

MIDDLE VENTON DREWSTEIGNTON



HERITAGE APPRAISAL, IMPACT ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTED RESOLUTION IN CONSIDERATION OF UNAUTHORISED WORKS

for

Dartmoor National Park
Authority

September 2014

SUBMISSION V1

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CONTENTS

	Page
1. Purpose of & background to the report	3
1.1 Commission	
1.2 Objective & structure of the report	
1.3 Ownership of and access to Middle Venton	
1.4 Planning legislation & policy	
1.5 Author	
2. Brief description	6
2.1 Location	
2.2 Former farmstead - description	
3. Heritage appraisal	10
3.1 Listing & list description, 1988	
3.2 Condition & form 2005	
3.3 Archaeological assessment 2006	
3.4 Dartmoor longhouse tradition & Middle Venton	
3.5 Conclusion	
4. Observation of implemented works & initial impact assessment	18
4.1 Approved works	
4.2 Observation strategy	
4.3 – 4.28 Observations	
4.29 Summary of observations and list of matters to be reviewed	
5. Detailed impact assessment & suggested remedial action	32
6. Mitigating circumstances and justification for the proposed remedial action	45
7. Proposed method of reviewing the report's findings and reaching agreement with the way forward	47

1. PURPOSE OF & BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

1.1 Commission

This heritage appraisal, impact assessment & suggestion of resolution report has been commissioned by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) to review the impact of works carried out without the benefit of prior approval, or as a variation of an approval, and work that has been approved, upon the heritage significance of Middle Venton, Drewsteignton, listed grade II*, set within Dartmoor National Park, in order to ensure that the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building is preserved.

1.2 Objective & structure of the report

The objective of the commission is for myself, as a third party, independent heritage planning professional, to consider the impact of implemented and approved works upon the heritage significance of Middle Venton and if harm is found to be caused by those works to suggest ways in which that harm might most appropriately be addressed. The purpose of this exercise is to find a way forward for the owner and the local planning authority to come to agreement on how the current situation of unauthorised works may be resolved; ideally without the necessity for enforcement action or appeals to the Planning Inspectorate. It is noted that it has already been agreed by the Local Planning Authority that it will not seek to bring any criminal conviction against the owner for breaches of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The report upon my findings begins with a short description of Middle Venton and is then laid out in 5 parts that conclude with how the recommended remedial actions could be reviewed and negotiated in order to achieve a resolution:

Section 2 - A brief description of Middle Venton to allow familiarisation with the building and its setting.

Section 3 - Appraisal of the heritage significance of Middle Venton, listed grade II*, to enable an appreciation of the heritage significance of the building and its constituent parts.

Section 4 - Observation of the works that have been carried out to the listed building and its curtilage buildings, in order to identify those works which are considered to cause harm to the identified heritage significance.

Section 5 - Detailed assessment of the works that are found to cause harm to the heritage significance of Middle Venton and a recommendation of how to remedy that harm.

Section 6 – Mitigating circumstances and justification for the recommended actions.

Section 7 - Recommended strategy for review of the recommendations and method of negotiation to achieve agreement in how to proceed towards resolution.

1.3 Ownership of and access to Middle Venton

Mrs L Sowrey lives at Middle Venton; it is owned by her and a family trust. The property was purchased by Mr & Mrs J A Sowrey in 2005. Sadly Mr Sowrey died in 2010 just after the approvals for the scheme to repair and alter the house were granted. The works that are considered in this report have all been carried out during the period of the Sowrey's ownership and occupation. Mrs Sowrey has provided full access to the property and its associated buildings and land and has been fully co-operative during the gathering of the information necessary to prepare this report, for which grateful thanks are extended.

1.4 Planning legislation and policy

The report has been prepared in accordance with planning legislation, national and local planning policy, principally the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Dartmoor Local Plan which comprises the DNPA's adopted *Core Strategy* and *Development Management DPD*.

1.5 Author

The report has been prepared by Nichola Burley, Dip Cons Arch, MRTPI, IHBC, Heritage Vision Ltd, an appropriately qualified and experienced building conservation, design and planning professional as required by the NPPF. Further details of qualifications and experience may be obtained at www.heritagevision.co.uk.

2. BRIEF DESCRIPTION

2.1 Location

Middle Venton is located in the small hamlet of Venton, 4km west of Drewsteington, 3 ½ km north of Chagford, within Drewsteignton parish, towards the very northern boundary of the National Park, figure 1. Venton is an isolated group of houses and cottages, of varying ages, set on the northern edge of Dartmoor within gently undulating land which appears to be principally in use for grazing, figure 2.

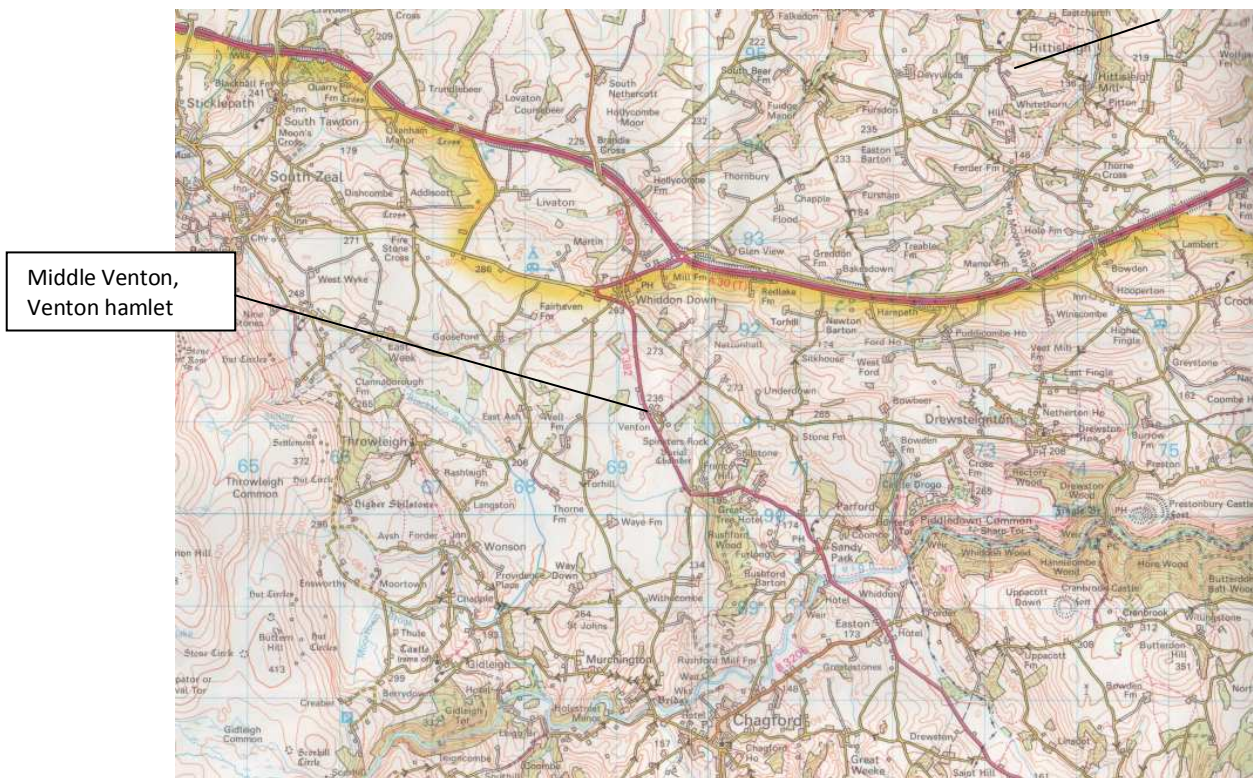


Figure 1. Location map



Figure 2. Venton aerial photograph

2.2 Former farmstead

Middle Venton is a former farmstead which consists of a Dartmoor longhouse, ie. the farmhouse with integral shippon, listed grade II*, addressing a yard of former farm buildings, figure 3. The longhouse is oriented roughly west-east, facing south, with its west end dug into the gentle slope which it backs on to, figures 4 - 8. The yard is made up of an open fronted animal house, believed to be C19, on the east side, which is in use as utility rooms, parking and storage for the house. What has been described as a cow byre is located in the south east corner of the yard, figures 9, 10, this has been converted to ancillary residential use, approvals 10701/05, 01702/05. A two storey shelter adjoining the south side of the converted byre, described as the former stables, figure 10, has been partly converted for secure storage on both the ground and first floor, approvals, 0746/06, 0871/07, 0179/07 with the upper floor currently in use as a bedroom for the annexe. A threshing barn is located on the west side of the yard, figure 11, this is listed grade II in its own right. While the threshing barn is listed in its own right, the other buildings are curtilage structures to the farmhouse and are the subject of listed building protection by virtue of that curtilage status. A garden area has been created to the north, east and south east of the house.



Figure 3. Middle Venton aerial photograph



Figure 4. Middle Venton, house and shippon, south elevation addressing the yard



Figure 5. Middle Venton, west gable and approved extension to the rear (2009 approval)



Figure 6. Middle Venton attached shippon, rear, north elevation, with approved lean-to shed/garden room extension beyond (2009 approval)



Figure 7. Middle Venton, approved shed/garden room reconstruction of a derelict outbuilding at the east gable end, beyond the lower end of the shippon, in the fore ground, approved rear extension in the background



Figure 8. Shed/garden room extension created from derelict outbuilding abutting the shippon



Figure 9. Former cow byre converted to ancillary residential use, approved 2005, south east corner of the yard



Figure 10. The residential conversion with the storage conversion of the former stables abutting, approved 2007



Figure 11. Threshing barn viewed from the lane, west elevation, listed grade II

3. HERITAGE APPRAISAL

3.1 Listing & list description

Middle Venton was formally protected as a *building of special architectural or historic interest*, ie. a *listed building*, in 1988. The building was identified, described and subsequently listed as part of the accelerated listing survey carried out in Devon. The list description provided at that time, included in full below, is a comprehensive and detailed description in common with the bulk of the descriptions prepared as part of the accelerated listing survey. However, since the carrying out of an archaeological assessment in 2006 and further interpretation enabled by the opening up of the house during the implementation of approved alterations, some of the findings of the listing description can now be challenged. In summary, Middle Venton was described in 1988 as a Dartmoor longhouse which originated in the early or mid C16 with major alterations in the late C16 and C17. Since the 2006 appraisal it is appreciated that the building is actually of one C17 build, that the chimneys and roof structure are original and that it did not evolve from a C16 open hall plan. The building is listed with the high grade of II*; this high level grading is considered to be wholly appropriate. Only 4% of all listed buildings are graded II*, 2 % are listed grade I, the remainder are grade II.

LIST DESCRIPTION

SX 69 SE DREWSTEIGNTON VENTON 4/132 Middle Venton Farmhouse GV II
Farmhouse, former Dartmoor longhouse. Early or mid C16 with major later C16 and C17 improvements. Smallish blocks of roughly-shaped granite laid to rough courses and large quoins, cob wall tops, front of house section is plastered; granite stacks topped with C19 and C20 brick; thatch roof, replaced with corrugated iron over the shippon. Plan and development: 3-room-and-through-passage plan Dartmoor longhouse facing south-east and built diagonally across a gentle slope The rear and uphill end are terraced into the hillslope. At the uphill left end is the inner room parlour with a projecting gable-end stack. The hall has a large axial stack backing onto the passage. The shippon is now used for storage. Since the roof structure was completely replaced (probably at a higher level) in the C17 most of the evidence for the earlier development of the house has been removed. Nevertheless it is likely that it began as an open hall house probably heated by an open hearth fire. The hall fireplace was inserted in the mid or late C16. The inner room was refurbished, and probably enlarged, as a parlour in the mid C17. The hall was floored about the same time and was thereafter used as a kitchen. In the C20 the passage front doorway was blocked and the present doorway inserted into the parlour (which is now used as the kitchen). 2 storeys. Exterior: the house section has an irregular 3-window front of C20 casements with glazing bars. Present doorway towards left end contains a C20 door behind a contemporary gabled and slate-roofed porch. The ground floor right window of this section is blocking the passage front doorway, The shippon section to right is exposed granite. There is a cowdoor immediately to*

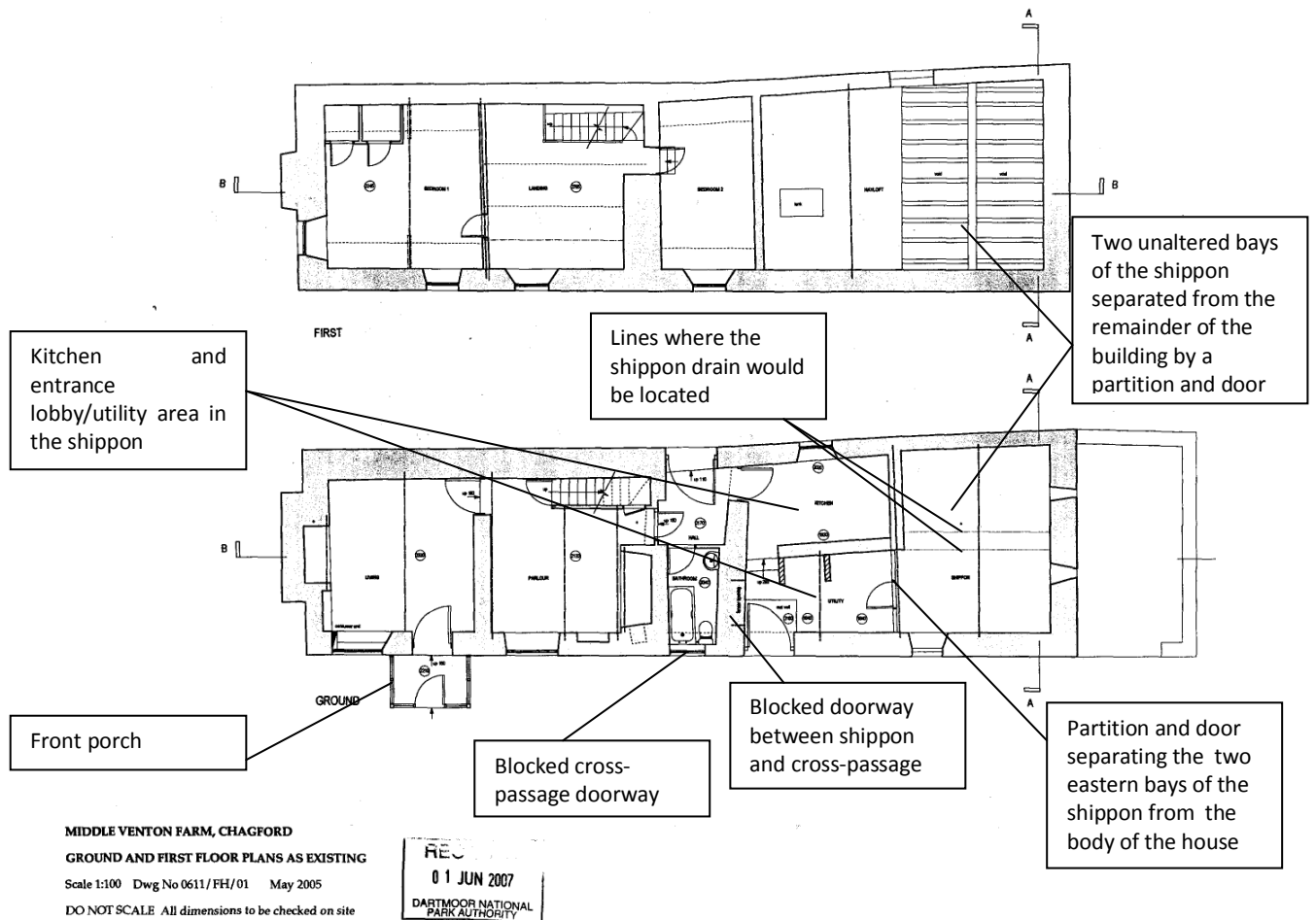
right of the blocked passage front doorway. Towards the right end there is a window, probably a dung hatch over a drain hole. The right end wall of the shippon has 2 slit windows and there is a hayloft loading hatch in the rear wall. The rest of the rear wall is blind except for the passage rear doorway. The roof is gable-ended. Interior: the oldest feature in the house is the early or mid C16 oak doorframe from passage to hall; it is round-headed with a chamfered surround. Hall has a large granite fireplace with an oak lintel which is soffit-chamfered and has one pyramid stop. The oven was relined with C19 brick. The hall crossbeam is soffit- chamfered with step stops. The inner room fireplace has a granite fireplace with a soffit-chamfered oak lintel and the crossbeam here is roughly soffit-chamfered. The ground floor partitions are stone rubble, those on the first floor are timber framed. The first floor partition between hall and inner room chambers may incorporate an original truss. Otherwise the roof from end to end is carried on C17 A-frames with pegged lap-jointed collars. The shippon has roughly-finished crossbeams. Middle Venton is one of the minority of Dartmoor longhouses where the shippon is unmodernised. It is still essentially how it was when used as a cow byre although the drain has been buried.

3.2 Condition & form in 2005

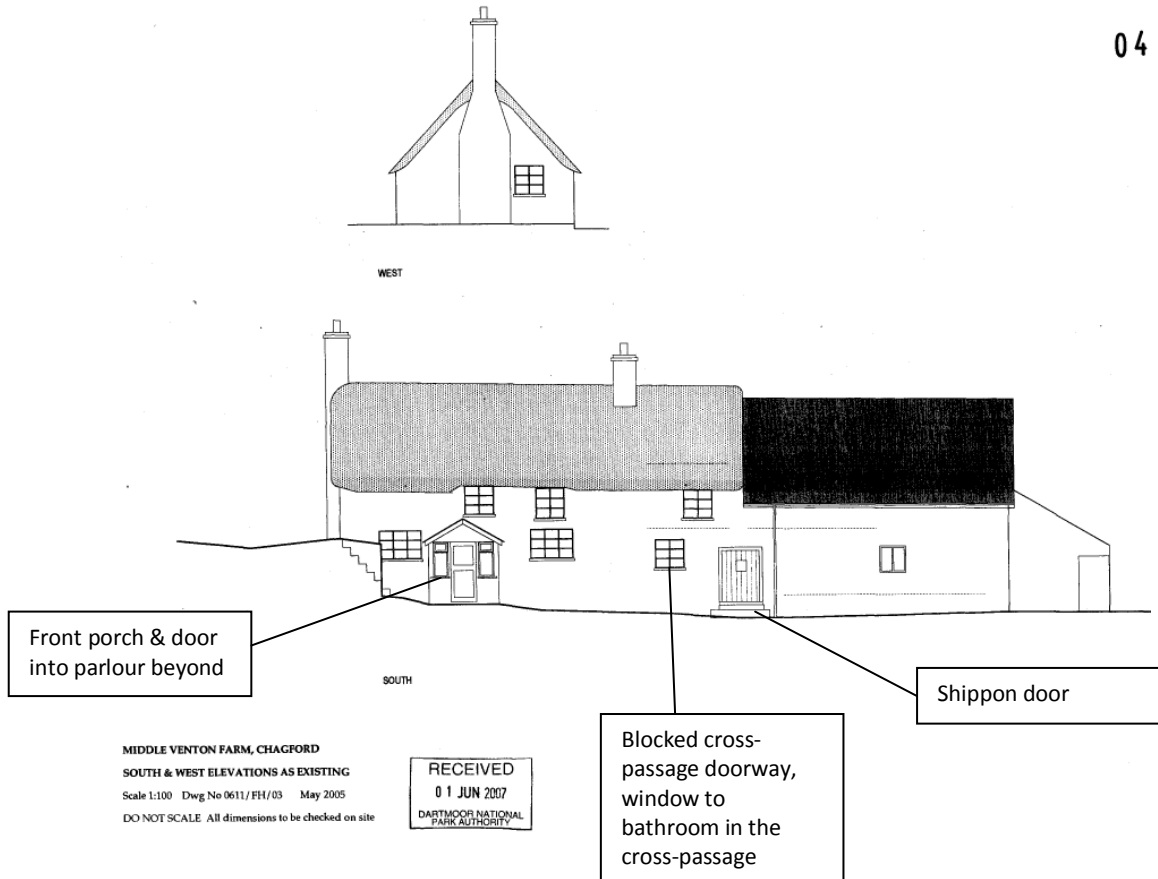
When Mr & Mrs Sowrey purchased Middle Venton in 2005, its appearance and plan form, by virtue of sales particulars and a measured survey, appear to be little altered from the list description of 1988. The sales particulars depict the house with the C19 and C20 alterations described in the list description, including the blocking up of the cross-passage door with a window in place of the door, metal window frames, a door into the parlour (the room at the west end) protected by a glazed porch and the shippon in comparatively poor condition, figure 12. Measured survey drawings commissioned by Mr & Mrs Sowrey in 2005, show amongst other things, as recorded in the list description, the bathroom blocking the cross-passage on the ground floor, the front door coming into the parlour via the porch and a partition with a door dividing off the two most eastern bays of the shippon from the house, figure 13. The appearance and form of the building shown in figures 12 and 13 along with the list description is taken to be the basic form of the building that was listed in 1988, which remained in 2005, from which any alteration that would affect its character would require prior approval through the granting of listed building consent and possibly planning permission.



Figure 12. Middle Venton – photograph from sales particulars 2005, reproduced by kind permission of Mrs Sowrey



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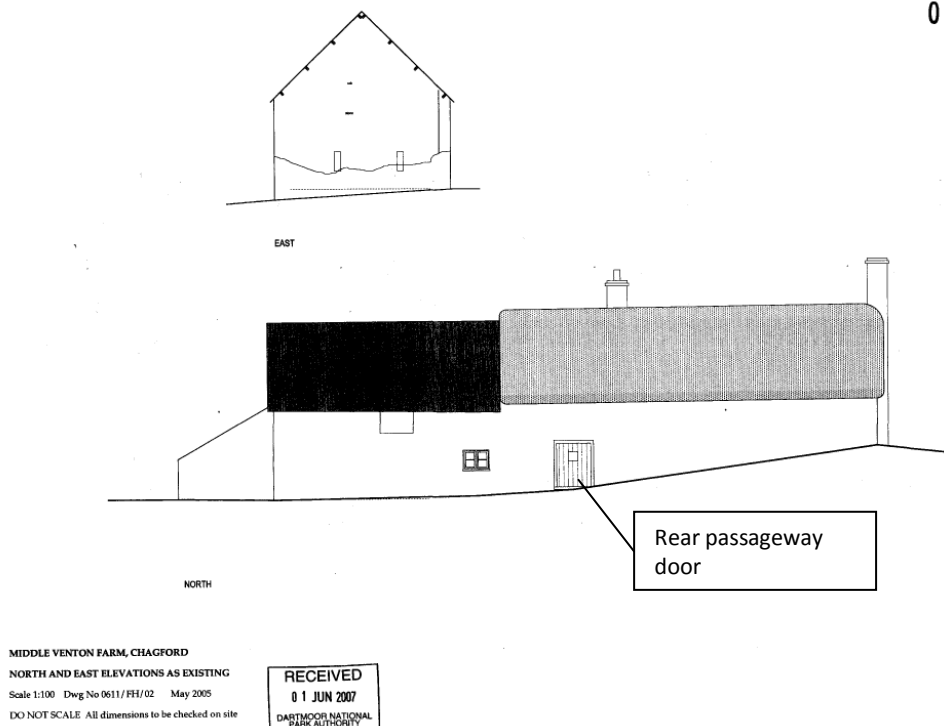


Figure 13. Measured survey of ground and first floor plans and elevations 2005

3.3 Archaeological assessment 2006

The measured survey, depicted at figure 13, is believed to have been commissioned by Mr & Mrs Sowrey as the initial stage of preparing repair and alteration plans for the house and its outbuildings. It is reported by Mrs Sowrey that following discussion with officers of DNPA it was agreed that a greater understanding of the house should be gained to inform the proposals so that the impact of the proposed alterations on the heritage significance of the building could be understood and the proposals amended if necessary in order to minimise harm to the heritage significance of Middle Venton. Subsequently the Sowrey's commissioned an archaeological assessment by Exeter Archaeology, report number 06.17, researched and written by John Allan, published in July 2006, an original print of which has kindly lent to me by Mrs Sowrey. The assessment provides clear evidence of the condition of the building at that time and it adds to the understanding of the evolution of the building that was first outlined in the listing description of 1988. The report concludes that Middle Venton is a mid status longhouse built in the early to mid C17. The additional research permitted by the detailed archaeological assessment disproves the list description's suggestion that the house is an evolved C16 open hall house with C17 alterations. The assessment indicates that the house is almost entirely of one build dating from the early to mid C17. Extracts of the assessment are provided below in order to help understand the building's heritage significance:

- Middle Venton is a plainly built, mid-status longhouse of the mid – early C17. It is less elaborate than neighbouring longhouses of a similar age in Drewsteignton parish such as Drascombe Barton and Nattonhole but neither is Middle Venton at the lowest end of the range as it has moulded beams, close set joists, and a massive granite fireplace that was built with an eye to public display.
- Middle Venton is particularly important despite its comparative modesty for two reasons:
 - **It is quite remarkably unaltered – room plans and volumes, door-frames, fireplaces, ceilings and almost the entire roof.**
 - **More exceptional is the survival of the unaltered form of approximately half of the shippon – a crucial feature in placing a high grading on the house. The precise number of longhouses surviving with unconverted shippons in any form is probably less than 20.**

3.4 The Dartmoor longhouse tradition & Middle Venton

3.4.1 Definition & distribution

The details provided below are taken from what I consider to be the definitive paper on Dartmoor longhouses prepared by Peter Beacham in 1990; see footnote 1, page 15, for more information. Dartmoor longhouses can be defined as houses of originally one build where a cross-passage separates animal and domestic accommodation, the degree of

connectivity can vary. The tradition of longhouses to Dartmoor appears to be peculiar; their distribution hardly extending beyond the moor's boundaries, figure 14. It is believed to be the benefits of sharing the warmth provided by livestock outweighing the disadvantages of sharing a building with livestock that led to the establishment and continuation of the house type on exposed Dartmoor.

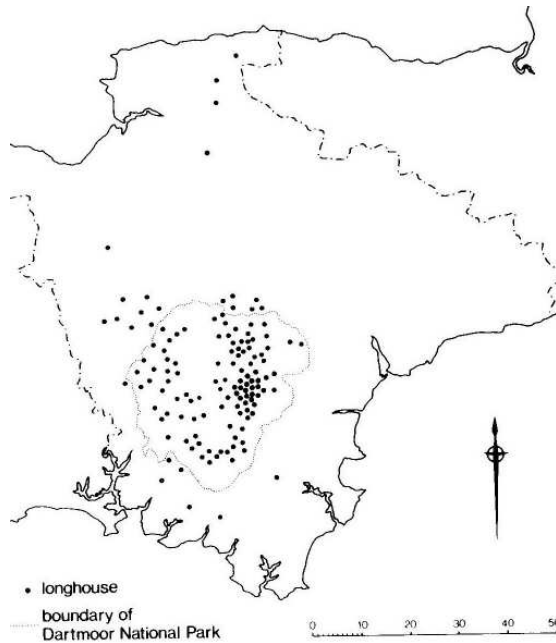


Figure 14. Longhouse distribution¹

3.4.2 Lower level and drainage for the shippon

The integral shippon, or animal house, which is generally occupied by cattle, is always at a physically lower level than the house to ensure that waste drains away from the house and a drain in the floor through the middle of the building to an exit hole at the base of the gable wall confirms a building's original function. The drain at Middle Venton is reported to have been lost but the projecting lintel stone above the drain was in place at the time of the archaeological survey with a photograph in the archaeological assessment confirming this. The survey drawings at figure 13 also appear to show two parallel lines in the floor of the shippon that would seem to indicate a drain.

3.4.3 Hayloft

Above a shippon was a hayloft where animal fodder was stored. The list description of 1988 and survey drawings of 2005 indicate that Middle Venton merely had the floor beam and joists remaining over the unconverted, eastern two bays of the shippon at that time, with no floor boards remaining. A floor remained over the former dairy (see 3.4.6 below) at Middle Venton in the rear quarter of the shippon adjacent to the cross passage and over the adjacent lobby, so half of the shippon at Middle Venton was floored over in 2005. Today only the floor beam over the open, eastern end of the shippon remains, the joists reported to have been removed due to their poor condition. A loft floor remains in place over the kitchen and entrance lobby as it did in 1988/2005.

¹ *The Longhouse*, published in *Devon Building – an introduction to local traditions* – Peter Beacham, Devon Books 1990

3.4.5 Access doors

Early, simple longhouses, had a single door into the cross-passage for people and animals, later longhouses such as Middle Venton have separate doors into the house and shippon with access from the cross-passage into the shippon as at Middle Venton.

3.4.6 Domestication of shippons

Over the years shippons were often annexed, to varying degrees, by domestic use. In Middle Venton's case a dairy appears to have been built into the rear quarter of the shippon, probably in the C19, accessed from the rear of the cross-passage. The dairy was converted to a kitchen, it is believed in the mid C20, with access being provided directly from the shippon, up steps and through a doorway opposite the shippon door. Today the former dairy remains in use as a kitchen but the doorway directly from the shippon has been blocked up, access is now only from the rear of the cross-passage and a new opening is provided in the south wall of the former dairy to let light into the kitchen from the shippon.

3.4.7 Openings

Other than a door, shippons, have a number of typical openings. In the front elevation there is often a small window to let in a little light and to allow dung to be flung out. There are ventilation slots to ventilate the ground floor set in the gable end. There is generally an opening at high level, often in the rear elevation if the building is built into a bank, to allow for loading fodder into the hayloft. Middle Venton has all of these openings.

3.5 Conclusion

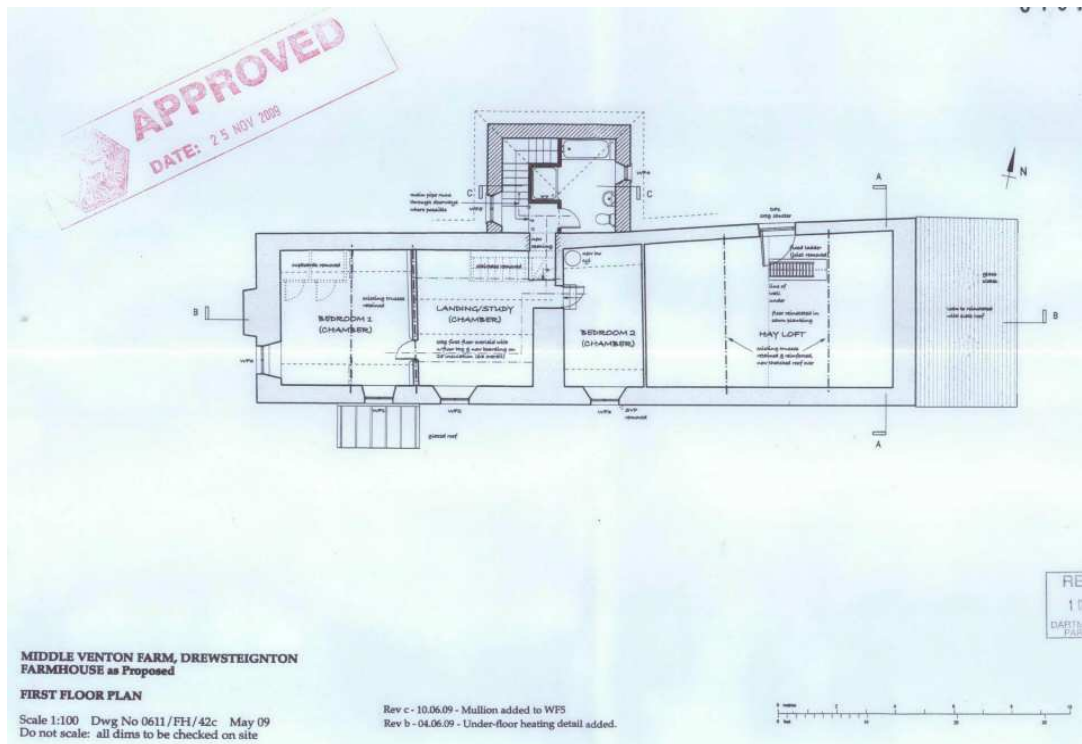
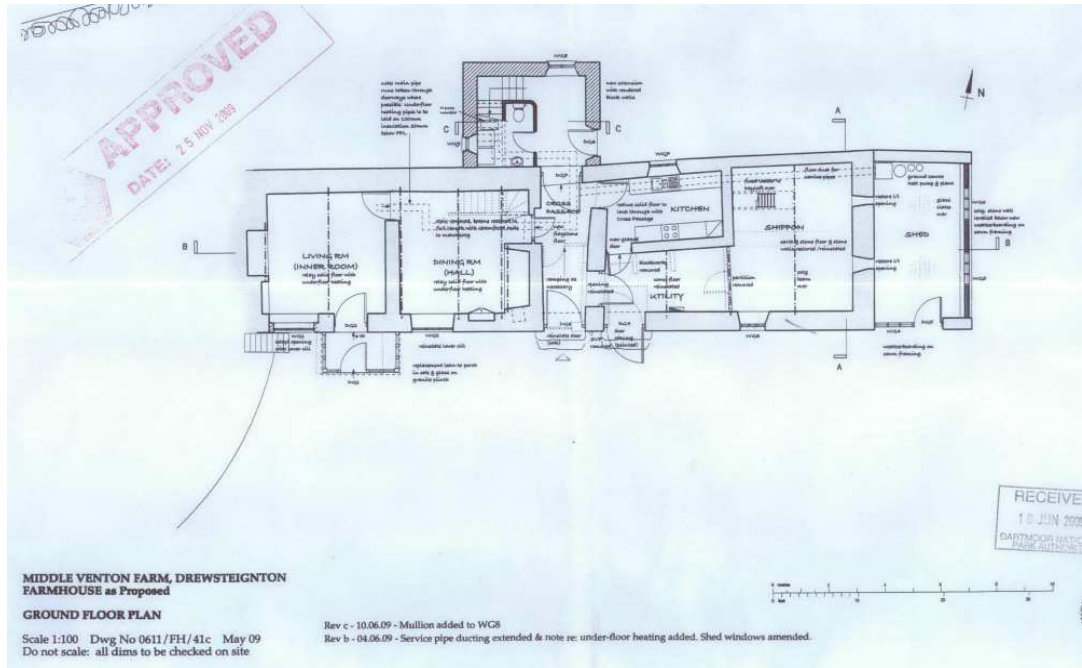
At the time of the list description in 1988, the measured survey of 2005 and the archaeological assessment of 2006, Middle Venton was a remarkably unaltered and complete early – mid C17 Dartmoor longhouse with, crucially, half of the shippon in an unconverted form. The eastern two bays of the shippon, as fully reported in 2006, still had an earth and stone floor, unglazed openings, unfinished walls, the stone marking the drainage hole at the base of the east gable wall and the remains of the hayloft, the eastern, unconverted two bays and the space above the kitchen and lobby, were in use as storage space. In the house, good evidence of the original plan form and detailing remained. Notable alterations to the believed original plan form were the insertion of the dairy into the shippon, believed to be in the C19, the provision of a doorway into the dairy from the shippon and the conversion of the dairy to a kitchen in the mid C20, and the blocking of the cross-passage with a bathroom in the mid C20 and the creation of a stair up from the hall running along the rear wall. The most important feature of Middle Venton was its retention of over half of its shippon unconverted with unglazed openings and an earth and stone floor. **The undoubted heritage significance of Middle Venton at the time of the listing in 1998, measured survey of 2005 and archaeological assessment of 2006 was firstly its existence as a Dartmoor longhouse with a part complete unaltered shippon and secondly the comparatively unaltered state of the plan form and volumes of the rooms in the house and the wealth of original fabric that remained.** The

objective of permitting any changes to the building, in accordance with planning legislation and planning policy, would be to preserve those two key elements of the listed building, ie. retention of the half unaltered shippon and the unaltered form and volume of the rooms and their wealth of period detail, unless any harm to those elements could be justified.

4. OBSERVATION OF IMPLEMENTED WORKS & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 Approved works

The bulk of the alterations that were observed on site were approved by the granting of permission for applications 0100/09 and 0101/09 for works to the house, for which the key approved drawings are shown below, figure 15, and the earlier approvals for works to the outbuildings for which drawings are included at figures 16, 17.



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Figure 15. Approved drawings from approvals 0100/09, 0101/09

4.2 Observation strategy

I attended Middle Venton on Wednesday 3rd September 2014, on a clear, bright day, along with James Aven, Planning Team Manager, DNPA and John Milverton, Planning Consultant for Mrs Sowrey, to meet Mrs Sowrey, hear from her how the alterations had progressed and to observe the buildings and their setting. The observation strategy for the site was simple; to start in the first floor, west end bedroom, work down through the house and work through the curtilage buildings.

4.3 West end bedroom

This room has not been altered other than to have approved replacement windows fitted. A door between the west end bedroom and the middle room, shown in photographs in the archaeological assessment, is no longer in place but the door frame and pintels from which a door would be hung are in place. The door does not appear to be of any great age in the photographs and the door itself is not commented upon in the archaeological assessment indicating, it is presumed, that it was not of notable significance. The lack of a door in this location is not a matter that raises concern as it is clear that there is an historic doorway in this location and that there would have been a door there but the door has been lost. The lack of a door does not confuse the interpretation of the building, it is not believed that any fabric of heritage significance has been lost and the identified heritage significance of the listed building is not harmed by the lack of a door within the door frame.

4.4 Middle bedroom

As with the rest of the house the room has replacement windows in accordance with the approval. The room retains its volume and plan form. The biggest change in this room is the creation of a significant opening in the rear wall to permit access to the approved stairhall and bathroom, rear extension. The opening does alter the character of the room but it is found to be justified as it provides access to the approved stair hall and first floor bathroom which in turn have permitted significant improvements to the plan form and overall character of the listed building, see 4.5 below.

4.5 Stairhall & bathroom extension

The stairhall and bathroom extension to the rear elevation, which appears to have been constructed as approved, is found to blend well with the original building and to provide a safe and good stair and a generous bathroom. In providing a new location for the bathroom and allowing the stair that had previously risen from the hall to the middle bedroom to be removed, the stairhall allowed both the cross-passage and its front door to be reinstated and the volume and character of the hall and middle bedroom to be restored. Any harm caused by the extension to the identified heritage significance of the building is outweighed by the benefits that it has permitted.

4.6 Passageway bedroom – en suite shower room

The bedroom over the passageway has an approved replacement window. A major consideration for this report, by virtue of the concerns raised by EH and DNPA is the addition of an en suite bathroom against the north wall of the bedroom which was inserted without listed building consent in place of an approved hot water cylinder. The en – suite bathroom is discussed in greater detail in section 5 of this report.

4.7 Bathroom and en-suite drainage pipes

The drainage pipes, for both the approved bathroom and the unauthorised en-suite, exit through the rear wall and are fixed to the rear elevation, contrary to the approved drawing of the rear elevation. It maybe that the detailing of the pipes was discussed at a later date with DNPA however I feel that whatever discussions have ensued that the presence of the pipes against the rear wall requires further comment. The matter is reviewed in section 5 of this report.

4.8 Rear extension door

While the design of the rear extension door which gives access to the garden was approved in application 13/543, granted after the fitting of the door, its design of three vertical strips of glass is found to be discordant with the character of the listed building and it is quite different from the simple plank door shown on the approved drawing,

figure 15. However the detail of the door has been approved and it is at least associated with modern fabric so this matter is not pursued in this report.

4.9 Lack of a rear passageway door

The rear stair hall and bathroom extension is accessed via the former rear cross-passage doorway. The door in the cross-passage rear doorway is shown indistinctly in a photograph in the archaeological assessment and is drawn as a simple plank door with a small high level window in the 2005 measured survey drawings. No mention is made of the door fitted into the doorway or its frame in either the archaeological assessment or the list description so it is considered probable that the door and frame in the doorway were not in themselves considered by the authors of those reports to be fabric of sufficient significance to warrant specific attention. The approved drawings show that a door was to be retained in the opening after the rear extension was built. No door or door frame has been put back; there is merely a scar where a door frame would have been fitted into the dressed granite doorway. The lack of a door is reviewed in section 5.

4.10 Hall and parlour

These rooms have received replacement windows in accordance with the approval and the floors have been lifted and relayed to permit under-floor heating. No matters which appeared to be unauthorised were noted.

4.11 Removal of the cross-passage bathroom – subsequent opening up of the doorway between the cross-passage and shippon and reinstatement of the cross-passage front door

The approved removal of the bathroom from the cross-passage has permitted the reinstatement of part of the original plan form of the house and the opening up of two, significant, original openings. The removal has permitted the re-establishment of the characteristic cross-passage through the width of the house, the opening up of the cross-passage front door and the opening up of the access from the cross-passage to the shippon. The bathroom was an obvious C20 addition so there was no issue of harm to heritage significance in permitting its removal. The opening up of the original front door was an obvious enhancement of the heritage significance of the house. The removal of the bathroom and wall finishes allowed the blocked up opening between the cross-passage and the shippon to be explored and the construction of the opening indicated that it was coeval with the cross-passage. The opening up of the cross-passage front doorway, the re-establishment of the full length of the cross-passage and the opening up of the doorway between the cross-passage and the shippon are all matters that help significantly with the interpretation of the building's original form and function and preserve the building in an appropriate manner for the enjoyment and interpretation of future generations.

4.12 Opened up doorway between the cross-passage and shippon

The approved drawings show a door in place in the newly unblocked opening between the cross-passage and the shippon. No door has been fitted. There is therefore no way of separating the air space of the shippon from that of the house; there is effectively no separation between the house and shippon. This matter is reviewed in section 5 of the report.

4.13 Openings in the former dairy/kitchen

The 2009 approved drawings show openings into the kitchen as they existed in the 2005 survey, with a glazed door being fitted into the existing access doorway into the shippon. This door would have made the kitchen a completely enclosable space from the shippon so it could be shut off from any draughts etc. On construction the approved scheme has not been implemented. The existing access doorway between the kitchen and the shippon has been blocked up leaving just a slit for light and a new waist high level opening, further into the shippon, has been created in order to let light into the kitchen. The high level openings are not glazed leaving the kitchen with no separation from draughts etc from the shippon. These matters are reviewed in section 5 of this report.

4.14 Shippon door

The 2009 approved drawings indicate that the existing door was to be re-hung and painted and would open outwards. The current door is oak, unpainted, with three, vertical glazed panels, similar to the rear extension door, with a fixed, glazed, side light. The door is well fitted within a frame; the close fitting nature serves to reduce draughts into the shippon. The door is not the design that is shown on the approved drawings, figure 15. The door is found to be discordant with the character of the listed building by virtue of its glazing pattern, fixed side light and oak finish. In addition, and crucial to the current way in which the shippon is used, the close fitting nature and draught proofing of the door enables the internal environment of the shippon to be kept comparatively draught free and therefore a few degrees warmer than would otherwise have been possible if the original plank door that was approved had been fitted. In addition the glazing to the door and its side light makes the lobby area to the shippon lighter than the approved plank door would have permitted. These matters are discussed in section 5 of this report.

4.15 Utility area, west bay of the shippon in front of the former dairy/kitchen

The area between the south wall of the former dairy and the south wall of the shippon, described in this report as the utility area, is not described in the 1988 list description. It is shown on the 2005 measured survey as a utility area separated from the eastern two bays of the shippon by a partition with a door; that partition presumably met with the underside of the hayloft floor above to create an enclosed utility area. The 2009 approved drawing shows this area retained as a utility space with access from the yard through the

outward opening, refurbished shippon door, with access into the kitchen via a new glazed door, access to the cross-passage through a door in the unblocked opening that opens into the cross-passage and no partition between the shippon and the utility area. The existing concrete floor of the utility area is shown as being reinstated. This scheme would have allowed for the retention of the space as a utility area with access from the yard, passageway and kitchen but with no separation between it and the shippon which is noted as being kept with the stone and earth floor being retained. With just a large plank door separating the area from the yard, with an earth and stone floored space next to it and the rest of the house being separated from it by doors, it can be envisaged that this area would have been quite draughty, quite dark with the door shut and more like an outbuilding than a well decorated, well lit, heated part of the house. It was approved therefore as very much a utility area in the 2009 approval being outside of the main, heated part of the house. The area as approved would have been in keeping with the character and qualities of the unaltered part of the shippon rather than with the warm, well decorated parts of the house. The character of this area today is quite different from that approved in 2009 by virtue of the well fitting, glazed door that is fitted into the shippon door opening which removes draughts and lets in light. In addition, with no door being placed in the doorway between the cross-passage and the former utility area and no seal being placed between the kitchen and the utility space, the former utility area can now be comfortably used as an additional sitting area because it is warmed by the heat from the main body of the house and by heat from the heated garden room entering through the ventilation slots in the gable wall. In addition the space is well lit by natural light by virtue of the glazed door in the shippon doorway. Far from being a chilly, dark utilitarian space as approved in 2009, this area is now a key part of the house and so is the remainder of the shippon as it is no longer separated from the utility area by a partition, as approved in 2009, and it has a concrete floor at a common level with the utility area floor, which is not approved, see 4.16 below The glazed, fitted shippon door and lack of seals between the utility area and the heated parts of the building have significantly altered the character of the space making it an intrinsic part of the house rather than a utilitarian part of it as it previously was and as approved in 2009. This matter is considered in section 5 of this report.

4.16 Shippon – concrete floor

The measured survey of 2005, figure 13, has two lines drawn on the floor of the shippon at the centre of the floor running parallel with the south and north walls. These lines would be where a drain in the centre of the floor would have been located. There is a photograph in the archaeological assessment of 2006 of a stone lintel above where a drain hole would be located in the east gable and the archaeological assessment confirms the presence and function of that stone. The assessment advises that below the debris on the floor at a depth of 20 – 30 cm would be the drain. Subsequently the floor was excavated but apparently no drain was found. The approved drawings state that the earth and stone floor would be reinstated. Today the shippon has been excavated and filled with concrete with a limecrete edging to a depth of about 30cm around the edge of the

wall to help with damp management. This floor significantly alters the character of the shippon and is discussed in section 5 of this report.

4.17 Shippon – openings

The shippon has four openings other than the door: a ground floor opening in the front elevation that would probably have been used for dung removal, two ventilation slots in the east gable and a first floor hayloft opening in the rear elevation. The two ventilation slots have been unblocked in accordance with the approval and remain as unglazed openings and their original form and function is clear. The front dung opening from the sales particular photograph of 2005 and the measured survey of 2005 can be seen to have a window fitted. A window was approved for this opening in 2009. The hayloft opening is shown in a photograph in the archaeological assessment of 2006 to have a wooden door fitted. An inward opening wooden shutter was approved in 2009. A three light window, as approved, painted to match the other windows in the house, has been fitted in the dung hole opening; finished in the same way as the house windows it is found to confuse the interpretation of the house and the former shippon and consequently this is reviewed in section 5 of the report. The hayloft opening, contrary to the approval, has been fitted with a window and an outward opening shutter. This matter is reviewed in section 5 of the report.

4.18 Shippon – whitewashed walls

The 2009 approved drawings state that stone walls are to be *restored, reinstated*. The walls, Mrs Sowrey advises, have received 4 coats of lime based whitewash. While lime whitewash is an appropriate finish for rubble stone walls in terms of being a traditional, vapour permeable finish, it is not a finish that would be found in an unaltered shippon and it was not the finish that was in place in 2006. It is a finish that alters the character of the walls and the character of the shippon. It is considered to be a finish that confuses the interpretation of the space. It is a finish that is not approved. This matter is reviewed in section 5 of this report.

4.19 Shippon – electricity supply, fittings and switches

Mrs Sowrey advises that there was an electricity supply in the unaltered end of the shippon and that there were switches and light fittings. No mention is believed to be made of switches and light fittings in the 2009 approval. There is a smart multi-switch fixing set against the stone on the outer face of the former dairy addressing the eastern bays of the shippons and there are light fittings fitted to a roof truss. These matters are discussed in section 5 of the report.

4.20 Shippon – removal of joists in the eastern two bays

At the time of the measured survey and the archaeological assessment, some of the floor joists over the eastern two bays of the shippon were in place. These are reported by Mrs Sowrey to have been in a poor condition. The approval merely allows for the introduction

of sawn planking over the joists to reinstate the hayloft floor. There is no floor over the two eastern bays today, the joists have been removed and not replaced and there are no sawn floorboards. This matter is reviewed in section 5 of this report.

4.21 Shippon – step access to the hayloft

In 2005 there was no fixed access to the hayloft. The approved scheme allows for a fixed ladder to be provided close to the north wall. A fixed set of steps has been introduced that appear to be at a shallower pitch than those shown on the approved drawing, the steps have a handrail and there is a balustrade along the edge of the hayloft. The handrail and balustrade are not in accordance with the approved drawings and the angle of the steps may not be as approved, these matters are reviewed in section 5 of this report.

4.22 Shippon – new roof, height of the thatch ridge

In 2005 the shippon roof was in poor condition and was covered in corrugated metal. The roof in accordance with the approval has been repaired and re-thatched. The roof repairs are of a high quality and fully conserve the character of the roofspace of the shippon and the quality of the work is to be applauded as it preserves for the enjoyment of future generations the character and detail of the shippon roofspace. The ridge of the shippon roof following re-thatching has however risen to almost the same height of the ridge of the roof of the house, contrary to the approved drawings. This matter is reviewed in section 5 of the report.

4.23 Garden shed/summer house

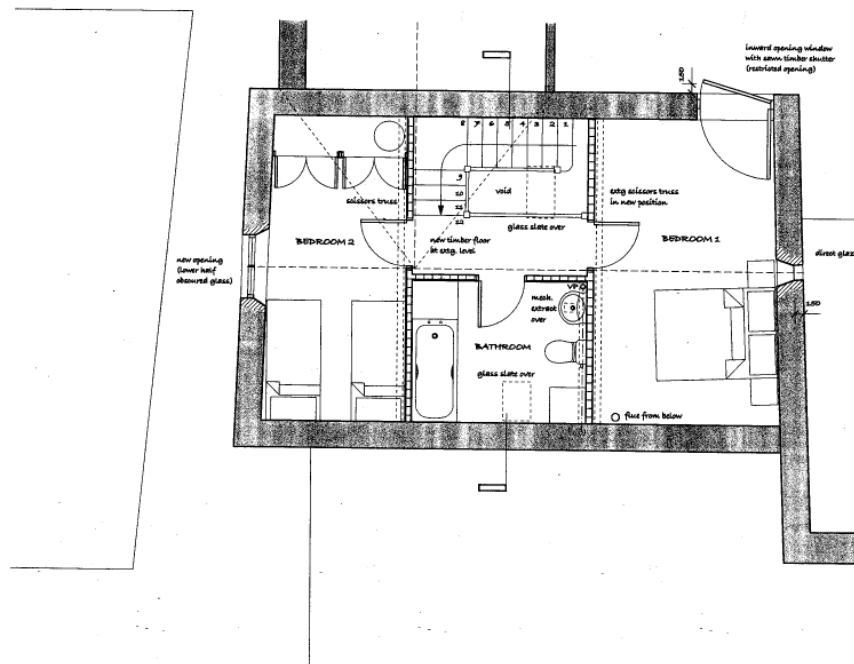
The photographs of the building in 2006 and the measured survey drawings of 2005, show derelict walls attached to the east gable of the shippon. The 2009 approval allows for the reconstruction of this space to create what is described as a shed where the heating plant would be placed. Today the heating plant is in the C19 animal house south of the house; without the benefit of prior approval. The 'shed' is provided with under-floor heating and is now used as a garden room. The glazed elevation of what is now a garden room was approved by application 13/543 following the construction of the glazed wall. The use of the space as a garden room with under-floor heating rather than as a shed to house the heating plant is considered in section 5 of this report.

4.24 C19 animal house

The C19 animal house is currently in use as car port, storage area, utility area and laundry. It is not believed that the conversion to domestic use has ever been approved. This matter is considered in section 5 of the report.

4.25 Converted former cow byre

Heritage appraisal, impact assessment & suggested resolution
in consideration of unauthorised works
SUBMISSION V1



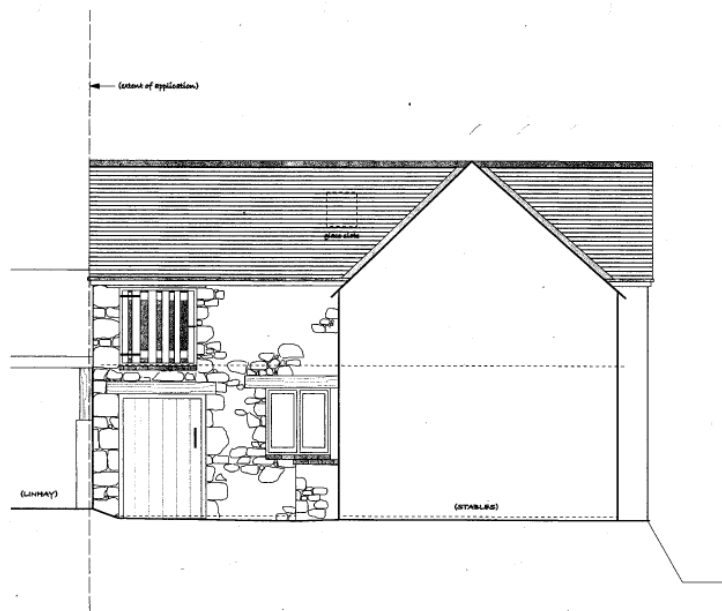
MIDDLE VENTON FARM, DREWSTEIGTON
CONVERSION OF COWBYRE

FIRST FLOOR PLAN as Proposed

Scale 1:50 Dwg No 0611/CB/12e Aug 05
Do not scale: all dims to be checked on site

- a - 14.10.05
- b - 31.10.05
- c - 08.02.06
- d - 03.03.06
- e - 19.04.06

Figure 16a. Approved plans for the conversion of the former cow byre



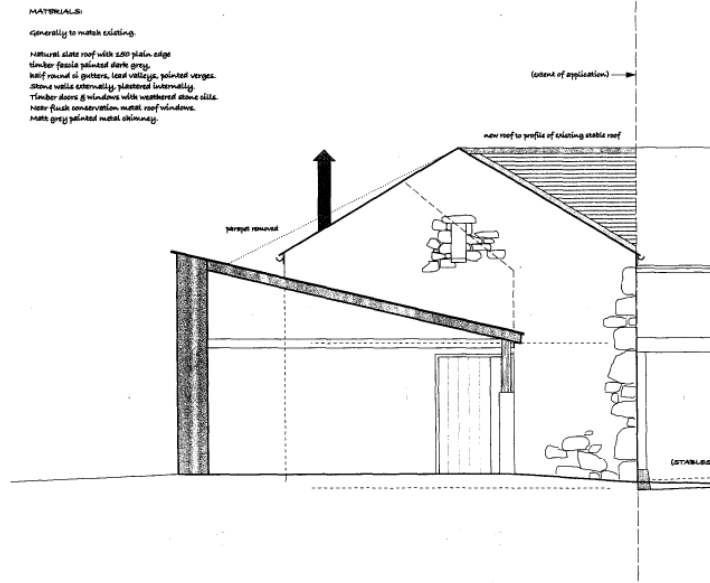
MIDDLE VENTON FARM, DREWSTEIGTON
CONVERSION OF COWBYRE

WEST ELEVATION as Proposed

Scale 1:50 Dwg No 0611/CB/14e Aug05
Do not scale: all dims to be checked on site

- a - 14.10.05
- b - 31.10.05
- c - 08.02.06
- d - 03.03.06
- e - 19.04.06

Heritage appraisal, impact assessment & suggested resolution
in consideration of unauthorised works
SUBMISSION V1



MIDDLE VENTON FARM, DREWSTEIGTON
CONVERSION OF COWBYRE

NORTH ELEVATION as Proposed

- a - 14.10.05
- b - 31.10.05
- c - 08.02.06
- d - 03.03.06

Scale 1:50 Dwg No 0611/CB/13d Aug 05
Do not scale: all dims to be checked on site

Figure 16b. Approved elevations application 0701/05, 0702/05

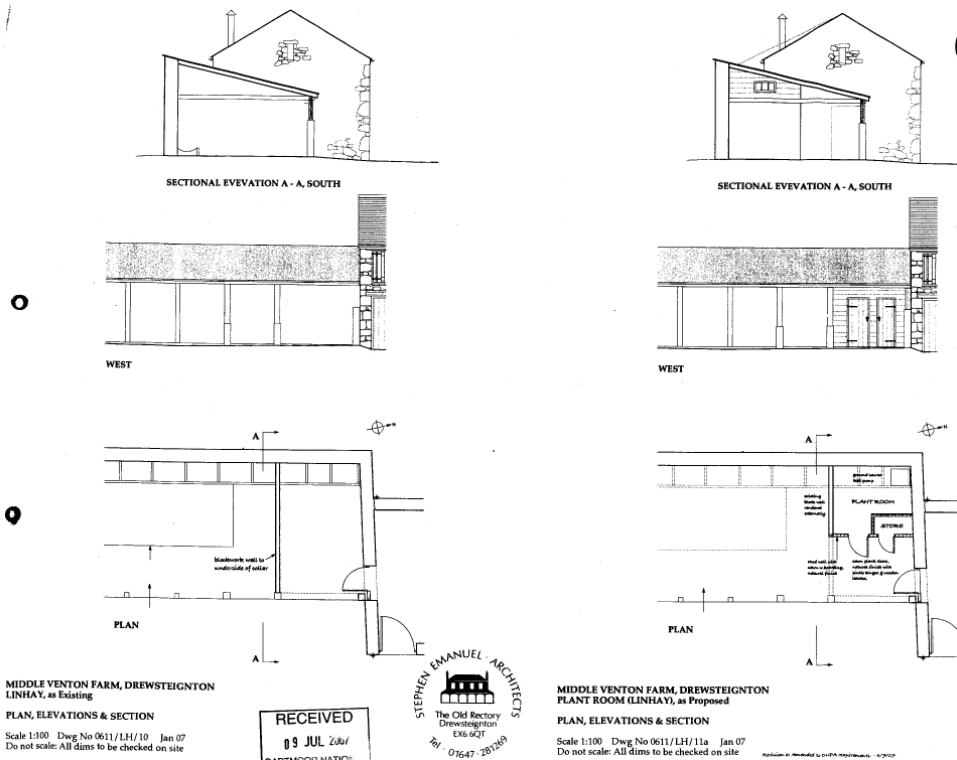


Figure 17. Unconditionally approved drawings, application ref: 0157/07

4.27 Garden area

The creation of a garden area to the east of the house and its outbuildings, without planning permission, is currently the subject of an appeal and is not considered any further within this report.

4.28 Construction of the approved porch to the parlour door

A replacement porch to the parlour door was permitted by the 2009 approval. This porch has not been constructed and I find that the house hugely benefits from not having a porch applied to the front elevation. I consider that the removal of permission for a porch to be constructed in the future would be of great benefit to the character of the house.

4.29 Summary of observations

At the time of purchase, Middle Venton and its outbuildings were in need of repair and while they retained much historic fabric they had also suffered from some alterations in the C20 that were harmful to its heritage significance. To provide a greater understanding of the heritage significance of Middle Venton prior to undertaking alteration work to the house, the Sowrey's, as requested by DNPA, and in accordance with planning guidance, commissioned an archaeological assessment. This assessment informed a scheme for alteration that was approved in 2009. In addition, in 2006 and 2007, schemes to alter the outbuildings had been approved. On review it is found that the schemes as approved, other than for the porch to the parlour door, would have preserved the heritage significance of Middle Venton as DNPA and EH sought to do and the approvals are found to have been granted in accordance with planning legislation and policy. However, in implementing the approvals the works that have been carried out are not all in accordance with the approvals. Further consideration now needs to be made of the list of works noted below, identified in section 4 above, to review whether those works cause harm to the heritage significance of Middle Venton.

It needs to be stated that in reviewing the implemented works I have the significant benefit of being able to look at the works in hind sight, as a whole, with generous time dedicated to looking at the case in detail and I am looking at the case from a truly independent perspective, benefits that neither Mrs Sowrey and her consultants nor the DNPA or EH may necessarily have been afforded.

In reviewing this case I find that the following implemented works need further consideration with regard to their impact upon the heritage significance of Middle Venton:

1. En-suite shower room
2. Drainage pipes against the rear wall of the house
3. Lack of a door in the cross-passage rear doorway

4. Lack of a door in the unblocked doorway between the cross-passage and the shippon
5. Altered openings and access to the former dairy/kitchen
6. The design of the shippon door
7. Character of the utility area
8. Concrete floor in the eastern two bays of the shippon
9. Design and finish of the window in the south elevation of the shippon
10. Glazed window in the hayloft opening
11. Whitewashed walls in the shippon
12. Switches and light fittings in the shippon
13. Lack of first floor joists and floor boards in the eastern two bays of the shippon
14. Steps, handrail and balustrade to the hayloft
15. Height of the ridge of the roof over the shippon in relation to the ridge of the house roof
16. Use of and alterations to the space approved as a shed now used as a garden room
17. Use of part of the C19 animal house as a laundry and utility area
18. Variation of the detail of the first floor window in the converted annexe
19. Breach in the wall between the annexe and store to create a room that may be used as a third bedroom in the annexe.
20. Use of the approved plant room for the annexe as a WC and utility area.
21. Consideration of an agreement to revoke the approval of a porch to the parlour door.

5. DETAILED IMPACT ASSESSMENT & SUGGESTED REMEDIAL ACTION

5.1 En suite shower room

The compartmentation of the northern part of the small bedroom over the cross-passage, to create an en suite shower room and WC, alters the volume of the room. The presence of unaltered volumes within the building is one of the two significant features of the house identified in the archaeological assessment. The en suite shower room as pointed out by Mrs Sowrey has been created through the introduction of a partition that is held in place by tension, the partition wall does not apparently harm existing historic walls or timbers through any fixings. The wall and doorway can reportedly be removed without any physical harm being caused to historic fabric. If the door to the en-suite is left open the full space within the bedroom can clearly be seen along with the purlins embedded in the ceiling, figure 18. It is found that the presence of the en-suite partition with its door, set neatly, parallel to the north wall, without apparent physical harm to historic fabric, is no more harmful than a large wardrobe that could be fitted, without consent, into the space. It is noted that the 2009 approval permitted the siting of a hot water cylinder in this location and in all likelihood this would have become part of a fitted airing cupboard. The presence of modern sanitary fittings within historic houses is to be expected and the presence of the en-suite fittings in the bedroom is no more harmful than the approved modern fittings in the WC or bathroom in the extension or the modern kitchen fittings. The presence of the partition and door and the fittings is not found to harm heritage significance because:

1. the volume of the room can still be appreciated,
2. the enclosure does not intrude as discordant block in the room,
3. no apparent physical harm is caused by the fittings,
4. a hot water cylinder was approved in this location which in all likelihood would be fitted into a cupboard.

It is found that the above points result in the en suite not causing any confusion to an understanding of the original plan form, not having any more of an impact than fitted or free standing cupboards would have on the character of the room, which could arguably be sited without the need for listed building consent, and not causing any apparent physical harm to the building other than through the provision of a hole in the wall for the drainage pipes. However there is a caveat to the acceptability of the en suite; improvements to the drainage pipes on the rear wall.

The matter of the drainage pipes is of concern and this is reviewed in para. 5.2 below. **If the drainage pipes can successfully be brought into the extension rather than being on the exterior of the building, other than perhaps a small section of soil vent pipe, the en suite is not found to harm Middle Venton's heritage significance. If the en-suite's pipes cannot be re-located within the extension, the en suite, by virtue of the additional harm that its pipes cause to the character of the rear of the building is not found to be appropriate and it should be removed.** Unlike the en suite, the bathroom is essential for the house. If the bathroom's pipes cannot be brought inside the house then they will reluctantly have to be permitted. The en suite however is a desirable but not essential

additional facility for the house and the additional harm that its pipes cause is not considered to be justified.



Figure 18. View into the en-suite

5.2 Drainage pipes against the rear wall of the house

The approved scheme does not show any drainage pipes against the rear wall of the house as they now exist, figure 19. I gather from Mrs Sowrey that there was discussion with DNPA about the need for external pipes to be cast iron not PVCu, I agree with this but do not agree that the pipes necessarily have to be outside the building. **The presence of the pipes on the exterior of the building detracts from the simplicity of the elevation as shown on the approved drawings. Consideration needs to be given as to whether they can be moved inside the building as part of a remedial package of works to be discussed with DNPA and Mrs Sowrey. As noted in para 5.1 above, unlike the en suite, the bathroom is essential for the house. If the pipes cannot be brought inside the house then they will reluctantly have to be permitted.**



Figure 19. Discordant drainage pipes detracting from the simplicity of the rear elevation

5.3 Lack of a door in the cross-passage rear doorway

An inward opening door is shown on the approved drawings, no door has been fitted, and the door frame has been removed. There is a scar from the original forming of the stone into a doorway for the house that clearly indicates where a door frame was. I find it clear that on passing through the thick wall, where the door and its frame were, that I am leaving the historic building and moving into a modern addition that is now the rear of the building. I find it clear that I have passed out of the old house through the original doorway into a new part of the house where the new rear door is located. I do not find it necessary for a door to be hung here to indicate where the original door was. Nor do I need a door there to understand how the cross-passage worked and I believe that this would be the case for other visitors to the house. As advised in section 3, the stair hall is a significant alteration to the house permitted because it aids enhancements elsewhere which are of benefit to the building's heritage significance. I consider that the relocation of the outside door to the rear extension from the original cross-passage location is a logical part of this approval unless the door that existed was important historic fabric in its own right. The door and doorframe are not noted in the list description or archaeological assessment so it is presumed that they were not fabric of great significance in their own right. **As the re-location of the rear doorway has been permitted through the approval of the rear extension, which was permitted with good and sound justification, as the former door and doorframe are not believed to have been of great heritage significance and because I find the form of the original cross-passage to still be legible I recommend that the current situation of no door frame or door should be accepted by whatever means is considered appropriate.** If DNPA are not happy with this recommendation consideration could perhaps be given to the return of a door frame to the location to reinforce for visitors where the original doorway was, I however do not believe this to be necessary and find the scar in the granite where the doorway was to be of historic interest and this would of course be covered by a new door frame.

5.4 Lack of a door in the unblocked doorway between the cross-passage and the shippon

The lack of a door in this location removes any environmental separation between the house and shippon: temperature, draughts, dust, noise and smell cannot be kept separate from the house and shippon. The house and shippon are one volume by virtue of the lack of a door in this location and the openings between the kitchen and the shippon. The identified most important feature of the heritage significance of Middle Venton was the unaltered shippon. The consent of 2009, as described in section 4, allowed for the retention of the unaltered character of the shippon by virtue of sealing off the house from the shippon at the doors into the cross-passage and into the kitchen. It is essential for the preservation of the character of the unaltered end of the shippon that there is physical separation between the house and the shippon. **To retain the separation in character between the shippon and the house, as envisaged in the 2009 approval, in order to preserve the heritage significance of Middle Venton, a door, as approved in 2009, should be fitted in the cross-passage doorway into the shippon**

5.5 Altered openings and access to the former dairy/kitchen

The approved drawings show a door fitted into the existing doorway between the kitchen and shippon. The approved door along with the door between the shippon and cross-passage would have separated the house and shippon. The doorway has been blocked up and a waist level opening, set above the kitchen worktop has been left in its place and a similar opening has been created further along the wall. Neither action is in accordance with the original 2009 approval. The doorway is believed to date from the C20 when what is believed to be the dairy encroachment into the shippon was converted to a kitchen. There is not considered to be any detriment caused to Middle Ventons' heritage significance by the blocking up of the doorway. The new opening is a completely unauthorised feature but it does not remove any fabric of significance in its own right, it is its presence and what it permits in terms of the use of the house that needs to be considered. The openings allow light into the kitchen and this is considered to be a reasonable consideration. While they remain unglazed there is no environmental buffer between the house and shippon. **As with the cross-passage-shippon doorway the kitchen openings need to provide an environmental seal between the shippon and the house to retain the difference in character between the house and the shippon. To this end it is considered that the openings could be retained and glazed and I recommend that this is permitted, subject to the approval of the detail of any glazing, by whatever means is considered appropriate.**

5.6 The design of the shippon door

The approved scheme shows the existing door being re-hung and painted. This would leave the utility area behind the door as a fairly draughty space as the door in place in 2005 does not appear to be a well fitting, draught proofed door. What has been fitted is a triple light, glazed, well fitting door, in oak, with a fixed light to one side, figures 20, 21.



Figure 20. Shippon door



Figure 21. Current shippon door, interior

I consider that it is essential that a door similar to that which previously existed and as approved in 2009 should be fitted in place of the existing door. Details should be submitted for approval and a replacement door should be subsequently be fitted.

5.7 Character of the utility area – consideration of a partition

5.7.1 Current character of the space

The approved scheme of 2009 shows the area between the kitchen and the front wall of the shippon as a utility area. This area is not a utility area today, it is an entrance lobby that is apparently used as an occasional dining and sitting area, figure 22. The former utility area now extends into the shippon as a continuous space, with a concrete floor at a common level. The former utility area and shippon are used as an additional room for the house, figure 23. This is not believed to be the character of either the utility space or shippon that was envisaged when the 2009 scheme was granted approval.



Figure 22. Current form of the utility area



Figure 23. Current furnishing of the shippon

5.7.2 2009 approval – character of the space that was envisaged

While the area between the dairy and the front wall of the shippon was in domestic use as a utility room in 2006, the shippon was not, it was an unaltered space and it was its unaltered nature that was the most important part of the building's heritage significance, the principal reason why it was listed grade II*. The 2009 approval retained the utility area as a dark, draughty space behind the existing door which linked through to the unaltered shippon and would have been separated from the body of the house by doors to the cross-passage and kitchen.

5.7.3 Impact of the implemented works

Through introducing a well fitting door into the shippon doorway and glazed windows into the shippon openings, which are not as approved, the utility area and shippon have become a space that is not as draughty and chilly as envisaged in the 2009 approval and the spaces can therefore be used as extra rooms for the house, quite altering the character of the space and destroying the character of the unaltered shippon which was the primary feature of Middle Venton's heritage significance.

5.7.4 Current lack of need for a utility area

The character of the utility area as a domestic space was established in 2005 and this function of the space was retained in the 2009 approval. A utility area is not currently required in the house as a utility area has been created in the C19 animal house, discussed below; although the creation of that utility room is not believed to benefit from prior approval. As noted below the use of part of the former animal house as a utility room is not considered to harm the heritage significance of Middle Venton.

5.7.5 Conclusion

It is agreed that the western two bays of the shippon had been partly domesticated at the time of purchase in 2005, through the dairy annexation at the rear and the laying of a concrete floor between the dairy and south shippon wall to create a space that was used as a utility area at the front, albeit without any running water or drainage in the utility area. The utility area is now of quite a different character by virtue of a well fitted, glazed door that lets in light and keeps in warmth and no doors or windows between the space and the house thereby allowing heat from the house to enter the space. It is now a comparatively bright and well lit space to the extent that it is used by Mrs Sowrey as a sitting and occasional dining area. This level of comfort and thereby high level of domestication is not what would have been permitted by the 2009 approval and it is not a level of domestication that preserves the character and heritage significance of Middle Venton. Through the removal of the well fitting glazed door and its replacement with a plank door, the introduction of a door in the cross-passage doorway and glazing into the kitchen openings, as recommended in this report, the character of this space will change back to that of a utilitarian space. Whether a resident of the house might continue to wish to sit or eat in the space is not the question, it is the quality of the environment of the space that is of concern and the measures recommended in this report will return it to the environment of a utilitarian

space as approved in 2009 so preserving the character and heritage significance of Middle Venton.

5.8 Concrete floor in the eastern two bays of the shippon

The 2009 approved drawings advise that the earth and stone floor would be *restored/reinstated*. This has not been done; the floor has been fully concreted, apparently with a lime-ash perimeter band to help with damp management. The floor means that the shippon may now be readily used as a room of the house as it has a dry, flat, firm floor. It may now be fully furnished as shown in figure 23. The flooring along with the glazing of the shippon openings, the well fitting shippon door, no environmental seal between the house and heat through the ventilation slits from the heated garden room that is set against the shippon's gable wall, has permitted the full domestic use of the former unconverted shippon, albeit slightly chillier than the rest of the house as it does not have under-floor heating like the rest of the house. The flooring of the shippon is found to be the most harmful of all of the implemented works to the heritage significance of the house. **I consider it to be a criminal offence for which prosecution could have been pursued.** In addition the presence of the concrete floor will drive any rising damp beneath the floor towards the pervious floor perimeter and the walls, potentially causing damp to rise within the walls which presently do not display any signs of damp. **Every effort must be made to remove the concrete floor to restore the shippon to as close as possible to its form in 2006. Every effort needs to be put to successfully removing the floor and providing an appropriate floor in its place. An earth/stone floor without a damp proof course restoring what was probably there is considered to be the most appropriate resolution, including the reinstatement of the drain as indicated in the 2005 measured survey linking it with the lintel stone over the drain hole. Details should be submitted of how this can be achieved. The purpose of the exercise is to re-create a crucial element of the shippon as it was in 2005 so that future generations have an opportunity to enjoy and interpret the space as it was in 2005, albeit it will now be a restoration.**

This recommendation is made in line with the long established and strong preservation policies adopted by DNPA to protect the few unconverted longhouse linhays that remain. Peter Beacham in his 1990 article makes the following concluding statement which I support in making the above recommendation:

'... Hence the policy of DNPA of refusing to allow longhouse shippons to be converted to domestic use if they survive in anything like their original form. There are now only a handful left, and unless such an exceptional, but clearly preservationist policy is rigidly applied (with accompanying public financial support for the upkeep of the shippon end), the visible longhouse will have disappeared from Devon by the end of the century.

5.9 Design and finish of the window in the south elevation of the shippon

The 2005 photograph of the house shows a simple window divided into two panes in the south elevation window of the shippon. The 2009 approval permits a three light window. A 3 light window is in position today. The window is painted to match the windows in the house given it a unity with the house and a domestic appearance. **It is a comparatively minor matter but it is considered that the removal of the current paint or painting the window a colour to give it a different appearance to the windows of the house, in order to mark it out as window to a utilitarian, former animal house rather than part of the house would help with the interpretation of the building.**

5.10 Glazed window in the hayloft opening

The approved scheme maintained the hayloft opening with the existing shutter opening inwards. The opening has been glazed with an outward opening shutter fitted, figure 24, both details are not as approved. The glazing helps to keep the shippon dry and draught free and it can be seen to be a glazed opening from the outside by virtue of the timber frame and the reflective glass. The shutter appears incongruous as it is not possible to operate it as it cannot be reached from inside or outside and historically it is inaccurate. **To preserve the character of the shippon the inward opening hatch door should be reinstated.** This will have an impact upon the fixed loft stairs, see the discussion with regard to this below.



Figure 24. Glazing and shutter to the hayloft

5.11 Whitewashed walls in the shippon

The walls in 2006 were rough stone with no surface finish, as they are on the outside of the building. Four coats of whitewash have reportedly been applied to the walls quite altering the character of the interior of the shippon. However the whitewash will not cause harm to the stones as it will permit the passage of moisture. **Attempts to merely scrub or scratch the whitewash to remove it would probably leave a discoloured and patchy finish to the wall so advice needs to be sought from a conservation specialist on how/whether the lime wash can be removed to enable the condition of the shippon in 2006 to be restored as closely as possible.**

5.12 Switches and light fittings in the shippon

No mention is made of switches or light fittings in the 2009 application or approval. Mrs Sowrey advises that the shippon had power when they bought the building and the shippon has merely been rewired and new switches provided. The presence of power points and switches is not considered to harm heritage significance as the shippon has been used as a store for a number of years. Equally the light fittings do enable the very well preserved roof to be enjoyed so it is considered that these fittings may be left, figures 25, 26. However the overall recommendation for the restoration of the shippon includes the recommendation to remove the glazing from the hayloft opening, only permitting the hatch door to remain, whether this will make the need for external quality electrical fittings to be introduced should be considered.



Figures 25, 26. Light switches and light fittings in the shippon

5.13 Lack of first floor joists and floor boards in the eastern two bays of the shippon

The 2009 approval advises that the hayloft floor would be reinstated with sawn planking; no mention is made of the supporting joists. There are today no joists and no floor boards over the two eastern bays of the shippon. The archaeological report comments on the unevenness of the floor joists and these can be imagined from the floor beam that still remains, figure 27. It is considered that to attempt to reinstate what must have been a very uneven hayloft floor would be extremely difficult. The fact that a floor did exist can clearly be seen from the floor beam with its sockets and the corresponding sockets in the gable wall. **With all of the other remedial work that is found necessary to restore the shippon, the replacement of the hayloft floor is not considered essential as its former presence can be readily understood, half of the shippon is still floored over, it will be technically very difficult to restore and not replacing the floor does permit enjoyment of the roof structure.**



Figure 27. Remaining floor beam with joist sockets and corresponding sockets in the gable wall

5.14 Steps, handrail and balustrade to the hayloft

A simple ladder to the loft existed in 2005. A ladder was approved up to the loft in 2009. What has been fitted is a set of steps fitted with a handrail with a handrail fitted along the edge of the hayloft, figure 28. The steps and handrail are considered to be a piece of excellent craftsmanship and apparently vestiges of the floor joists are used in its construction, albeit without approval. **While not historically correct their presence is not found to harm the heritage significance of Middle Venton and they are not considered to confuse the interpretation and legibility of the shippon. However where the steps are currently located they would stop the inward opening loft hatch from opening fully. This would not have happened with the approved scheme as no handrail was envisaged. It is recommended that either the steps are moved and the handrail altered to permit the historically correct hatch door to work properly, opening inwards, or the right hand rail is moved to permit the hayloft door to open.**



Figure 28. Steps and handrails

5.15 Height of the ridge of the roof over the shippon in relation to the ridge of the house roof

In 2005/2006 it is clear that Middle Venton was a building of two parts by virtue of the different roof finishes and height of the ridges: high and thatched over the house, low and tin over the shippon, figure 12. Today that difference is virtually non-existent as the whole building is thatched and the ridge is nearly of the same height along its entire length. Whether the ridge height is because of a taller roof structure being provided for the shippon than was approved or a thicker depth of thatch being provided is not clear. The shippon has at least had its roof repaired and it is thatched in the local tradition. To lower the ridge of the shippon would be a major task. Longhouses elsewhere do have similar ridge heights over house and shippon due to the nature of the build up of thatch over the years. **On balance because of the difficulty in remedying the matter, because longhouses elsewhere do have similar ridge heights over the house and shippon and because the shippon is at least now thatched, the matter is not considered worth pursuing.**

5.16 Use of and alterations to the space approved as a shed now used as a garden room

The 2009 approval permitted the reconstruction of the remains of walls beyond the gable wall of the shippon as a shed within which the plant for the ground source heat system would be located. The plant has instead been located in the C19 animal house in the yard without the benefit of prior approval. The shed has under-floor heating installed. The shed is used as a garden room. The glazing to the front elevation of the structure was approved by application 13/543, figure 29, further to it being fitted in place. With the under-floor heating and absence of any heating plant the 'shed' is now in use as an additional room for the house, albeit separated from it by the shippon. **Overall the alterations to the shed and its use as a heated garden room could be approved by whatever means is considered appropriate if it is approved as part of a balanced group of works to restore Middle Venton's heritage significance.**



Figure 29. The heated garden room approved as a shed

The heating of the garden room it should be noted helps to keep the ambient temperature of the shippon reasonable as heat passes into the shippon from the ventilation slots. The matter of the re-location of the plant room to the C19 animal house without prior approval also needs to be considered, please see below.

5.17 Use of part of the C19 animal house as a laundry and utility area and for the heating plant

No approved alterations for this building can be found. The uses introduced to the building include utility, bin store, plant room, general storage and car port, figure 30. **The alterations to accommodate the changes are not considered to harm the heritage significance of Middle Venton. The re-location of the utility area from the shippon removes the need for drainage in that part of the longhouse. The uses give the building a use and it will therefore be maintained. It is recommended that the current arrangement is accepted by whatever means is considered appropriate subject to a control over any future further domestication.**



Figure 30. The converted part of the C19 animal house

5.18 Variation of the detail of the first floor window in the converted annexe

The approved scheme shows a shutter structure over the window, figure 17, this has not been fitted. **The first floor window that has been fitted as part of the overall conversion is not found to harm the heritage significance of Middle Venton and it is therefore recommended that the amendment is accepted by whatever means is considered appropriate.**

5.19 Breach in the wall between the annexe and store to create a room that may be used as a third bedroom in the annexe

The approvals for the conversion of the cow byre to a two bedroom annexe and the conversion of the stables to a two storey store were granted separately. The two buildings are quite separate structures that had different functions and were probably

built at different times. It is not generally appropriate to knock through from one historic building to the other, through a solid gable wall, to create one unit as this confuses plan form and an understanding of the functions of the two buildings. **The joining of the two buildings is found to confuse an understanding of the farm's outbuildings and the provision of a third bedroom for what is merely permitted as an annexe to the main house is not considered to be a reason that gives sufficient justification for the harm caused. The opening to give access to the store from the annexe should be blocked up.**

5.20 Use of the plant room for the annexe as a WC and utility area

The permission for the plant room adjacent to the annexe has not been implemented as approved. The implemented works provide a WC and utility area for the annexe. The provision of additional facilities outside the existing envelope of an outbuilding is not normally permitted. **However as the works have a low impact on the heritage significance of Middle Venton it is considered that they should be accepted by whatever means is considered to be appropriate.**

5.21 Revocation of permission to erect a porch to the parlour door

The 2009 approval includes permission for a fully glazed, timber porch. This porch has not been constructed. The approved porch, if erected, would I believe appear as a discordant feature detracting the character of Middle Venton. **It is recommended that as part of the balanced package of measure to remedy the unauthorised works that permission to erect the porch is revoked by whatever means is most appropriate.**

6. MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RECOMMENDED WORKS AND ACTIONS

6.1 Personal circumstance of Mrs L Sowrey

Mrs Sowrey was widowed during the course of the implementation of the approved works. Mr Sowrey died in 2010 not long after the granting of the approvals for the major scheme of alteration to the house. Mrs Sowrey has been responsible for the works during a period of bereavement and at a later stage in her life, during her 70's. Mrs Sowrey advises that it was her husband's dying wish for Mrs Sowrey to successfully complete the restoration project. It is not believed that Mrs Sowrey knowingly sought to gain benefit for herself in implementing the works in a manner that was not in accordance with the approved scheme. Mrs Sowrey advises that she was often confused by what changes were approved and what needed to have the benefit of prior approval. Mrs Sowrey advises that often her architect appeared, on reflection, to have advised her to approve the undertaking of works, such as the lime washing, that were not covered by the approval as they were reported to her as being the correct way to proceed. While possibly Mrs Sowrey, the architect or contractors could conceivably be prosecuted, it is considered that it would be difficult to prove any negligence and to pursue the matter would undoubtedly be costly and would in all probability not be of benefit to the listed building.

6.2 General high quality of repairs and overall enhancement of Middle Venton

It is unfortunate that looking at the unauthorised works on site leaves little opportunity to congratulate and applaud the authorised works and repairs that have been carried out. Overall the implemented works at Middle Venton have been carried out to a high standard in an appropriate manner and the majority of works are such that they leave the building in a state which allows its history and importance to be better appreciated and interpreted than was the case in 2005.

6.3 'Public support for the retention of unconverted shippons'

Peter Beacham advised in 1990 that the policy to preserve unconverted shippons should be accompanied by *public financial support for the upkeep of the shippon end*. Local Authorities can no longer afford to offer grants. However the recommendations in this report to permit the retention of the en suite, subject to works to the drainage pipes, the change of use of the approved shed to a garden room, the use of the animal house as a utility area and the retention of the approved plant room for the converted cow byre in use as a WC and utility, all add inherent value to the property. In addition, the conversion of the former cow byre to an annexe is reported by DNPA to have been permitted to relieve development pressure upon the house and its shippon and this approval also adds significant value to the property. These measures can all be seen as adding value to the property in an alternative way to that of the grant funding that existed in the 1990's.

6.4 Restoration works to the shippon

The following works are considered essential in restoring the shippon to as close a possible a condition as it was in 2006:

1. Removal of the concrete floor
2. Laying of a stone/earth floor
3. Removal of the whitewash
4. Removal of glazing from the hayloft opening, fixing of an inward opening shutter
5. Relocation/alteration of the steps to allow the hayloft door to open
6. Replacement shippon door
7. Alteration to the south window of the shippon
8. Introduction of a cross-passage door to the shippon
9. Glazing of the kitchen openings into the shippon

6.5 Other works found to be important to preserving the heritage significance

1. Relocation of the drainage pipes to within the extension
2. Revocation of the permission to erect a porch to the parlour door

7. PROPOSED METHOD OF REVIEWING THE REPORT'S FINDINGS AND REACHING AGREEMENT WITH THE WAY FORWARD

1. Review by DNPA to check for factual correctness of the case background and legality of the recommendations and any issues that the recommendations might cause in terms of precedent
2. Release of the report to Mrs Sowrey for her and her family's consideration, with the date of a meeting offered a few days later, to discuss the findings with her. At the same time release of the report to English Heritage for consideration
3. A meeting with Mrs Sowrey to discuss the report and to hopefully gain her in principle agreement
4. Support in implementing the recommendation, particularly with the technical matters of the floor and whitewash removal, as well as with preparing the necessary planning and listed building consent applications

It is hoped that the report will meet with the approval of DNPA, EH and Mrs Sowrey and her family, subject to detail, and that the matter can then be resolved without turning to enforcement action and appeals.

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Nichola Burley Dip Cons Arch, MA, MRTPI, IHBC

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Mr Stephen Belli
Dartmoor National Park Authority
Parke
Bovey Tracey
Newton Abbot
Devon
TQ13 9JQ

Direct Dial: 0117 975 0725
Direct Fax: 0117 975 0701

Our ref: PA00354917

3 November 2014

Dear Mr Belli

Request for Pre-application Advice

**MIDDLE VENTON FARM, VENTON, WEST DEVON, DREWSTEIGNTON, DEVON,
EX6 6PG**

Thank you for consulting us over the plans for the above site. This is an admirable report, well set out and well illustrated; above all, clear, well-argued and understandable. We have comments and advice as follows:

Rôle of English Heritage

English Heritage is at present the popular name for the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (HBMCE). We are the Government's advisor on all aspects of the historic environment in England - including historic buildings and areas, archaeology and the historic landscape - and we have a duty to promote public understanding and enjoyment. HBMCE is an Executive Non-departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and we report to Parliament through the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Our remit in conservation matters intersects with the policy responsibilities of a number of other government departments - particularly the CLG, with its responsibilities for land-use planning matters. In planning matters our statutory remit extends *inter alia* to grade I and II* listed buildings.

We cannot enforce on listed building matters; that is the rôle of the Local Planning Authority, in this case Dartmoor National Park. However, because of the nature of our advice to the NPA over the years about this case, we are grateful to have been consulted about this Report into the best way forward



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given the impact of the works, the particular situation of the case and resources available the NPA.

On the basis of the latest information about the proposals, received by us on 29 October 2014 and detailed below, I offer the following advice.

Summary

The way forward

The response of English Heritage to this report and to your letter is as follows: If a revised application were submitted along the lines recommended in the report by Heritage Vision dated September 2014, we would support it. Our comments and advice largely endorse its thrust.

We accept that a pragmatic approach for the NPA to follow at this stage could be a Section 106 agreement to address the recommendations in sections 5 and 6 of the Report and the additional ones that we have made (see below). If the unauthorised works are effectively and legally rectified we are relaxed about the route by which this is achieved.

English Heritage Advice

Historical significance

The significance of the special plan-type and rarity of survival of unaltered long-house shippons should be made clearer at the outset of the Report, at 1.1, rather than explaining about the significance of the rarity of survival of relatively unaltered shippons at para 3.3.

Note that we now have a greater understanding of longhouses as a plan type, but even so the conventional understanding conveyed at 3.4.1 should stress the exceptional nature of the building type in national, if not international terms.

The author of the report was not told of the report of tree-ring analysis of the structural timbers 2010-11, with contributions by John Allan, the author of the 2006 Exeter Archaeology report (English Heritage Research Department Report Series No.23-2011, ISSN 1749-8775). This confirms the dating put forward in the list description, the timbers of the primary roof structure being felled c.1507-30, and the timbers of the adaptation to floored hall dating to 1598-1623. The open-hall plan of the primary building helps underline the significance of the



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longhouse.

Also, the report does not draw attention to the significance of the mid-wall doorframes; this will need to be addressed in the rectifications in at least four locations: the Shippon doorways to the yard and to the Passage, the back doorway of the Passage and the doorway from the Hall into the Passage. See below for Shippon and back doors.

On a point of statistics, it is officially given as 5.5%, not 4%, of the overall number of listed buildings.

Enabling development

Important considerations are buried in para 6.3 of the Report about enabling works leading to added value. Greater emphasis is needed to underline the exception nature of this aspect of the works which it is asserted - surprisingly - was not appreciated by the applicant.

In fact, the NPA bent over backwards to help this project

1. Permitted conversion of farm-buildings against local plan policy to domestic annexe to provide accommodation for owners during works;
2. Permitted large extension to remove pressure for development of Shippon;
3. Appears to have accepted the conversion of the proposed greenhouse against the east gable to garden room.

Whole farmstead plan

From the outset from 2004, English Heritage indicated that it would advocate scope for negotiation over the conversion of the grade II* farmhouse and shippon as part of an integrated, holistic plan for the farmstead as whole. This was both to ensure that suitable treatment of the Shippon and that the conservation of the grade II barn was addressed.

Instead a piecemeal approach has been adopted with resultant prolonged and mutually unsatisfactory negotiations and resulting unauthorised works including adaptations of outbuildings to modern use (laundry, utility, WC, garden room and ancillary accommodation etc), which EH knew nothing about but which would probably have been incorporated in such a master-plan. This would arguably have resulted in far less expenditure over less time to



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achieve more consistent results. It would presumably have addressed issues like ridge-heights, doors and doorways etc. The aim of this holistic approach was, as conceived in 2004, not only to secure the future of the grade II barn and a positive degree of reinstatement for the former lincay, but also an appropriate setting for the farmstead.

Domesticisation of the Shippon

The report sensibly takes the 'spin' out of the word 'domestic' in relation to accommodation and clearly explains that the Shippon was utilitarian and should remain so. The emphasis on 'unheated' and 'draughty' clearly conveys the correct impression.

Although we consider that more should have been made of the unconverted volume of the Shippon, we largely endorse the conclusions at 5.7.5 as to the harm and appropriate corrective action.

It should be noted that the draughtiness of the reinstated Shippon will be to some extent mitigated not only by the openings from the garden room, which has under-floor heating, but also by the under-floor heating pipes that run through it to the present Kitchen.

Conflicts and resolution

English Heritage broadly supports all the recommendations in section 5 of the Report ('Detailed impact assessment and suggested remedial action') and the proposed method of finding a way forward in Section 7. Having identified 21 conflicts (para 4.29), it makes 11 recommendations - 9 restorations plus two improvements - (para 6.4 & 6.5)..

English Heritage supports the approach. We positively endorse items 4-8 inclusive in para 6.4 and items 1 & 2 in para 6.5.

We welcome recommendation 1 & 2 in para 6.4 about the removal of the concrete floor in the Shippon and making good. This is a critical issue and to do this would be a huge improvement. However, the danger is that it might be seen as unreasonable.

We would add the following recommendations:



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- i. The back door of the Passage should be reinstated or at the very least a solid mid-wall frame using the evidence of the groove in the granite. An architect should easily sort this out, especially if the Kitchen is removed in time to the Inner Room.
The reason for this is to reinstate the proper volume and character of the Passage and to emphasise the additional nature of the stair and service extension. This needs emphasis, not simply for academic reasons, as the Report suggests, but for the sake of authenticity.
- ii. The railings of the part-loft in the Shippon should be removed. They are clearly removable/reversible but they are unnecessary and convey a discordant domestic character.
- iii. The timber lintels over the gable-end vents of the Shippon should be limewashed or so toned down as not to read as a 'feature'.
- iv. The appropriate setting for a grade II* former farmhouse should be considered to reduce its presently suburban nature.
- v. John Allan's 2006 Exeter Archaeology report should be updated to include the results of further understanding resulting from observations during opening up and the works on site, including tree-ring research paid for by English Heritage. This would also provide an opportunity to pay outstanding money owing to Exeter Archaeology and their successor contractors for undertaking that work.

Returning to the recommendations at para 6.4, we would not insist on items 3 (removal of limewash) or 9 (glazing of openings from the Kitchen into the Shippon).

- Real limewash (if that is what the finish in question actually is) can be removed easily enough or reduced in impact, - trials are needed. It should be borne in mind however that the lower part of the Shippon was probably whitewashed at one time.
- The Kitchen may well revert to being a dairy/larder or ancillary space and so more thought will in due course be needed for suitable treatment of its present openings into the Shippon.



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Recommendation

To recapitulate:

Conflicts and resolution

English Heritage broadly supports all the recommendations in section 5 of the Report ('Detailed impact assessment and suggested remedial action') and the proposed method of finding a way forward in Section 7. Having identified 21 conflicts (para 4.29), it makes 11 recommendations - 9 restorations plus two improvements - (para 6.4 & 6.5)..

English Heritage supports the approach. We positively endorse items 4-8 inclusive in para 6.4 and items 1 & 2 in para 6.5.

We welcome recommendation 1 & 2 in para 6.4 about the removal of the concrete floor in the Shippon and making good. This is a critical issue and to do this would be a huge improvement. However, the danger is that it might be seen as unreasonable.

We would add the following recommendations:

- i. The back door of the Passage should be reinstated or at the very least a solid mid-wall frame using the evidence of the groove in the granite. A good architect would easily sort this out, especially if the Kitchen is removed in time to the Inner Room.
The reason for this is to reinstate the proper volume and character of the Passage and to emphasise the additional nature of the stair and service extension. This needs emphasis, not simply for academic reasons, as the Report suggests, but for the sake of authenticity.
- ii. The railings of the part loft in the Shippon should be removed. They are clearly removable/reversible but they are unnecessary and convey a discordant domestic note.
- iii. The timber lintels over the gable-end vents of the Shippon should be limewashed or so toned down as not to read as a 'feature'.
- iv. The appropriate setting for a grade II* former farmhouse should be



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- The Kitchen may well revert to being a dairy/larder or ancillary space and so more thought will in due course be needed for suitable treatment of its present openings into the Shippon.

Conclusion

This report is an excellent heritage appraisal and impact assessment. English Heritage broadly supports its suggested resolutions and proposals for the way forward with some additional recommendations, see above.

The above advice is the response that we would offer if the same proposals were put forward for statutory approvals. Thank you for involving us at the pre-application stage. We would be pleased to offer further advice on the resolution of outstanding matters if this would be of assistance.



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Yours sincerely

Francis Kelly

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

E-mail: francis.kelly@english-heritage.org.uk



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**MIDDLE VENTON FARM, VENTON, WEST DEVON, DREWSTEIGNTON, DEVON,
EX6 6PG**

Request for Pre-application Advice

**List of information on which the above advice is based
FREETEXT**



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**Response to Nicola Burleys report on Middle Venton farm,
Drewsteignton.**

**Prepared by John Milverton MATP PGDipArchCon
PGDipBioIRec BA MRTPI.
On behalf of Mrs Lorna Sowrey.**

1.0 Appreciation.

Mrs Sowrey would like to thank Nichola Burley for the detailed consideration of the circumstances of Middle Venton and for seeking a solution acceptable to both parties. She believes that the report has helped move the debate forward.

2.0 Preliminaries.

For the sake of brevity Nicola Burley is referred to as NB.

An appendix detailing factual errors in NBs report is attached as an appendix. Those that are pertinent to consideration of the contents are outlined in this response.

3.0 Key points of this response.

1. With respect to the shippon, the report confuses “unconverted” and “unaltered” with “unmodernised” throughout.
2. The report is based on a perception that a domestic use is harmful to the character of the shippon per se and it is claimed that heating and lighting the shippon “destroys its character”. I do not consider heating and lighting can “destroy the character” of any listed building and any assessment of a listed building should not be predicated on a premise that certain uses are unacceptable; the acceptability of proposed uses of listed buildings are generally assessed by the degree of impact on the fabric of the building.
3. No account is taken of the fact that the shippon is lawfully part of the house.
4. There is no balancing of the benefits of the restoration of the house and shippon against the minor departures from the approved plans and the minor harm caused by full domestic use.
5. The report wrongly claims that there was an historic stone floor and does not identify that the concrete floor was laid following advice from the then DNPA conservation officer Val Harrison.
6. The suggested solution – sealing the utility from the rest of the house and keeping it “chilly and draughty” is not achievable and undermines Mrs Sowreys right to use her house as she wishes.

4.0 Preliminary comments.

1. There is a high degree of subjectivity in making listed building decisions. Where equally valid opinions can be held it is reasonable to expect decision makers to give the benefit of the doubt to house owners provided the overall package of works to a listed building are beneficial.

2. Where officers of an LPA give advice or direction on subjective matters and a house owner expends time, money and effort following that advice, it is reasonable to expect the Local Authority to be as good as its word, and for subsequent officers not to seek to impose a different solution than that previously agreed by their colleagues once the works are complete. In the event that this occurs, the Director of Planning should exercise his authority and accept that works undertaken in good faith should not be undone just because of a change of professional view.

3. Where formal consents have been issued, any undoing of such works has to be voluntary on the part of the house owner and one would expect there to be some advantage offered to the homeowner to accept such works.

4. Owners have a right to use their homes as homes and local authorities have no powers to oblige a homeowner to give up part of the use of their home. Rather, the right to use a building as a home needs to be taken into account in decision making.

5.0 The minor matters.

5.1 NBs recognition that the en suite bathroom does not cause harm is welcome. Sub division of rooms to create en suites is common in listed buildings and we are in possession of a long list of similar grants of consent by DNPA and adjoining authorities.

5.2 With regard the issue of the drainage pipe on the rear, it is not possible for it to be set into the wall without the loss of historic fabric from the house. The pipe was changed from plastic to cast iron at considerable expense following a direction to do so from Jo Burgess and these works being undertaken, it is considered the Park should abide by its advice. The effect on the character of the house is minor.

5.3 NBs recognition that the balustrade, stairs and hand rail are not detrimental in principle to the character of the listed building is welcomed, as is her acceptance that there is no need for a door at the back of the cross passage.

5.4 NB dislikes the whitewashing but DNPA had previously reached the view that this was not worthy of pursuit.

5.5 NBs recognition that there is no harm in listed building terms to all the other matters listed in the report is also very welcome and appreciated by Mrs Sowrey.

6.0 Unconverted/unaltered/unmodernised.

6.1 Some confusion is apparent in the use of the terms “unconverted” and “unaltered”. The shippon was converted to domestic use at least 70 years ago. The listing refers to the shippon as “unmodernised” and this is suggested as a more accurate term.

6.2 The shippon is not unaltered; works to adapt the shippon were undertaken in two phases, the 19th C and the mid 20thC. A doorway was cut through from the kitchen to give access into the shippon, the utility area was concreted, electricity and water were installed. The whole was used both as a back kitchen and for domestic purposes and the shippon door became one of the principal points of access into the house in 1945 with the area behind it used as a lobby.

6.3 Information has been supplied to DNPA demonstrating that the shippon end has been in domestic use since the 1940s. The list description identifies that the shippon was used for storage in 1988 which accords with the information provided to the Park that the shippon was full of furniture for over ten years.

6.4 DNPA policies and indeed Peter Beachams article refers to “unconverted” shippons ie those still in agricultural use; where – as here – the shippon has long been converted then the policy presumption against such a use cannot apply. The fact that one end was unmodernised is an important feature of the architectural character of the shippon, but so is the long standing existing lawful domestic use.

7.0 The issue of the optimum viable use for the shippon.

7.1 It is a general tenet of listed building practice that once a building is redundant for its original purpose that an alternative use should be found as this is the best way to keep the building in good repair. This principle is long standing in conservation and it is set out in paragraph 126 (repeated in para 131) of the NPPF that LPA's should take into account;

“the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them back to viable uses consistent in their conservation”.

7.2 The importance of finding an alternative use for buildings is identified in the Practice Guide that accompanied PPS 5 (still valid at the time of writing) in paragraph 77 as follows;

“ Finding the optimum viable use for an asset may require the LPA to apply other development control policies flexibly and imaginatively to achieve long term conservation. For example....it may be necessary to make an exception to policy that restricts residential use on employment land.”

or indeed a residential use of a shippon.

7.3 I am not aware of any guidance that says listed buildings cannot be put to certain uses or are better off disused.

7.4 One of the key impediments to reaching a resolution of the issues at Middle Venton has been the perception that a domestic use of the shippon is harmful to its character per se, and that any works that facilitate that use must by definition therefore also be harmful. This line of logic has been followed by the Park, by Francis Kelly and it unfortunately now appears in NBs report. Paragraph 5.7.3 states;

“ ...the utility area and shippon have become a space that not as draughty and chilly as envisaged in the 2009 consents...the spaces can therefore be used as extra rooms for the house, quite altering the character of the space and destroying the character of the unaltered shippon which was the primary feature of the Middle Venton farm”.

7.5 The claim that a particular use defines the character of the building and/or that it is critical that buildings are retained as “dark and draughty” is not well grounded in conservation practice. Rather, the aim is to find uses that maintain the fabric of the building. If the historic fabric is maintained (as here) wholly unaltered then the use is immaterial.

7.6 The shippon was in a parlous state and in 2003 the structure in usable condition consisted of;

- the three walls with historic openings.
- one part truss
- the tie beams
- the integral dairy/kitchen

7.7 The roof, historic floor and doors were gone and the shippon itself was in danger of being lost.

7.8 The works have achieved the full restoration of the shippon to a usable structure and all remaining historic elements have been conserved. The cost of the same has been in the region of £100,000.

7.9 The harm identified to the shippon by a domestic use is trivial in comparison – it is “warm and well lit”. NB does not like the design of the two doors – these can be changed if need be but both are replacements for modern fixtures. “Well fitting doors” appears to me to be a small price to pay for the restoration of the shippon.

8.0 The issue of the concrete floor.

8.1 NB expresses the strong view that the laying of a concrete floor was a criminal act for which prosecution could have been brought. I do not accept that damp will be forced into the walls by the presence of the floor and point out that DNPA has a detailed report from a building professional advising that this will not occur.

8.2 What is of note, is that NBs report identifies no harm to the listed building whatsoever, beyond the fact that the floor enables the use of the shippon as part of the house. As above, uses by themselves are not a listed building issue – their desirability or

otherwise is judged by their physical impact on the listed building. If the desirability or otherwise of the domestic use is set aside, the fact is that no harm is identified as being caused by the floor per se. As such, it cannot be said to be harmful to the listed building.

8.3 The report does not (and should) record the fact that the floor was laid following advice given by the former DNPA conservation officer, Val Harrison. Mrs Sowrey has advised that she had never heard of a “hybrid limecrete floor” and was given examples of where such a floor had been laid and was told only such a floor would be acceptable if Mrs Sowrey could not afford flagstones. Again, we have the issue that Park Officers have given advice, it has been acted upon and money spent and then a different officer has a different view.

8.4 The report does not address the report submitted by Mrs Sowrey that jack hammering out the new concrete floor may cause harm to the fabric of the building.

9.0 Has Mr Sowrey gained benefits from the Park to offset not converting the shippon?

9.1 At 6.3 the following works are identified as benefits to Mr Sowrey which “offset” the non use of the shippon;

- the retention of the en suite
- the cou of the garden room
- the use of the animal house to a utility area
- the retention of the plant room
- the creation of the annexe

9.2 These works are only “benefits” if they would not have ordinarily been granted and are concessions. I would disagree that unusual benefits have been given to Mrs Sowrey and in point of fact she has had considerable additional costs imposed upon her as follows;

9.3 Negotiations to restore the house took six years and cost £50,000 in professional fees alone.

9.4 The Park refused to countenance a bathroom anywhere but the cross passage – one could not be created in the principal

bedrooms nor the shippon so a two storey extension had to be built at a cost in excess of £50,000.

9.5 The house does not have a utility room – if the Park had investigated the history of use of the shippon, it would have revealed that the shippon had been in use as a back kitchen for over 60 years and it may well have been possible for a similar use to continue. A separate utility area across the yard is inconvenient and necessitates going outside to put the washing machine on.

9.6 The garden room has been created out of a restored lean to which had partly collapsed. There is already a net benefit to the house and allowing its use as a garden room is not a concession.

9.7 The conversion of the annexe would have been allowed anyway and has cost in excess of £200,000.

9.8 There have been no unusual or overriding benefits to Mrs Sowrey that offset the use of the shippon; rather the refusal to allow basic facilities in the house has necessitated considerable additional expenditure.

10.0 Can Mrs Sowrey be obliged to keep the utility area “chilly and draughty”?

10.1 The 2009 consent was not a mutually agreed document; it represents the imposition of the National Parks view of how the shippon should be used and the Park simply refused to grant any permission or allow the restoration of the house to proceed until it had its own way; this process took six years.

10.2 NBs report underplays the role of the “utility area” and this gives legitimacy to the suggestion that the utility be incorporated into a “chilly and draughty” shippon. What is not acknowledged in the report is that the utility area is not simply just that, but remains one of the principal doors into the house and has had a domestic function for at least 60 years. The area behind the shippon door is a key part of the house and is the first part of the house guests will enter and see; it needs to be presentable and cannot be part of a “chilly and draughty” shippon.

10.3 Reference also has to be had to what has actually been approved. Whilst the Park may have had it in mind that the shippon

would be unused, the utility area has long been fully used as part of the house (since 1945) and Mrs Sowrey has every right to heat and light this area. If the shippon had to be kept “chilly and draughty” then the way to do it would have been to require the shippon to be partitioned from the rest of the house along the line of the former partition. The Park did not do this, but approved a scheme whereby the partition was removed and a single volume created. In addition, a new door was created into the hallway and a second slot (a “serving hatch”) cut through from the kitchen into the utility area. NB states that the “*new openings are a completely unauthorised featurethere is no environmental buffer between the house and the shippon.*” NB has obviously not been provided with the consent granted for this feature and for the part blocking up of the door. The removal of the partition and the approval of the slot represent an integration of the shippon into the rest of the house - there is no “environmental buffer” between the house and the shippon and for that reason the shippon cannot be a “chilly and draughty” place because lack of glazing and a “poorly fitting door” means that cold air and damp will blow through the rest of the house.

10.4 I refer to a recent (Aug 2012) appeal decision at Hall Farm, Harford where DNPA served a listed building notice to require the removal of unauthorised windows; the notice was quashed and the Inspector readily accepted that a lack of windows would be harmful saying;

“ Even if the windows themselves are found to be harmful, the lack of any windows would be more harmful because of the inevitable risks to the historic fabric.”

10.5 If the building is not sealed then wind and moist air will blow into the main body of the house, as well as access being given to birds and vermin. This is clearly not an acceptable situation and has been found to be so at a listed building appeal within the National Park.

10.6 The consents granted have integrated the shippon into the rest of the house; as such there is an obvious need to properly seal the building. My client is willing to consider variations to the designs to the front door and the hayloft door but it is a prerequisite that they form a proper seal for the building; this means glazing with respect to the hayloft door.

11.0 Re-balancing the listed building factors.

11.1 In my opinion, a more reasonable and realistic way of assessing the relevant factors is as follows;

1. The shippon was converted to domestic use before listing and physical alterations to enable that use carried out. However, these were limited and the shippon end was unmodernised. The shippon door is now the principal entrance to the house and – given the location of the kitchen – is likely to remain so.
2. Even if this was not the case, there is no other practical use other than domestic for the shippon as it can only be accessed through the principal entrance to the house.
3. Works approved by DNPA have integrated the shippon space further into the domestic space of the house and it cannot be “sealed off” from the rest of the house. There is no benefit in NBs suggested solution to Mrs Sowrey and it cuts across her existing property rights.
4. Given the interconnectedness the front (shippon) door and the hayloft door have to be wind and weather tight to prevent harm to the interior of the building – this position has already been upheld at appeal within DNPA.
5. The hybrid floor is a prerequisite for any form of use for the shippon and was laid following advice from Val Harrison. There is no evidence of a stone floor being present and no historic fabric was removed. NB identifies no harm with the concrete floor other than it allows a full residential use. The removal of the same may damage the fabric of the building.
6. The shutter for the hayloft door will be a replacement and a drawing showing a folding internally opening shutter has been submitted – this means the stairs can remain as is.
7. DNPA have accepted the whitewash as not worthy of pursuit.
8. Overall, the shippon has been saved from dereliction and the quality of the restoration is outstanding. The benefits achieved in conservation terms far outweigh the negative effects of the departures. Given the saving of the structure and the lack of harm caused by the unauthorised alterations no harm arises from the domestic use. The agricultural use is long gone and a domestic use is the only sensible use of the building given the access arrangements.

11.2 I think it is worth quoting Inspector Katie Peerless who allowed a listed building appeal within the National Park and said this;

“Historic buildings frequently have to be subject to sympathetic change if they are to survive and it is often considered that the incremental alterations that take place over the years can add to its evolutionary interest. Working buildings such as Hall farm have to be adapted to meet modern needs and standards if they are to continue to be used

11.3 All the above is true of Middle Venton. In essence, the debate is about the design of two replacement features and whether a floor accepted by the DNPA conservation officer at the time should be allowed to stay. I believe it is time that the debates are drawn to a conclusion and the Park accept that what has been done is of huge benefit to the house and that few, if any, of the minor departures is of any real consequence.

Appendix 1 – identified errors.

Paragraph	Comment
1.3	Mr and Mrs Sowrey bought the house in 2003, not 2005. This error is repeated in various places
3.3	Reference in bullet points to an “unconverted” shippon; the shippon was converted to domestic use before listing but was unmodernised
3.4.2.	The floor was excavated under the supervision of DNPA officers. There was no drain.
3.4	It is stated that the shippon had an earth and stone floor in 2006; this is incorrect. John Allans report said the floor was covered in debris and it was presumed that there was a floor and drain beneath. The floor was excavated under the supervision of DNPA officers and there was no historic floor of any description.
3.5	listing occurred in 1988, not 1998.
4.13	The report claims that the second opening in the kitchen is not approved – consent was granted by DNPA.
4.18	reference is made to an unaltered shippon. The shippon was altered in the 19 th C and again in the mid 20 th . The shippon was not unaltered.

- 5.2 Jo Burgess advised the pipework had to be cast iron as it was external. If the pipes were to be buried in the wall they could have remained plastic. The pipes were changed in accordance with her advice.
- 5.5` *“The opening is a completely unauthorised feature.”* Consent was granted by DNPA and acted upon.
- 5.6 The fact that a space is shown as a utility does not mean that is its only lawful use. The space could legally be used as a bedroom. There are no conditions on the lbc requiring certain works (such as the installation of doors) and many of the works are entirely discretionary on Mrs Sowrey.
- 5.7.1 *“The area is not a utility area today, it is an entrance lobby.”* The area has been an entrance lobby since 1945, long before the building was listed.
- 5.7.2 *“While the area between the dairy and the front wall of the shippon was in domestic use as a utility room in 2006, the shippon was not...”* Yes it was; the shippon has been used as an integral part of the house for over 60 years.
- “...it was an unaltered space and it was its unaltered nature that was the most important part of the buildings heritage significance.”* The space was not unaltered, it had been adapted in two phases for residential use; the water tank was on the hayloft floor. The entire roof fabric and most of the internal floor had rotted away. The historic floor (if there ever was one) had been removed. The historic doors had gone. It was a partly unmodernised shippon, with many of its

historic features lost. “Unaltered” is a misdescription.

5.7.3 *“...destroying the character of the unaltered shippon”*. All architectural features of interest have been retained and restored. The character of a building is not destroyed by putting it to a new use. The shippon was not unaltered.

5.7.4 *“A utility room is not required in the house”*
A utility room is required and could have been provided.

5.7.5 *“It is agreed that the western bays of the shippon had been partly domesticated...”*
The shippon is an integral part of the domestic property and use for any domestic purpose is lawful.

“utility area without any running water”;
there was a water tank in the shippon on the hayloft floor and a system of water pipes from it to the rest of the house and other barns.

“no doors or windows between the space and the house thereby letting heat from the house to enter the space.” The open doorway between the kitchen and the utility area was inserted in 1945 and heat has been leaking from the kitchen into this space for 69 years.

“this high level of comfort and thereby domestication is not what would have been permitted by the 2009 approval.” At the time of the determination of the applications, DNPA had the erroneous belief that the use of the shippon is agricultural. There are no conditions controlling how the space can be used and DNPA will advise that they are not in a

position to bring enforcement proceedings to limit the use of the shippon.

“it is not a level of domestication that preserves the character and heritage significance of Middle Venton”. The use of a building is not what gives it its character or its heritage significance; it is how those uses are embodied in the fabric of the building and all these have been preserved. *“Whether a resident of the house might continue to site and eat in the space is not the question.”* Buildings have to be adapted and modernised (see Inspector Peerless’ comments above. The domestic use is lawful and there is no reason why the shippon end of the house has to be maintained as a “chilly and draughty” space.

5.8

Paragraph 5.8 does not record that the floor design was discussed by Val Harrison with both Mrs Sowrey and her builders. The floor has been laid in accordance with the advice given by the DNPA conservation officer.

“The concrete floor will drive any rising damp beneath the floor towards the walls...potentially causing damp to rise within the walls”. This will not occur for the reasons given in the report by David Brewer, a building control professional with over 40 years experience of buildings.

Peter Beachams comment *“Hence the policy of DNPA refusing to allow longhouse shippons to be converted to domestic use...”* The shippon has been converted to domestic use for over 70 years and as consent for such a use is not required, neither the policy nor the comment are relevant to Middle Venton.

- 5.9 Removal of the paint from the window. The paint is approved.
- 5.16 “...the use as a heated garden room could be approved.” No consent is required.
- 5.19 “it is not generally appropriate to knock through from one historic building to another”. There was a pre-existing hole which was the only point of access into the space concerned; there was therefore a long standing connection between the two volumes.
- 5.20 Revocation of the porch. This cannot be achieved without Mrs Sowreys consent. There are no benefits offered currently to secure that consent.
- 6.3 Reference to “unconverted shippons” The shippon was converted to residential use before listing.