

DESIGN & HERITAGE STATEMENT

Project: New Garden Room
At: 5 Westbury Farm Close
Offley
SG5 3FL
Client: Mr & Mrs Carter

Project No: 24340

1.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 1.1 No. 5 Westbury Farm Close forms part of a collection of three separate dwellings within a grade II listed former farmhouse.
- 1.2 No. 5 occupies the north crosswing of the block, with the garden of no. 5 located along the north/side elevation, separated from nos. 3 and 4 which form the remainder of the farmhouse.
- 1.3 The farmhouse is predominantly 2-storey, with attic accommodation in the north crosswing, and single storey to the south. It is finished externally in a pink render, with steeply pitched plain tile roofs.
- 1.4 The primary elevation, which includes all three dwellings, faces east onto Westbury Farm Close (photo record sheet no. 01).
- 1.5 When viewed from the road, the ground floor storey of the north/side elevation of no. 5 is obscured from view by a laurel hedge, approximately 2.3m tall (photo record sheet nos. 03 & 04). The only point at which the ground floor is visible is from the entrance gate, where it is seen obliquely (photo record sheet no. 05).
- 1.6 It is believed the farmhouse was converted to a separate dwelling in the early 2000's following listed building consent 99/01397/1LB.
- 1.7 The south range of farm buildings, north and east range of farm buildings and the dovecote are also grade II listed original farm buildings, now converted to dwellings.
- 1.8 The converted barns are black timber clad with slate pitched roofs, predominantly single storey with some 1½ and 2-storey elements.
- 1.9 Elsewhere, including immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of the garden of no. 5, Westbury Farm Close consists of black timber clad 'barn-type' modern dwellings, with similar external materials to the converted barns and, again, largely single storey with some 1½ and 2-storey elements.
- 1.10 Some 2-storey brick and mixed brick and timber dwellings are located further north towards the end of Westbury Farm Close.



- 1.11 The overall effect is of a farmyard collection of buildings. The architectural styles present a clear hierarchy with the farmhouse demarcated as being of importance by virtue of the pink render, full two-storey height and steep pitched plain tile roof, all of which contrasts with the barn-type, low level, timber clad buildings elsewhere.
- 1.12 No. 5 has an unusual internal layout, with the main living room located on the first floor, a dining room and guest bedroom on the ground floor and kitchen at lower ground floor.
- 1.13 The layout of the internal living spaces, and the small size of the garden facing windows (typical of the age of the property) give rise to a disconnect between the house and garden and between the main living spaces within the house.

2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

- 2.1 Listed Building Consent was granted in November 2020 for the addition of a first-floor bathroom; ref: 20/02016/LBC.
- 2.2 A Certificate of Lawfulness was granted in January 2025 for like-for-like window replacements on the east/front elevation; ref: 24/01968/LDCLB.
- 2.3 A request for pre-application advice pertaining to this current application for an attached garden room extension was submitted in March 2025; ref: 25/00797/PREH.
- 2.4 Alterations suggested by the Conservation Officer were summarised within the pre-application response as:
 - Move the extension further west to retain the front boundary hedge and the mulberry tree.
 - Omit the coat cupboard to result in a clearly defined SE corner and longer external front wall (which could include a narrow vertical window).
 - Changing the external materials to be more contemporary to reflect the design approach of the extension, using materials such as vertical boarding or zinc.
- 2.5 And the report concluded:

"There are some alterations required based on the comments from the Conservation Officer. Subject to these being carried out, and the proposal being acceptable in all other respects, applications should be able to be supported. Consideration should also be given to whether a new replacement shed is required, and its design and siting".
- 2.6 Subsequent conversations with the case officer and conservation officer discussed the possibility of removing part of the existing hedge in the event that the existing large Anglian Water manhole to the west of the extension cannot be relocated, or whether the footprint of the extension could be modified.
- 2.7 In preliminary discussions with Anglian Water it has been agreed in principle that the existing manhole can be replaced with a smaller manhole, allowing the footprint of the extension to be moved further west as suggested by the conservation officer. This and other changes are outlined in more detail below in paragraph 3.15.

3.0 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The proposal is to add additional living space in the form of a garden room providing valuable family space at ground floor - key to family living both now and as the family ages.
- 3.2 The new space provides a link to, and views of the garden.
- 3.3 The architectural intent is to create a contemporary addition to the house, whilst respecting the heritage setting both in terms of the relationship to the farmhouse and to the wider collection of buildings.
- 3.4 The garden room is clad with black timber, similar to the predominant material throughout Westbury Farm Close, and to maintain the existing hierarchy in which the pink rendered farmhouse contrasts with the barn-type buildings forming the remainder of the complex.
- 3.5 The building has an irregular footprint, designed to make optimum use of the space available, whilst maintaining maximum garden size.
- 3.6 A simple façade is presented to the road (screened by the existing hedge), whilst on the garden side the space opens up with bi-fold doors to create a connection to the garden space.
- 3.7 The existing hedge is retained, so as to root the building in the existing landscape context and maintain the existing screening. Some modest cutting back of the hedge on the garden side is required to accommodate the footprint of the extension.
- 3.8 A green flat roof softens the appearance and limits the height of the building to approximately the same height as the existing hedge.
- 3.9 The floor level is dug slightly below the existing ground levels. This is both to create a flush floor level from the farmhouse, and to restrict the roof to the height.
- 3.10 The main garden room is linked to the house by a glazed lobby with minimal framing to maintain the oblique view from the gate, across the north/side elevation of the farmhouse and into the garden.
- 3.11 The structure of the glazed lobby will be designed to have minimal impact on the historic fabric. Detailed designs will require input from a specialist glazing manufacturer, and we would be willing to agree to a condition that such details, when sufficiently advanced, are to be submitted for the Council's approval.
- 3.12 The projecting timber frame porch canopy will need to be removed, which appears to be a modern addition.
- 3.13 The glazed lobby forms a deliberate demarcation between the contemporary garden building and the farmhouse.
- 3.14 The contemporary elements of the garden room (green flat roof, irregular floor plan, bi-fold doors) form a deliberate contrast to the existing farmhouse, clearly expressing and celebrating the modern nature of the addition.

3.15 Subsequent to the pre-application advice the proposals have been developed as follows, acknowledging the input from the Conservation Officer:

- i. The footprint of the extension has been slightly adapted and moved further west, thereby allowing the retention of the existing boundary hedge and screening the extension from Westbury Farm Close.
- ii. The coat cupboard has been omitted from the south east corner of the extension, creating a clearly defined corner and longer external front wall.
- iii. A smaller cupboard has been added to the west side of the extension, adjacent to the glazed link. Storage space (particularly full height storage) is underprovided in the existing house, and a new cupboard is therefore an important element of the design brief.
- iv. The footprint of the extension has been extended slightly further north to compensate for the space lost due to the removal of the coat cupboard from the south east corner and reintroduction on the west elevation.
- v. External materials have been amended to vertical boarding, reflecting the contemporary nature of the design. We would be willing to agree to a condition such that details of external materials are to be submitted for the Council's approval.

3.16 The insertion of a narrow vertical window in the extended section of front wall was considered as a design option, but seemed an over-provision of glazing in close proximity to the glass link and detracted from the current clear demarcation the glass link provides between the farm house and the extension.

3.17 It is intended to re-position the existing shed and this is now included as part of the application. The existing elevations are shown on drawing SU-03, and the proposed new location is shown on drawing PL-01.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The proposals present a high-quality, well-designed addition to the house which will provide much needed practical family living space.

4.2 The proposals have been developed to respond positively to the Conservation Officer's comments.

4.3 The extension responds to the site constraints and the historic context to take the form of a contemporary garden room.

4.4 The design is respectful of the listed farmhouse and historic setting, specifically:

- i. The contemporary design forms a deliberate contrast to the farmhouse, so that the garden room is clearly seen as a modern addition.
- ii. The external materials are similar to those of the listed barns and other barn-like structures predominant throughout Westbury Farm Close. The use of black timber cladding continues the architectural hierarchy whereby the pink rendered farmhouse is marked as important in relation to the surrounding barns.
- iii. The height of the roof is limited to approximately match the height of the existing hedge.
- iv. The glass link forms a visual break between the garden room and the farmhouse and maintains the oblique view of the north elevation of the farmhouse from the gate.
- v. The glass link creates a 'light-touch' junction to the farmhouse, both in visual terms and in terms of the constructional interaction with the historic building fabric.