

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 25/00509/FPH & 25/00510/LBC

Date: 03/06/2025

Planning Officer: HT

Address: Rooks Nest Farm, Rooks Nest Lane, Therfield, Hertfordshire, SG8 9QX

Subject: Renovation and conversion of existing barn into habitable accommodation, to include insertion of windows to front and side elevations, insertion of two rooflights in rear elevation and repair or replace existing cart doors. Installation of mezzanine floor, and erection of single storey glazed extension to link to main dwelling, following part demolition of existing side store.

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 With a slight adjustment to the gable end glazing it is considered that the proposal will not occasion harm to the significance of Rooks Nest Farmhouse or the nearby barn (both grade II) thus satisfying the provisions of Sections 16(2) (LBC only) and 66(1) (FPH only) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will accord with Section 16 of the Framework or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031. Consequently, I find the proposal **UNOBJECTIONABLE**.

2.0 The Local Plan and NPPF

- 2.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of the NPPF:
- **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*).

3.0 Context

- 3.1 Rooks Nest Farmhouse together with Barn 5M E Rooks Nest Farmhouse are separately listed grade II and are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF. Both buildings were added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest on 29.01.1986 (see links below for descriptions):

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1307694?section=official-list-entry>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1347390?section=official-list-entry>

3.2 In the submitted Design and Heritage Statement [DHS], it says that *“The previous conservation document talks of the barn as being described as “5m east of the farmhouse” I can find no documentation where this is stated, the observed distances by Mark Simmons are correct (perhaps this was an internal comment?)”*. For clarity, this reference to 5m is taken directly from the address accompanying the list entry.

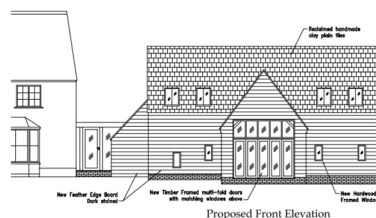
3.3 Further on, the DHS notes my involvement with appn refs: 11/00282/1HH & 11/00283/1LB which were subsequently withdrawn. The DHS states:

- *The number of rooflights has been reduced as to 2 no. from 13 no. as recommended, the size of rooflights has remained as they are only on the rear of the building & natural light to the mezzanine would be inadequate. (four smaller rooflights, rather than the two larger ones would be an option).*
- *A small under eaves window has been added to the WC as advised.*
- *The glazed link has been revised & reduced very similar to that recommended. The steps have been designed to satisfy building regulations as well as wishes of the applicant, having a separating door is essential.*
- *The original cart doors are to be repaired or sympathetically replaced, the external cladding & doors are to extend nearer to the external ground level.*
- *The bi-fold doors have now been set back & open inwards, all as recommended. However, due to the new internal floor being significantly higher than the external ground level, building control will insist that below floor level is brick (this will be concealed when cart doors are closed)*
- *The glazed panels in the east gable have now been reduced to a uniform size separated by timber cladding, the reduction is not as great as suggested but it is felt that the design is a reasonable compromise.*

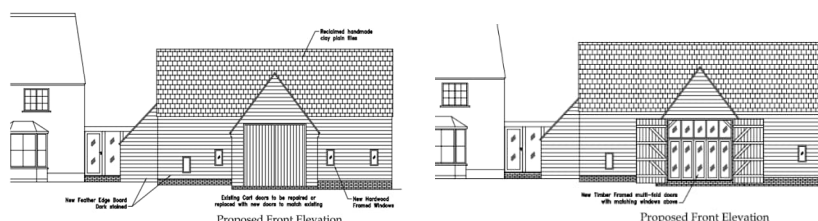
4.0 The Proposal

4.1 Below is a comparison between the 2011 scheme and that now proposed indicating the roof lights removed from the front elevation and cart doors included.

2011



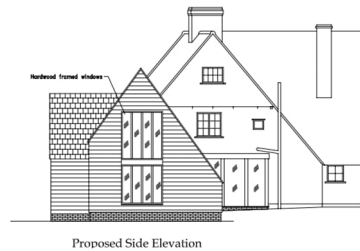
2025



4.2 In 2011 I stated:

Size of glazed panels in east gable

In terms of proportions, one might normally expect first floor glazing to cover a smaller area than that at ground floor. On this occasion, the first floor glazing in the east gable end is taller than that below the mezzanine and the amount of glazing proposed is commensurate with a large cart door opening which would not have existed on this part of the building. Whilst I have no objection in principle to a significant amount of glazing in the east gable (bearing in mind that this gable is relatively devoid of internal framing), I suggest that some weatherboarding is introduced at first floor mezzanine level to a height of let's say one metre so that the first-floor glazing is less dominant. This suggestion will also have the additional benefit of concealing the mezzanine level.



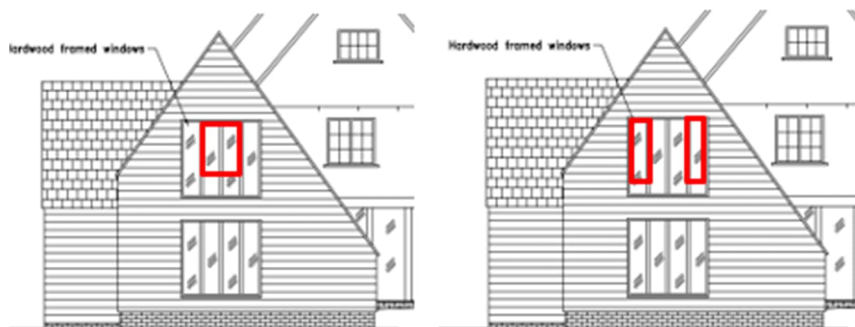
- 4.3 Whilst noting the following in the submitted DHS, I make further comment regarding the treatment of the gable end:



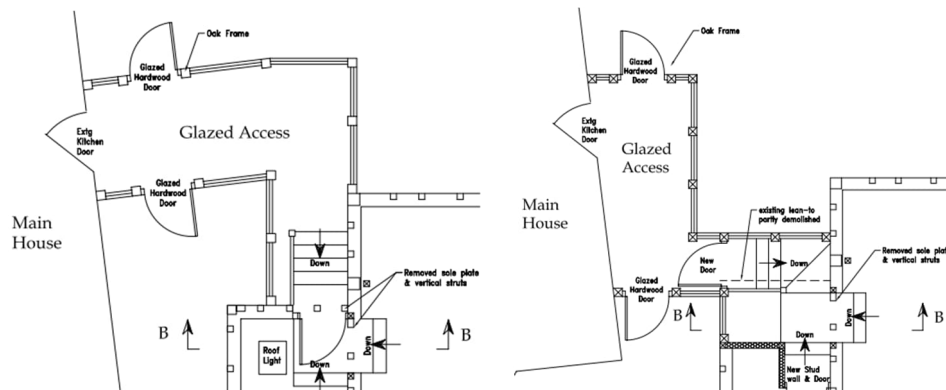
Even though the timbers at the right hand gable end are quite modern, the new window has still been designed to fit within the existing timbers with very little alteration required (see left).

The new windows & doors to the Front gable fit to the existing door opening. All New windows are designed to fit between existing vertical struts. The Roof will consist of entirely new rafters, the roof lights will not affect any original timbers at all

- 4.4 The 'quite modern' framing in the right-hand gable end is unconventional in that there is no central main post and no continuous tie chord at the height of the front wall plate. Had these existed it would have been an opportunity to express this framing internally. Although the DHS describes what is now shown as a 'reasonable compromise' there is opportunity to go slightly further in reducing glazing at first floor. Below are two possible options that would, in my opinion, be considered improvements. The left-hand version could be designed as a pair of casements whilst weatherboarding could be introduced between the glazing in the right-hand image.



- 4.5 The glazed link has been redesigned meaning there is less of it and ensures the back left-hand corner of the barn remains fully expressed and is considered acceptable.



- 4.6 The following is noted in the DHS:

The extent of the steps from the glazed link into the barn are governed by maintaining headroom below the existing historic member, this style of access was designed on the original verbal recommendation from Mr Simmons. The lowest step will be 240mm lower than the existing ground floor level, considerably higher than the noted high-water table (the trial holes were over 1m deeper than the existing floor) the new internal floor level shown on the plans is not indicative of the existing floor level.

This is considered acceptable.

5.0 Suggested conditions (LBC only)

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 approved drawings, where any original timber frame members are proposed to be replaced these shall be identified by photo and/or drawing and the extent of removal agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of replacement framing. The works shall thereafter 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.

4. Details of the proposed reclaimed clay plain tiles for the barn roof shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the re-roofing. Thereafter, the roof shall be covered with the approved roof materials.

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. A 1:5 or 1:10 section detail of the lead roof /fascia to the flat roof link shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the 'link' roofing. Thereafter, the roof shall be implemented 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. Prior to the commencement of that part of the development hereby consented, details of all wall and roof insulation systems shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the insulation 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 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. The framing to all glazing shall be hardwood timber unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Furthermore, the external finish of this framing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the external frame finish shall be implemented 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.

8. Prior to their installation, details of the conservation roof lights shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the roof lights 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 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. New rainwater goods shall be black-painted cast-iron or aluminium or black cast-iron effect 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.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer