

M Scott / Architectural Design

Design and Heritage Statement Rev A

For

Erection of outbuilding to provide staff accommodation and kitchen storage following demolition of existing chicken shed.

At

Robin Hood And Little John, Rabley Heath Road, Codicote, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 9UB.



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Introduction

This Design, Heritage and Access Statement has been prepared in support of the proposed erection of an outbuilding to provide staff accommodation and kitchen storage following demolition of an existing dilapidated chicken shed located within the grounds of the Robin Hood and Little John Public House. The proposal will provide essential staff accommodation and additional kitchen storage. The Public House is experiencing increasing popularity, with a growing number of lunch and dinner covers, and these works are necessary to support its continued viability.

The scheme proposes the creation of four double bedrooms for staff, which will help attract and retain skilled personnel - vital for the long-term sustainable operation of this destination venue. Additionally, the increased kitchen demand has led to the current storage facilities becoming inadequate, necessitating the need for additional dedicated kitchen storage space.

Background

The Robin Hood and Little John Public House has operated for many years and has undergone various extensions and alterations over time. Previously owned by the McMullen Group, the building experienced a period of instability due to difficulties in securing a long-term tenancy agreement with an operator. As a result, the pub saw several changes in management and was closed and reopened on multiple occasions, each closure attributed to a lack of profitability.

In July 2024, the pub was purchased by David and Fiona Nye, who reopened it following a comprehensive refurbishment. Their vision has been to retain the traditional character and charm of the building while enhancing its quality and appeal as a popular, high-quality destination venue.

In May 2024, planning permission and listed building consent were granted for a courtyard infill extension and a new conservatory on the west elevation. These alterations were designed to provide additional space for diners and drinkers, supporting the long-term viability of the business. The courtyard extension was completed in December 2024, with construction of the conservatory scheduled to commence next year.

Existing Conditions

The existing chicken shed is located within the grounds of the public house. It is currently in a state of disrepair and no longer fit for purpose. The shed is constructed from slatted timber and has suffered from significant deterioration, including areas of rot and structural damage, and is no longer weather-tight. It is identified as being of low significance within the Plan of Significance and is not original to the historic core of the site, having likely been constructed in the mid-1970s. The proposed works will not result in the loss or alteration of any features of high or moderate heritage value.

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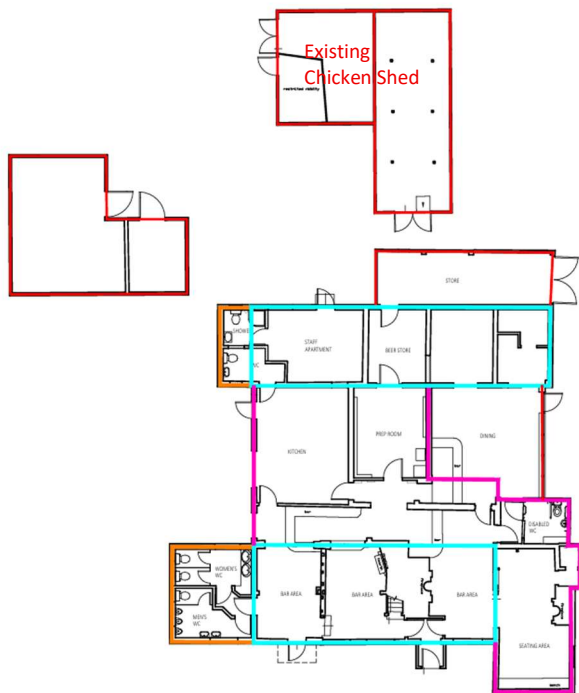
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Plan of Significance



Site Photographs

Justification For Works in The Green Belt:

1. Increased Operational Capacity

The proposed works will enable on-site staff accommodation, which is essential for improving recruitment and retention - key to ensuring the long-term commercial viability of the pub. Additionally, the provision of dedicated kitchen storage is critical to supporting the increased number of covers, allowing the pub to meet current and future service demand efficiently.

2. Enhanced Facilities and Staff Welfare

The new outbuilding will provide improved and functional space, enabling the integration of high-quality staff accommodation and enhanced kitchen facilities. These upgrades contribute directly to staff satisfaction, operational efficiency, and overall business sustainability.

3. Diversification of Offerings

Improved infrastructure supports the potential for a broader range of services such as events, private dining, or extended operating hours - which can diversify income streams and enhance the customer experience.

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4. Adaptation to Changing Trends

Consumer expectations have shifted, with greater emphasis on quality service, sustainability, and destination experiences. These works enable the pub to remain competitive by responding to changing industry trends while maintaining its traditional charm.

5. Economic Benefits

A thriving rural pub generates local employment, supports local suppliers, and attracts visitors to the area. The proposed works will strengthen the pub's economic contribution by increasing visitor capacity and improving service delivery.

6. Preservation of Heritage through Active Use

Sustainable use is often the best way to preserve a heritage asset. By ensuring the Robin Hood and Little John Public House remains viable and active, the proposed works support the ongoing conservation and appreciation of this historic community asset.

7. Competitive Advantage

In a competitive hospitality landscape, enhanced facilities - such as on-site accommodation and expanded storage - provide a distinct advantage. These works help the business offer a compelling, high-quality customer experience in a rural setting.

8. Long-Term Sustainability

The investment in works signals a commitment to the pub's future. By expanding capacity and modernising operational infrastructure, the pub is better positioned to endure economic pressures and shifting consumer patterns.

9. Strengthening the Pub as a Community Hub

Rural pubs often serve as vital community spaces. By securing the operational future of the Robin Hood and Little John, these proposals help retain its role as a social and cultural focal point for the local population.

10. Boost to Local Tourism

Located in a scenic and culturally rich area, a well-functioning, high-quality pub enhances the local tourism offer. With suitable facilities in place, the pub becomes a desirable destination for visitors, further supporting local tourism strategies and businesses.

Proposed Works

The existing chicken shed is identified as being of low significance within the Plan of Significance and is not original to the historic core of the site, having likely been constructed in the mid-1970s. As such, the proposed works will not result in the loss or alteration of any features of high or moderate heritage value.

The proposed works are modest in nature and aim to retain the existing footprint of the chicken shed as far as possible, with a limited extension of the footprint to the west and north - positioned away from the main public house building and areas of significance.

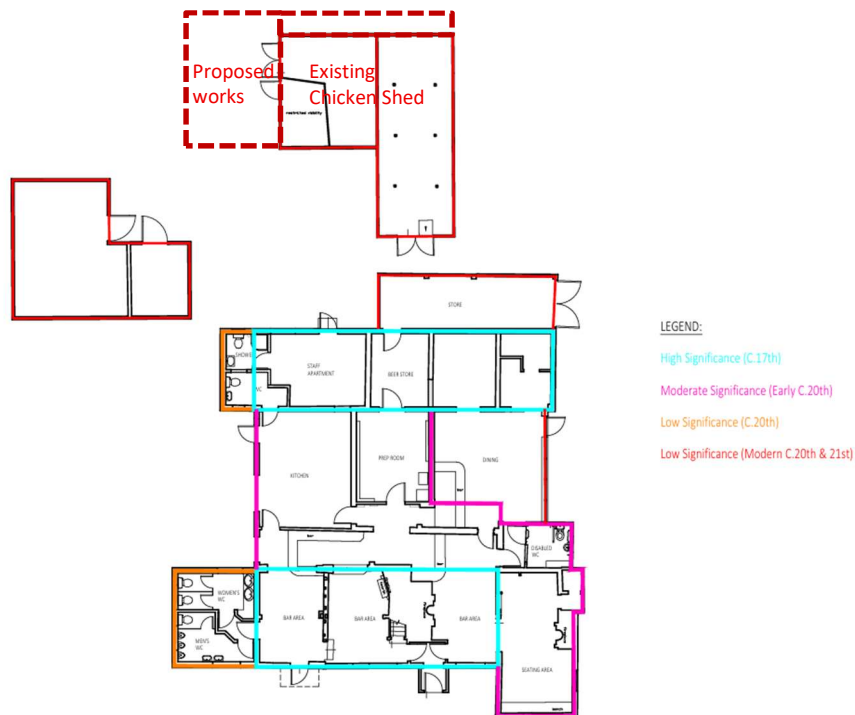
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The design approach is to replicate the appearance and character of a traditional agricultural outbuilding, including a slatted timber exterior, particularly where the building is most visible from the public house. The proposal has been carefully designed to avoid impacting any elements of low, moderate, or high historical significance, as identified in the Plan of Significance.

The proposals include the following key elements:

1. New Kitchen Storage Facility

A modern kitchen storage area will be created near the pub and existing kitchen, compliant with current building regulations. The existing double-door access will be retained to preserve the outbuilding's appearance and ease of use.

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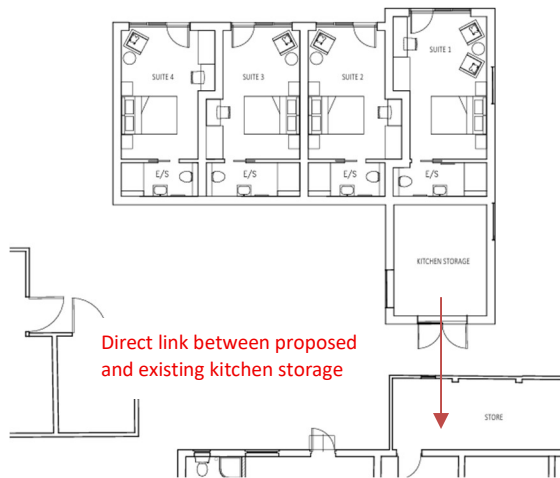
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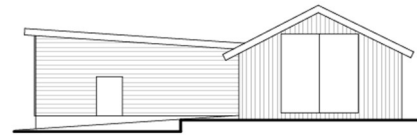
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Proposed floor plan



South-east elevation

Existing elevation

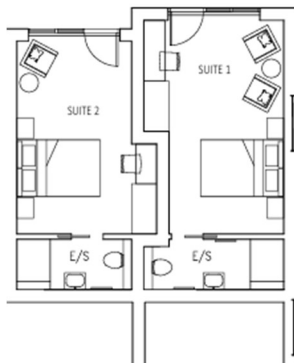


South-east elevation

Proposed elevation

2. Staff Accommodation

Four well sized self-contained double-bedroom units will be introduced along the north-west edge of the site. Each unit will include an en-suite bathroom, double bed, wardrobe, desk area, and lounge seating. High-quality double-glazed windows will be used to maximise natural light and thermal efficiency whilst also providing views to landscaped garden.



Plan of Unit Design



North-west elevation

Proposed elevation

3. Modest Extension of Footprint to the West

To accommodate the required staff accommodation, a small extension of the chicken shed footprint to the west and north is proposed. The layout of the units has been interlocked to minimise the overall increase in footprint. Access to the accommodation will be via the existing car park, ensuring that the works do not interfere with the day-to-day operations of the public house.

4. Ridge Height Adjustment and Roof Design

The proposed ridge height will be raised from that of the existing chicken shed by the minimum amount necessary to achieve a usable internal head height of 2.1 metres. Despite this modest

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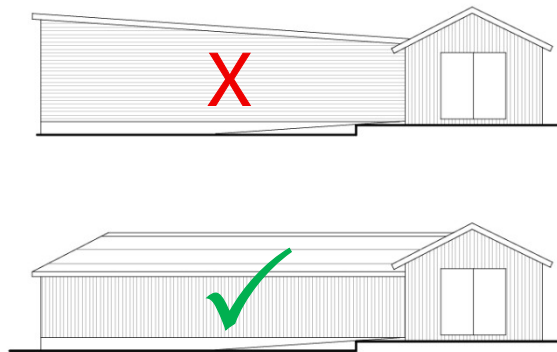
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increase, the building will remain clearly subordinate in scale to the main public house, maintaining the established visual hierarchy of built form on the site.

The existing chicken shed roof form, which runs perpendicular to the pub, is a traditional gable and this has been retained in the new outbuilding design. The north-western section of the existing chicken shed roof is a different and less cohesive form and, therefore, has not been replicated in the proposal. This roof section has been redesigned to also feature a gable roof for consistency and simplicity. Alternative options, including replicating the existing roof design, were explored; however, these were found to have a greater visual impact and lacked coherence with the agricultural character of the outbuilding.

To further reduce the visual impact of the proposed roofline on the wider setting, a hipped end has been introduced at the western gable. This design refinement softens the roof profile while retaining the simple agricultural vernacular appropriate to the building's historic rural context.



Heritage Asset and Significance

The accompanying Plan of Significance identifies the original public house building and its associated outbuildings, along with an assessment of their relative heritage significance. Based on a detailed visual inspection of the site, it is evident that the elements of high significance have, over time, been surrounded by several later extensions and alterations. Most of these additions appear to date from the mid to late 20th century, including the chicken shed, which is estimated to have been constructed around the mid-1970s. The former stables are identified as being of high significance and are believed to have originally served the public house. These have since been incorporated into more recent extensions to the main building.

7/72 Robin Hood and Little John Public House - - II

Public House. C17 timber frame. C18 and C20 red brick casing. Plain tile roof. 1 storey and attics. Lobby entrance plan, 1 bay each side of central stack and smaller single bays joining these each end. 3 glazing bar casements, 2 left of door with wooden lintels, right one segmental headed. C20 gabled Porch to C18 door arch. 2 large roughcast gabled dormers. Chamfer- stopped beams. Numerous rear extensions including C18 single storey outbuilding with slate roof.

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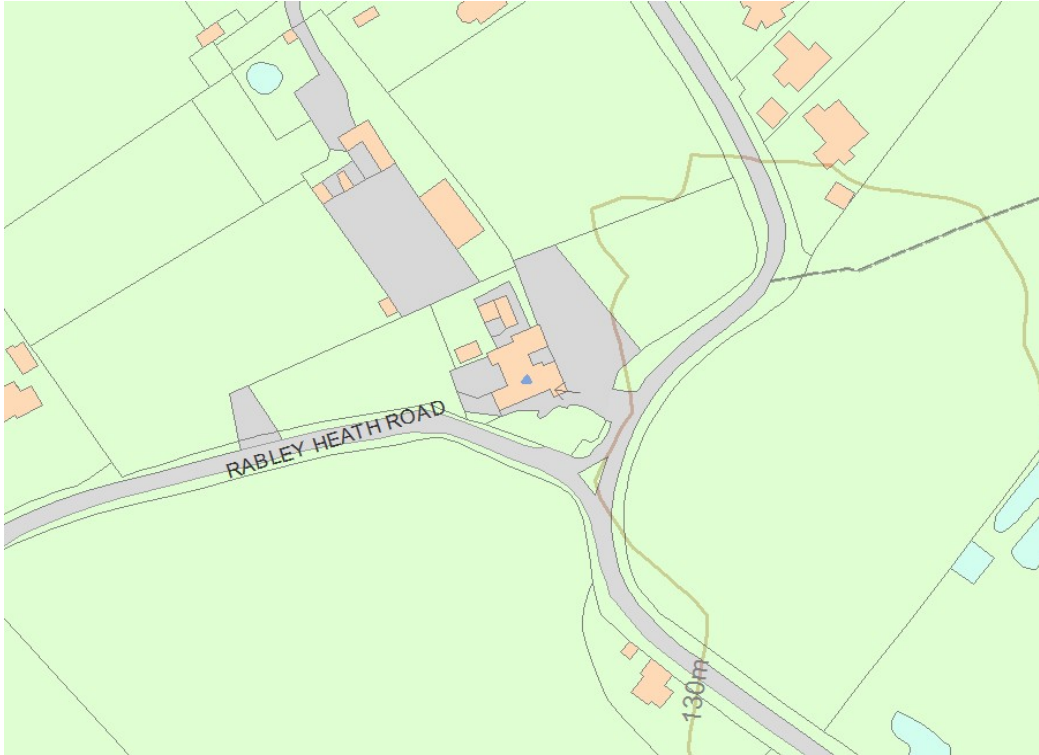
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Listing NGR: TL2355019132



Impact on the Significance

The proposed works have been carefully designed to ensure there is no harm to the significance of the heritage asset, either in physical or visual terms. The existing chicken shed is identified as being of low significance within the Plan of Significance and is not original to the historic core of the site, having likely been constructed in the mid-1970s. As such, the proposed works will not result in the loss or alteration of any features of high or moderate heritage value.

Importantly, the proposal is intended to support the long-term viability of the Robin Hood and Little John Public House, which represents a valued community asset and a locally significant heritage building. In an increasingly challenging economic environment, the sustainability of rural pubs relies on their ability to adapt and function efficiently. The provision of additional kitchen storage and on-site staff accommodation will contribute directly to the operational needs of the business, enabling it to continue serving the community.

By securing the continued active use of the building as a public house, the proposal aligns with the principles of heritage conservation set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, which emphasise the importance of sustaining heritage assets through viable and sympathetic uses (see below section for further

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detail). The works will ensure that the significance of the heritage asset is preserved and safeguarded for the future, while supporting its evolving role within the rural economy and community life.

Planning Policy Assessment

This proposal has been carefully developed in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) and the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 (adopted 2022). It supports the sustainable growth of a rural business, preserves the setting of a designated heritage asset, and meets Green Belt policy requirements.

1. Heritage (NPPF & Policy HE1)

The scheme involves demolition of a non-designated structure of low significance and has no impact on the fabric or setting of the Grade II listed public house. This demolition allows for construction of a high-quality new subordinate outbuilding of agricultural design. It aligns with NPPF Paragraphs 197 and 203, which support viable uses of heritage assets and accept change to less significant elements. It also complies with Local Plan Policy HE1, which requires development to conserve or enhance heritage significance.

2. Green Belt (NPPF & Policies SP5 / CGB1)

The proposed works are modest, well-sited, and subordinate in scale. The proposal will significantly aid the operations of the public house. This complies with Policies SP5 and CGB1, which support small-scale development that sustains rural businesses without harming Green Belt purposes.

3. Rural Economy & Sustainable Development (NPPF & Policies ETC7 / ETC8)

The proposal enables improved staffing and operational capacity for a growing rural business, in line with NPPF Paragraph 84, which encourages the sustainable growth and diversification of rural enterprises. The Local Plan supports this through Policies ETC7 (re-use of rural buildings) and ETC8 (tourism-related development), which permit such uses where they are well-designed and sympathetic to their surroundings.

Conclusion

The proposed works at the Robin Hood and Little John Public House represent a sensitive and well-considered response to both the operational needs of the business and the heritage value of the site.

The scheme respects the historic character and rural setting, replacing a dilapidated low-significance structure with a high-quality agricultural style building without causing harm to the significance of the listed public house or its wider context. The modest and sympathetic design ensures the building remains visually and functionally subordinate to the main public house, while securing the sustainable future of the site in line with national and local heritage and planning policy.

By providing essential staff accommodation and improved kitchen storage, the proposals directly support the long-term viability of this valued community asset.

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