

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).

RECOMMENDATION:

Await feedback to matters raised but I will be looking to support this proposal and I am unlikely to raise an 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.

Policy HE2: Heritage at risk

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that seek to conserve or provide new uses for designated heritage assets identified on the national register, or the Council's 'At Risk' register maintained by the Council, that are justified and appropriate to the significance of the asset to return a heritage asset to beneficial use.

Proposals that harm the significance of heritage assets included on national and local registers will be resisted unless the need for, and the benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh that harm, taking account of the asset's significance and importance, and all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully assessed.

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.

SITE CONTEXT:

The Threshing Barn at Highover Farm is grade II listed and is therefore a Designated Heritage Asset for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF. Other

agrarian buildings within the group and the farmhouse are considered to be Non-designated heritage assets. The building was added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest on 2 May 2018, and the list entry is at the following link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1452743?section=official-list-entry>

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

On 12 March I made comment on an email intended to be sent to the applicant under pre-app ref: 24/02201/PRE as feedback on the proposal. Those comments included the following:

*All comments below relating to the Threshing Barn's timber frame are caveated upon examining rafter/frame construction and **following submission of a timber frame survey.***

*Discussion regarding insulating the timber frame for Units 2, 3 and 4 (weatherboarding). **External build out more favourable than internal insulation scheme** but it is accepted that this will impact upon character particularly building new plinth walls in front of field stone/flint sections.*

Structural oak frame repairs required internally avoiding steel where possible other than maybe in the construction of the first floor.

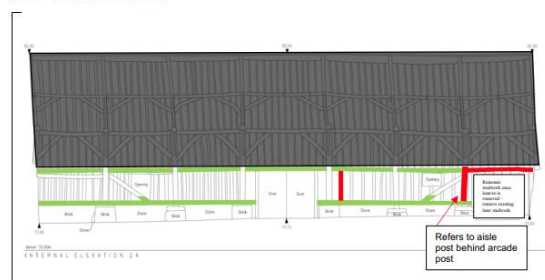
*Lower/ground floor windows - discussion fire safety/building regs - alternatives? **Need to consider impact on historic fabric (the timber, sole plate and plinth).** Noted higher plinth in the courtyard compared to the rear elevation. Minimal windows required.*

The following matters are considered key to the success of this conversion: i) size, number, and position of openings and ii) steel frame envelope.

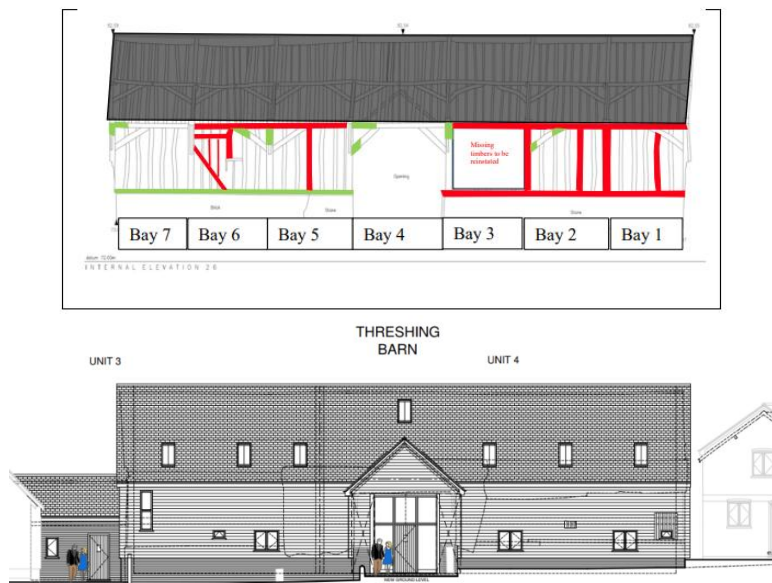
Point i)

Key here is where the windows sit within the walls – are they intended to be flush with the timber frame or sitting 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.

5.1.6 Internal Elevation 24



5.1.7 Internal Elevation 26



Point ii)

A Condition Survey dated 16 June 2025 has been prepared for Gill-Hudson Homes Limited by Scott Enders for and on behalf of Heritage Consulting. At section 4 entitled 'BUILDING EXTERIOR' the following is noted:

4.1 Roof Coverings

The barn is covered with natural slates on a pitched roof. There is no membrane beneath the slates.

The roof is in very poor condition, with numerous slipped, broken, and missing slates. This has resulted in significant water ingress, which is visibly contributing to decay within the underlying timber frame and roof structure.

It is understood that as part of the proposed conversion works, a new steel frame is to be erected in front of the existing timber frame and over the existing roof structure. New roof coverings are then to be installed over this new steel framework.

Although building outside of the existing frame is a tried and tested approach for barn conversions, this is rarely in my mind undertaken by cloaking the existing building with a steel structure. Under ref: 24/00413/LBC in relation to a barn at Manor Farm, Kelshall, a similar approach was offered early on, but the decision was taken to seek a solution that did not require either the frame to be rebuilt or the frame to be 'hung' from a steel frame envelope. Instead, an internal steel frame system was consented which effectively stiffened or supported the frame internally and then a timber stud/rafter system in conjunction with insulation was used externally.

I question 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).

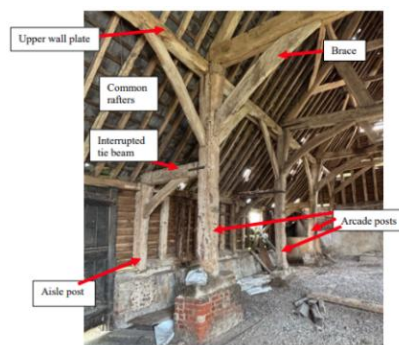
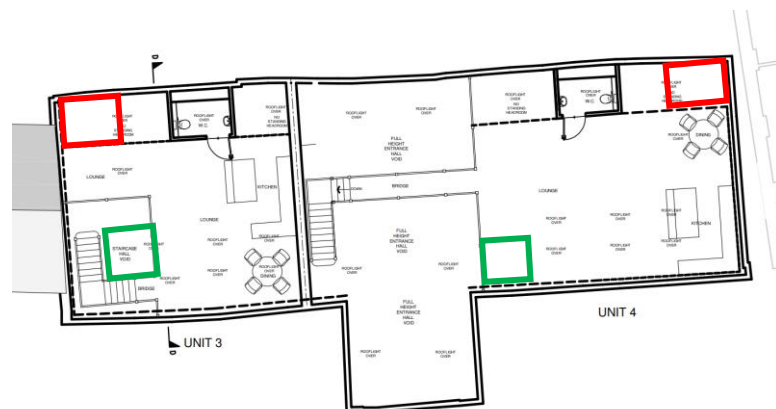
Other matters

The submission indicates a subdivision of the building which was generally agreed at pre-app including offsetting the party wall within Bay 3 so that the threshing floor is fully revealed including the 3rd and 4th aisle posts with Unit 4. Whilst I have no intention of suggesting significant alterations to the internal layout, I have some further observations:

- Would it not be better to have a slightly reduced staircase void to Unit 3 to ensure a slightly more generous living area at first floor?



- Next, whilst it is indicated that there is wheelchair access at ground floor to Units 3 & 4, there is no such access onto the first floor. My first question is whether the applicant is promoting these two units as fully DDA compliant in which case I would be encouraging may be the installation of hydraulic platform lifts perhaps in the areas outlined in green below. I appreciate that this would incur an additional cost but if it is not the intention to make these units fully accessible then I question the intention of the wheelchair user symbols.
- Although I appreciate that the first floor WC's are located directly over ensuites on the ground floor thus making sense in terms of drainage runs, Looking at this again, I wonder where there is a case for relocating the first floor WCs to the corners of the first floor where separate drainage could drop outside of the building envelope of boxed in within the corner of both ground floor bedrooms?



- Finally, the projecting bay to the Master Bedroom of Unit 4 is not shown as a side elevation. **My interpretation of this feature is that it may be proposed to be built as a flat-roof projection in which I case I would find this objectionable.** On the other hand, a catslide roof projection may be acceptable.



It is advised that Condition 3 below is included as part of the determination, considering that at page 46 of the Heritage Consulting Condition Survey it states the following:

“The full and definitive extent of repairs to the timber frame cannot be specified at this stage and will require further investigation following removal of weatherboarding and the erection of scaffolding. The marked-up drawings provided within this report serve as a preliminary repair outline, identifying areas currently assessed for replacement or repair based on the accessible inspection. However, these remain subject to further confirmation once full access is available and the structure is opened up.”

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), full structural details of all steelwork 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. Sections 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.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:
Section 16(2)

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:
Policies HE1 & HE2

NPPF (December 2024):
The following paragraphs are relevant:

- **135 c)** (*sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment*),
- **207** (*local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting*)
- **210** (*desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*),
- **212** (*great weight should be given to the asset's conservation*),
- **213** (*clear and convincing justification*), and
- **215** (*harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*).

CONCLUSION:

Generally, an acceptable scheme although responses are sought to the points raised.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 28/07/2025