





**Balmullo Steading,
Fife,
Delisting Application,
Additional Information**

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1 Introduction

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 ARCHAS Cultural Heritage Ltd were commissioned by Mr David Queripel Montgomery Forgan Associates on behalf of Ms Mary Forster of Pecehill Farm, to undertake an archaeological and historical assessment of Balmullo Steading in Fife.
- 1.1.2 Balmullo Steading is a Category C Listed Building and the client wanted to explore options for having this Listing removed. Following assessment of the Steading complex, ARCHAS believed a case could be made for delisting Balmullo Steading and agreed to compile an application to this affect.
- 1.1.3 This document contains much of the same information available in the accompanying Designation Application form. However, the Historic Environment Scotland form has a space limit which meant it was not possible to include all of the research completed for Section 8. This missing information is included in this report.

2 Development Proposals

Section 6

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 The landowner proposes to wholly or partially demolish Balmullo Steading (Photographs (002) and (004)) as it has been identified as unsalvageable by a structural survey and uneconomical to repair, redevelop and refurbish.

3 Reason for Application

Section 7

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The 0.9 hectare area around Balmullo Steading has been identified by Fife Council as an area into which the town of Balmullo can expand with the construction of up to 23 dwellings. The site has been in the Local Plan for over 10 years and is allocated as a housing development site.
- 3.1.2 Submissions have been made in the past for the redevelopment of the site to incorporate retention and redevelopment of the steading (08/00147/FUL). Due to various constraints on the site, including the presence of the listed Balmullo steading, these applications were unsuccessful and in the intervening period the condition of the steading has deteriorated to such an extent that it is now considered unsafe and largely unsalvageable.
- 3.1.3 The landowner has commissioned structural surveys¹ which have reached this conclusion, while a survey from independent property consultancy CKD Galbraith indicated that development of the site was uneconomical if the Steading was to be renovated and retained.
- 3.1.4 The landowner would like to have the property delisted, and enter into discussions with Historic Environment Scotland regarding the demolition (whole or partial) of the Steading to ensure it is adequately recorded, the site made safe and development is able to proceed.

¹ Dryburgh Associates Ltd, Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers, August 2014 'Structural Condition Report on Buildings at Balmullo Farm, Balmullo, Fife,

4 Designation Criteria and Supporting Information (including photographs)

Section 8

4.1 General

4.1.1 In order to ascertain whether a structure is suitable for Listing, and to confirm which category of Listing it should be assigned to, Historic Environment Scotland have three principles which are used to assess the value of a structure for statutory listing. These are:

- Age and Rarity;
- Architectural or Historical Interest; and
- Close Historical Associations.²

4.1.2 This section now aims to look at each of these sections in turn, highlighting how the applicant evaluates Balmullo Steading under these headings.

4.2 Age and Rarity

Age

4.2.1 The first record of the farm at Balmullo is on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6 inch to 1 mile map surveyed in 1854 and already the farm has the appearance of a multi-phase, well established farm complex with mature trees planted in the garden of the neighbouring farmhouse. Balmullo itself is shown on earlier maps such as William Roy's Military Survey of c.1750, but the detail is insufficient to show if the farm is in position.

4.2.2 The steading as shown in 1854 is virtually unrecognisable from that visible today. A rectangular structure lies obliquely to the main road on a NW-SE alignment, with a longer range returning at right angles in a NW direction from the NW corner of the 'core' rectangular structure. The return between the two ranges is occupied by a set of stairs. The narrow area between the main rectangular 'core' structure and the road is occupied by a conjoined circular building – almost certainly a horse mill. Access into the farm runs along the eastern side of the rectangular 'core' building.

4.2.3 Overlaying the 1854 map with subsequent editions of the OS allows the development of the farm to be charted. By 1893 a 25 inch to 1 mile map has been produced by the OS, showing the complex in greater detail, with phasing and divisions between conjoined buildings. The horse mill has been removed while a large extension has been built to the NE abutting the 'core' rectangular structure visible in 1854. These new additions cover the access road, forming a pend, while the new range runs NW parallel to that visible to the west on the first edition of 1854.

4.2.4 Subsequent maps show further alterations to the complex, but the buildings shown on the 1854 and 1893 map include those that remain as the Category C Listed 'Balmullo Steading' today.

4.2.5 Balmullo Steading as it survives today clearly retains a 'core', however altered, which pre-dates 1854.

² Historic Environment Scotland, "Policy Statement, June 2016", 51

Rarity

- 4.2.6 The standard ARCHAS Study Area for an archaeological or environmental assessment is up to 10km. If similar sites protected by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1997 are considered within this study area, Balmullo Steading is one of 27 protected farm steadings or complexes.
- 4.2.7 Of the 27 Listed Buildings within the study area:
- 1 is protected as Category A Listed Building;
 - 11 are protected as Category B Listed Buildings; and
 - 15 (including Balmullo Steading) are protected as Category C Listed Buildings.
- 4.2.8 Using these figures, Balmullo Steading comprises around **3.7%** of the Listed Buildings in the Study area and c.**6.66%** of the Category C Listed Buildings.
- 4.2.9 Although it is clear that farm steadings in themselves are not rare in north east Fife, it is also important to identify architectural factors which characterise Balmullo Steading and ascertain whether these can be considered rare or unique.
1. Balmullo Steading is constructed from a mix of dark grey whinstone rubble and roughly coursed red whinstone rubble. The dressings and quoins are of white sandstone.
- 4.2.10 This style of build can be paralleled to varying degrees at a large number of the 27 sites within the study area protected by statutory legislation. The coursed and random whinstone rubble dressed with ashlar quoins can be seen at sites including:
- Creich Farm Steading (LB43883);
 - Prioory Farm Steading (LB45855);
 - Newton Farm Steading (LB10808);
 - Kinshaldy House Farm Steading (LB8865);
 - Mount Melville Home Farm Steading (LB2664);
 - Newcairnie Steading (LB8832);
 - Newington Steading (LB8841);
 - Cairney Lodge Home Farm (LB2620);
 - Foodie Steading (LB2614);
 - Todhall Steading (LB2597); and
 - Pitencrieff Steading (LB2640).
2. Balmullo Steading is roofed by red pantiles with piended roofs.
- 4.2.11 The red pantile and piended roofs which characterise Balmullo Steading are common to the agricultural buildings of north east Fife. These roofs can be seen on at least ten of the steadings within the study area, including:
- Wester Forret (LB8654);
 - Thornbank Farmhouse and Steading (LB8866);
 - Newcairnie Steading (LB8832); and
 - Colluthie Steading (LB15551).

3. The plan of the structure with two opposing, parallel ranges running from a third side to form a three sided courtyard.

4.2.12 As evolving agricultural buildings in near continual use, the steadings of NE Fife do not conform to strict patterns, but the survival of Balmullo Steading as a small, three sided structure around a courtyard is more by accident than design, with the once much longer ranges and outbuildings demolished in the early 21st century. The removal of the octagonal horse mill from the front of the structure between 1854 and 1893 also attests to this continual evolution.

4.2.13 As such the direct plan of the steading is not easily compared to other sites within the study area, but the courtyard arrangement is common to a number of sites, while the arrangement of parallel ranges running from a main 'core' block is also commonplace.

4.2.14 Most relevant comparable examples here include:

- Colluthie Steading (LB:15551);
- Creich Farm (LB43883);
- Newcairnie Steading (LB8832);
- Pittencrieff Steading (LB2640); and
- Priory Farm Steading (LB45855).

4. Segmentally arched cartsheds

4.2.15 Balmullo Steading contains three segmentally arched cartsheds, which are arguably the most aesthetically pleasing aspect of the structure. Cartsheds are common to the steadings of NE Fife and can be seen at a number of sites including:

- Cassindonald Steading (LB2643);
- Creich Farm Steading (LB43883);
- Drumcarro Steading (LB2691);
- Foodie Steading (LB2614);
- Kinnaird Farm Steading (LB8880);
- Newcairnie Steading (LB8832);
- Newington Steading (LB8841);
- Pittormie House Steading (LB2594);
- Rathillet Farm Steading (LB8791);
- Todhall Steading (LB2597);
- Wester Kincaple Steading (LB15805);

5. The kiln vent at mill section

4.2.16 The Listing specifically mentions the kiln vent at the mill section of the building. This feature is located in the secondary part of the structure, constructed between 1854 and 1893. It is difficult to ascertain parallels to the kiln vent, but similar features are notable from a cursory inspection at:

- Craigsanquhar House Steading (LB43926);
- Todhall Steading (LB2597); and
- Whitehill Farm Steading (LB4957).

4.3 Architectural and Historical Interest

General

- 4.3.1 The architectural and historical interest of a building is assessed under a number of sub-headings.

Interior

- 4.3.2 The farm buildings remained in use until the late 20th century, undergoing phases of alteration and re-use. All of the buildings and rooms survive as shells (Photograph 021), with collapsing roofs (Photograph 023) and are unsafe to access.
- 4.3.3 The eastern pre-1893 range in particular has undergone a significant degree of alteration and modernisation to the interior, containing partitioned areas from concrete cinder blocks (Photograph 033).
- 4.3.4 The main building does not contain obvious signs of modernisation, but retains no obvious internal features or fittings, having seemingly been totally cleared out.

Plan Form

- 4.3.5 The building is a simple agricultural complex. It is narrow and shows no visible signs of complexity or an interesting layout. While it was not possible to access the upper floor, the lower level essentially comprise one large empty room in each of the three ranges, and the area under the arches, which is open along one side.

Technological excellence or innovation, material or design quality

- 4.3.6 There is no clear indication of unique, technological innovation. The date of the Steading from the early to the latter part of the 19th century means that it has none of the innovations and ideas on ventilation designed to aid animal health.
- 4.3.7 Much of the Steading complex has the appearance of a high quality finish, with carefully crafted ashlar quoins and dressings. However, a Structural Survey commissioned in August 2014³ (see Section 9 below) has revealed significant structural issues apparent in the original construction, with unrestrained gables, subsistence and significant thrusts created by the arched openings which the gables cannot resist.
- 4.3.8 In addition the removal of the horse mill from the SW wall has led to a degree of poorer quality repair, further weakening the wall and contributing to significant slumping.

Setting

- 4.3.9 As a functional agricultural building, Balmullo Steading would have been positioned in the heart of the farmland it worked. The exact age of the town of Balmullo is unknown, but it is shown as a small collection of buildings with a port office on the 1st edition OS map of 1854. At this stage, Balmullo Steading and farm complex sits within fields to the south of the town.
- 4.3.10 The continued expansion of Balmullo, particularly to the immediate north of the Steading, as well as the upgrade of the main A914 trunk road has removed much of the agricultural feel to the Balmullo complex. While the Category B Listed (LB8893) farmhouse complex has remained a constant to the west, the construction, alteration and often removal of modern

³ Dryburgh Associates Ltd, Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers, August 2014 'Structural Condition Report on Buildings at Balmullo Farm, Balmullo, Fife,

farm buildings around the remaining Steading buildings have removed much of the site's setting and 'feeling of place.'

Regional Variations

4.3.11 As discussed above, Balmullo Steading fits clearly into a regional pattern of steadings in NE Fife. These are naturally a very mixed selection of buildings, but the random, roughly coursed whin construction, white sandstone ashlar dressings, pantile-piended roofs and the segmented arches all conform to a general pattern of which Balmullo Steading is one.

4.4 Close Historical Associations

4.4.1 Balmullo Steading has no known associations with nationally important people or events.

4.5 Conclusions

4.5.1 Balmullo Steading is a Category C Listed Building.

4.5.2 This category is described by Historic Environment Scotland covered by one or all of the following criteria:

- Simple traditional buildings which group well with others in Categories A and B;
- Are of Local Importance;
- Lesser examples of a period, style, or building type; and
- Survive as they were originally constructed or are only moderately altered.⁴

4.5.3 Balmullo Steading is a simple, traditional agricultural building of which there are a large number surviving across the rich agricultural landscape of east Fife. It can be argued that architecturally the building is of Local Importance as it retains a core that is likely to date to at least the early 19th century if not earlier.

4.5.4 The Steading is a functional agricultural building which remained in use until the late 20th century or early 21st century. Today the building complex is multi-phase, much altered and in serious danger of collapse. However, the condition of the building has deteriorated greatly, leading this to be recorded as in "Very Poor" condition and at "High" risk by the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland.⁵ The condition of the building, particularly the main southern wall of the pre-1893 'core' range is a serious safety concern (Photograph 052).

4.5.5 While the building fits well into the regional pattern of 19th century steadings in NE Fife, the remains contain no remarkable or obviously unique features to set it apart, while those factors which define the structure (such as the arcaded segmented arches, the pantile-piended roof and the whin construction) are all paralleled elsewhere on better reserved examples.

⁴ Historic Environment Scotland, "Scotland's Listed Buildings 2016", 5

⁵ <http://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk/details/907785>

5 Further Information

Section 9

5.1 General

5.1.1 Balmullo Steading is in serious danger of collapse. The building is currently ruinous and listed as in a 'Very Poor' condition and 'high' risk by the Buildings at Risk Register of Scotland. A structural survey carried out by Dryburgh Associates Ltd, Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers in August 2014⁶ assessed that the majority of the building was beyond salvage. The report records that due to advanced rot and decay, none of the following can be salvaged:

- All timber safe lintels;
- Beams carrying stonework;
- All first floor timber joists; and
- All flooring.

5.1.2 Similarly, defects in the original build are becoming apparent. Perimeter walls are leaning outwardly, suffering subsistence, while water ingress at the wall heads has caused penetrating damp and washed out mortar joints. Gables are unrestrained, as are the long tall walls. The arched openings are creating significant thrusts which the adjacent gables cannot resist.

5.1.3 The report concludes that:

*"These walls cannot be salvaged or satisfactorily repaired primarily due to the subsistence and lean they experience."*⁷

5.1.4 While it is understood that no factors other than architectural or historical interest can be taken into account while assessing statutory protection, the ongoing deterioration of the Steading is worthy of a mention. While this application has discussed and assessed means by which it can be argued that the 'special character' of Balmullo Steading is no longer intact, or considered worthy of Category C Listed status, if action is not taken to preserve or record the structure, it will be lost.

5.1.5 Previous planning applications (08/00149/ELBC and 08/00147/FUL) have shown the development of the site incorporating the Steading is difficult and uneconomical for various reasons. The continuing and swift deterioration of the steading means that this situation is unlikely to improve.

5.1.6 If Balmullo Steading is delisted, the client is willing to commission a detailed archaeological record, including stone by stone recording of the pre-1854 core of the structure if required. The architect and developer would also be keen to engage Historic Environment Scotland in discussions about what parts of the structure it would be possible to retain, or in the event of demolition, to re-use.

5.1.7 The Historic Environment Scotland Listing specifically mentions the 'kiln vent at the mill section' and the ornamental wrought iron gate with side-rolling mechanism'. The former is

⁶ Dryburgh Associates Ltd, Consulting Civil and Structural Engineers, August 2014 'Structural Condition Report on Buildings at Balmullo Farm, Balmullo, Fife,

⁷ Ibid. 11

currently in a precarious position due to the decline of the roof and has shifted from true, while the latter sits in overgrown ground, is not overlooked and is easy prey for thieves.

- 5.1.8 It is the opinion of the applicant that the condition of the building is such, that the compilation of a comprehensive archaeological record prior to demolition may be preferable to the loss of the historical site through neglect, collapse and deterioration.