

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 24/02117/FPH

Date: 15/01/2025

Planning Officer: TR

Address: Manor Farm, Church Lane, Graveley, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7BN

Subject: Single storey rear extension and alterations to fenestration. Erection of rear outbuilding to facilitate golf simulator/gym/office with associated decking; erection of greenhouse/store following demolition of existing outbuilding. Installation of front entrance gate to driveway.

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 In determining applications, great weight should be given to the conservation of Designated Heritage Assets (para 212, NPPF) and any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset from development within its setting requires clear and convincing justification (para 213).
- 1.2 I await feedback regarding windows and the extension design before giving a final recommendation.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 I previously commented under ref: 24/00243/PREH on 23 April 2024 in relation to ***'Erection of single storey rear extension, detached garage and carport including other minor works. Erection of outbuilding with PV panels to roof slope following demolition of existing outbuilding'***.
- 2.2 Manor Farm is grade II listed and is described as:

Manor house, now a farmhouse. C17, part demolished and remainder converted to a farmhouse in c.1770s, renovated and rear extensions C19. W wing timber frame, now with roughcast on 1st floor on N and E, exposed timbers on W side with brick infill, red brick ground floor casing on S and SW to match red brick of south wing. Steep old red tile hipped roofs. A 2-storeys and attics house facing S with a long 2-storeys W wing joined to its NW corner and linked only by a single-storey lean-to. The S wing has a 2-rooms, end chimneys, single-room-depth plan with an older very large projecting rear wall chimney to the W room and a large rear stair tower adjoining it on E. Entrance now by a gabled C19 low porch in the NW angle of the stair tower and the S wing. W wing has a large internal chimney a third from the N end a 3-cells plan later adapted to service rooms. S front has 2 windows to each floor. 3-lights casement windows on ground floor, 2-lights on 1st floor, and segmental arched heads on both floors. Sash windows to E end, stair tower, and C19 extension at rear. Near S end of W side of W wing is a 5-lights original moulded oak mullioned window on the ground floor. 3 tall diagonal shafts to rear wall chimney of S wing. Interior of W room of this wing said to have oak panelling. Stair of dog-leg plan, oak with square newels, moulded caps, and turned balusters. (RCHM (1911)93: VCH (1912)86: Pevsner (1977)149: RCHM Typescript).

On south-west and west of the Manor House is a boundary wall and gate piers which are also separately grade II listed and described as:

Wall and gate piers. C18. Red brick in Flemish-bond. About 3M tall garden wall with swept offset on W side a little below the brick on edge coping. Square piers for gateways project and are carried higher with stone plain caps. Gateway blocked by brickwork on W. (RCHM (1911)93).

3.0 The Local Plan and NPPF (Dec 2024)

3.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 is relevant as are following paragraphs of the NPPF are relevant in the consideration of these cases:

- **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).

4.0 Previous history

4.1 Please see comments under ref: 24/02342/LBC regarding previous pre-app on proposed extension.

4.2 Under ref: 24/00243/PREH I stated:

Looking at the planning history and particularly photos on appn ref: 00/01123/1LB, the outbuildings against the west wall of the walled vegetable garden show that the structures were in poor condition.



Other photos show a chimney stack that would have served a building in the north-east corner of this enclosure.



What we see today is the implemented scheme approved in 2001. It is fair to say that the softwood framing to the conservatory/greenhouse has not stood up particularly well to weathering in the last 23 years. Having said that, the scheme makes a positive contribution to the walled garden and to the wider setting of Manor Farmhouse. Contextually it is highly appropriate. Whilst I probably cannot resist the demolition of

C21 structures, the question this raises is would the proposal make an equal or better contribution to Manor Farmhouse's setting?



- 4.3 I went on to say that the weatherboarding and large glazed areas of the pre-app scheme *"do not have the architectural vocabulary of buildings expected to be found in a walled garden setting"* and that *"if a replacement building(s) is to be successful here then I believe the design should be revisited to create a building that is more traditional in appearance, thus more respectful of its context"*.

5.0 The Proposal

- 5.1 Please see comments under ref: 24/02342/LBC regarding proposed extension. I now turn to the proposed outbuildings. At page 27 of the submitted Design and Heritage Statement under the subheading 'DESIGN PROPOSALS - Garden Outbuildings (Pre-application comments)' the applicant responds to points I raised in April 2024.
- 5.2 The architect has responding stating that the proposed garden outbuildings will make a positive contribution to the Manor Farmhouse as it will enhance the quality of the garden space by the rebuilding of structures in the kitchen garden.
- 5.3 Not only would there be more buildings within the walled garden their form and the materials used does not infer that these are garden buildings. Although the amount of glazing is less than the existing buildings, the large, glazed sliding doors are the most significant element, in particular, the more horizontal than vertical form of glazing serving the golf simulator section. Even the images shared at page 18 of the DHS are considered to have better proportions.

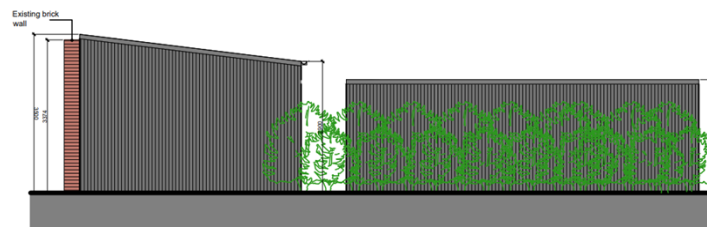


I encourage a slight reduction in the width of the glazing to the Wellness and Home Office section and would not be opposed to a splayed section being introduced either side as noted in the left-hand image above. However, at my site meeting on 13/01/2025 the applicant was not amenable to this suggestion. I also suggested adjusting the size of the larger opening also to match that of the Wellness and Home Office section even if this then required

a single much narrower glazed panel in front of the cycling machine? This was also not received positively. However, the applicant is prepared to consider a reduction in the width of the glazed opening, and this is to be encouraged. More vertical door proportions are to be encouraged. Furthermore, and something I did not raise on site, is whether it would be appropriate to introduce a timber external door to the lobby? In short, I am not entirely convinced by the current approach in the image below



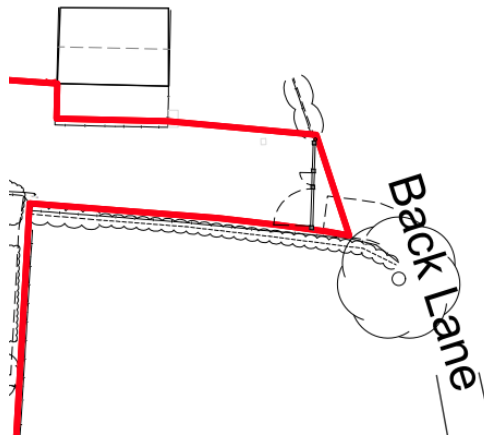
- 5.4 Previously I also said that *“whilst I appreciate the benefits of introducing solar PV to the roof, this will also instil the perception that rather than being a building ancillary in character, this building adopts a rather domestic appearance giving the perception of an annexe as opposed to garden buildings”*. The architect has confirmed that no PV panels are proposed on the roofs.
- 5.5 The architect has stated that *“The design proposal maintains the height of the existing brick wall. However, the lowest existing level of (139.61m above datum level) is maintained through the entire ground floor of the outbuildings. In doing so the roof of the outbuildings does not project above the highest level of the existing brick wall significantly. A comparison of the heights of existing brick garden wall and the roof of the proposed outbuildings is shown in the elevations on the following pages”*.
- 5.6 Furthermore, the greenhouse / potting shed did not form part of the pre-application and introducing a further, yet smaller building in the same style as the main building will only serve to reinforce this build-type. This is an important consideration in that the rear of this building is more ‘exposed’ as there is no wall on this side of the quadrant. From Back Lane there are glimpse views afforded across to Manor Farm and to the remains of the Church of St. Etheldreda. Although there is a case to suggest that the greenhouse and store as opposed would have limited impact upon the setting of both, it is still considered that a contrasting and more traditional build type being proposed for the greenhouse / potting shed so that this building at least had more of a wall garden aesthetic.



- 5.7 I would not be opposed to a building similar to that in the images below and the applicant appeared to be amenable to this suggestion at my site meeting on 13/01/2025.



- 5.8 No objection is raised to the installation of a 5-bar filed gate with pedestrian gate alongside to mark the entrance to the site.



Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer