

Maydencroft Manor Loft Conversion

Gosmore,
Hertfordshire,
SG4 7QA

Design & Access Statement Incorporating Heritage Statement

October 2025
Rev B



Prepared for:

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Document Control

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10.10.25	GY	Draft
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1.0 Introduction & Site Context

Executive Summary

This document forms the Design & Access Statement incorporating Heritage Statement for the proposed Loft Conversion at Maydencroft Manor being submitted for Listed Building Consent.

Its purpose is to explain the design principles and establish the significance and details of the heritage asset in line with Historic England’s Conservation Principles and assess the level of impact of the proposed design upon it.

Historic England defines conservation as the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations.

Location and Context

Maydencroft Manor is located south of Hitchin in North Hertfordshire, west of the village of Gosmore. It is not within the Gosmore Conservation Area.

Maydencroft Manor is a grade II* house which the client currently lives in and has been carrying out a series of renovations over the last few years including restoration of the external facades. These renovations have all been grated planning and listed building consent to date.



Aerial view of Maydencroft Manor

2.0 History & Significance

Listing Description of Maydencroft Manor

Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1347391
Date first listed: 09-Jun-1952
Date of most recent amendment: 28-May-1987
Statutory Address: MAYDENCROFT MANOR, MAYDENCROFT LANE
County: Hertfordshire
District: North Hertfordshire (District Authority)
Parish: St. Ippolyts
National Grid Reference: TL 18189 27421

Details
ST IPPOLLITTS MAYDENCROFT LANE TL 1827 (North side)
Gosmore 8/56
Maydencroft Manor 9.6.52 (formerly listed as Maydencroft Farmhouse)
GV II* House.

Late medieval former open hall house in E part of N wing, C16 E wing possibly built as a separate house, united and hall floored over early C17 (‘EC/1615’ on oak pillar supporting inserted floor), later in C17 originally unheated block to W of hall, subsequently kitchen added to N wing, gabled stair turret on E side of E wing, and L-shaped lean-to service room in NE angle of kitchen and hall. Interior features of early C18 and some brick casing. Renovated 1980-81. Timber frame on red brick sill, frame exposed with plaster infill panels in E wing and W gable of N wing, roughcast 1st floor of N wing, red brick casing to ground floor of N wing and lower buildings to N of N wing. Steep old red tile roofs. A large 2-storeys house on a moated site with 2 long wings joined at right-angles and 1 1/2-storeys service wing extending to N of N wing. N wing faces S, and E wing faces W with entrance near junction with N wing and jettied S gable end. Irregular fenestration with 3-lights C16 leaded casement windows (one of 4 lights to hall and C19 casements each of 6-lights to jettied S end of E wing. N wing has 3 windows to each floor on S front. E wing has 4 windows to 1st floor and 3 to ground floor, that to le! of door an early C17 4-lights ovolo moulded mullioned window moved here from kitchen wing on N. Battened oak door in old hollow chamfered doorway with 4-centred head. Similar blocked door at S end of this W front noted in works in 1965. Front shows 4 structural bays. Entrance into N bay with stair projection to rear. Late C17 cut-string stair with barley-sugar twist balusters, panelled newells all lit by large 9-lights mullioned and transomed window. Large 3-bays room to S has chamfered crossbeams supported by brackets on the bay-posts, early C18 panelling with dado and cornice, large open fireplace in middle of rear (E) wall but indications that the S end bay may originally have been partitioned o”. Large projecting rear wall chimney of flint and clunch with 2 diagonal brick sha!s. Bolection moulded marble fire surround added in C20. Similar large rear wall chimney on N side of hall in E part of N wing has 3 diagonal sha!s and 4-centred fireplace now blocked on 1st floor. The medieval hall was of one bay with a narrow screens passage bay to W the whole

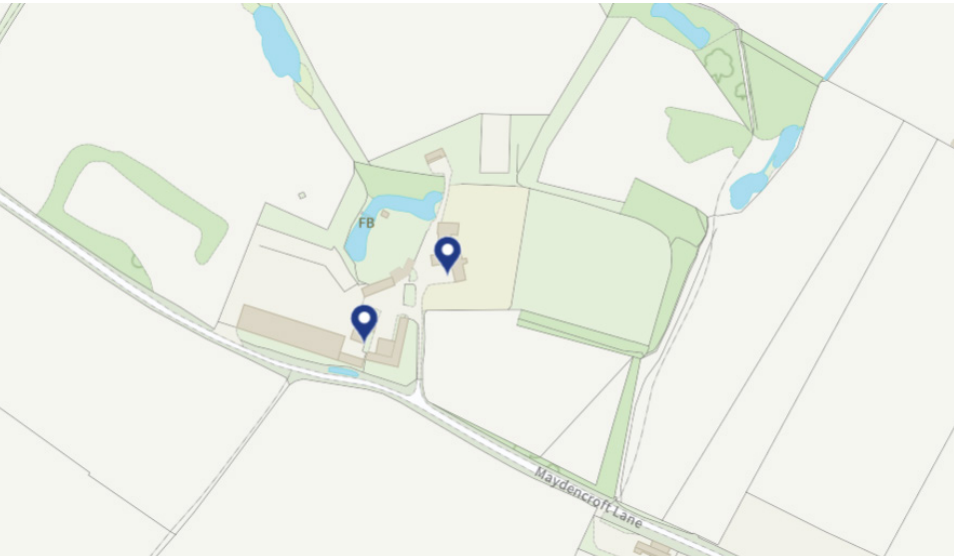
forming a square plan with smoke blackened clasped-purlin roof. E wall of hall removed and room extended to E with stone floor and Doric column dated 1615 on line of former hall wall. Convex curved tension braces, heavy jowled posts, and long curved braces to tie-beam in hall bay. Later W block has edge-halved scarf joint with bridled butts in rear wallplate. Added rearwall chimney to heat W room. Kitchen to N originally open to roof has large internal chimney with oven to rear (N) and lobby entrance from W. 2 gabled dormers at eaves and 4-lights casement window to ground floor. (RCHM (1911)130 no. 2: VCH (1912)25: Pevsner (1977)148: RCHM Typescript: inf Mrs. Rance, and the owners).

Listing NGR: TL1818927421

Nearby Listed Buildings

Maydencroft Manor Grade II* (Subject of application)

Barn at Maydencroft Manor Grade II* (Listing: 1295380)



2.0 History & Significance

Maydencroft Manor History

Maydencroft Manor is a large multi-phase manorial complex. It is likely the site has been occupied since the 12th Century. The manor house has remnants of a late medieval hall house dating to the 15th century and has been added to and extended every century since.¹

The house consists of two main ranges, a 2 storey gabled range on the east west axis and a second on the south north axis, forming an L shape in plan, to the north of this, centrally, sits a one and half storey service range and brew house, and to the north of that an extension built in the 1980's on the east west axis adjoins. Repairs to the fabric including re-roofing also happened in the 1980's.

Most recently the house has undergone a series of alterations and restorations including that of the external historic fabric.

The loft conversion proposed sits within the historic east west range.

Maydencroft Manor has a rich history including being in the ownership of the mother of King Henry VII, at this time it was likely occupied by the Baliff of the manor, who is likely responsible for the building of the medieval hall which is the oldest surviving fabric still part of the house today. ¹

The original medieval hall was square in plan and open to the rafters, evident by soot blackened rafters in the loft. The adjoining solar and service rooms were added in the late 16th or early 17th Century, possibly around the same time the first floor, staircase turret and fireplaces were inserted. The most substantial addition was the building of the 'east wing', the range running north south from the original east west range of the house. To the north of the hall the service range with fireplace was added around the same time, this contained the brewery. The range running east west was extended again to the west end late 17th Century.¹

The house has gone through many changes over the centuries besides extensions, these include the insertion of floors and internal partition walls, removal of internal partition walls, changes to the windows and doors in size, location and style. Changes to the materials of the elevations, additions of chimneys and rooflights. A lot of these changes form part of the houses history even where more historic material might have been replaced this tells a story of the house in that time period.

1. Jon Lowe Heritage Statement for Maydencroft Manor, 2020.



Photo 1908 facing the west end of the east-west gable range, chimney on the face of the gable no longer exists, GF window is now bigger and central. The render/brick exposed has changed over time. Hatch at loft level adjacent to chimney present.



Photo 1908 facing the north side of the east-west gable range, door has since been bricked up



Photo 2020 north-west end of the east-west gable range (prior to conservation repairs of external fabric) showing changes since the 1908 photos.



Photo 2025 showing historic rafters with modern rafters overlaid, likely done when the house was re-roofed in the 1980's. (Loft space of east west range of house).

2.0 History & Significance

Significance

Recognising the significance of a place relies on understanding the range of heritage values which may be attached to it. As set out by Historic England these are:

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present it tends to be illustrative or associative.

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Maydencroft Manor is Grade II* listed which Historic England characterise as buildings that are particularly important buildings of more than special interest. Around 5.8% of listed buildings are Grade II*.

There is a hierarchy of significance at Maydencroft Manor generally following the pattern of evolution through the centuries with the most important being the two gabled ranges of the house containing the oldest surviving fabric, followed by the brick service range with the brew. The modern extensions are generally not detrimental to the heritage (though not totally), but do not have any historic significance.

The following extracts of significance taken from Jon Lowe’s Heritage Report (submitted in support of the recent series of renovations and alterations to the house) are relevant to the latest proposals and the below focus on the oldest gabled range ‘the north wing’ as the area for development being submitted for planning sits within the loft space of this part of the building:

68. **The North Wing:** The north wing contains the oldest part of the house, the original late 15th century open hall, though little of this structure remains clearly legible, particularly at ground floor level. Despite this change the existing fabric is still of interest due to its age and being able to inform the building's evolution. Internally the original timber structure has remained visible within the bedroom at first floor level. Jowled posts, curved braces and tie beams are well-preserved and allows for understanding of the building's origins and development, adding to significance. Externally the original timber structure has been largely covered over by later alterations - the brick casing is demonstrative of a common form as well as the rising popularity of brick as a building material in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and is of interest. However, the cement render at first floor level detracts from the overall external appearance of Maydencroft, harming significance.

Note, the external cement render has now been replaced with lime render as part of the conservation repairs to the external fabric.

69. Many of the subsequent changes within the north range, such as the construction of the chimney stack to the north elevation, provision of fireplaces and insertion of the floor first and pillar to the formerly open hall, are also of interest and illustrate typical forms of redevelopment seen in many homes during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The cellar, which dates to the early 17th century is well preserved and again provides insight into the changing standards of living during the post-medieval period.
70. Decorative fabric is generally sparser throughout the north wing when compared to the east wing. Most historic decorative that is visible: doors, architraves, fireplace surrounds and the flag stone floor, are 17th or early 18th century in date though the now blocked fireplace at first floor level is from the late 16th century. All these items are of interest and contribute to the overall internal character of Maydencroft. Other joinery items like skirting boards and cupboardry are modern and of little or no heritage interest. Whilst structural in nature the pillar in the dining room contributes to interest through its decorative form and materiality and demarcates the line and date of the original east wall of the medieval hall.

The chimney in the far north east corner of the north wing is a 20th Century insertion, seen above roof level and then internally with a chimney breast diagonally across the corner of the room at both ground and first floor level. At first floor a modern fireplace surround is fixed to the surface of the wall with the opening blocked up, this may have always been a ‘dummy’ fireplace at first floor level as it is directly above the wood burning stove installed at ground floor level or it was installed for use at first floor level only and later altered to serve the ground floor when the adjacent external chimney on the end of the gable was removed to widen the ground floor window, later in the 20th Century. Its significance is relatively low in the heritage of the house but does hold some clues of to 20th Century changes to the house so has a low historic value.

The loft space of the north wing holds significant clues to the buildings past in its surviving historic timber roof frame, all other materials have been replaced; the end gable infills and the roof tiles and the way they are installed. There is a lath and plaster ceiling to the first floor which at loft level is hidden below modern insulation.

Blackened timbers in this roof space mostly over Bedroom 4 within the void above the higher ceiling level and what looks to be some fading out into the space above bedroom 5/the ensuite are signs of the original Hall house where fires would have been lit in the centre of the floor before the introduction of the chimneys and fireplaces. This is of significant evidential value.

The original timber rafters throughout the loft space predominantly have been preserved, during the 1980’s re-roofing instead of replacing them they were overlaid with new rafters so the originals with their deflection are very visible within the loft space.



Photo of existing door, view from inside Bedroom 6



Photo in hallway outside of Bedroom 5 looking towards Bedroom 6.



Photo of the 20th C chimney breast diagonally across the corner of Bedroom 6 with modern surround and blocked up opening. (North east corner of the gabled range).



Photo looking at the ground floor area of the 15th Century Medieval Hall with the later extension east, removal of the wall and insertion of the round column in place of the wall. Fireplace is a 17th/18th Century addition, referred to as the north fireplace in the extracts from the Jon Lowe Heritage Report.



Photo of Bedroom 4 (looking west) in location of original 15th Century Medieval Hall, first floor insertion later addition. Small void above apex visible in loft space.



Photo of loft space over bedroom 5&6 looking north towards end gable. New breathable render carrier board visible between the end timber studs.



Photo of loft space over bedroom 5 looking south into the void over the ceiling above Bedroom 4 (15th Century Medieval Hall House)

4.0 Proposal

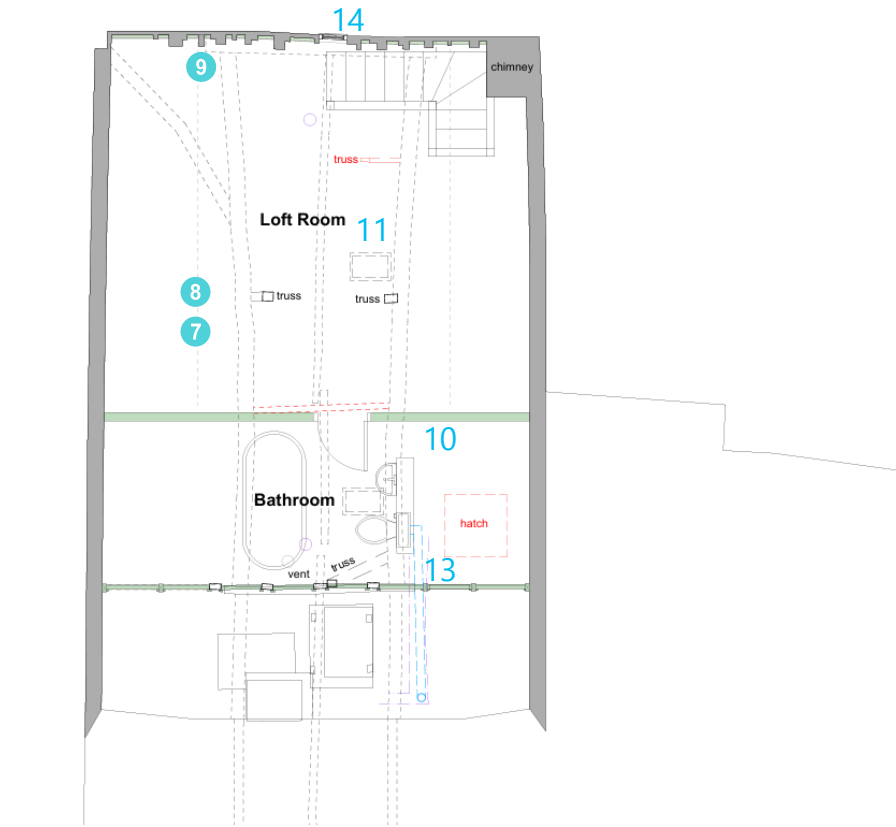
There is a substantial space in the loft above bedrooms 4 & 5 which with a few alterations could be utilised as a habitable space linked to the bedrooms of the north wing.

Details of Proposal

1. Removal of the chimney breast at first floor level back to a stack around the flue servicing the ground floor log burner. Retaining external appearance of chimney.
2. New partition wall in Bedroom 6 making a smaller bedroom and extended hallway for locating stairs to the loft space.
3. Move existing door into bedroom 6 to the new partition wall, essentially retaining the existing entrance door to the bedroom but in a new location.
4. Removal of built in wardrobe in Bedroom 6.
5. New timber staircase to loft space.
6. New door opening placed in hallway at first floor level to provide fire escape protection, use of salvaged hardwood door (which is in storage on site) and matches style of some other first floor doors.
7. New floor joists installed alongside the existing ceiling joists at loft level and boarding to create structural floor at loft level. Retain lath and plaster ceilings at first floor level.
8. New breathable insulation to underside of roof with historic rafters left visible.
9. Lime render internal face of new render carrier boards on end gable, leaving timber studs visible.
10. Install partition wall creating bathroom space at loft level. Both spaces left 'open' to eaves to retain visual impact of the volume and views of the historic roof frame. (Space under eaves has limited head room down to 0mm).
11. Insertion of 2no conservation rooflights to north pitch of roof.
12. Installation of upgraded fire protection system.
13. Install 40mm woodfibre insulation boards between timber frame leaving it visible. (support battens to back). Lime render face to bathroom side. Access hatch in new section of wall to existing water tanks.
14. Re-open historic hatch to external side and install fixed timber framed glazed light to opening.



Proposed Plan First Floor Level (Part Plan North wing)



Proposed Plan Loft Floor Level (Part Plan North wing)

4.0 Proposal

Materials

Insulation

Insulation to the underside of the roof will be breathable woodfibre insulation with lime plaster finish, installed between the modern overlaid rafters leaving the historic rafters exposed.

The end gable has been restored externally and the new breathable render carrier boards are visible internally, these would be rendered internally too with lime plaster/ insulated lime plaster, leaving the face and some depth of the wall studs visible.

Doors

At First Floor Level: One existing door to be relocated into the adjacent new partition and one ‘new’ door to be installed to the hallway for which a salvaged hardwood door of a similar style is proposed for use (photos opposite), this is in storage on site and likely came out of the house. At Attic Level, new door into bathroom to match style of exisitng on site in this part of the house.

Chimney breast

Rebuilding of the chimney breast at first floor level around the flue may need to be in brick to support the chimney above, lime rendered and decorated. Alternatively if structural support is found/put into the floor for the chimney then this could be of fire resisting plasterboard.

Stairs

The stairs proposed will be timber, treads and risers likely carpeted. Small section of handrail/guarding at first floor level and balustrade at loft level also in a traditional timber design.

Access

Access to the loft accommodation is via new staircase from first floor level.

Escape routes and building control have already been considered and discussed with a Fire Engineer and building control, as well as increasing the number of smoke detectors and enhancing the fire detection system for early warning the escape strategy involves a new doorway to the hallway with the use of the salvaged solid hardwood door.

Accessibility

Given that this is additional accommodation to a house which already has all amenities covered at ground and first floor it is not necessary to make the loft accommodation accessible for a disabled person, they would be accommodated better elsewhere in the house.



Photos of the salvaged hardwood door for use in the hallway

5.0 Impact

Impact of design proposals on host asset

1. Removal of the chimney breast at first floor level back to a stack around the flue servicing the ground floor log burner. Retaining external appearance of chimney. Loss of 20th Century fabric, mock fireplace at first floor cannot be operational, with fireplace retained at ground floor level and the chimney externally, the changes to the chimney at first floor level have a very low impact on the heritage.

2. New partition wall in Bedroom 6 making a smaller bedroom and extended hallway for locating stairs to the loft space. The original room is still readable by retaining the opening, the new partition is in addition, it doesn't require removal of historic fabric, the changes are considered to have very low impact on the heritage.

3. Move existing door into bedroom 6 to the new partition wall, essentially retaining the existing entrance door to the bedroom but in a new location. There is no loss here and the door will retain character in the same area of the house. This is considered to have no impact on the heritage.

4. Removal of built in wardrobe in Bedroom 6. The wardrobe is modern and has no historic significance, its removal has no impact on the heritage.

5. New timber staircase to loft space. Changes required to give the space for this are as above in items 1 & 2, outside of those insertion of a timber staircase in a traditional style has no impact on the heritage. Essentially it is reversible. The house has a history of inserting and changing staircases.

6. New door opening placed in hallway at first floor level to provide fire escape protection, use of salvaged hardwood door (which is in storage on site) and matches style of some other first floor doors. The door is likely to have come out of the house and is of a similar style to those on the first floor, so there is benefit in reinstating historic material (although not to an original location, this is unknown). The new doorway doesn't require any loss of fabric, its partitioning of the hallway is considered to have a very low impact on the heritage.

7. New floor joists installed alongside the existing ceiling joists at loft level and boarding to create structural floor at loft level. Retain lath and plaster ceilings at first floor level. The intention is to retain all historic joists and ceiling linings and install a new floor structure between and over the existing, this is not considered to have an impact on the heritage.

8. New breathable insulation to underside of roof with historic rafters left visible. As detailed above, the historic rafters will be predominantly visible due to the overlaying of new rafters at the time of the re-roofing in the 1980's therefore the insulation layer will sit between the new rafters at the upper level. It is considered that this will therefore have no impact on the heritage. A detail has been provided.

9. Lime render internal face of new render carrier boards on end gable, leaving timber studs visible. The studs will remain visible, the rear side of the render carrier boards will be lime rendered, this wall will look like the internal walls on the first floor. This has no impact on the heritage.

10 & 13. Install partition wall creating bathroom space at loft level. Spaces left 'open' to eaves to retain visual impact of the volume and views of the historic roof frame. (Space under eaves has limited head room down to 0mm). Install Insulation board and lime render between truss/wall frame. The value of the loft space is predominantly in the remaining timber roof structure, the 'space' itself doesn't hold a lot of significance as it has never been a room, a single partition wall splitting this space up doesn't impact the heritage greatly especially with the spaces left open to the eaves to provide an insight into the original volume. The extent of the new accomodation at loft space starts from where the historic truss/wall is (leaving the space with the existing water tanks now as it is), this allows for preservation of the truss/wall and the area of blackened timber roof joists which sit within the tank area and over bedroom 4 to not be disturbed.

11. Insertion of 3no rooflights to north pitch of roof. The least impactful way to get natural light and ventilation into the loft space is via rooflights, these will be conservation rooflights inline with the tiles and on the north pitch of the roof, unseen from the entrance driveway. These will have a very low impact on the heritage.

12. Installation of upgraded fire protection system (smoke detectors in all rooms of the north wing). This will be introduced as part of enhancing detection of fire and protection of escape routes required to allow (under building control) for accommodation at the attic floor level. Whilst aimed at saving lives it also brings a benefit of early warning and therefore greater protection of the building.

14. Re-open historic hatch to external side and install fixed timber framed glazed light to opening. The hatch within the end gable was present in the early 1900's (see photo on page 5) and still is visible internally to the loft space. The frame of the hatch will be retained and utilised for the framing of a new timber framed fixed glazed light/window. The size and location and outer framing (visible internally) are all historic so reusing it has a low impact on the heritage of the building; the low impact of glazing the opening for modern day use is offset by recreating a feature from the past which helps to tell the history of the house.

Overall the impact of the proposals for the loft conversion have a very low impact on the heritage of the house and the area and features that they impact upon are mostly of lower significance, comparatively in the house. The enhanced fire protection will be a positive benefit.