

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	25/01383/LBC
CASE OFFICER:	SK
APPLICATION SITE:	Highover Farm, Highover Way, Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 0RQ
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Internal and external alterations to threshing barn to facilitate change of use to 2no. self-contained dwellings (Unit 3 to also include adjacent unlisted, single-storey courtyard building) (as amended by drawing nos. 2208.PL.02C, - PL03C; - PL04B; - PL05C; - PL06C; - PL07B; -PL08B; - PL09B and – PL12A received on 19/08/2025 and amplified by Structural Appraisal of removal of Roof Covering to Existing Corner & Threshing Timber Barns dated 27/08/2025 and received on 28/08/2025).

RECOMMENDATION:

As you will see I have updated the description above to reflect latest submissions.

I raise **NO OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will (subject to amendments) hopefully 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 Policies HE1 & HE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on listed building's special character and its setting

The proposal will have a moderate impact upon the building's special character. Although this designated heritage asset is not identified on the national register, or the Council's 'At Risk' register maintained by the Council, the building is considered to at risk. As such Policy HE2 is applicable.

Harm, preserve or enhance.

The proposal would occasion a degree of harm to the building's special character such as the construction of the internal party wall, but will, by way of this conversion not only result in a viable long-term use for this building but will bring forward a viable use for this agrarian grouping as whole which includes several non-designated heritage assets.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

I previously stated on 27 July 2025 the following matters are considered key to the success of this conversion: i) size, number, and position of openings and ii) steel frame envelope.

Point 1) – Are the windows to sit flush with the timber frame or are they to sit in front of the frame? If it is the former, then there is a concern that several studs would need to be

cut to accommodate single and double casements. Whereas, if sitting in front of the framing within the insulated envelope of the building then the studs can be left in-situ. What is unclear, therefore, is the impact of windows on the host building's fabric. This has not been confirmed.

Point 2) – I have questioned the approach of cladding a new steel framework and no technical details are provided as to how this might be achieved. An external steel framework approach is not supported unless convincingly justified (see conditions 4 and 5 below).

Other matters

I previously raised several other matters including i) creating a more generous living area to Unit 3, ii) whether the applicant is promoting Units 2 and 3 as fully DDA compliant in which case I would be encouraging may be the installation of hydraulic platform lifts, iii) relocating the first floor WCs to the corners of the first floor of Units 2 and 3 where separate drainage could drop outside of the building envelope or boxed in within the corner of both ground floor bedrooms? and iv) the projecting bay to the Master Bedroom of Unit 4 is not shown as a side elevation and that a catslide roof projection may be acceptable.

Points i), ii) and iii) have not been addressed but point iv) has and is better than the previous iteration. Having said that, a reduction in rooflight size is encouraged.



I note the content of the Structural Appraisal of removal of Roof Covering to Existing Corner & Threshing Timber Barns dated 27/08/2025 and received on 28/08/2025 in which it states:

Stuart Thomas Associates Ltd are appointed as Consulting Engineers for the redevelopment of Highover Farm where existing agricultural buildings are being converted for residential use.

*There are two timber framed barns **which are to be over-framed with a modern steel framed structure which will form the final structural fabric of the building**, providing support and restraint to the original timber framing which will be retained and exposed as far as possible within.*

This has remained a point of contention. No technical details as to how this might be achieved have been submitted to resolve this and I note the following in the report addressing the Threshing Barn and Hay Barn respectively:

*The Heritage Consulting report recommends limited replacement of rotten timbers and further survey of others. The principal structural members are all in **surprisingly good condition**.*

and

STA Ltd have carried out a walkover survey of the barn, the principal members are in **good condition**

This in my view, offers the possibility of addressing both buildings by a combination of frame repairs, 'structural bracing' by introducing steel work internally to create the floors in conjunction with a timber over-framing structure rather than over-framing with a modern steel frame.

I note what the case officer has reported to the applicant previously (see below):

Regarding the removal of slates, initially we agree to the removal of slates from all non-listed/brick barns and the farmhouse building (not 'the corner grouping');

- *For all the non-listed, brick built barns, battened down tarpaulin would be fine. We could agree these details formally by email and we may impose a condition regarding temporary roof coverings.*
- *For the farmhouse, the removal of slate is agreed but we need to be confident that any material for rainwater runoff will be effective to limit internal damage. Mark suggested using felt, or metal sheeting, rather than tarpaulin. Please confirm which material you will be.*
- *If you want to proceed with removal of slates from the listed Threshing Barn, together with the corner brick building and unit 2 timber framed building ('the corner grouping'), please:*
 1. *examine the timbers underneath in line with the structural survey to assess the impact of slate removal on historic fabric;*
 2. *confirm that the change in loading from slate to a temporary material (felt?) will be structurally sound; and*
 3. *provide a method statement of how you will do the work and protect the timber structure.*

Note, these can be registered planning application documents and secured by grant of permission

With regard to roof loading, the Structural Appraisal report states that "The new roof covering is to be tarpaulin or plastic sheeting to protect the underlying timber work. This will see a reduction of 20-25kg/m² over the existing slate weight". I am satisfied that the removal of slates should not harm the building's structural integrity.

I have also noted the comments regarding bats, including Liz's comments on 18 August 2025 which references the plan below which should be duly considered. I am prepared to accept the removal of the slates to carry out essential frame repairs on the understanding that both buildings will remain weathertight and that bat habitats would not be adversely affected.



Suggested conditions (draft only and may need to consider others or amendments).

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 permission.

3. Notwithstanding the red coloured timber frame sections identified at 5.1.6 Internal Elevation 24 on page 25 and 5.1.7 Internal Elevation 26 on page 28 of the Heritage Consulting Condition Survey dated 16 June 2025, these frame members and any others identified during further inspections of the frame shall form part of a detailed full inspection with the Local Planning Authority and their removal shall be 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 the listed barn under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

4. Notwithstanding reference to '*a new steel frame is to be erected in front of the existing timber frame*' at 4.1 of the Heritage Consulting Condition Survey (16 June 2025), the Threshing Barn shall not be over-framed in steel unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Full details of all proposed steelworks shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any steel work. Thereafter the steel work shall be undertaken 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 this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

5. Section details of all roof and wall insulation works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the insulation works. Thereafter this work shall be undertaken 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 this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

6. As agreed by the case officer by email on the existing slates shall be temporarily removed and stored securely on site ready for reuse. The roof shall be

temporarily covered with as agreed by email on As part of the conversion works and prior to occupation the temporary roof covering shall be replaced with salvaged natural slate 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 this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

7. A sample of the facing brickwork for the plinth shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the plinth being constructed. The plinth thereafter shall be built in accordance with the approved brick sample.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

8. A sample of any new weatherboarding and details of its external finish shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to its installation. Thereafter the weatherboarding shall be installed in accordance with the approved sample and finish.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

9. All new windows and doors shall be manufactured in timber 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 this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

10. All new openable windows shall receive flush casements 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 this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

11. All new rainwater goods shall be black metal or cast-iron effect, details of which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the rainwater goods shall be installed 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 this grouping at Highover Farm under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

CONCLUSION:	
Generally, an acceptable scheme although responses are sought to the points raised.	
OFFICER: Mark Simmons	DATE: 09/09/2025