North Hertfordshire District Council
Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 18/01071/LBC
Date: 10/09/2018
Planning Officer: CP
Address: The Bull, 28 High Street, Offley, Hitchin SG5 3AD
Subject: Single storey rear extension including three roof lights following demolition of existing lean to structure, additional window to side elevation and demolition of existing garage. Erection of detached annexe. Internal alterations.

Firstly, the description should be amended to read as

Single storey rear extension including three roof lights following demolition of existing lean to structure, additional window to side (west) elevation, internal alterations and demolition of existing garage.

If, however, the amended scheme discussed below is formally submitted then the description would need to be amended further:

Single storey rear extension including three roof lights following demolition of existing lean to structure, replace first floor 3-light casement window on side (east) elevation with double casement and install additional window to side (west) elevation, internal alterations and demolition of existing garage.

The Bull, 28 High Street is grade II listed and is located within the Offley Conservation Area. Both the building and the area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF. The list entry reads as:

House, now a public house. Circa 1700, N-W wing and stable early C19. Red brick in Flemish-bond with random blue bricks, front roughcast, S end painted. Stable and NW wing dark weatherboarded. Steep old red tile roofs. A 2-cells, 2 storeys and attics, end chimneys and central entrance plan house, set back from road and facing E. Front has gable parapets with raking brick courses under fancy C19 ridge tiles, a flat-topped dormer on roofslope, 3 2-lights casement windows to 1st floor, 2 3-light transomed casement windows to ground floor and plat-band stepping up over central door. Small gabled roughcast and tiled porch. Internal gable chimney each end, larger at S, with shallow vertical recess between square shafts. Single-storey gabled extension to N end set back and slated lean-to to rear. 2-storeys 2 windows wide NW rear wing with internal chimneys at each gable and lower small stable at W end. Interior has 2 rooms to main range with entrance into S end of N room. Axial chamfered beams with ogee stops, stair rising in S room and surviving original fireplace there with canted rear corners.

Last year under ref: 17/00407/1LB, I commented on a scheme which included "Single storey rear extension with two roof lights, glazed link extension to new build bedroom following demolition of existing garage. Internal alterations and insertion of window to first floor side (west) elevation" and raised an objection based on the following reasons:

- *The demolition of a late C19/ early C20 rear lean-to considered to possess moderate significance;*
- *The juxtaposition of sliding sash windows and flat roof placed in front of the lean-to with roof lights;*
- *The impact of flat roof forms when viewing the building from the rear;*

- *The height and width of the glazed link incorporating an oak hit-and-miss screen and its relationship to the existing lean-to and the new build bedroom extension, the latter resulting in an awkward roof junction; and*
- *The length of the new build bedroom together with its fenestration (apart from the door opening into the new build bedroom from the link, there is only one window (another sash) to this part of the building and there is, perhaps, a missed opportunity to introduce a more appropriate opening).*

The current scheme, whilst addressing the second, third and fourth bullet points above, still requires the demolition of a late C19/ early C20 rear lean-to which I have previously considered to possess moderate significance. I, therefore, have to decide as to whether the existing lean-to merits retention or not for to resist its demolition will significantly impact upon what the applicant is seeking to achieve.



I have previously said that I would be prepared to support the removal of the internal wall between the existing rear hall and utility room in conjunction with perhaps introducing a pair of quarter-pane casements in the rear wall of the existing utility to bring more light into this space. I fully appreciate that a deeper, squared off room would provide a good functional space but this could only be achieved by removing this addition which has some character.

The following OS map extracts reveal, a much larger grouping of buildings on and adjacent to this site, much of which has been removed. Nonetheless, what remains has significance in terms of contributing to the building's special character.






Revised 1896 1899 Revised 1946 Present

I have read the supporting Design, Access and Heritage Statement (DAHS), the following section is of particular interest:

"…. The new proposal does remove the existing C1920s rear lean to wall to create the additional living space but maintains to [sic] original form of a pitched slate roof….. A detail in the roof is formed to accommodate the roof passing the existing side window ….. the proposal to remove the rear wall of the lean-to alterations to the pitch of the roof will have ***no significant harm*** *to the listed building. Furthermore the loss of historical fabric is restricted to C1920s brickwork…"*

Whilst this scheme is an improvement when compared with that of the previously withdrawn scheme I still have some reservations. The applicant does not say that there will be 'no harm' resulting from the removal of the existing lean-to and slackening the roof pitch, but says there would be 'no significant harm'. Significant harm or not, the scheme would, in my opinion, still occasion some harm (less than substantial) and my concerns principally to the following three issues:

- The significance of the existing lean-to;
- The depth of projection resulting in the slackening of the roof pitch from 26^0 to 19^0; and

- The consequential effect of the above where the roof line cuts across the first floor window to the rear two-storey wing which presumably is why the architect has detailed this on plan.

The applicant appears to have dismissed the existing lean-to as a 1920's addition of little/limited interest and has backed this position up by stating that concrete lintels have been used and that the brickwork is considered to be more likely C20 rather C19. Without conducting more detailed research, I cannot substantiate the claims that this is a 1920's addition. In my view, the loss of this later element could only, in part, be justified if the replacement structure made an equal or more positive contribution to the building's special character but this is evidently not the case.



Following discussions with the architect last Friday, the right hand image above was submitted informally and indicates: i.) a reduced depth to the extension; and ii) the first floor window modified to a double casement to provide a better relationship to the roof pitch. Both changes are significant improvements.

Recommendation
Initially I was intending raising an objection to this scheme based on the following:

a. The removal of an existing lean-to considered to possess moderate significance;
b. The extension's depth and shallow roof pitch (19^0) resulting in an overly deep footprint for a lean-to; and
c. The relationship of the lean-to roof to the first floor window of the rear two-storey projection

However, following my telephone conversation with architect last Friday, there is a possible design solution for the extension which would be acceptable but this could only be implemented if I remove my objection to the removal of the existing lean-to.

I have reconsidered my position with respect to the existing lean-to and whilst I am prepared to 'downgrade' its perceived significance, as the scheme currently stands, by reason of: a.) the extension's depth and shallow roof pitch (19^o) resulting in an overly deep footprint for a lean-to and b.) the relationship of the lean-to roof to the first floor window of the rear two-storey projection, the extension would not preserve or enhance the building's special character or preserve or enhance the appearance of the Offley Conservation Area. I, therefore, raise an **OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will fail to satisfy Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and as supported by the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (Proposed

Submission, October 2016). In my opinion, the proposal would not make a positive contribution to local character, hence would be contrary to the aims of paragraph 192 c) and the degree of harm would be less than substantial but there are no discernible public benefits to outweigh this harm that would satisfy paragraph 196 of the NPPF.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer