

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	25/01317/FPH & 25/01318/LBC
CASE OFFICER:	VW
APPLICATION SITE:	Docwra Manor, 1 Hitchin Road, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3PZ
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	FP - Alterations to fenestration. LBC - Alterations to fenestration including painting of all existing and new windows. Internal alterations.

RECOMMENDATION:
I raise **NO OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) (LBC), 66(1) (FP) and 72(1) (both) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on listed building's special character and its setting

The proposal will have minimal impact upon the building's special character.

Impact on character and appearance of the conservation area –

Limited impact upon character and appearance of the Pirton Conservation Area (PCA).

Harm, preserve or enhance.

The proposal would not harm the building's special character or harm the character or appearance of the PCA.

SITE CONTEXT:

Docwra Manor is grade II listed and is located in the PCA. To the north is 2 Bury End (grade II*) and nos. 4 & 6 Bury End (grade II) whilst The Cottage and Tudor Cottage, Great Green (grade II) are located due west. Docwra Manor and the PCA are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The list entry can be found at the following link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1175493?section=official-list-entry>

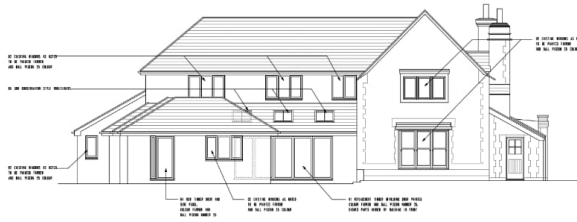
DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The key heritage issues are to consider the impact of the proposal upon:

- The special character of the listed building and
- The character and appearance of the PCA.

I note the Parish Council's response on 15 June 2025 stating that PPC have no objections to the majority of the application, save for the issue of roof lights. It says that "Docwra

Manor is in the Conservation Area, and the latest Conservation Management Plan for Pirton **advises against the use of roof lights in conservation areas**. In this case, we do not regard them as necessary for illumination of the interior of the property. They will also allow excess light on to neighbouring gardens and properties in Bury End”.



There are three references to rooflights in the Pirton Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan March 2023 (see below). None of these advise against the use of rooflights in conservation areas and the word ‘distract’ rather than ‘detract’ is used at page 35.

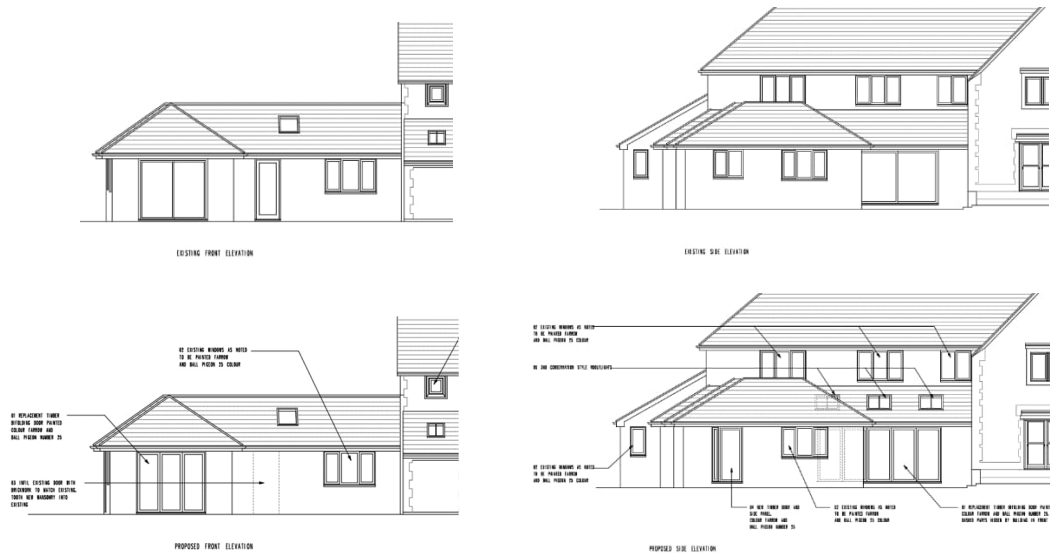
- *Rooflights are not common within the Character Area and, where present, distract from the traditional appearance of the roofscape.* (page 35)
- **28, Shillington Road and individually listed barn [Figure 59].** A sixteenth- century or earlier open hall house with inserted floor. The building features sections of exposed framing. The barn has been converted to residential amenity space, including the addition of three rooflights on the western roof slope. (page 41)
- *Dormer windows and rooflights are not common features and loft conversions are not commonplace.* (page 42)

The proposed rooflights relate to later additions to this listed building, noted within the listed building description as having no special interest. No.2 Bury End, being the highest value designated heritage asset nearby, would not, in my opinion, be adversely affected by this aspect of the proposal.



A reduction to two roof lights on either side would, to an extent, ameliorate the concerns raised by the PPC, but I cannot justify raising an objection to the roof lights in the scheme as currently proposed.

With respect to other fenestration changes, these once again relate to the section of building of no special interest. My only comment is that the very narrow side light alongside the glazed door in the north-west end of the single-storey hipped roof section appears to have more timber than glazing. Although unobjectionable, either a wider door with no side light should be encouraged or a wider opening to receive a pair of doors.



Internally, my attention is only drawn to alterations within the earlier part of the building as the alterations elsewhere in the section of no special interest is of limited consequence. The two alterations of interest are those in images 01 and 03 on page entitled '*Internal photos - Living room & reception*' in the submitted Planning and Heritage Statement May 2025 [PHS].



Image 01 indicates where a door would be formed between existing framing (horizontal timbers denote where a window previously existed) whilst the internal window with obscured glass in image 03 would be made into a door whilst the part glazed door in the right-hand image above would be removed and the opening closed over. Although the PHS says that this door will be reused where the new opening is to be formed instead of the window, I am unconvinced that this is a door type worthy of reuse and that a solid door to match others at the property would be more desirable.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 16(2) – LBC only, 66(1) – FP only and 72(1) – LBC and FPH

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

Policy HE1

NPPF (December 2024):

The following paragraphs are relevant:

- **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*).

CONCLUSION:

The proposal is clearly set out and well-articulated. I raise no objection to the matter commented on above or to the change in window/door external frame joinery finish to Farrow & Ball colour 'Pigeon 25'.

There are several minor changes that are considered potential improvements but none of these are matters which specifically invite a conservation-based objection:

- Omitting one roof light to both side elevations to ameliorate PPC concerns,
- Omitting the side light to new external glazed door in hipped section, and
- Install new solid internal door to match other internal solid doors where internal window is to be removed rather than reusing part-glazed door.

Otherwise, I agree with the conclusion in the submitted PHS that *"the changes do not impact on the heritage of the listed building"*.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 21/07/2025