvements.

3.7

**Environment Agency** – No objections subject to the imposition of a condition to require an investigation and, if necessary, remediation of contamination to be carried out.

3.8

**Environmental Health** – A condition should be imposed on any planning

3.9 permission to require measures to be carried out to protect the dwellings from traffic noise from the M40.

**Contaminated Land Officer** – Conditions should be imposed on any planning permission to require investigation of, and, if necessary, remediation of any 3.10 contamination on the site as a result of the agricultural use.

**Forestry** – No objections subject to conditions to protect trees on and adjacent to 3.11 the site.

**Natural England** – All of the buildings should be surveyed for protected species. 3.12 Bat boxes should be erected in suitable locations within the site.

**Countryside Officer** – No objections as there is no evidence of protected species 3.13 at the site.

**County Archaeologist** – There is potential for archaeological remains at the site. A condition should be attached to any planning permission to ensure the 3.14 implementation of an archaeological watching brief.

**CPRE** – The stiles should be replaced by kissing gates. A dedicated footpath 3.15 down Church Lane to link to the footpaths extending to the north of the site would be beneficial to avoid having to walk through the churchyard.

**OCC Rights of Way Officer** – The kissing gate between the site and the churchyard should be retained and it is recommended that the stile on the boundary of the site with the adjoining agricultural land is also replaced with a kissing gate.

3.16

N.B. The amended site plan indicates that a pedestrian gate will replace the existing stile on the boundary of the site and that a gate to the churchyard would be retained.

**Neighbours** – One letter of support has been received but it is considered that the open setting of the stream to the west of the site should be retained. Three letters of objection have been received based on the following concerns:

- Increase in traffic
- Increased disturbance to local residents
- Loss of rural outlook
- Loss of view and loss of value (N.B. These are not planning considerations)
- No capacity for additional children at the local school

#### **4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P75/N0008/O - Erection of dwellinghouses and garages with roads and ancillary services. Accesses. Refusal of Planning Permission on 21 March 1975.

#### **5.0 POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:

- G1 – General Policies for Development
- G2 – Improving the Quality and Design of Development
- G3 – Infrastructure and Service Provision
- G5 – Development Outside Settlements
- G6 – Energy and Resource Conservation
- T1 – Sustainable Travel
- T2 – Car Parking
- T3 – Public Transport
- T8 – Development Proposals
- EN1 – Landscape Character
- EN4 – Historic and Cultural Heritage
- EN6 – Archaeology
- E1 – Provision for Employment Development
- H3 – Design, Quality, and Density of Housing Development
- R2 – Access to the Countryside and Rights of Way Network

5.2 Policies of the Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP):

- G1 – General Restraint and Sustainable Development
- G2 – Protection and Enhancement of the Environment
- G3 – Locational Strategy
- G4 – Development in the Countryside and on the Edge of Settlements
- G5 – Making the Best Use of Land
- G6 – Promoting Good Design
- C1 – Landscape Character
- C4 – The Landscape Setting of Settlements
- C9 – Landscape Features

- CON2 & 3 – Alterations and Extensions to Listed Buildings
- CON4 – Use and Changes of Use of Listed Buildings
- CON5 – Setting of Listed Buildings
- CON6 & 7 – Proposals affecting a Conservation Area
- EP2 – Noise and Vibrations
- EP5 – Surface Water Protection
- EP6 – Groundwater Protection
- EP8 – Contaminated Land
- D1 – Good Design and Local Distinctiveness
- D2 – Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
- D3 – Plot Coverage and Garden Areas
- D4 – Privacy and Daylight
- D5 – Promoting Mixed Use Development
- D8 – Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design
- D10 – Waste Management
- D11 – Infrastructure and Service Requirements
- H4 – Towns and Larger Villages Outside the Green Belt
- H5 – Larger Villages within the Green Belt and Smaller Villages throughout the District
- H6 – Locations where New Housing will not be permitted
- H7 – Range of Dwelling Types and Size
- H8 – Dwelling Densities
- H9 – Affordable Housing
- R8 – Public Rights of Way
- E3 – Employment in the Rural Areas
- E4 & E5 – General Employment Policies
- E8 – Reuse of Rural Buildings
- T1 & T2 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

### 5.3 Government Guidance:

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPS3 – Housing
- PPG4 – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- PPG13 – Transport
- PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment
- PPG16 – Archaeology and Planning
- PPS23 – Planning and Pollution Control
- PPG24 – Planning and Noise

### 5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide December 2000 (SODG)
- South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment

## 6.0 PLANNING AND LISTED BUILDING ISSUES

### 6.1 The issues that are relevant to this application are:

1. The principle of the development
  - i. Housing
  - ii. Office conversion
2. Housing mix
3. The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
4. The impact on neighbouring amenity
5. The impact on the historic and architectural interest and setting of the listed buildings
6. Highway considerations
7. Sustainability issues
8. Impact on adjacent trees

### The Principle of the Development

#### i) Housing

#### 6.2

The application site comprises a mix of modern and traditional farm buildings, which are specifically excluded from the definition of 'previously developed land' in Annex B of PPS3. The site is located on the northern edge of the built up area of Lewknor and beyond the farm complex to the north and east the land gives way to open agricultural land. To the west, beyond an area of open paddock land, lies an area of linear residential development along Weston Road, whilst to the south the site adjoins existing residential development extending along Church Lane and the

#### 6.3 churchyard of St. Mary's Church.

Lewknor is designated as a smaller village for the purposes of the SOLP. Within such villages, Policy H5 of the SOLP allows for new residential development in the form of 'infill, which is defined as the filling of an appropriate small gap in an otherwise largely built up frontage by the erection of one or two detached or up to four small terraced or semi-detached dwellings, or backland development of the same scale'. This is on the provision that the criteria under Policy H4 of the SOLP are met. Criterion (v) of Policy H4 relates to backland development and seeks to ensure that such development 'would not create problems of privacy and access and would not extend the built limits of the settlement'.

#### 6.4

The proposed residential element of the development consists of four dwellings spread over a relatively wide area. In this regard the development would not readily be assimilated in with the existing residential development either along Church Lane or Weston Road and would not relate to the infilling of an otherwise built up area of the village. The site adjoins flat open agricultural land to the north and west, beyond which lies the M40 motorway. The existing agricultural buildings are an integral part of the countryside as they evidently relate functionally to the



- 6.5 surrounding agricultural land and visually the agricultural buildings dominate the northern edge of the village, particularly in public views from the rights of way extending to the north of the site and the M40.

- The edge of the village for the purposes of Criterion (v) of Policy H4 and Policy H5 is deemed to be formed by the southern boundary of the application site, which adjoins the residential development in Church Lane and the churchyard. Apart from this boundary, there is open land beyond the agricultural buildings to the east, west and north. Agricultural buildings are a feature of the countryside and in this case, although the site adjoins the main built up area of Lewknor, the agricultural buildings are part of the countryside and beyond the main built up urban edge of the village. As such the principle of redeveloping the agricultural buildings for residential use is unacceptable as the proposal would result in the extension of the built up limits of the settlement, which would detract from the rural appearance of this prominent edge of the village. In addition, the two proposed detached dwellings are located on an area of undeveloped land laid to grass and therefore, the buildings would not directly replace existing agricultural buildings but would be
- 6.6 sited on an area of land that is an important open space in terms of its positive contribution to the character of the village edge and the conservation area.

- The open setting of the farm buildings forms an attractive feature of the edge of the village that allows the surrounding agricultural land to diffuse into the village. The site is an integral part of the countryside and therefore, the proposal falls to be assessed against Policy H6 of the SOLP, which states that planning permission will
- 6.7 not be granted for new houses in the countryside or on the edge of settlements where the built up area of the settlement would be extended.

- However, notwithstanding the strong objections to the principle of the proposed housing and the impact of the development on the surrounding area and historic environment, if this site was to be accepted as a site capable of supporting new housing it is clearly large enough to accommodate more than four dwellings. Policy H8 of the SOLP seeks to make the most efficient use of land in terms of housing density and this is supported by PPS3. No information has been submitted with the application to explain why the number of new dwellings should be restricted to four. As such the application fails to accord with Policy H8 and, on the presumption that the site could support a higher number of dwellings, there would be a requirement for the provision of affordable housing in accordance with Policy H9 of the SOLP, where 40% affordable housing will be sought on housing sites which are capable of supporting a net gain of five or more dwellings in
- 6.8 settlements such as Lewknor.

## ii) Office conversion

- 6.9 Following strong objections to the conversion of the Grade I listed barn, this element of the proposal has been omitted from the scheme. However, it is still proposed to 'convert' an adjacent single storey brick building to form an office. The principle of the re-use of rural buildings is governed by Policy E8 of the SOLP. Criterion (i) of this Policy states that the building to be converted should be of permanent and substantial construction and that the building is capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.

- The proposed conversion of the building involves the re-roofing of the building and the demolition of the walls on the south and west elevation of the building and the reconstruction of these walls. The only wall to remain would be the north elevation. The conversion also involves the loss of internal walls between individual stables to form an open plan office. As well as the reconstruction of walls and roof the proposal involves reshaping the building by making it approximately 1.5 metres deeper and 4.5 metres shorter than the existing. Thus the proposal involves major reconstruction works to the external elevations of the
- 6.10 building and the internal layout. In light of this the proposal cannot be regarded as a proposal for conversion of the existing building and therefore it fails to comply with Criterion (i) of Policy E8. The proposal also fails to comply with Criterion (iii) of Policy E8, which requires that the fabric and essential character of the building is maintained.

## Housing Mix

- 6.11 The proposal relates to the construction of a pair of semi-detached two bedroom units, and two detached four bedroom units, although one of these dwellings could easily be converted into a five bed unit. Policy H7 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that a mix of dwelling types and sizes are provided in relation to new residential developments. Specifically the Policy seeks that at least 45% of dwellings built for sale on the open market on sites suitable for 2 or more dwellings should be 2 bed units. The proposed housing mix satisfies this requirement and therefore, it is considered that the proposal is broadly acceptable against Policy H7.

## The Impact of the Development on the Character and Appearance of the Surrounding Area

## 6.12

The site is not located within an AONB, however, the site is included within Lewknor Conservation Area and is in a sensitive location on the northern edge of the village. Policy CON7 of the SOLP requires that any development respects the character and appearance of conservation areas, and this requirement is reinforced by guidance contained within PPG15. There are two Grade I listed buildings, one being the barn within the site, and the other being St Margaret's Church, which both make a very important contribution to the conservation area. In addition Church Farmhouse has recently been Grade II listed. Any development that affects the character and setting of these buildings will also have an effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The site contains a number of traditional and modern agricultural buildings as well as Church Farmhouse. These buildings represent an important transitional area between the historic core of the village and its built up edge and the open countryside to the north and east. The western side of the application site consists of an area of open paddock land between a stream on the western boundary of the application site and the agricultural buildings. This 'limb' of open land extends from the north western boundary of an adjoining property, 1 Church Lane, past the western boundary of Church Farmhouse before opening out into the open countryside to the north. This area of undeveloped open grassland makes a very positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the landscape setting of this part of Lewknor. Indeed the open paddock helps to draw the countryside towards the heart of the village and along with the adjoining agricultural development, it gives this part of the village a distinctly rural appearance. In addition the paddock provides an important landscape buffer between the farm complex and residential development to the west.

## 6.14

The applicant has sought to justify the new residential development in part by the demolition of the existing modern farm buildings. However, there are no such buildings within the paddock area, which can certainly be classified as undeveloped greenfield land. The two proposed detached dwellings are sited within the paddock area where the openness of this space would be completely eroded by the siting, size and scale of the new dwellings and the associated domestic curtilages of the dwellings. The dwellings and their associated garden areas would completely alter the attractive and informal rural character and appearance of the land and detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Criterion (i) of Policy H4 states that new residential development should not result in the loss of 'an important open space of public, environmental or ecological value'. The paddock land is an important open space in terms of its environmental value in that it makes a very positive contribution to the character and appearance

of the conservation area and the rural landscape setting of this part of the village. As such the proposal would fail to accord with Policy H4.

6.16

As well as through the open areas of the site, the rural character and appearance of the site also stems from the agricultural development and its relationship with the adjoining open countryside. Houses 3 and 4 would in part replace an existing modern agricultural building on the northern edge of the site. Although the majority of the existing agricultural buildings would be removed, thereby creating a greater amount of open space within the site, the residential and office development would harmfully alter the character and appearance of the site by substituting agricultural development that is appropriate and in keeping with this rural location and makes a positive contribution to the rural landscape setting of the village of Lewknor. The residential development in respect of Houses 3 and 4 would be very prominent in views from Lewknor footpaths 7 and 9, which extend northwards from the site.

6.17

In views from the north, including views from the M40, the residential development associated with Houses 3 and 4 would be seen in front of the Grade I listed barn on the site and also partially in front of St Margaret's Church from Lewknor Footpath 9. Whilst substantial in terms of floor area, the existing agricultural buildings form an appropriate rural setting to the Grade I listed buildings. These buildings are considerably lower in height than the Grade I listed barn and allow the roof structure of this building to dominate the surrounding built form. Houses 3 and 4 would be viewed in front of the listed barn in public views to the north, and the additional height of the houses over the existing barns to be removed would reduce the dominance of the height of the listed barn and reduce its prominence within the site.

6.18

The modern agricultural buildings are prominent in views from the north. The applicant is of the opinion that the removal of the buildings and their replacement with dwellings would improve the landscape setting of the village. However, the agricultural buildings are contiguous with the surrounding countryside and are an appropriate and distinctive feature of the edge of the village. The removal of the modern agricultural buildings may reduce the amount of built form, but substituting agricultural buildings with residential development would urbanise this prominent edge of Lewknor to the detriment of the character and appearance of the conservation area and the wider landscape setting of the village. Thus the proposal would also fail to accord with Policy C4 of the SOLP, which states that development, which would damage the attractive landscape setting of a settlement will not be permitted.

6.19

With regard to the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (SOLA), the site is located within Landscape Character Area 5, which is The Eastern Vale Fringes.

Furthermore, the site is described as a floodplain landscape, which is associated with a minor streamcourse north of Lewknor. The SOLA states that one of the key characteristics of this land is that it has an 'intimate and pastoral character'. Table 5.2 of the SOLA, attached as Appendix D states that the flat floodplain pasture has a high scenic quality, a strong sense of place and a high sensitivity to change. The proposed development represents a significant adverse change to the landscape character of the site and the edge of the village contrary to the thrust of the SOLA and Policy C1 of the SOLP, which seeks to conserve and where possible, enhance the landscape of the district. The development would fail to be in keeping with or to integrate into the landscape character of the area.

### Demolition of Buildings in a Conservation Area

Due to the proposed demolition of buildings within a conservation area, an application for conservation area consent for demolition has also been submitted. The buildings to be demolished have a total footprint of over 2000 m<sup>2</sup> and, with the exception of the existing stables to be partially rebuilt, are modern timber or steel framed or blockwork agricultural buildings of little architectural or historic merit. However, the buildings do make an important contribution to the agricultural character of this prominent edge of the village and do provide a strong agricultural context for the adjacent listed barn and farmhouse.

Policy CON6 of the SOLP states that consent to demolish a building within a conservation area will only be granted if the loss of the building would not adversely affect the character of the area and, where appropriate, if there are detailed and acceptable plans for the redevelopment of the site. In this case, the buildings contribute to the agricultural character and appearance of the site and the wider surroundings, and there are no acceptable plans for the redevelopment of the site. Therefore, in the absence of such an acceptable scheme for redevelopment, the demolition of the agricultural buildings is premature and should be resisted having regard to Policy CON6. This view is supported by guidance contained in Paragraph 4.27 of PPG15, which simply states, 'Consent for demolition should not be given unless there are acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment'.

### 6.22 The Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

The redevelopment of the farm buildings would evidently lead to the cessation of the majority of agricultural traffic and agricultural activities at the site. However, following the withdrawal of the conversion of the listed barn to an office use, it is

now intended to retain the use of the building for agricultural storage. It is unclear how intensive this agricultural storage will be and therefore how much agricultural traffic it might generate along Church Lane. Nevertheless, the use of the listed barn for agricultural storage is unlikely to generate significant amounts of agricultural traffic. The significant reduction in the amount of heavy agricultural traffic along Church Lane would be a general benefit to existing residents of Church Lane, however, the level of nuisance caused by the movement of farm vehicles will depend on individual perspective. The loss of the existing grain store, which is immediately adjacent to residential property, would also alleviate existing problems of dust and noise. However, again the level of nuisance experienced from the grain store is subjective and in the case of the grain store, the activity would be largely confined to a relatively short period of the year. Overall it is not considered that the possible improvements to the amenity of the nearby residents can justify the redevelopment of the farm buildings.

6.24 The proposed dwellings would be sited away from existing residential development so that the closest distance between the proposed and existing dwellings (with the exception of Church Farmhouse) would be approximately 50 metres. Although Houses 1 and 2, which would be within the existing paddock area, would only be separated from the garden areas of the existing dwellings to the west by a small stream, the distance of the proposed houses to the western boundary of the site and the screening effects of vegetation would ensure that there would be no significant impact on the existing neighbouring dwellings to the west.

Houses 3 and 4 would be relatively isolated alongside the northern boundary of the site. In this location, these dwellings would have no significant impact on existing neighbouring residential occupiers. The main cause for concern stems from the close proximity of House 1 to the existing farmhouse. The front (east) elevation of House 1 would be within 2 metres of the boundary of the site with the curtilage of the farmhouse and within 14 metres of the side (west) elevation of the farmhouse. This represents an uncomfortably close distance between the two properties and although there are not many windows in the east elevation of Plot 1, there would be an unacceptable degree of overlooking between the two properties. In addition, House 1 would appear overbearing in the outlook from the western elevation and curtilage of the farmhouse.

Houses 1 and 2 would be provided with generous garden areas over the existing paddock land, which would be more than sufficient for the size of the properties. Houses 3 and 4 would be provided with much more modest gardens of approximately 70 m<sup>2</sup>, which would still be sufficient for a two bed unit. However, the amenity of the garden areas would be undermined by the fact that they would be facing towards the existing listed barn where there would be disturbance from agricultural traffic associated with the agricultural storage use of the barn. Furthermore, the gardens would be open to view from the adjacent public right of

way and the proposed office use in an adjacent building. Nevertheless, it is not considered that these concerns by themselves would justify the refusal of the application.

### The Impact on Historic and Architectural Interest and Setting of the Listed Buildings

Included within the application site is a magnificent Grade I listed barn dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the listing description of which is as follows:

6.27 House, now barn. Mid/late C14. C20 weatherboarding over heavy timber framing on brick base; half-hipped roof, old tiles to left and C20 tiles to right. Aisled 3-bay hall. C20 plank double doors. Interior: left end wall has 8 panels of which top 4 are cusped. Left truss: arch braces from wall to tie beam were reset to centre when aisle posts were inserted to support long tie beam; queen-post truss with tension-braced collar and arch braces to tie: arch-braced collar above with clasped purlins, diminishing principals and wind braces. Right spere truss: of similar construction, but lower aisled part has arch-braced aisle posts flanked by trefoil-cusped aisles. Probably built by John de Lewknor, who rebuilt the east end of the church (q.v.) in the Decorated style c.1320-40. Church Farm was acquired by All Souls College from Abingdon Abbey in 1340. Morrey and Smith date the barn to between 1350 and 1440.

6.28

As well as the barn, there are two other listed buildings immediately adjacent to the application site, which are Church Farmhouse (Grade II) and St Margarets Church (Grade I). The impact of the development on the setting and special architectural and historic interest of the listed buildings is a very important consideration. In this regard Policy CON3 of the SOLP states that any alteration to a listed building must respect its establish character and not diminish its special architectural or historic qualities. Policy CON4 of the SOLP states that a change of use of part or the whole of a listed building will only be permitted where its character and features of special architectural or historic interest would be protected and Policy CON5 of the SOLP states that proposals which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will be refused. The above policies are supported by central Government guidance contained within PPG15.

6.29

The original proposal included the conversion of the Grade I listed barn to an open plan office. This element of the scheme has now been withdrawn following very strong objections from the Council's Conservation Officer, English Heritage and The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. However, although the barn would now remain as an agricultural storage building in connection with the

surrounding agricultural land, many of the objections to the scheme from the above consultees are still relevant with regard to the setting of the barn. The following two paragraphs, which explain the negative impact of the development on the setting of the listed buildings, are taken directly from English Heritage's consultation response, which is repeated in full at Appendix C.

6.30 'The site lies at the heart of the conservation area. Whilst much of the development of the conservation area lies to the south of the site, the special character of this part of the conservation area relates to its position on the edge of the developed area with open fields adjacent to the north, west and east of the site. The principal views of the farmstead are from the public footpaths which cross these fields to the north and east. From here, the church, barn and existing farmhouse can be read as the historic core of the village. The proposed pair of semi-detached houses would intrude on this view. These would also have a damaging impact on the setting of the barn, introducing an inappropriate and overly domestic character to this part of the site. The openness to the west of the site would also be compromised by the new houses, which, despite the 'barn conversion' style again introduce a domestic element into the agricultural character of the site.

6.31 'Far from being of 'no particular architectural merit' the existing farmhouse not only makes an important visual contribution to the site but is of considerable historic interest. Possibly dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, if not earlier, it has clearly been the principal farmhouse on the site for centuries. The proposed houses in the 'barn conversion' style immediately adjacent to it, damage its setting by encroaching too close and by confusing its farmstead context'.

6.32

6.33 The above comments can now be afforded greater weight by the fact that the farmhouse has been listed in its own right since the comments were written. It is clear from the above comments that English Heritage has very strong concerns regarding the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the site and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. The existing buildings are entirely in keeping with the agricultural character of the site and the surrounding land, and the replacement of these buildings with residential properties would erode this distinctive character and entirely undermine the agricultural context, which is so important for the setting of the listed barn and farmhouse.

6.34

Houses 3 and 4 would be in close proximity to the listed barn and the detrimental effect of this residential development on the setting of the barn would be exaggerated by the fact that the domestic curtilages of these properties would extend towards the barn with a separation of only 6 metres and by the fact that the houses would be higher than the existing agricultural buildings they would replace



thereby diminishing the prominence and dominance of the roof structure of the 6.35 barn in views from the north, including from the M40 motorway.

House 1 is approximately 2 metres from the boundary with the farmhouse and within 14 metres of the farmhouse itself. This element of the development would result in a very cramped relationship with the farmhouse and would seriously undermine its open setting to the west and its agricultural context.

Although the conversion of the Grade I listed barn has now been withdrawn from the scheme, the proposal would have a very adverse impact on the setting of this barn and the associated listed farmhouse. As such the proposal fails to comply with Policy CON5 of the SOLP and guidance contained within PPG15, particularly 6.36 at Paragraph 2.16, which states:

‘Sections 16 and 66 of the Act require authorities considering applications for planning permission or listed building consent for works which affect a listed building to have special regard to certain matters, including the desirability of preserving the setting of the building. The setting is often an essential part of the building's character, especially if a garden or grounds have been laid out to complement its design or function. Also, the economic viability as well as the character of historic buildings may suffer and they can be robbed of much of their interest, and of the contribution they make to townscape or the countryside, if they become isolated from their surroundings, e.g. by new traffic routes, car parks, or other development.’

6.37

There are currently relatively modern agricultural buildings wrapping around the listed barn in respect of its south and west elevations. The proposal includes the demolition of these buildings thereby opening up all elevations of the barn and allowing it once again to stand as a single structure. This may benefit the setting of the listed building, however, since the withdrawal of the proposed conversion of the barn to an office use, the building would now remain as a barn and the various works put forward to convert the barn are no longer of relevance. However, following the removal of the existing buildings it is evident that restoration works to the building will be required and very little detail of how the barn is to be restored has been submitted. Therefore, particularly given the importance of the Grade I 6.38 listed building, the application contains insufficient information to assess the restoration works to the building having regard to Policy CON3 of the SOLP.

The applicant has stated that the barn will remain in agricultural storage use associated with the surrounding agricultural land, however, although this would be

an appropriate use for the barn, the removal of the remaining agricultural buildings would functionally isolate the barn within the development. Therefore, the agricultural context of the building would be seriously diminished and given the farmer's intention to relocate the farming operations to Field Farm and the fact that the barn is within the ownership of the current applicants it is not clear how exactly the barn will be used and by whom. There are no details of who would be responsible for maintaining the barn and the long term management of the building has not been explained. Such issues should be resolved as part of these applications to ensure the long term future of the very important Grade I listed building.

### Highway Considerations

6.40 A Transport Statement has been submitted with the planning application. The Statement states that the average daily traffic generation to Church Farm at the present time is 40 vehicle movements of which 12 movements are by HGVs. The Statement further states that the proposed development would generate 40 movements per day based on there being 8 employees within the office development. Now that the conversion of the listed barn has been omitted from the scheme, the overall number of traffic movements associated with the proposed development is now likely to be reduced.

6.41

Notwithstanding the above information on traffic movements, the Highway Authority has raised concern that the site is not sustainable for office use as Lewknor is a village not well served by public transport and therefore there would be a reliance on the private car. In addition, whilst the Highway Authority has acknowledged that the level of traffic movements is likely to be similar to the existing situation, there is concern that the number of peak hour traffic movements are likely to be higher. Although the Highway Authority has raised concern regarding the sustainability of the site for an office use, the extent of the proposed office use has now been significantly reduced with the omission of the conversion of the listed barn. Furthermore, the availability of other modes of transport to the private car is only one aspect of sustainability and it is not considered that the relatively modest office use on the site would justify a refusal reason on sustainability grounds.

The Highway Authority has no objection to the residential development. The dwellings would be provided with one space for each of the 2 bed units and three garage spaces for each of the 4 bed units. This level of parking provision is considered broadly acceptable. 7 parking spaces, including 2 disabled spaces, would be provided for the office use, which given the modest size of the building to be converted is again considered acceptable.

In line with Policies G3 of the OSP and D11 of the SOLP, the Highway Authority has requested a financial contribution of £10000 towards public transport improvements to help promote the use of public transport to and from the site. Such a contribution has not been secured and as such the development fails to accord with the above mentioned policies.

6.44

#### Efficient Use of Energy, Water and Materials

Policy D8 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that all new development demonstrates high standards in the conservation and efficient use of energy, water and materials. This Policy has recently been afforded greater weight by the Government's Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change, which was published in December 2007. This Statement is a supplement to PPS1.

The design and access statement outlines measures to provide for the conservation and efficient use of energy and water such as high levels of insulation, energy efficient appliances, ground source heat pumps and rainwater and grey water recycling systems. The orientation and design of the dwellings has also sought to make use of the natural benefits of solar gain. In light of these measures the proposal does seek to demonstrate the efficient use of energy and water and such measures can be formalised through the use of a condition attached to any permission.

#### Impact on Adjacent Trees

There are very few trees within the site itself as the main body of the site is taken up by farm buildings and extensive areas of hardstanding. However, there are trees within the paddock area on the western side of the site and particularly along its western boundary. There are also trees along Church Lane itself. These trees make a very positive contribution to the environmental quality of the surrounding area, and are important to the landscape setting of the village and the character and appearance of the conservation area. Indeed, the majority of the trees will be protected due to their position within the conservation area.

The Tree Officer has been consulted in respect of this application and has no objections to the proposals. However, there are some areas of concern in relation

to such matters as large vehicles accessing the site via Church Lane and breaking low hanging branches, and the proximity of the new development in respect of Houses 1 and 2 to adjacent trees. However, the Tree Officer has confirmed that conditions can be attached to any planning permission to address these concerns.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

7.1 The application site is located on the edge of but beyond the main built up area of Lewknor. Although there are existing modern and traditional agricultural buildings on the site, this development is contiguous with the adjacent countryside and open undeveloped land to the north, east and west of the site, and the effectively part of the countryside surrounding Lewknor. The site does not fall within the definition of previously developed land and the principle of housing development on the site is not deemed to be acceptable. In addition, the partial demolition and substantial rebuilding of the existing stables to form an office does not comply with Policy R8 relating to the reuse of rural buildings.

7.2 The site is highly sensitive in terms of its location and is important to the landscape setting of Lewknor. In addition, the site lies within Lewknor Conservation Area and there is a Grade I listed barn on the site and the site also lies adjacent to the Grade I listed church and Grade II listed farmhouse. The proposed development would have an adverse effect on the setting of the listed buildings and their historic integrity and would fail to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. In addition the development would detract from the agricultural and rural character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, and this negative impact is exaggerated by the prominence of the site in public views, particularly from the north.

## **7.3**

Furthermore the development would result in a detrimental relationship between Church Farmhouse and House 1 to the detriment of the occupiers of these properties and financial contributions towards public transport have not been secured as part of the proposals.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **8.1 P07/E1166**

**That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:**

- 1. The application site is located on the edge of but beyond the main built up area of Lewknor. The existing agricultural buildings are a feature of and contiguous with the countryside and do not represent previously developed land. The proposed development fails to comply with Policy H5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan as it cannot be regarded as infill or backland development. Therefore, and in the absence of any overriding considerations of sufficient weight, the principle of housing development on the site is not acceptable. The application also fails to comply with Policies G1, G2, G4, G6, D1, H4, and H6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and guidance**

contained within PPS1, PPS3 and PPS7.

2. **The proposed office use within the existing stable involves considerable demolition and major reconstruction of the building. The proposal, due to the extent of the works to the building would also fail to maintain the fabric and essential character of the building. As such this element of the proposal would fail to comply with Policy G2, G6, D1 and E8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and guidance contained within PPS7.**
3. **A Grade I listed building (Church Farm barn) is located within a prominent position within the application site. In addition, the site lies adjacent to St Margaret's Church and Church Farmhouse, which are Grade I and Grade II listed buildings respectively. The proposed residential and office development, due its siting, design, height, bulk, massing and domestic character and appearance would harm the setting of the listed buildings contrary to Policy CON5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and guidance contained within PPG15 and the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2000.**
4. **The application site comprises a range of traditional and modern agricultural buildings, which are located in a prominent position adjacent to open agricultural land on the northern edge of Lewknor. The site also lies within Lewknor Conservation Area. The proposed residential and office development, due to its siting, size, design, height, bulk, massing and domestic character and appearance would detract from the rural character and appearance of the site and surrounding area and the landscape setting of this edge of the settlement. In addition the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policies G2, G4, G6, C1, C4, CON6, CON7, D1, H4, H5, E5 and E8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and guidance contained within PPS1, PPS3, PPS7, PPG15, the South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2000 and the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment.**
5. **House 1 would be sited in close proximity to the boundary with Church Farmhouse. The proposed dwelling, due to its siting, size, design, height, bulk and massing would cause an overbearing effect on and overlooking to Church Farmhouse to the detriment of the amenity of its occupiers. In addition the cramped relationship between the two dwellings would adversely affect the amenity of the**

**future occupiers of House 1. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies G2, G6, D4 and H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.**

- 6. The development fails to provide an appropriate scheme of works or on and off-site mitigation measures to accommodate the impact of the development on local infrastructure, services, or amenities. Specifically the proposal fails to provide for improvements to local public transport services. As such the proposal is contrary to government advice, and Policies G3 and T3 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 and D11 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.**
  
- 7. Notwithstanding Refusal Reason 1 above, if the application site is considered acceptable for new housing, the proposed development fails to make the most efficient use of the land in respect of the number of units. Furthermore the site would be capable of supporting a new gain of five or more dwellings thereby requiring the provision of affordable housing. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies G5, D11, H8 and H9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and guidance contained within PPS1 and PPS3.**

**P07/E1167/LB**

**That listed building consent be refused for the following reason:**

- 1. The proposed works comprise the removal of modern agricultural buildings attached to the Grade I listed Church Farm barn. The application is accompanied by insufficient information regarding the methodology for the removal of the buildings and the repairs to the listed building. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies CON3 and CON5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and guidance contained within PPG15.**

**P07/E1263/CA**

**That conservation area consent be refused for the following reason:**

- 1. The existing modern agricultural buildings are of no significant architectural or historic merit, however, they do represent an appropriate form of development on the application site. Whilst a scheme has been submitted for the redevelopment of the site, this scheme is not acceptable at the present time. In the absence of an acceptable scheme for the redevelopment of the site, the demolition of the existing buildings is premature and undesirable in relation to the requirement to protect the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy CON6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, and guidance contained within PPG15.**

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