North Hertfordshire District Council
Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 18/00897/LBC
Date: 30/07/2018
Planning Officer: MT
Address: Fox and Hounds, High Street, Barley
Subject: Single storey rear infill extension. External alterations including revision to car parking, creation of garden and external patio. Removal and replacement of roof tiles to single storey roof slopes. Installation of external vents and flues. Internal remodelling to ground and first floor, internal fit-out to reinstall bar and restaurant areas.

First and foremost, I advise that the description is amended to read as: ***Single storey rear infill extension. Internal and external alterations to facilitate bar and restaurant area at ground floor and two flats for staff accommodation at first floor.***

The Fox and Hounds is grade II listed and is located within the Barley Conservation Area, therefore, both the building and the area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 12 of the NPPF. The list entry reads as follows:

Public house. Mid C17 with small C18, C19 and C20 additions. Timber frame, roughcast. Steeply pitched tiled roofs. 2 cell lobby entry with rear wing. 2 storeys. Central entrance with flanking flush frame small pane 3 light casements, hoodboards, on first floor 2 similar 2 light casements. Boxed eaves. Tall central stack behind ridge has multiple diagonal fillets, moulded base, oversailing cap. Exposed plates and purlins in gable ends. Attached to left a 1 storey, 1 bay gabled outshut with a 3 light casement in return. Attached to right and set back slightly a 1 bay, 2 storey lower addition with steeply pitched roof to front, shallower to rear, ground floor 3 and first floor 2 light casements. Behind this and attached to original rear wing is a separately gabled C19 brewhouse bay with an external red brick stack with offsets. Rear wing extends from front block at an angle, outer elevation first floor 2 light casement, rear gable end exposed plates and purlins, inner elevation entrance, scattered casements, a horizontal sliding sash and a stack. 1 storey C20 additions to rear left. Interior: ground floor has some exposed framing, double fireplace with a chamfered depressed brick arch and a cambered timber bressumer. First floor not inspected. Attached to right gable end is inn sign which is a timber beam resting on posts on either side of Church End. On top of beam are painted silhouette figures of huntsmen and hounds chasing a fox into the gable of the public house. This sign of c.1955 replaces an earlier sign that straddled the High Street where the original Fox and Hounds Inn stood. Formerly the Waggon and Horses Public House. (Hertfordshire Countryside, vol.17, No.67, Winter 1962, p.294).

My previous involvement with this site related to three applications submitted in 2015, two of which related to the change of use and alterations (including vertical subdivision of the building) to form two residential units. All three applications were refused and then dismissed at appeal following a Hearing held on 8 November 2016 with a site visit made on the same day. I, therefore, have reasonable knowledge of this building's special character and those elements considered as having significance.

In 2016, the Inspector considered that *"The central issue in Appeal A is therefore whether the loss of the pub is unnecessary, as the LPA, Parish Council and many residents claim, or necessary because it is simply financially unviable given the costs of the repairs that the building urgently needs, as the appellant claims."*

It is known that the former owner, Mr Parkes, purchased the property in February 2011 for £372,000 plus £21,500 for fixtures and fittings and reopened it in April 2011.

Less than a year later, in early January 2012, it was being marketed for sale by Everard and Cole, national licensed property agents, at £495,000.

At para 25 of the Inspector's Decision, it states that *"…The LPA argues that the pub could still be viable if the asking price was reduced to a reasonable enough level to allow a purchaser to repair and redecorate the building to a sufficient standard to enable trading to resume."*

At para 37, the Inspector states that *"….. Undoubtedly for pubs to be viable in this day and age it is necessary for them to attract more than local village custom by offering* ***a welcoming environment and a good choice of quality food and drink****. But there is no reason why this pub is incapable of attracting such clientele as these other pubs do. Just because the appellant was not able to do so does not mean that another publican could not."*

It states in the submitted Design, Access and Heritage Statement (DAHS) that *"The property has been purchased by three business partners (and friends), one of which is the applicant. Each 'team member' has a keen interest in good business, and most importantly good food…."* The business arrangement may well be the key to any future success this pub enjoys and I am keen to encourage the partners' vision in making this a successful business opportunity that may not only benefit from village patronage but also that of the wider area. With the right team at the helm to provide a *'good choice of quality food and drink'* it then remains for the applicant to deliver on and for the LPA to support, a scheme which will provide the essential *'welcoming environment'.*

At para 38, the Inspector continues by saying that *"… The pub is located in a central position in a large village, which is within easy and convenient walking distance of most of its population. Its prime position in the village combined with its retained outdoor space, which would still provide sufficient parking and garden area for its customers, would mean that it would potentially have as good a chance as other local pubs of being viable and successful provided it could be purchased at a realistic price to account for the necessary works required."*

At ground floor, the DAHS states that the layout will change very little and that *"…The proposal includes for the widening of some existing openings within the later C20 extensions to the rear, and the removal of some modern partition walls within the same elements. There are no proposals for the removal of historic fabric from the property, with the proposal working with the existing layout rather than trying to force a new layout onto the building. The construction of some new partitions provides improvements to the existing layout with the option to remove without damage in the future…..To the first floor, the proposal includes for a minor amount of demolition to facilitate the angled entrance into the bedroom in Flat Two (east side). Additional partitions will form a new en-suite with drainage and services picked up from the adjacent kitchen. A partition is proposed centrally to divide the two flats."*

Unlike, the previous scheme to subdivide the building vertically into two residential units, the current proposal seeks to retain the use of the existing ground floor as a public house with associated restaurant whilst the first floor is proposed to be subdivided into two flats providing live-in accommodation for staff members. The 'light touch' applied to the first floor and the formation of two relatively generously sized flats for staff members is considered sympathetic to the building's use.

A large proportion of the timber-framing is retained in each of the historic elements of the building. Unfortunately few original fixtures and fittings survive, with the exception

of the ground floor stairway door. Much of the original roof structure is believed to have survived. In order to facilitate the viability of the re-opening of the establishment, a modest programme of repairs, renovations, extension and re-landscaping is proposed. Most of the works to the historic core of the property would be cosmetic improvements, with the additional floor area created to the rear, between two much later structures.

The supporting DAHS says that the *"rear 'infill' extension will improve the aesthetic of the rear elevation, removing a dark and unwelcoming courtyard, and replacing it with a light (in colour) structure, with expansive glazing to flood the internals with natural light and to also provide a connection between the internal spaces and the terrace / garden space….."*. Whilst I appreciate that this flat roof proposal will ensure that the pitched roof elements are not interfered with too much, if I have a concern with this aspect of the scheme it is with regard to: i) the heavily moulded cornice and ii) the fact that this 'infill' extension would sit forward of the single-storey rear gables (see existing situation in photos below taken from the Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Trent & Peak Archaeology in support of the 2015 applications). I encourage a simpler cornice/verge detail to the infill (in fact a rather minimalist approach) so that it does not have a too formal appearance which may unduly compete with the gable additions on either side which are constructed more in the vernacular tradition. I would like to see the extension set in marginally from the right hand lower gable so that the right have gables remain relatively dominant. This is, in fact, the only design alteration that I am suggesting to the current scheme and would see 6 covers removed but the 'infill' will still see 8no. additional covers being created.





The supporting DAHS states that *"….. The intentions of the applicant are to retain, enhance and develop on such details, where possible restoring architectural features previously lost to earlier renovation works…. The subdivision of the first floor is easily achievable without the demolition or loss of any historic fabric. Works are likely to be required to 'party walls' to reduce sound and fire transfer between properties, but it is considered that this can be achieved through the insertion of independent/removable fire protected and insulated partitions, which would not impact on the historic fabric of the property…"*

Under appn ref: 15/01893/1LB, I commented on 09/10/2015 stating that this a *"… substantial premises with 6-bedroom accommodation/kitchen/bathroom provided on the first floor and at ground floor the cellular plan perhaps does not lend itself particularly well to a restaurant layout (2no. lounge areas and 3no. small and disconnected (perhaps even slightly unwelcoming) dining areas). In my opinion, such a dysfunctional ground floor layout was most likely to be problematic operationally irrespective of the quality and skills of the manager and his/her staff….".*

There are number of positives to be taken from this current proposal:

- First and foremost, this proposal should provide the opportunity for this pub's future to be secured at least in the short/medium term with a dedicated business team at the helm;
- The pub garden would be retained at the rear;
- A reasonable amount of customer parking would be retained;
- Signage would be retained or would be replaced under separate consent(s);
- Essential repairs would be undertaken to the fabric;
- Limited extension works are to be undertaken; and
- A 'light touch' would be applied in terms of internal alterations.

There is no doubting that this site historically has had a well-established pub use. Furthermore, the Fox and Hounds has the potential to develop into a family-friendly pub with a good food offer and there is a reasonable prospect that it could cater for the specific needs of the local community and for other nearby rural settlements because of the significant available floor space and a reasonable on-site parking provision. Irrespective of a competitor PH, I consider that the resident population that could easily walk to the Fox and Hounds is significant but still perhaps insufficient on its own to support the business

Whilst I presume that the case officer will be considering paragraph 92 (amongst others) of the NPPF, I consider that the following paragraphs extracts from ***Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment***, are also pertinent:

- *"the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation", "the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality" and "the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness"* (para 192); and

- *"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation"* (para 193)

Recommendation
The Fox and Hounds is an iconic, prominent building in the Barley streetscene and which has a well-established use as a pub that has provided a social, recreational and cultural purpose over many years. The proposal seek to reinvigorate this heritage asset and by doing so also revitalising this site at the heart of the Barley Conservation Area. The proposals are generally compatible with the building's special character with the exception being the overly embellished cornice/fascia to the infill extension which I urge a reconsideration thereof. Apart from this, it is considered that the proposal will preserve the building's special character and the character & appearance of the Barley Conservation Area. I will provide draft conditions in due course and I am minded to raise **NO OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will 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).

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