

This submission includes a Heritage Statement in support of an application for Listed Building Consent for alterations and enhancements to the garden within the curtilage of a circa 18th-century Grade II listed building. The proposals have been developed to respect the building's historic character, architectural form, and setting, and to ensure that changes are sustainable, sympathetic, and considerate of both heritage and neighbouring amenity.

The statement explains how the proposals preserve or enhance the setting of the listed building, and is provided for assessment by the Council's Heritage Department.

Heritage Statement

Introduction

The property is a Grade II listed building dating from the circa 18th century, embodying the character of a traditional black barn. The black-painted timber is typical of historic agricultural buildings in Hertfordshire and contributes significantly to the building's architectural interest and local identity. Internally, exposed timber beams further underscore its heritage value.

The garden contributes to the setting of the building, and changes within it should be considered in relation to views from and towards the house, neighbour amenity, and the building's heritage significance.

Existing Garden

The garden is currently a flat expanse of grass with a single pathway and limited biodiversity or variety of use. Parking and outbuildings are visible from the house, and some paving is uneven. The space is underused and does not enhance the setting of the listed building, nor does it support the needs or wellbeing of the family.

Design Approach

The garden design responds directly to the architecture of the house and the views from its windows and doors. The angular form of the building has informed the alignment of paths, patios, seating areas, and garden spaces, ensuring that every area serves a clear purpose and relates proportionally to the house.

The garden is intended to be both usable and visually engaging, with planting and subtle features that enrich views from the house without competing with its character.

Materials and Built Elements

Natural and traditional materials are used throughout the garden, chosen for both their appropriateness to the listed setting and practical performance:

- **Black timber** for the pergola and arbour, matching the house exterior;
- **Natural gravel and porous surfaces** for paths and driveway to improve surface water drainage;
- **Porous paving and lawn areas** designed with a gentle fall away from the house (approx. 1:60) and supported by a new soakaway beneath the lawn;

- **Planting beds** that support biodiversity and absorb rainwater.

Most structures will be largely softened by planting. Climbing plants on the pergola and arbour are expected to establish within one to two growing seasons, integrating these features into the garden visually. The garden tool shed will be largely **screened by planting**, ensuring it remains inconspicuous.

The only non-natural material proposed is a small area of **composite decking** beneath the sauna, chosen for long-term sustainability and low maintenance, which reduces the need for future disruption to the garden.

Four existing stone or concrete posts in the garden will be reused within planting, supporting sustainable retention of features and avoiding unnecessary removal.

Garden Movement, Biodiversity, and Subtle Features

Shallow water pools with stepping stones are integrated into the garden layout to support circulation and provide habitat for birds, bees, and insects. The water is designed to sit naturally within planting without dominating the landscape.

Planting has been selected to increase biodiversity and seasonal interest, with species chosen to attract native wildlife. Seating areas and routes create spaces that the family can use regularly while maintaining a calm, ordered character that complements the building.

Sauna (Medical Requirement)

The proposals include a **small infrared outdoor sauna** required for daily medical treatment of a resident. The sauna measures approximately **1.88 m by 1.7 m** with an overall height below **2.4 m** and is located in a discreet, lightly used section of the garden close to the house. It sits on a small composite deck to provide a stable, low-maintenance base.

Its modest scale and placement minimise visual impact on the listed building and neighbouring properties. Because it lies within the curtilage of the listed building, it is included in this application so that the Council can assess it alongside the wider garden proposals.

Parking, Carport, and Tool Shed

The number of outbuildings has been reduced to create more garden space. Parking and turning space for two vehicles is retained, softened by planting to reduce visual prominence from the house.

A **carport** is proposed; the applicant seeks the Council's advice on an appropriate **maximum height and design** for this element so that it is sympathetic to the heritage setting, scale, and proportions of the listed building.

Adjacent to the carport, a small **replacement garden tool shed** is proposed to house a lawnmower and basic garden tools. It is positioned discreetly and will be painted black to match the house, with planting screening to ensure it does not visually impact views from key elevations.

All outbuildings and garden structures are modest in scale and subordinate to the main house, preserving the asset's character and setting.

Neighbour Amenity

The proposals are designed to ensure that garden works do not adversely affect neighbouring properties. Features, planting, and structures are positioned and scaled to protect neighbours' outlooks, privacy, and daylight. Where appropriate, additional planting will provide natural screening, and no element of the garden is intended to overlook or harm adjacent amenity.

Impact on the Listed Building and Setting

All works are confined to the garden and involve no alterations to the historic fabric of the listed building itself. No original internal or external features of the house are proposed for removal, and all changes are reversible.

The proposed garden design enhances the setting of the listed building through the use of natural materials, sympathetic drainage solutions, biodiversity planting, and garden routes that complement rather than compete with the house. It respects the scale, materials, and character of the listed asset and helps to preserve its architectural and historic interest in line with East Hertfordshire Council's heritage policies.

Conclusion

The proposals transform a flat, underused garden into a thoughtfully designed landscape that responds to the character, architecture, and views of the Grade II listed building. With natural materials, integrated drainage, subtle built elements, and considered planting, the garden now enhances usability, supports wildlife, respects neighbours, and complements the heritage significance of the building.

The proposals are modest, reversible, and sensitive to the age, character, and significance of the listed building, providing a garden that supports family use and long-term stewardship of this heritage asset.