

**Item No. 15****SCHEDULE B**

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER</b>	<b>CB/09/05343/LB</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Flitwick Mill, Greenfield Road, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 5BE</b>
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>Listed Building Consent: Conversion of existing Mill to Dwelling.</b>
<b>PARISH</b>	<b>Flitwick</b>
<b>WARD</b>	<b>Flitwick West</b>
<b>WARD COUNCILLORS</b>	<b>Cllr D Gale &amp; Cllr S Male</b>
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>	<b>Mary Collins</b>
<b>DATE REGISTERED</b>	<b>08 July 2009</b>
<b>EXPIRY DATE</b>	<b>02 September 2009</b>
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>Mr &amp; Mrs D Whelan</b>
<b>AGENT</b>	<b>C W &amp; R C Shrimplin, Architects and Town Planners</b>
<b>REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE</b>	<b>Assistant Director, Development Management considers it prudent to refer the application to committee</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED DECISION</b>	<b>Listed Building Consent</b>

**Site Location:**

Flitwick Mill is a redundant water powered corn mill with attached mill house which dated from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century and has been subsequently extended. It is listed Grade II as a rare surviving example of the complete milling process, demonstrating the continuing process of expansion and development of mills in the nineteenth century. The complete water system remains as does the attached Mill House (miller's house) which is Grade II listed and associated outbuildings.

The watermill is a timber framed structure, clad with horizontal weatherboarding. The timber superstructure stands on a brick base and has a timber framed and boarded pitched roof covered with slates. The brickwork extends from the ground floor to the first floor. Above this are three further levels which are weather boarded. The waterwheel is cast iron "overshot" design. The mill pond is located to the south of the building and is fed from the River Flit. The lucam (the timber framed housing for the sack loading hoist for the delivery of corn) to the north elevation projects out over the mill yard.

The Mill building itself lies within the Flitwick Settlement Envelope on its far eastern tip off Greenfield Road. The remainder of the site is outside the Settlement Envelope in the Green Belt.

## **The Application:**

Listed Building Consent is sought for the conversion of existing Mill to one residential dwelling.

An application for planning permission has also been received ref. CB/09/05342.

## **RELEVANT POLICIES:**

### **National Policies (PPG & PPS)**

PPG 15                      Planning and the Historic Environment  
PPG 16                      Archaeology and Planning

### **Regional Spatial Strategy**

East of England Plan (May 2008)

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (March 2005)

### **Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan First Review 2005 Policies**

None

### **Planning History**

MB/07/01836/LB	Listed Building Consent: Conversion of existing mill into residential dwelling. Refused: 21/01/09. Appeal pending.
MB/07/01837	Full Conversion of existing Mill into one residential dwelling and the creation of a new vehicular access. Refused: 21/01/09. Appeal pending.
CB/09/01137/LB	Listed Building: Alteration of curtilage listed outbuilding. Including the insertion of external doors and skylights. (Part retrospective). Approved: 03/08/09

### **Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)**

Flitwick TC

Members object to this application on the grounds of loss of heritage, concerns regarding vehicular access/egress and change of use from a Mill to a dwelling. The Town Council would like to see the building retained as a heritage site with the Mill being refurbished to its original state and understand that a charitable trust is being set up by an outside Group. Reaffirm views as set out in the written submission to the planning committee of January 2009. Maintain that the proposal does not represent the best or most cost-effective way to preserve and safeguard its long term future.

Flitwick Preservation Group (Friends of Flitwick Mill)

Since the resubmitted applications are identical to the original rejected proposals and there has been no change in legislation submit that the proposal to convert the mill to a domestic residence does not satisfy planning guidance PPG15

A formal meeting was held on 16th May with the owner of the mill to explore the possibility of working together to achieve an outcome that would preserve the mill and respond to the interests of Flitwick and the wider area. Unfortunately it was not possible to reached a shared view of the future of the mill. Whilst respect the rights of the owner to pursue his proposals, remain convinced the best way of safeguarding the future of the mill is as a working mill and heritage centre.

No response received

Adjoining Occupiers

### **Consultations/Publicity responses**

English Heritage Awaiting response

Society of Protection Awaiting response

of Ancient Buildings  
(Mills Section)

Flitwick Local  
History Society

Support the application in view of what may occur should the whole project be further deferred. Would like to emphasise the importance of retaining the machinery and if possible the display of the machinery so that it can be seen by future generations. In an ideal world the restoration of the mill to its former working life would be admirable but suspect that funding and expertise needed to carry this out

Ampt Hill and District  
Preservation Society

This historic building should be preserved and the proposed change of use with alterations may be the most expedient and cost effective way of achieving this. Consider it highly desirable that the milling machinery should be preserved and maintained.

Archaeology

Dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Flitwick Mill (HER 1061) represents one of the best surviving examples of a watermill complex of this type within Bedfordshire and it is likely that it lies at a site of an earlier mill, probably dating at least to the medieval period.

No objection in principle to the conversion of the building, given its local and regional significance, recommend that adequate recording of the structure take place prior to conversion. In addition the associated works including the creation of new access and parking have the potential to

have an impact on any buried archaeological deposits present at the site. Therefore these remains would need to be satisfactorily investigated and recorded should the proposed development take place. Recommend conditions are imposed.

Application advertised 17/07/09 No response received  
Site Notice posted 16/07/09 No response received

## **Determining Issues**

**The main considerations of the application are;**

1. Background
2. Principle of conversion to a dwelling
3. Other alternative possible uses
4. Impact upon the historic structure and fabric and the special architectural interest of this Grade II listed building

## **Considerations**

### **1. Background**

Applications for Planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the conversion of the Mill to residential use were refused at the Development Control Committee of the Mid Bedfordshire District Council held on 14th January 2009.

The Members resolved that the applications should be refused as the proposed change of use of the mill into a single dwelling was considered to be detrimental to this statutorily Grade II Listed Building by way of its impact on the character of the building. As such the proposal was considered to be an insensitive reuse of the building and contrary to the guidance given in paragraph 3.13 of PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment 1993.

It was considered that the restoration of the Mill to working order would be a more appropriate use for the mill. The Friends of Flitwick Mill presented ideas for an alternative scheme for the use of the mill as a heritage centre and visitor attraction encompassing demonstrations of milling and renewable energy technology, educational activities for local schools and adults, an information centre for visitors to Flitwick and Flitton Moors, local community facilities with meeting rooms, exhibition/gallery space, office space and a tea room.

However since that time, the Friends of Flitwick Mill have met formally with the owner of the mill to explore the possibility of working together but have been unable to achieve a shared view of the future of the Mill. As such it appears that there are no plans to form a charitable trust to purchase and preserve the mill and that no progress has been made in bringing forward any alternative scheme for renovation and repair.

This application is identical to that previously refused and an application for planning permission has also been resubmitted for reconsideration.

Officers remain of the opinion that in order to achieve a realistic and timely repair and renovation of the Mill, its conversion to a dwelling and the reintroduction of an active use should be supported as a mechanism to ensure the renovation and upkeep of this important historic building which is highly distinctive structure on the edge of the urban area of Flitwick. These resubmitted applications are therefore supported by officers.

## **2. Principle of conversion to a dwelling**

The Mill building itself lies within the Flitwick Settlement Envelope and the conversion of the premises to residential use is acceptable in principle in this location. The mill meadow to the south of the mill is considered to be garden land in association with The Mill House and therefore a change of use of the land to residential use is not required.

Planning Policy Guidance 15 paragraph 2.18 advises that the principle of change of use of listed buildings is acceptable in principle : New uses may often be the key to a building's or area's preservation, and controls over land use, density, plot ratio, daylighting and other planning matters should be exercised sympathetically where this would enable a historic building or area to be given a new lease of life. The same provisions on change of use should apply to historic buildings as to all others. Patterns of economic activity inevitably change over time, and it would be unrealistic to seek to prevent such change by the use of planning controls.

Planning Policy Guidance 15 paragraph 3.8 states: *Generally the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use. For the great majority this must mean economically viable uses if they are to survive, and new, and even continuing, uses will often necessitate some degree of adaptation. The range and acceptability of possible uses must therefore usually be a major consideration when the future of listed buildings or buildings in conservation areas is in question.*

Planning Policy Guidance 15 paragraph 3.9 states: *Judging the best use is one of the most important and sensitive assessments that local planning authorities and other bodies involved in conservation have to make. It requires balancing the economic viability of possible uses against the effect of any changes they entail in the special architectural and historic interest of the building or area in question. In principle the aim should be to identify the optimum viable use that is compatible with the fabric, interior, and setting of the historic building. This may not necessarily be the most profitable use if that would entail more destructive alterations than other viable uses. Where a particular compatible use is to be preferred but restoration for that use is unlikely to be economically viable, grant assistance from the authority, English Heritage or other sources may need to be considered.*

Planning Policy Guidance 15 paragraph 3.10 states: *The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed, and the*

*continuation or reinstatement of that use should certainly be the first option when the future of a building is considered.*

The building is on the Mid Bedfordshire Buildings at Risk Register which is published to draw attention to these buildings in the hope that prompt action by the Local Authority and owners or other interested parties will make their future more secure. The building has been assessed in terms of its condition and is allocated a risk grade based on the English Heritage Risk Scale. It has been given a risk grade of 3 (at risk) and is described as being in Fair condition but deteriorating in the June 2004 publication. The Buildings at Risk Register has not been reviewed since and the building is now considered to be in a Poor condition. If historic buildings are not cared for, and repaired when necessary, then decay, failure and collapse will soon follow.

This application has been put forward as an active way to secure the future of the building.

### **3. Other alternative possible uses**

The building was specifically constructed for its use as a water mill and has been adapted many times since including twentieth century alterations to accommodate new machinery and practices. As the building has been built for a specific purpose, it is considered any reuse of the building will require further adaption and changes to both its internal and external appearance.

The agent has considered and discounted other uses in terms of their economic viability and likely potential impact on the building.

Commercial uses have been considered. However, substantial works would need to be carried out to make the building useable for any commercial purposes. The existing floors are uneven and of relatively low loadbearing quality. Ceiling heights are relatively low and the building is not naturally well lit. The provision of modern amenities and insulation would additionally be required. More importantly, an internal staircase would need to be constructed and means of escape would also need to be provided. Cumulatively, it is considered that the alterations required for commercial use would result in a detrimental loss of historic fabric and adverse visual impact on the character and appearance of the listed building. It is also considered that the use of the premises for commercial purposes would also affect the setting of the listed building due to the potential needs for car parking spaces, commercial signage, cctv etc .

SPAB (Mills Section) previously commented that they would like to see the building restored to working use. This would be the best use for the building in accordance with the guidance in PPG15, however this use should also be a viable use. Restoration of the mill will require significant funding and long term management. The mill has been on the Buildings At Risk register since 2004 but no approach has been made to restore the mill by any restoration group. Even if the mill is restored back to working use, this use may not be viable in terms of long term running costs and funding and with this insecurity, this use may not provide viable long term survival for the building.

Enabling development has been considered whereby the mill is restored and funding for the restoration is raised through the granting of planning permission for a residential dwelling within its curtilage. However, it is considered that in this case there is insufficient land within the curtilage of the mill for one residential property without such enabling work detrimentally impacting upon the setting of this listed building and the appearance of this rural edge of settlement location. As such enabling work has been discounted.

The use of the building as a single residential dwelling is considered by the applicant to be minimal intervention into the historic fabric of this building.

#### **4. Impact upon the historic structure and fabric and the special architectural interest of this Grade II listed building**

There are a number of other changes that are proposed to the building to enable its renovation and then conversion to a single residential unit.

##### **External works:**

Replacement of all existing windows and new weatherboarding.

##### **Ground floor:**

- Insertion of door in east elevation.
- Remove existing window to south elevation and replace with door and construction of new additional footbridge from new door.
- Replace stable door to north elevation with new window above timber panel.
- Lower head and cill of existing window opening and replace with larger window

##### **First floor:**

- Insertion of new window to north, south and east elevation.
- Remove high level window in east elevation

##### **Second floor:**

Insertion of two windows to north elevation, two windows to south elevation and two windows to east elevation

##### **Attic**

The existing window in the gable to the north elevation is to be replaced for a smaller window

##### **Internal works:**

- Removal of parts of the floors and floor structure
- Removal of some partitions and timber beams
- Removal of ladders between the ground and first floor and first and second floors
- Removal of partitions forming the grain bins at the upper level.
- Insertion of new insulated ceiling to third floor

- Construction of new staircase
- Subdivision of space and addition of new partition walls.

The Listing description of the building states “The Mill is a rare surviving example of the complete milling process. While the building is not architecturally of a piece, since it has been extended and reclad, it demonstrates the continuing process of expansion and development of the C19 mill”. It retains its complete water system, with clay lined pond, waterways, sluices and hatches.

In this instance it may be argued that the core part of the mill is the machinery and that the internal spaces are there to accommodate working machinery within the building. It can also be argued that the building is not of architectural importance due to the extent of alteration already undertaken. However the interior and exterior of the building are of equal importance to the determination of this application. The building itself is highly distinctive and makes an important contribution to the character of this part of Flitwick and especially to the setting of the listed Mill House to which it is attached.

The internal machinery is concentrated in the western two bays of the structure. The part of the building which is to undergo most changes is the later section to the eastern end of the building. This later section has a raised floor level (formerly housing an auxiliary steam engine) and this is to be removed to allow for level floors throughout. The drive shaft/wheels and associated machinery is situated in the western end of the building and this equipment is to be retained in situ.

The removal of existing floors is mostly to the eastern end of the building. The loss of historic fabric and the new additions would substantially change the internal plan form and character of the Mill and will result in the loss of the unencumbered space which was essential for the purposes for which the building was designed. However the internal space although rearranged and subdivided will still retain the original four floors of the mill.

The core part of the mill may be argued to be the machinery. This proposal includes the retention of the machinery within the mill building in its original location and context and the building will keep its intrinsic historic interest. If permission is recommended, a condition will be imposed to ensure that the items identified in the SPAB (Mills Section) report by Luke Bonwick dated March 2008 are retained within the building. These would then be enclosed within a glazed screen so that they would internally remain fully visible.

The mill is considered to be of special interest and is Grade II listed but is not considered to be of national importance. The building is on the Mid Bedfordshire Buildings at Risk Register. As such it is the Council's duty to intervene in the future of the building and not delay unduly without another viable use having become apparent.

The requirements of modern day residential use are very different from that of a traditional working mill. The building was never intended to be lived in but to house milling machinery and carry out an industrial process. As such the change of use to residential use will inevitably impact on the character of the mill building.

The external appearance of the Mill will be changed, to some extent by the insertion of new windows and openings. The new openings are to be of a



similar size and design to the existing windows and due to the scale of the building the openings are not considered to give the mill an overly domestic appearance. The addition of a new footbridge to the south elevation is not considered to be an intrusive feature to a water mill. Due to its low level in relation to the building, it will have only a minimal visual impact.

The scheme proposed would slightly alter the external appearance of the building but it would still read as a Mill and the external setting would be preserved. To maintain the setting of the listed building and the public views across the water meadow, permitted development rights will be removed for the erection of washing lines and other domestic paraphernalia.

The new use is not considered to pose a threat to the machinery and the Mill which houses it. The proposal seeks to retain as much as practicable of the milling machinery and create living accommodation around the constraints of the mill. The retention of the milling equipment in its original position but within the context of a residential conversion will enable the building to retain its integrity whilst the active use of the building as a dwelling will enable the long term preservation of the building and the machinery it houses.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the above considerations application is recommended for approval.

## **Reasons for granting**

The proposal is in conformity with PPG 15 as the external and internal alterations and additions to the listed building would not have an unacceptably adverse effect on its architectural or historic interest, the development does not unacceptably adversely affect the setting of a listed building and the change of use would not have an unacceptability detrimental effect on the architectural or historic interest of the building, its setting and the long term preservation of the building. The proposal is in accordance with the provisions of PPG16 Archaeology and Planning, paragraph 30 as any material of archaeological interest which exists on the site is safeguarded.

## **Recommendation**

That Listed Building Consent be granted subject to the following:

- 1 The works hereby consented shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to ensure that this consent does not continue in existence indefinitely if the development to which it relates is not carried out.

- 2 **No site works / development shall be undertaken until the full implementation of an appropriate programme of building recording and analysis of the equipment and machinery in the mill and has been agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority and undertaken by a specialist acceptable to the Local Planning Authority and in accordance with an agreed written brief and specification.**

**Reason: To enable a proper record of the building to be made and in accordance with PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.**

- 3 Details of a scheme of archaeological investigation of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the development hereby approved is commenced. The said development shall only be implemented in accordance with the scheme thereby approved.**

**Reason: To safeguard any material of archaeological interest which exists on the site in accordance with PPG16 Archaeology and Planning.**

- 4 Details of a scheme for the retention in situ and protection of the milling machinery as identified in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (Mills Section) report by Luke Bonwick dated March 2008 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works. The said feature(s) shall be protected during the execution of the permitted works, in accordance with the approved scheme.**

**Reason: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the building or structure, its character and appearance is properly preserved, maintained and enhanced, in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.**

- 5 Prior to any building works or repairs being first commenced, a full and detailed, precise specification of all proposed internal and external materials (e.g. type & origin/ manufacturer and mix of lime & sand/ aggregate for mortars or plasterwork/ render, wood lath, brick, stone, tile, slate, thatch, timber or wood);**

**method statement, clearly explaining the sequence of the proposed works and how the approach accords with usual conservation good practice; and**

**an itemised schedule of works (describing fully all repairs, reinstatements and replacement works) and agreed making good,**

**shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be implemented only in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

**Reason: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the building or structure, its character and appearance is properly preserved, maintained and enhanced, in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.**

- 6 Details of the repair and reinstatement of the existing water wheel, mill race, leat, sluice gates and associated retaining walls and abutments**

shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted. The works shall be completed before first residential occupation of the converted mill.

**Reason:** To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the building or structure, its character and appearance is properly preserved, maintained and enhanced, in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 8 The existing weatherboarding shall be reused where possible. New weatherboarding shall match in size and type that of the existing weatherboarding. Details of dimensions and profile of the weatherboarding and a description of its paint finish shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted.

The works shall be implemented solely in accordance with the agreed details.

**Reason:** To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily Listed Building in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 9 Samples of any new slate or ridge tiles required to be used for the roof shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted.

The works shall be implemented solely in accordance with the agreed details.

**Reason:** To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily Listed Building in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 10 Prior to any brickwork repair or new brickwork being first commenced, a detailed description and precise specification of the nature, bond and extent of the works, together with the lime-based mortar mix and sand/aggregate to be used, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Additionally, a sample panel or area of the brickwork, in the agreed bond and providing a representative range of the bricks to be used throughout the repairs, in terms of colour and texture, and the mortar jointing or pointing profile and finish shall be provided and retained during building works as a reference and agreed standard to maintain consistency in workmanship for the duration of the repair works.

**Reason:** To ensure that the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily Listed Building is properly preserved, maintained and enhanced in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 11 Detailed drawings including sections, showing the new doors which it is proposed to install, drawn to a scale of 1:10, together with a detailed description or specification, including the external finish and the pattern of the proposed external door including the door furniture, specifically the hinges, door handle(s) and any external locks and bolts shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved.

Development shall be implemented in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily Listed Building in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 12 The existing windows shall be set aside and inspected for reuse where possible. If beyond reasonable repair, the windows should be used as a model for replacement windows. Plans of the new windows and glazing bars drawn to a scale of 1:5 and 1:2 respectively must be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the removal of the old windows.

The works shall be implemented solely in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily Listed Building in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 13 Prior to any building works being first commenced, detailed drawings of all proposed new and replacement doors and windows, together with a detailed specification of the materials, construction and finishes, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall be provided which clearly show (as appropriate)- a section of the glazing bars , frame mouldings, door panels, the position of the door or window frame in relation to the face of the wall, depth of reveal, arch and sill detail.

Reason: To ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the building or structure, its character and appearance is properly preserved, maintained and enhanced, in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 14 Details of the means of support to the new floors independent of the existing timber structure must be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved.

Development shall be implemented in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of

**this statutorily Listed Building in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.**

- 15 **Details of the construction, design, materials and external finish to the footbridge hereby permitted shall be submitted to and agreed in writing prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted.**

**Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily Listed Building in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.**

- 16 Notwithstanding the approved plans, all rainwater goods shall be of cast iron and painted black.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily Listed Building in accordance with PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994.

- 17 Following the carrying out or completion of the building operations or alterations for which consent is hereby granted, all *making good* of the existing building shall be carried out in materials and finishes which closely match, like-for-like, those historic materials and finishing details used in the existing building or structure- to accord with usual conservation good practice and to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. If there is any doubt regarding the approach to any proposed making good, or any alternative materials are proposed, a precise specification of the materials and finishes should be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the special architectural and historic interest, character, appearance and integrity of the listed building or other historic building is properly maintained and to accord with PPG15 and standard conservation good practice.

**DECISION**

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