

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 20/00643/LBC

Date: 10/03/2021

Planning Officer: SE

Address: Rye End Farm, Green Lane, Codicote, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 8SU

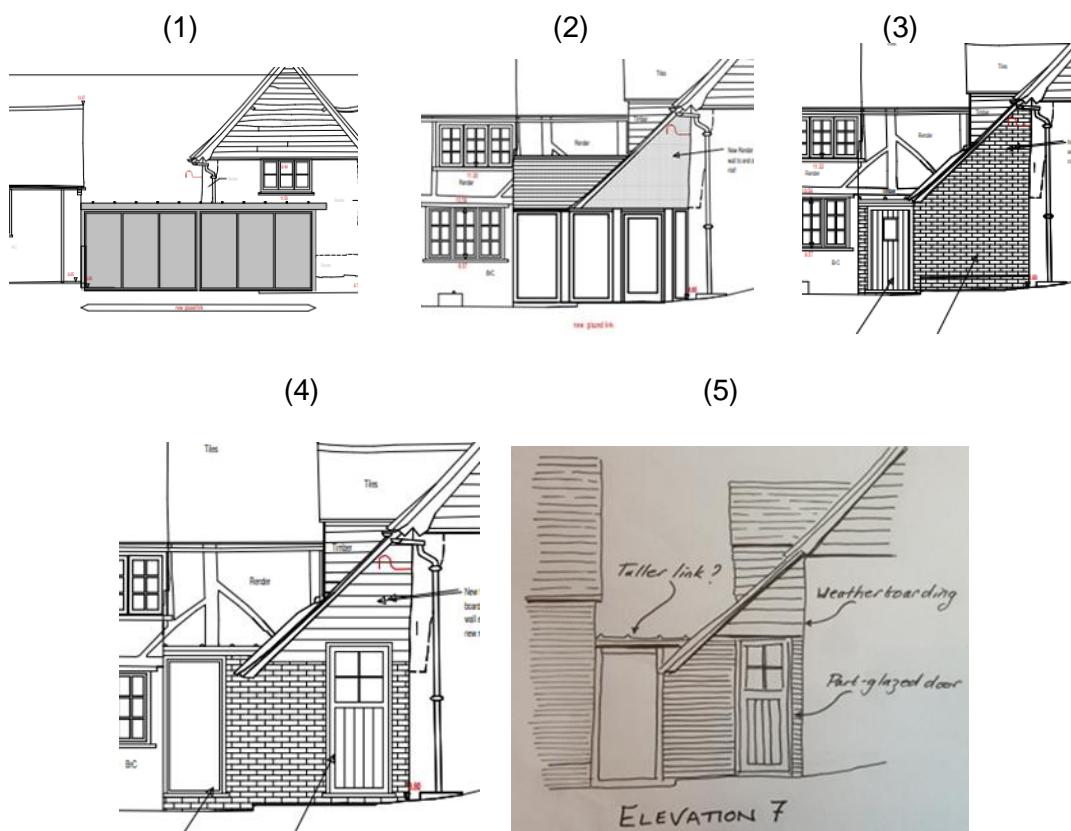
Subject: Internal and external alterations to Barn, East Stables and West Stables. Single storey link extension between Farmhouse and East Stables and between East Stables and Barn and single storey extension to front (east side) of West Stables.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 I previously commented on 26/06/2020 and 18/11/2020. Then, on 02/12/2020 I responded to plans informally received on 30/11/2020. These latest comments are in response to a 23-day re-consultation period which commenced on 17/12/2020. My sincere apologies for the delay in getting back to the case officer and ultimately the applicant.

2.0 Link

- 2.1 The images below show the progression of the discussion from the initial flat roof, large glazed 'box' concept (1) through to a partially glazed lean-to with dual-pitched link (2), through to a brick lean-to with flat roof link with solid doors (3) through to the current version of a part brick/part weatherboard lean-to with a short flat-roof glazed link (4).



- 2.2 Whilst there would be a modest amount of harm occasioned to the farmhouse and to the East Stables by forming this link, this element is crucial to the accessibility of this courtyard group. The latest version follows the format offered in a sketch I prepared previously (see 5 above) and I am prepared to support this alteration.

3.0 East Stable Range

- 3.1 A 'STATEMENT OF STRUCTURAL DESIGN INTENT' (26/10/2020) has been prepared by mason navarro pledge [MNP] and states at 6.1.1 that

"The roof structure was not visible above the ceiling. We understand that the ceiling is to be removed as part of the proposed works, allowing the rafters and truss elements to be inspected. A roof of sawn rafters, purlins and trusses is anticipated."

- 3.2 It has, therefore, not yet been established as to the extent of any necessary roofing repairs.
- 3.3 I note that the elevation treatment has been amended from the top image below to the bottom image below and is now considered to be a much more sensitive handling of the elevation and is unobjectionable.

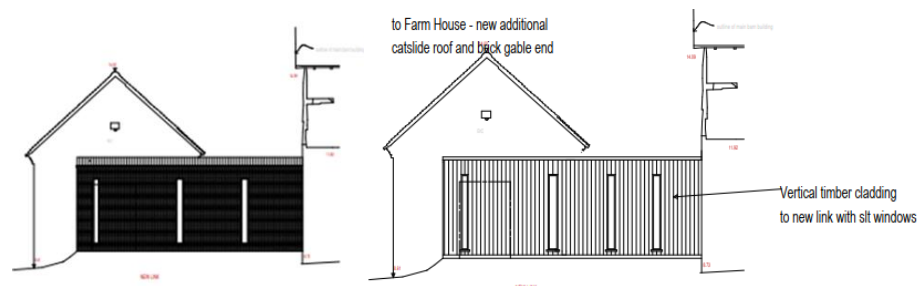


4.0 Main Barn

- 4.1 I previously advised against a chimney stack and the applicant has offered a 'cranked' flue projecting from Elevation 17 and although a permanent fireplace is still shown rather than a 'floating' type as indicated in the images previously provided, I find the new arrangement unobjectionable.



- 4.2 On reviewing the link between the East Stables and Main Barn, I suggested that having seen the brick-faced option, it might be worthwhile considering a vertical timber cladding external finish as this would give a more desirable contrast to the brickwork either side and still look semi-agrarian? The latest proposal takes this design concept on board and is considered unobjectionable.



- 4.3 In light of comments previous made, the fenestration to both gable ends has been adjusted and is considered acceptable.



- 4.4 In December 2020, I stated that whilst a survey record of the timber frame has been made and a 'STATEMENT OF STRUCTURAL DESIGN INTENT' (26/10/2020) has been prepared by MNP, neither is a fully worked up structural solution and more work is clearly necessary in this regard to fully understand what the structural implications are not only for the main barn but also for the stables/outbuildings.
- 4.5 It is noted at 1.1.4 of the above report that the applicant's strong preference is to retain as far as possible the existing interior aesthetic. In effect this means leaving a maximum amount of the original structure on display **by placing the necessary insulation outside the structure**. This contradicts the submitted

DAS which states that “.... *This will require the floor and walls to be upgraded as well as insulating and boarding the inside of the roof structure. The internal walls will have a timber stud insulated wall built inside the external walls filled with insulation and covered over with plasterboard. The existing floor will be damp proofed and then insulated and screeded..*”. To avoid any confusion and favouring the MNP approach, I advise this work is conditioned.

- 4.6 At 1.1.5 it states that the insulation is to be placed **outside the masonry walls and will be over-clad in boarding** continuing the plane of the wall above. No objection is raised to this approach.
- 4.7 I am happy with the suggestion at 3.1.2 that *‘structural engineering interventions should be undertaken only where necessary, with maximum retention / minimum loss of historic fabric. Works should be undertaken in a manner both structurally and aesthetically that ‘goes with the grain’ of the historic fabric. Preferably an intervention should be distinguishable (Honest) from the historic fabric and should be reversible (should technological advances allow a more sympathetic solution)’*
- 4.8 Once again at 4.1.1 of the report I welcome the suggestion that the *‘proposed works to the three buildings (Barn, East Stables, West Stables) are broadly similar, with a light-touch conversion approach envisaged’*.
- 4.9 The ‘Anticipated approach’ at 5.4 of the report is to repair decayed/ fractured members using a combination of local repair (with new timber), splinting, or through-bolting. I am satisfied that generally where interventions are envisaged that this work can be handled in such a way that it *‘should blend in with what is there. Additional members will be visually obvious but, with care, should go with the grain of the existing structure’*.
- 5.0 **West Stable range**
- 5.1 At 7.1.1 of the MNP report, it states that:
- “The structure to the low-roofed area is of rectangular sawn rafters on purlins propped by raking posts on tie beams. It is expected to require only minimal structural work, perhaps strengthening with added steel plates) if any.”*
- 5.2 Whilst at 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 it states that: *‘The rear wall is of full height solid brick construction, which wasn’t obviously distorted’* and *‘The front wall is of timber stud behind cement rendered interior finish. Decay of many of these posts is anticipated’* respectively.
- 5.3 Under 8.2 ‘Anticipated approach’ the following is noted:
- “The arrangement of the existing roof structure needs to be improved. There are probably a few options or combinations of tying opposing rafters and adding support to the purlins, perhaps using props off new members spanning north–south between side walls”.*
- 5.4 Included with the latest submission is a new drawing no. REF-MNP-WSC-SK-S-4011 Rev P1 entitled West Stable – Centre East Elevation – External Timber Repairs which was received on 21/01/2021. This drawing is really helpful in fully understanding the task in hand in bringing one elevation of one

building up to an appropriate structural standard. This is an approach that is expected of the main barn also.



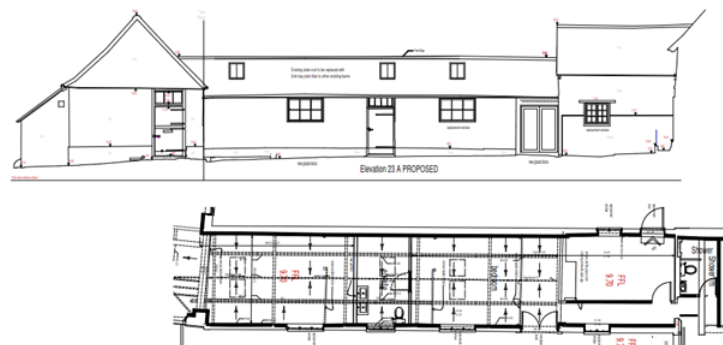
- 5.5 Similar to other parts of this building group, my understanding is that internal character of West Stables was to be expressed internally after conversion, however, I note in the DAS that:

“The internal walls will have a timber stud insulated wall built inside the external walls filled with insulation and covered over with plasterboard. The existing floor will be damp proofed and then insulated and screeded”.

Once again, to avoid any confusion and favouring the MNP approach, I advise this aspect of the work is conditioned.

- 5.6 I previously suggested the following (which is considered acceptable):

- Omit one ‘pair’ of roof lights;
- Retain a false external door and fanlight to the ensuite bay; and
- Insert a window to match the one to the right.



- 5.7 I note that the 4no. roof lights have been omitted from Elevation 24 and this is acceptable.

- 5.8 I note that the windows on Elevation 25 have been altered to shorter, 6-pane types and this is acceptable.

6.0 Site layout

- 6.1 The previous formal landscaped courtyard has now been omitted and the latest version is much more acceptable.

7.0 Ecology

- 7.1 On 24/01/2021 I received an email from the agent which, amongst other things, mentions that:

".... The BAT report has all been informally approved by HE and I know you have sent the report to HE for their comments. The structural design intent was prepared and issued to you last Oct.

We really need to draw a line on this application and I hereby now ask if you would kindly within the next 7 to 10 days be able to combine everything on the applications so that they can then be finally approved.

We are happy for any pre commencement conditions to be added if reasonable and happy for any conditions to be added to the approval for further details to be submitted for approval after the consents are in place.

I hope you can appreciate and I must put a heavy emphasis as highlighted many times before, that these listed building are being destroyed by the lack of care and the worsening weather we now have, and that if planning is held off any longer, we will not be able to get the works done in time to make the buildings safe for the bats...."

- 7.2 On 04/02/2021, I was copied into a further email from the agent which stated:

"I know from earlier today that Herts Ecology will now be responding shortly to you"

- 7.3 On 24/02/2021, I was copied into an email from the applicant which stated:

".....We are so worried that we won't be able to complete this before May, for the bats. How can we manage this situation for the bats and save the listed buildings.

The bat expert has just informed me that the report they provided that if there is a delay it will contravene all of the bat regulations which will incur tens of thousands of pounds and the listed buildings will be lost....."

- 7.4 On 24/02/2021, this time I receive an email from Stuart Ellis at MNP stating:

"..... Works at Rye End Farm barns are progressing somewhat stutteringly and with the tiles (which were in a very fragile and frost damaged condition) having now been removed I am in a position to visit to measure and inspect the condition of the roof timbers. This will inform designs to stabilise and strengthen the structure to support the weight of insulation. The intention is to retain all historic timbers and to add a few steel ties (to resist roof spread) and to counter the implications of the (historically) shortened posts (possibly cut and replaced with brick side walls up to mid rail level).

The client is anxious to obtain Planning and Listed Building Consent and does not want to proceed without the permissions in place. Unfortunately, the ecologists require the roof tiles to be replaced by May, for bat roosting and will not accept provision of temporary alternative roosts. We understand that the inspectors dealing with Planning Application have recently left the council and are unable to find out its status.

I wonder, are you in a position to comment on the LBC aspects of the proposals / conditions submitted to date, so that works can progress with a view giving the bats a suitable May roost. "

- 7.5 A further email was received on 09/03/2021 in which concerns have been expressed regarding delays in seeking to address the issue of bats on site.

The request is to potentially explore options to permit some of the works for it is understood that as matters stand, there is no mechanism for summer roost provision and apparently this could have a detrimental impact to the local bat population.

8.0 Suggested conditions (the following only relates to potential LBC conditions and I suspect that hard/soft landscaping, ecology etc will need to be addressed under the sister planning application).

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of listed building consent.

3. Prior to the construction of the lean-to against the farmhouse, a sample panel of the brick type, bond and mortar mix shall be erected close to the farmhouse and east stable range and shall either be inspected by the Local Planning Authority on site or photographs submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the construction of the lean-to. Thereafter, the brickwork shall be implemented in accordance with the approved sample panel.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

4. The roof to the lean-to against the farmhouse, shall be covered with clay handmade clay tiles to match the existing section of lean-to roof alongside unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the grade II listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

5. With the exception of approved drawing no. REF-MNP-WSC-SK-S-4011 Rev P1 received on 21/01/2021, all other sections of the timber frame to the East Stables, Main Barn and West Stables that are deemed necessary to replace or where new sections of frame are required where previous frame members are missing, shall be identified and agreed with the Local Planning Authority prior to the new frame members being formed. Furthermore, where new frame sections are required, these shall

be undertaken in oak unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

6. During the course of stripping the existing roofs to East Stables, Main Barn and West Stables the buildings shall be properly protected and all clay tiles/slates shall be inspected for defects and set aside for reuse. The balance to replace those unsuitable for re-roofing shall be made up with second-hand salvaged tiles/slates to precisely match the existing unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

7. Full details of all wall and roof insulation systems to be used in the conversion of East Stables, Main Barn and West Stables shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of that part of the alterations hereby granted consent. Thereafter, the wall and roof insulation systems shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

8. As part of the conversion works, the roofs to East Stables, Main Barn and West Stables shall retain exposed eaves throughout unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

9. Full details of the precise type and size of the roof lights shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their installation. Thereafter, the roof lights shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

10. All window and door (internal and external) joinery shall be manufactured in timber and windows shall have flush as opposed to storm proof frames unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning

Authority. Where windows or doors are shown to receive glazing bars, a 1:1 glazing bar profile including the glazing system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the manufacture and installation of the windows/doors and these shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

11. Details of all internal doors shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their installation. Thereafter, the internal doors shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

12. All new rainwater goods shall be manufactured in metal and be black painted unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of these listed buildings under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

9.0 **Recommendation**

- 9.1 Although the conversion scheme will result in some harm, this would, in my opinion, be towards the lower end of the 'less than substantial' continuum. The conversion would facilitate a long-term viable use for the barn and stable range and ensure that these buildings do not find themselves on a subsequent Register of Buildings at Risk. Whilst this may not necessarily be the optimum viable use (alternative uses not explored), it is important that a new use is found sooner rather than later. In this regard, the scheme is sufficiently well-handled in my opinion to ensure that the special character and significance of the buildings at Rye End Farm (farmhouse, barn and stables) is not unduly affected.

It is considered that subject to the above conditions, the proposal is **UNOBJECTIONABLE** on the basis that the proposal would satisfy the provisions of Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 Proposed Submission (September 2016) Incorporating The Proposed Main Modifications (November 2018).

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer