

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	25/02096/FPH & 25/02097/LBC
CASE OFFICER:	AHD
APPLICATION SITE:	Friends Green Farm, Friends Green, Damask Green Road, Weston, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 7BU
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	<i>Single storey side extension with glazed link to main dwelling and erection of single storey side porch, and re-opening of original window openings following demolition of existing side extension. Remove existing render and repair/re-pointing of existing brickwork with lime mortar and render.</i> <i>Single storey side extension with glazed link to main dwelling and erection of single storey side porch, and re-opening of original window openings following demolition of existing extension. Remove existing render and repair/re-pointing of existing brickwork with lime mortar and render. Internal alterations including new stairs to existing loft and relocation of kitchen, utility, and WC.</i>

RECOMMENDATION:

Apart from some matters highlighted and suggested conditions, I raise **NO OBJECTION** to the scheme as it will generally satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) for ref: 25/02097/LBC and 66(1) for ref: 25/02096/FPH 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 some impact upon the listed building's special character and will be experienced within the wider setting of the two grade II listed barns nearby.

Harm, preserve or enhance.

The proposal will not harm the listed building's special character or adversely affect the significance of the two grade II listed barns nearby.

SITE CONTEXT:

Friends Green Farmhouse is grade II listed and is therefore a Designated Heritage Asset for the purpose of applying Local Plan policy and the aims of the NPPF. Two barns to the north of the farmhouse (East Barn and West Barn) are also grade II. The list entry for the farmhouse is provided below:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1102522?section=official-list-entry>

No building chronology is provided with the application so below is my best interpretation of what is given in the list entry above and from the planning history.



Ground Floor Plan @ 1/100



C17 or earlier 1½ storey W wing



2-storeys, 2 windows higher N wing c.1700



2-storey hipped and gabled infill in angle (ref: 83/00261/1)



Single-storey extension 2018 (under ref: 15/01721/1LB)

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

As I stated in May this year under appn refs 25/00497/FPH & 25/00498/LBC, although the building has evolved over more than 3 centuries, the form of the smaller, earlier part of the building is still evident and distinguishable from the built form behind. Although the porch is non-original, this earlier part of the building defines its special character and accommodates the large internal chimney with its 3 square shafts in line across the ridge.



I objected to the above scheme and following the withdrawal of these applications, there was informal pre-app that assisted the preparation of the current scheme. In short, the proposed first floor accommodation has been omitted, the extension consented under refs: 15/01697/1HH & 15/01721/1LB is proposed to be removed and replaced by an enclosed

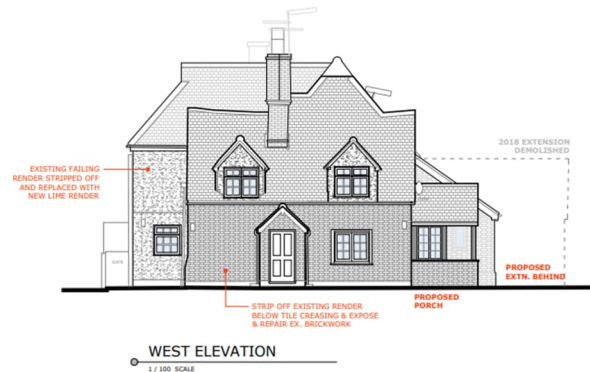
porch and a linked single-storey addition is now shown and which would make full use of the garden aspect.

Single storey side extension with glazed link to main dwelling and erection of single storey side porch

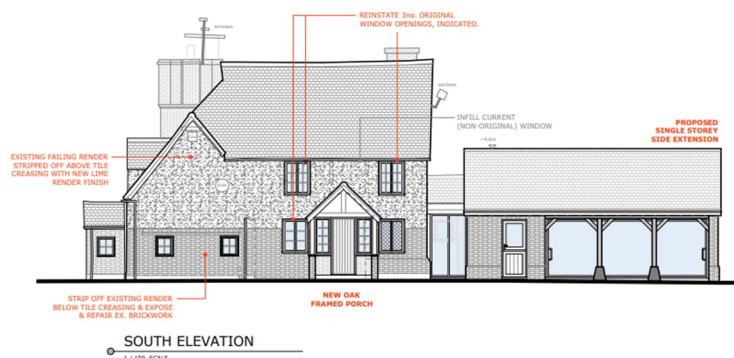
As I have stated previously, the extension approved in 2015 is deemed a successful outcome following a challenging negotiation. The size of addition and change in external materials serves to reinforce the compact built form of the earlier building. I would be prepared to go as far as to say that this a positive intervention.



Having said that, the removal of the extension would not harm the building's significance. The question is whether the proposed extension and porch would be considered in a similar vein i.e. positive. A porch already exists on the East and West Elevations but that does not mean to say that one cannot be placed on the South Elevation. The proposed porch combines both closed and open elements which is unobjectionable. My only concern is the glazing.



The extension is a sizeable clay tiled, brick-faced and glazed, single-storey addition and with the use of timber posts, knee braces and plinths will have a partial cart-hovel aesthetic albeit I understand why brick as opposed to weatherboarding is proposed considering the close proximity to the adjoining property and O-class spread of flame (a fire retardent boarding such as Cedral boarding could perhaps have been proposed).

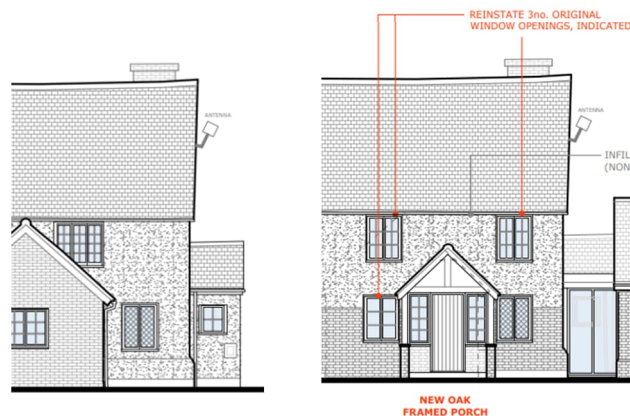


Re-opening of original window openings following demolition of existing side extension.

The submitted Design, Access & Heritage Statement [hereafter DAHS] states:

*Historic openings that have been blocked in previous alterations will be sensitively reopened, reinstating the building's original proportions and allowing natural light to penetrate more deeply into the interior. **Where ground-floor windows will sit within the new extension, these will be retained in situ**, ensuring the continued visibility of the original fabric from within the building. The only window proposed for removal is a non-original unit dating from the 1980s, which has no historic or architectural significance. Overall, the proposed layout and scale ensure that the historic farmhouse remains the principal architectural element, with new works clearly legible as later, respectful additions.*

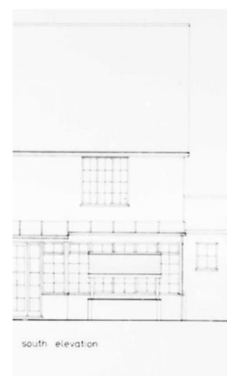
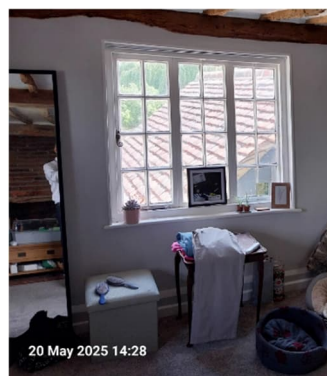
I am confused with what I have highlighted in bold above. One cannot retain in-situ what has not yet been built.



The DAHS goes on to say:

*Reopening original window openings will allow the façade to regain its historic balance. New timber windows **will be purpose-made to match traditional profiles and detailing**, with slim glazing bars and painted finishes in historically sympathetic colours. Internally, **the retention of existing ground-floor windows within the new extension will preserve important elements of the historic envelope**. The replacement of the 1980s first-floor window with a more sympathetic design will further enhance the building's architectural coherence.*

The first floor window referred to above is that in the image below. **I have found no evidence to corroborate the 1980's date of installation or seen evidence to indicate that the proposed 6-pane double casements at first floor relate to former window openings.** The first floor window is indicated on plans submitted under ref: 85/00051/1 (extract below right) so the window at least pre-dates this.



Having said that, I am prepared to consider new windows but only once the fabric where the new openings are to be made is fully understood. Either opening-up works will need to be undertaken ahead of determination or these works could potentially be conditioned as follows.

Notwithstanding the approved plans and only once the existing wall construction has been revealed by the removal of internal plaster and/or external render, the precise size and position of the two new first floor windows on the South Elevation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the windows shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

I have also suggested in the draft conditions below a further condition covering joinery window joinery details.

Remove existing render and repair/re-pointing of existing brickwork with lime mortar and render.

One key aspect of the scheme which I remain uncertain about is the following extract from the submitted Design, Access & Heritage Statement.



An important component of the proposals is the removal of modern, non-breathable cement render applied to parts of the original building in previous works. Its removal will not only restore the visual integrity of the exposed brickwork but will also allow the building to perform as intended, improving the long-term preservation of the fabric. Where brickwork repairs are required, these will be carried out using reclaimed or carefully matched new bricks, and all repointing will use traditional lime mortar. If brickwork is found to be in too poor a condition to repair, the height at which the exposed brickwork finishes be reduced to that deemed acceptable by the planning authority.

In May 2025, I stated the following:

4.10 *This building is essentially 'timber frame' with a rendered 'roughcast' finish covering what is understood to be, in places, brickwork at ground floor level. Although the 2015 extension is in facing brickwork, I am not convinced that other brickwork was intended to be exposed and the proposal to hack-off the existing render and leave sections of brickwork exposed will significantly change the appearance of the building. The brickwork may be in such poor condition as to require new facework which, even if undertaken to a good standard would erode the building's original character.*

4.11 *I do not have a problem with careful re-rendering and for this to be put back with a smooth, wood-float finish.*

As noted whilst removing cementitious render is arguably a good thing for this building, the potential damage that may be occasioned to the brickwork could be significant. **I remain sceptical that the exposed brickwork would be in sufficiently good and consistent condition to remain exposed without extensive repairs which may have an unwelcome transformational impact on the listed building's special character.**

In my opinion, one way to address this is would be via condition but that condition could be quite wordy, so I have split my intended condition in two – see below.

Following the removal of the existing render, a site meeting with the local planning authority shall be undertaken to assess the exposed brickwork at ground floor. No mechanical cleaning method shall be used on the facing brickwork unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter only an approved cleaning method shall be used.

Following the removal of the existing render and site meeting referred to above, if it is agreed with the Local Planning Authority that the brickwork is capable of repair and left exposed then any new brickwork repairs shall be undertaken in matching brickwork (colour, gauge, texture) and using lime mortar. In the event that it is agreed with the Local Planning Authority that the brickwork is incapable of being exposed with an acceptable external finish then not only the first floor but also the ground floor shall be rendered using a lime-based render, the specification of which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the re-rendering. The re-rendering shall then be undertaken in accordance with the approved render specification.

Internal alterations including new stairs to existing loft and relocation of kitchen, utility and WC.

In May, at 4.12 of my comments I stated:

*It is the attic space of the c.1700 2-storey section which is intended to be accessed from a new staircase and where at least one floor joist would be removed. What is unclear is the extent to which other frame members may be affected. For instance, **a section drawing would provide some assurance that the wall plate to the c.1700 structure would not be affected i.e. is there 2000mm clearance below this plate?***

A section detail has not been provided so although it is understood that one floor joist would be lost or trimmed, the impact of the staircase on the c.1700 wall plate remains unknown. I would like to fully understand the implications of the staircase being Building Regs compliant. I do not consider it acceptable to deal with this by condition just in case it is proven that there will be loss of fabric that will occasion unacceptable harm.

Suggested conditions (LBC only)

In the event that the case officer is minded to recommend that permission be granted, I advise the following conditions.

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. Details and/or samples of the clay tiles for the porch and extension roofs shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of that part of the development hereby approved. Thereafter the porch and extension roofs shall be covered in accordance with the approved materials.

Reason: To ensure that the development will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the listed building's special character to comply with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

4. A sample brick panel indicating brick type, bond and mortar mix for the porch and extension shall be made available for inspection on site and then approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the porch and extension shall be constructed in accordance with the approved sample panel.

Reason: To ensure that the development will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the listed building's special character to comply with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

5. Following the removal of the existing render, a site meeting with the Local Planning Authority shall be undertaken to assess the exposed brickwork at ground floor. If it is agreed with the Local Planning Authority that the brickwork is capable of repair and left exposed then any new brickwork repairs shall be undertaken in matching brickwork (colour, gauge, texture) and using lime mortar. If, however, it is agreed with the Local Planning Authority that the condition of the brickwork is such that it should not be left exposed then not only the first floor but also the ground floor shall be rendered using a lime-based render, the specification of which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the re-rendering. The re-rendering shall then be undertaken in accordance with the approved render specification.

Reason: To ensure that the alterations will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the listed building's special character to comply with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

6. No mechanical cleaning method shall be used on the facing brickwork unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the alterations will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the listed building's special character to comply with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

7. Notwithstanding the approved plans and only once the existing south wall construction has been revealed by the removal of internal plaster and/or external render, the precise size and position of the two new first floor windows on the South Elevation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the windows shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the alterations will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the listed building's special character to comply with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

8. Window joinery section details including 1:1 scale drawing of glazing system and glazing bar profile together with window ironmongery details shall be submitted to and agreed in writing, by the Local Planning Authority before the manufacture of the windows. Thereafter the windows shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the alterations will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the listed building's special character to comply with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

9. Details of 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 development hereby consented. Thereafter, the rainwater goods shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the alterations will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the listed building's special character to comply with Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 16(2) and 66(1)

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 considered broadly acceptable.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 28/10/2025