North Hertfordshire District Council
Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 18/00585/LBC
Date: 09/07/2018
Planning Officer: MT
Address: Sandon Bury Farm, Sandon, Hertfordshire SG9 0QY
Subject: Internal alterations to Sandon Bury Farmhouse (grade II* listed); refurbishment of the Black Barn (grade II* listed) to include overcladding, acoustic insulation work and alterations to existing openings; internal and external works to the Dovecote (grade II listed) including the provision of a new roof; internal and external alterations to the Coach House/Garage Barn (grade II listed) including new and infilled window and door openings.

As noted in the description above, 2no. grade II* listed buildings, a grade II listed dovecote and a number of other buildings (curtilage-listed and unlisted) are located on this site, most of which sits within the Sandon Conservation Area. The Barley Barn (also grade II) is also within the applicant's ownership but lies outside the current application site. This manorial group is of national significance and the grade II* listed building possess exceptional architectural and historic interest. The proposals would facilitate the use of Sandon Bury Farm as a wedding venue. The key issues are to assess the impact of the proposal in terms of their direct impact upon the building to which the works relate and in the case of external works, the impact upon the setting of other listed buildings in the group and upon the character and appearance of the Sandon Conservation Area.

I previously commented under withdrawn application ref: 17/01316/1LB on 19/07/2017 and my sincere apologies for the delay in responding to the current application.

Firstly, and as was the case with the previous applications, there is case to suggest that the description should be amended to include new build elements of the scheme where they would physically affect a listed or curtilage-listed building. In the current scheme, the kitchen 'link' and rebuilt Grainstore Barn would be physically attached to Black Barn whilst the covered entrance loggia and extension to the Hay Barn would affect this curtilage-listed building. It may be worth clarifying with the agent as to what would be the most appropriate description for the LB application (may be the following?):

Internal alterations to Sandon Bury Farmhouse (grade II* listed). Refurbishment of the Black Barn (grade II* listed) to include overcladding, acoustic insulation work and alterations to existing openings. New building (Grainstore Barn) abutting northeast gable end of Black Barn. Link extension between Black Barn and Centre Barn. Alterations to Hay Barn and extension thereof to form covered entrance loggia. Internal and external alterations to the Dovecote (grade II listed) including the provision of a new roof. Internal and external alterations to the Coach House/Garage Barn (grade II listed).

My comments below take account of the attachments with Tom Miller's email dated 27 April 2018 to the case officer in which Mr Miller states:

"…..I attach a summary document detailing the additional fire escape and protection measures that the fire consultant has advised us will be necessary. This includes some minor changes to the internal layout of the Black Barn and an additional exit door from each of the

Centre Barn and the new Grainstore Building. In the Bury itself he has suggested that two new fire doors would allow the stairs to be protected; we think these can be added without compromising the reading of the principal spaces and in a way that would avoid loss of historic fabric and be, ultimately, reversible.

…..in reviewing the fire strategy we realised that an existing door on the ground floor of the house (between the dining room and the north stair) had been omitted in error; this has been corrected……"

I have noted the content of the Supplementary design/Heritage Statement: Fire escape for Sandon Bury Farm Ltd dated April 2018 and I have considered the drawings to which this document refers. I raise no objection to the partition screen or to the 2no. additional doors proposed on drawing no.P15D and I raise no concerns with respect to the additional works now proposed to the barns.

Planning and Economic Statement (PES)
I note the explanation for this application provided at 1.4 and note the following amendments at page 13:

General
- *Maximum number of events per year halved from 150 to 75.*

Black Barn
- *Insertion of new acoustic enclosure;*
- *Reduction in dining capacity from 200 to 150 guests; and*
- *Bat lofts in westernmost and easternmost roof bays.*

Centre Barn and extension
- *Existing Centre Barn building converted to provide spa and studio space (previously kitchen admin and staff facilities); and*
- *Detail changes to kitchen layout.*

Grain Store
- *Change to footprint and roofline to improve relationship of roof with that of the Black Barn;*
- *Primary space now the wedding ceremony hall, with north window looking onto gardens;*
- *With acoustic enclosure no longer required within this building, lobbied entrances omitted; and*
- *New entrance from Bury gardens between Black Barn and Grain Store.*

Hay Barn
- *Enclosed south bay to provide bat emergence zone adjacent to Barley Barn; and*
- *Alterations to north end connection with reworked Grain Store Building.*

Upper Courtyard
- *Alterations to layout.*

Lower courtyard
- *Provision for coach turning and embarkation.*

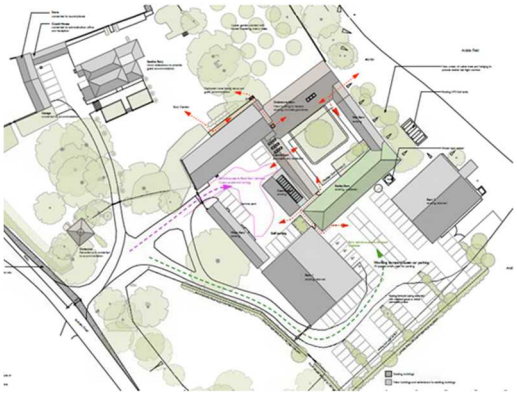
At 4.2 it is noted that *"… the scheme proposes the demolition of the existing modern concrete grain store and fertiliser barns (which have a total floor area of 553sq m) and conversion works to other buildings on site …. A freestanding, structurally independent and reversible purpose-built enclosure within the Black Barn will contain amplified music and dancing…. To the northeast, an existing pre-cast concrete grain*

store will be replaced with a new building, designed to accommodate toilets and the wedding ceremonies themselves"

At 4.17, it is noted that *"The fundamental difference is that the proposed scheme will be smaller in scale (in terms of the number of events, expected guests and parking provision)".* Whilst at 4.20 it is important to note *that "Parking provision will also be within the existing courtyard and working farmyard as opposed to extending to the north-east, with the existing access used rather than the re-opening of the track to Notley Corner".*

At 5.47 the PES states that *"In light of the above, therefore, it is considered that the important heritage assets of the site will be retained through the sympathetic proposals to re-use the listed buildings as part of a wider diversification scheme. It is considered that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be enhanced by virtue of the retention and improvement of the listed buildings within the site".*

The proposed site layout plan indicates the location of the proposed parking which I consider more respectful of the wider setting to Sandon Bury and the adjacent barn group when compared with that previously proposed under the withdrawn application. Ultimately, however, it is for the case officer to determine the acceptability or otherwise of the car parking arrangement.



Whilst not a conservation matter as such, the proposed layout does, however, raise three questions (which should be considered under the planning application):

1. Due to the fact that the two large Atcost barns remain in agricultural use and with the car park access being the same as the working farm access , it would be presumably be the case that the Atcost buildings will not in use at the time of a wedding. In which case, this must surely limit the operational efficiency of these barns if access is not possible for up to 75 occasions each year and will also result in a rather undesirable first impression for guests arriving at the venue (see photo below). If the barns remain continually in use for what would be up to 75 events per year, then how is access achieved to both buildings considering the parking layout for guests?
2. What provision is there to accommodate parking overspill – how will this be managed if it occurs? and
3. If coaches are bringing guests to the venue, the service yard is identified as the 'dropping off point' which is close to the kitchen and with a relatively tight turning facility. I would have thought that if the central parking spaces are removed from the main parking area, would this not provide a sufficient turning area and negate coaches having to enter the service yard? Another

alternative would be to leave the coach drop off where it is and to perhaps consider omitting the 'outside' car parking bays in the 5no. group abutting the rear of the single storey building to the right of the service yard entrance.

Note: In terms of visitors arriving at the venue, I still consider that the Barley Barn could provide a better route through to the rear courtyard from the main car park and it is disappointing that this opportunity has not been considered further. The parking would be to the right and behind the large barn in the photo below.



Design and Access Statement (DAS)
This document states that *"Materials for the extended parking area will be appropriate for the rural context, using stabilised gravel to give an all-weather, permeable surface suitable for all users without resorting to tarmac. In areas where heavier vehicle loads require it (including those that might be over-run by heavy agricultural vehicles that use the yard as part of everyday farm activity), a surface of exposed-aggregate concrete will give a similar tone. Parking areas will be subdivided with native hedge species planting".* Aesthetically, it would be desirable if there is visual consistency between the two types of surface treatment proposed.

Local Plan
Policy HE1 : Designated Heritage Assets, of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 Proposed Submission October 2016, states that Planning applications relating to Designated heritage assets shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:

i. Assess the significance of heritage assets, including their setting, impacted by the proposal;
ii. Justify and detail the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated asset(s); and
iii. Inform any necessary mitigation measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms;

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable):
a. Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;
b. Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified.

National Planning Policy Framework
The following sections of the NPPF are also considered relevant:

131. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*

- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

132. 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. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.....

134. 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.

137. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.

Internal alterations to Sandon Bury Farmhouse (grade II* listed)
According to 3.1 of the submitted Heritage Statement, the Bury will principally be used to provide accommodation for up to 14no. guests staying to attend weddings or similar events. At the site meeting on 27 June 2017, much of the discussion focused on the internal reordering of the existing boiler/boot room (formerly the Bury's original kitchen). At the time concern was expressed regarding alterations to this space in that the two new cloakrooms would significantly intrude upon existing space resulting in a disproportionate narrow space in front of the inglenook. The scheme has been amended to show only one new cloakroom and the layout on drawing no.P14E is considered acceptable.

At second floor, I previously stated that *"… an existing bathroom is proposed to be subdivided to form two new ensuite shower rooms and a further ensuite is proposed within the adjacent bedroom. The later would be an unfortunate intervention and the applicant is discouraged from making this change…."* Drawing no.P16A takes the latter point on board and the proposal is considered acceptable.

Refurbishment of the Black Barn (grade II* listed) to include overcladding, acoustic insulation work and alterations to existing openings
At 3.2 of the Heritage Statement it says that: *"… The existing windows and doors, weatherboarding and roof slating are essentially sound but gappy; daylight is visible in many places in the walls. After discussion with the NHDC Conservation Officer and Historic England it is proposed to leave the existing weatherboarding and roof sarking boards in place to preserve the existing internal appearance, and overclad to improve draughtproofing, thermal performance and acoustic performance. The reversible overcladding will incorporate no more than 100mm mineral wool in the roof and no more than 75mm in the walls to ensure that the external appearance stays largely the same. Where wall boarding meets the brick southwest gable the insulation thickness will reduce to ensure that the existing relationship between the two surfaces does not change significantly.*

Existing windows and doors will be moved out to the new cladding line and refitted. The windows are at high level and small and were probably reused from elsewhere; we propose that they could be fitted with minimally-framed secondary glazing to improve acoustic performance without significantly altering their appearance from outside. The two pairs of large doors will be retained; inside will be new purpose-made timber-framed screens with insulated translucent glazing to admit daylight but stop views out into the southern service yard.

Interior
In character the interior appearance will remain much as it is at present, with the existing structure unchanged and the existing boarding and sarking boards visible beyond. The presence of roosting bats in the roof structure at both ends of the building has been identified by survey. At the southwest end the tapered first bay will be partitioned off to form a store and electrics room at low level and a dedicated roost loft for bats above. The new partition, with timber boarding and exposed studs, will be a recognisably modern intervention but relate to the other walls adjacent. A similar roost loft for bats will be provided in the roof triangle of the eastmost bay.

The most significant intervention in the interior of the Black Barn will be the insertion of a new, structurally independent and reversible acoustic enclosure within the westmost bays of the barn to contain all amplified music. The acoustic "box" will be a clearly modern, timber-clad insertion with a glazed end wall facing the rest of the space. It will stand independently just inside the main post arcade, and its top will be below the level of the diagonal braces so that the entire frame structure (and the full length of the roof) is visible and can be clearly read from outside the box.

Services
It is proposed to heat the building during functions using warm air incorporated into a new ventilation system; the new air handling plant will all be housed in the roof space above the toilets in the new Grainstore building alongside to the northeast. The warm air will introduced through a new floor duct in the central trench that was previously used to transfer grain from the storage bins; this trench, almost a metre wide and a metre deep, was filled with rubble and concreted over as part of the 2012 works. Exhaust air will be drawn out through exposed circular galvanised ducts and pass out of the building through a panel at high level in the northeast gable that until 2012 was open for an access catwalk. The exposed ducts are a straightforward solution in keeping with the robust character of the space.

I am generally satisfied that the new steel heating/ventilation/lighting ducts system proposed to be installed at high level and as referred to on drawing nos. P10E, P30C & P41A will respect the building's special character. Drawing no.P41A also shows the purpose built acoustic enclosure in section whilst Drawing no.P10E shows this enclosure in plan form and both are considered acceptable.

Centre Barn
Clarification required as to whether this is a refurbishment or new build (see annotation on drawing no. P30C which *states 'Centre Barn refurbished with new cladding and roof sheeting'* whereas drawing no. P10E states '*Existing Centre Barn refurbished/rebuilt as new swimming pool/spa'*). If a swimming pool is to be provided, this is not shown in section on Elevation A of drawing no.P30C. It is also apparent that this facility would have no fenestration and where would the changing facilities be located?

External cladding
On page 6 of the submitted Design and Access Statement it states that:

Black Barn
The Black Barn will be overclad to improve its thermal and acoustic performance in a way that is reversible and will not significantly alter its appearance either inside or outside. The addition of 75mm of insulation and batten space will inevitably push the cladding out slightly in relation to the brick plinth, but not enough to detract from the appearance. At the southwest end the thickness of insulation may be reduced to allow the boarding to meet the brick gable without projecting significantly.

Drawing no. P40A states that the Black Barn Wall Build up will be:

- Historic timber frame

- Existing retained featheredge weather boarding
- 75mm horizontal battens. Void filled with mineral wool insulation
- breather membrane
- 12.5mm Fermacell board
- 38 x 50 mm vertical battens
- 18mm featheredge weather boarding

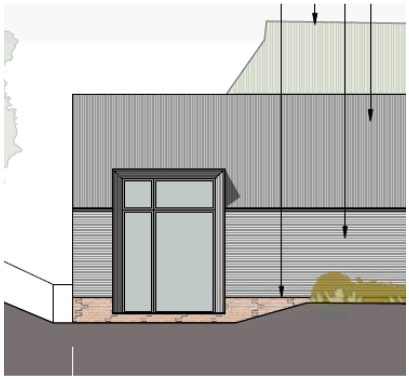
The applicant was previously encouraged to produce a vertical section drawing that would illustrate the relationship between wall build up and plinth. I would need to be reassured that the build up would not occasion harm to the external appearance of the listed building if the build up sits significantly forward of the brick plinth, particularly on the east facing side.

New building (Grainstore Barn) abutting northeast gable end of Black Barn. Link extension between Black Barn and Centre Barn. Alterations to Hay Barn and extension thereof to form covered entrance loggia.
The formation of two distinct spaces (service yard and courtyard) has been well-justified and no objection is raised to the new build elements of the scheme.

Previous discrepancies between plans have been addressed:

- 3no. roof lights on the south side of the kitchen 'link' are now shown on drawing P30C; and
- The external outlet / external ventilation to the proposed plant equipment is not shown on Elevation B.

Having said that, I make the following comment with respect to Drawing no.P31B



Whilst I appreciate the design benefits of the large area of glazing towards the left hand end of Elevation D as depicted to the left, the framing of this opening including breaking through the eaves would introduce an overtly contemporary element to this elevation facing towards Sandon Bury. To ameliorate my concerns, I encourage consideration of a section of patent glazing the same width as the screen which follows the plane of the roof i.e. does not interrupt the eaves i.e. would not have a ‘dormer-like’ up-stand.

Internal and external alterations to the Dovecote (grade II listed) including the provision of a new roof.
As stated by the Council for British Archaeology on the previous application, the Dovecote has a very distinctive identity and function and that 'retaining the historic character of the Dovecote without the permanent loss of all fixtures and fittings or eroding all legibility of its former use is particularly challenging'. I am satisfied that the proposed mezzanine would ensure that the internal 'open' volume of the building would remain and I am pleased to note that the opportunity has been taken to incorporate the surviving brick cotes on the west elevation into the design of the accommodation. I am, however, still uncertain as to how the cotes will be ‘presented’ in the conversion.

Internal and external alterations to the Coach House/Garage Barn (grade II listed) including new and infilled window and door openings.
The detailing of the windows has not been altered in line with suggestions made under the withdrawn application but the proposal as it stands is not considered objectionable. It was previously agreed that a condition should be imposed to address the detailing of internal shutters to the north facing windows.

Suggested conditions

1. A sample of the Anthracite grey corrugated steel sheet to the Grain Store Barn, Centre Barn and Kitchen 'link' shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the roofing works.

   Reason: To safeguard the setting to this group of Heritage Assets

2. A sample of the clay tiles for the Dovecote Roof shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the roofing works.

   Reason: To safeguard the listed building's special character.

3. Full details of the proposed steel heating/ventilation/lighting ducts system to be installed in Black Barn indicating how this would be fixed to the existing building and any interventions with the timber frame, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of that part of the scheme hereby approved.

   Reason: To safeguard the listed building's special character.

4. Notwithstanding the approved drawings, joinery details (including glazing bar profile where appropriate) at an appropriate metric scale of all new windows to be installed at the Coach house, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the manufacture and installation of new windows.

   Reason: To safeguard the listed building's special character.

5. Details of the internal shutters to the windows in the north elevation of the Coach house shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the manufacture and installation of the shutters.

   Reason: To safeguard the listed building's special character.

6. Details of all new internal doors at:

   a. Sandon Bury;
   b. Coach House & Garage Barn;
   c. Between Black Barn and kitchen; and
   d. Acoustic lobby forming part of Grain Store Barn

   shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the installation of new internal doors.

   Reason: To safeguard the special character of these listed and curtilage-listed buildings.

7. Notwithstanding the over-cladding details on approved drawing no.P40A, vertical section(s) at a metric scale indicating the extent of build-up relative to the brick plinth, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the over-cladding works.

   Reason: To safeguard Black Barn's special character.

8. Details of all new rainwater goods shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of that part of the alterations hereby consented.

   Reason: To safeguard the special character of this building group.

Recommendation
It is considered that this is a generally well-conceived proposal that pays sufficient regard to a particularly important group of listed and curtilage-listed buildings and would ensure that these Designated Heritage Assets are put to a viable use which is consistent with their conservation (para 131, NPPF). In supporting this proposal, I have given great weight to the conservation of these Heritage Assets (para 132, NPPF). I consider that the development proposals will lead to some harm, however, this would be less than substantial harm to the significance of Designated Heritage Assets. The degree of harm should be weighed against the benefits of retaining these buildings within one ownership and one use which would secure, as far as is possible, a use which is viable (para 134). It is difficult to determine whether the proposal would, in fact, be the optimum viable use.

The removal of the Fertiliser Barn will satisfy the aims of para 137, NPPF i.e. would enhance the setting and better reveal the significance of nearby heritage assets. It would be a fair comment to say that had Barns 1 & 2 on drawing no. EX06 also been proposed to be demolished then the aims of para 137 would have been more or less met in full. In concluding that there would be an element of harm arising from the proposal, it may be said that the proposals would be contrary to the provisions of Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, however, this is clearly a paragraph 134 case.

I have taken a similar approach to that when commenting on a similar scheme at Redcoats Farmhouse and barns, Little Wymondley where a recently implemented hotel scheme has resulted in a new use for barns considered to be 'At Risk'. In my opinion, the proposal would result in some public benefit by securing a long term viable use for this important group of Heritage Assets and the wider setting of the listed building and indeed the character and appearance of the Sandon Conservation Area would not, in my opinion, be adversely affected by the use proposed to warrant an objection.

I, therefore, raise **NO OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal would meet the aims of Policy HE1 : Designated Heritage Assets, of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 Proposed Submission October 2016 and the aims of Section 12 of the NPPF. As stated at 5.0 of the Heritage Statement, *"….The stewardship of both historic agricultural buildings and the surrounding rural farming landscape is an important responsibility; the proposed development will allow the applicants to go on meeting that responsibility in the years ahead".*

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer