North Hertfordshire District Council
Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 18/00577/LBC
Date: 12/06/2018
Planning Officer: JMC
Address: Radwell Grange, Great North Road, Radwell SG7 5EU
Subject: Conversion of existing barn to 2-bed dwelling and erection of detached triple carport and store.

First and foremost, the erection of the detached triple car port and store does not require LBC, therefore, this should be omitted from the description. I suggest the following:

Internal and external alterations to facilitate the conversion of existing barn to 2-bed annexe.

Radwell Grange is grade II listed and is described in the list entry as:

House. Possibly C16 core to predominantly mid C17 main range. Extended and altered C19. Restored C20. Timber frame and brick, roughcast, tiled roof. L shaped. 2 storeys and attics. 3 window front with a central entrance. C19 multiple pane glazing bar sashes with a small ground floor bay window to right. Right hand red brick return wall. Large external C17 gable end stack stepped up to two diagonally set square brick shafts. 2 small chamfered brick mullioned windows with hood moulds flank stack at first floor. Left return has hipped outshut in angle with rear wing. Small gable in roof of this wing over secondary entrance. Behind this gable and attached to rear of main range is the main, possibly C16, stack with 5 shafts, 2 pairs of diagonally set squares and one a star on plan. Rear wing extended by a lower addition. Tall gabled wing in inner angle, originally a staircase wing, has a 2 light wooden ovolo moulded mullion in attic. Interior: original brick fireplaces exposed. Moulded head to jowled post in rear wing. Clasped purlin collar beam roof trusses, originally with crown post. Much altered in C19, especially in main block. (RCHM Typescript).

To the north-west there are a significant number of former agricultural buildings, some of which have been converted to separate dwellings and previously formed part of Radwell Grange Farm.

According to the Heritage Statement, Radwell Grange Farm includes two buildings which have been listed as being of special architectural or historic interest under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.The first building is clearly Radwell Grange but with regard to the second building some clarification may be required as to which is the listed barn.

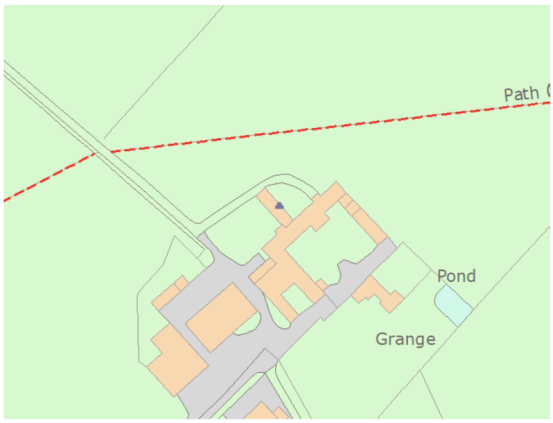
The building is described as:

Barn. C17/C18, altered and extended C19/C20. Timber frame, weatherboarded, brick plinth. Steeply pitched corrugated sheet roofing. The original barn is on a north-west/south-east axis. Open truss roof with clasped purlins and curved braces.

and the address states that the listed barn is 50M north-west of house.

The barn that is the subject of this application is located 50M north-west of the house and is aligned on a north-west/south-east axis as stated in the description. However,

according to the Heritage Statement, the listed barn now forms part of the property known as 'The Threshing Barn' which is situated 65M north-west but on a north-east/south-west alignment. The Heritage Statement says that *"… The omission of this barn in this location on the 1804 estate plan and the 1839 Tithe map suggests that it may have been moved to its present position in the middle of the 19th century".* The map on the Historic England website confuses matters further with the 'blue triangle' positioned over a lower rear wing to 'The Threshing Barn' (see extract below).



I have not been in any of the other buildings to verify/match the list entry to the relevant building. What we do have, however, is the former Principal Conservation Officer's view on 01/08/2012 under ref: 12/01294/1LB where the officer writes:

"….. there seems to be continuing confusion in the reference to one of these barns as listed, ***when the listed barn on the site is the one remaining in the same ownership as the farmhouse****. As this is a variation application, these matters do not materially affect the conservation consideration of the proposal…."*

The agent replied saying that *"…. I am now confused regarding barns listed, you refer to barns in the same ownership as the farmhouse which we are not touching, which one/s are you referring to?".* The Principal Conservation Officer's response did not necessarily clarify the situation simply adding that *"…. The comments in my first paragraph of 01/08/2012 were intended for internal record and there is nothing further for the agent to do in this respect…."*

Unless further clarification is provided by the agent, I consider the listed barn is that which is the subject of the current application unless confirmation is provided to the contrary. For the time being, I do not, therefore, concur with the Heritage Statement where it states that:

"….The present barn forms part of the Radwell Grange farmstead, recorded on the Historic Environment Record, and is, therefore, considered to be an undesignated heritage asset. It does not benefit from curtilage listing either from the farmhouse, which was listed before 1969 when consideration of curtilage was introduced, or from the nearby 'Threshing Barn', which is, itself an ancillary structure in a separate yard (see Historic England Advice Note on Listed Buildings and Curtilage). Nevertheless, the barn certainly forms part of the setting of both listed buildings….."

Furthermore, even in the event that the listed barn is the 'The Threshing Barn', I do not concur with the reference made to 1969 pursuant to the matter of curtilage. It is my understanding that 'curtilage' is considered in terms of three key factors:

1. Was the building erected pre 1st July 1948?
2. Was it in the same ownership as the principal building at the time that the principal building was added to the statutory list – 27th May 1968?
3. Did the building perform an ancillary residential function to the principal building at the time that the principal building was added to the statutory list – 27th May 1968?

Fulfilling these criteria, even if not considered to be the listed barn on site, the building would still be regarded as 'curtilage-listed'.

The proposal.

The key issue here in conservation terms is to establish the extent of impact upon the setting and hence the significance of Radwell Grange by introducing a separate residential unit within close proximity to the host building.

I visited site with the case officer on 14th May 2018 and the first feature noticed when approaching Radwell Grange is the new access similar to that of the original entrance i.e. brick piers and surmounted by ornamental pineapple finials (right hand image below). I have found no planning record for this work but this would perhaps imply that this would become the principal entrance to Radwell Grange whilst the original access (onto which the north-west elevation of 'The Grange' faces), would become the principal access for the proposed dwelling.

Historic map evidence clearly indicates that the existing access to Radwell Grange was a 'drive-through' that provided access to the fields beyond to the north. Historically, therefore, the present 'courtyard' enclosure on the west side of 'The Grange' was part of the farm building complex and not part of the private curtilage to Radwell Grange. However, with more recent planting, together with the conversion of the surrounding farm buildings, the access now appears as a private driveway/parking area to the side of the house (left hand image below).





Should the original access also become the access for a separate dwelling, the use of this access would be intensified. In my opinion, using the original access to Radwell Grange for a second dwelling would denude this access of its significance in relation to the setting of Radwell Grange, thus, I suggest would have a potentially harmful impact upon the setting of the 'The Grange'. It is understood, however, that the primary purpose of the conversion is to provide annexe accommodation for family members. As such, I would not raise an objection to an annexe type use, thus retaining the barn / outbuilding and access solely within Radwell Grange's curtilage.

The Heritage Statement suggests a mid-18th century or earlier date for the barn's construction and it acknowledges that it has been previously converted for leisure use, with the northern 3 bays housing a sauna, and the southern 5 bays being furnished with a large open fireplace at the south-eastern end and a small performance space at the north-western end.

Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that:

"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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. ***Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting*** *……"*

Paragraph 134 states that:

"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use."

In the glossary, the setting of a heritage asset is described as: *"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."*

As stated in the Heritage Statement, *"….the barn is a former agricultural building, already converted to leisure use, forming an integral component of the historic farmstead. As such, the retention, as far as practicable, of its visual character is important. On this basis, the number of additional window openings in the south-western elevation will be restricted and will match those openings already inserted. Additional light will be provided by conservation roof-lights, similar to those installed in 'The Threshing Barn' and 'The Chaff Barn' on the north-west side of the farmyard…"*

In my opinion, this outbuilding range could perhaps be handled a little more sensitively if the following matters are taken into account:

- On the understanding that the windows are to be replaced, I advise that glazing bars are omitted to simplify the fenestration;
- A significant number of relatively large roof lights are proposed. I advise that at least 3no. roof lights are omitted (1no. front and rear to living room, the right hand one of the pair on the front elevation serving bedroom 1 and the one serving the WC at the rear) and that the roof lights are reduced in size (perhaps reducing their width by 200mm);
- I advise that the opening into the building is treated more like a barn opening (see sketch). The left hand door would obscure the kitchen window but the glazing in the screen would more than compensate for this;
- I have suggested reducing one of the windows to bedroom 1 on the front elevation to a single to simplify the elevation and this would then not conflict with bedroom door internally. Furthermore, to reinforce the barn-like character to the front elevation, I have also shown a stable type door opening (bottom panel fixed), to the far left hand window (also to bedroom 1);

- I have also suggested reducing the WC window on the rear to simplify the elevation a little (the same could also be achieved with the utility room window); and
- I advise that consideration is given to opening up the interior of the right hand end by omitting the proposed wall and double doors between kitchen and living room.

A wooden trough runs along the northern elevation from the east end to half-way along Bay 5 in this building. It would be a somewhat quirky feature to retain internally but I appreciate the impracticality of where it is currently located considering the proposed layout.



Recommendation
First and foremost we need to establish beyond doubt as to which building is the listed barn on this site. Secondly, I await feedback regarding the physical alterations to this building and confirmation as to whether this is to be treated as an 'annexe' application before giving a final recommendation. As matters stand, I would be minded to raise an **OBJECTION** on the basis that it is my considered opinion, that the conversion works would not preserve this building's special character, thus, would not satisfy the provisions of Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 or the aims of Section12 of the NPPF or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (Proposed Submission, October 2016).

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer