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DESIGN and ACCESS STATEMENT

The Mill, Mill Street, Ashwell

Proposed rear extensions, and internal and external alterations

1. The Process

1(a) Physical context

The site is to the east of Mill Street within Ashwell Conservation Area. The Mill is a grade II listed building and comprises a C17 timber-framed mill house that was refurbished and extended in the 1970s as a dwellinghouse. The extension replaced a timber framed and weatherboarded mill building that had fallen into disuse and disrepair, as detailed in the accompanying Heritage Statement produced by John Selby BA MSc IHBC.



Photo 1 – Front of The Mill

The original mill house and the extension are separated by a brick tower containing services and the staircase linking the various levels within the two parts of the building. The form of the 1970s extension with its asymmetric roof form and projections from its front façade incorporating windows and rooflights means that it has an unusual form. Together with the extensive use of asbestos cement tiles and robust brickwork it creates an uncomfortable contrast to the earlier part of the building while incorporating subterranean elements and the scale of the earlier mill building it replaced. As explained in the Heritage Statement the mill wheel was brought from the nearby Fordham Brewery before its demolition and redevelopment for housing.



Photograph 2 – The mill house from Mill Street

The rear roof slope of the 1970s extension is weathered in plain clay tiles in contrast to the front and incorporates a large dormer window (Photo 3). Windows project out over the mill race both at ground and first floor levels (Photos 4 and 5).

Internally, the 1970s extension is finished in a mixture of exposed yellow brickwork, pine cladding and white painted board ceilings, with a timber floor to the kitchen / living / dining space.



Photo 3 – Rear view of 1970s extension with dormer window



Photo 4 – Rear view of 1970s extension including element over mill race



Photo 5 – Window projecting over mill race

1(b) Social context

The site is within a predominantly residential area and the proposal will not affect the living conditions of the occupants of any neighbouring properties. The proposed extensions and alterations are to the rear of the property and Mallard is the closest residential property to the rear, which is over 88 m from The Mill building and set at

an oblique angle. The nearest buildings are the stables to the south and 47 Mill Street to the west, which will not be affected by the proposal.

1(c) Economic Context

The proposed development will have a negligible effect on the economic context of the area. However, local consultants, builders and materials will be employed as far as practicable, which will make a positive contribution to the local economy.

1(d) Planning Policy context

The site is within the Church and Environs Character Area V1 within the Selected Village Policy Area of Ashwell. The Mill is grade II listed and within Ashwell Conservation Area. Therefore, the following national and local plan policies apply:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

North Hertfordshire District Council
District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations 1996 (adopted April 1996) (LP)

Policy 7 -	Selected Villages beyond the Green Belt
Policy 16 -	Areas of Archaeological Significance and other Archaeological Areas
Policy 28 -	House Extensions
Policy 57 –	Residential Guidelines and Standards

2. Involvement

The applicant submitted a request for pre-application advice relating to a proposal for a two storey rear extension to the 1970s extension. The Conservation Officer's comments on this proposal are recorded in a letter (15/03046/1PRE) from Joanne Cousins, Planning Officer, dated 15 February 2016, which suggested a reduction in the width of the extension and raised concerns with its height. However, he raised no objection to sympathetic replacement of the aluminium window frames, which were noted as requiring upgrading.

A revised proposal was submitted via email on 2 January 2017 for a highly glazed single storey rear extension to the 1970s extension, measuring 11.2 m wide by 3.1 m

deep, and for projecting windows to the north elevation at ground and first floor levels. A response was received in an email from Joanne Cousins dated 10 April 2017 incorporating comments from Mark Simmons, Conservation Officer, which related to discrepancies in the drawings, suggesting the use of additional areas of zinc cladding and requesting more detail of the fascia/ soffit arrangement which he considered a little too 'boxy' in appearance. Although no objection was raised to a significant amount of glazing he advised that a reduction would reduce its dominating effect of the continuous wall of glazing proposed.

3. Evaluation and Design

Following the receipt of the pre-application advice on a single storey rear extension in April 2017 Tempietto Architects was appointed in October 2017 to reconsider the proposals. Following a site visit and numerous discussions the applicant concluded that an extension was not necessary in the form previously proposed. The main objectives were to create an improved relationship between the open plan kitchen / dining / living space within the 1970s extension and the garden by introducing additional glazing, making better use of the space available, replacing the existing steep ladder access to the first floor studio space (see Photograph 6) with a staircase, and updating and improving the external appearance of the rear elevation.



Photograph 6 – Existing ladder access to studio space above

In order to improve the internal layout of the open plan space on the ground floor it is proposed to replace the existing built in woodburning stove (see Photograph 7) with a freestanding one, which will occupy less area and be better related to the function of the space. Also, one of the existing brick piers (see Photograph 8), which sits awkwardly within the living area space, is to be relocated by replacing it with two steel columns arranged symmetrically around the rooflights within one of the front projections. This will require the addition of steelwork under the floor and above the mill race in order to support one of the two steel posts, while the other is directly over an existing brick pier.

The brick pier between the two existing sliding doors is to be removed and the doors replaced with a three track sliding door. This will be achieved by supporting a new steel lintel across the opening on two steel posts and mounting the doors within a steel framework beyond the existing rear wall.



Photograph 7 – Existing fireplace



Photograph 8 – Interior of living area and brick pier to be removed

In order to accommodate a new staircase to the studio above, it is proposed to create a modest rear extension above the mill race with a two-storey glazed screen that does not project out beyond the existing roof but provides sufficient space for the staircase, which is to be constructed of solid timber treads supported on a structural glass balustrade to maintain views out from the living space to the mill race and the garden beyond (see Figure 1).

Externally, it is proposed to replace the existing aluminium windows at ground and first floor levels with powder coated aluminium frames finished in anthracite grey, which will match the finish of the proposed sliding doors and the glazed extension to accommodate the staircase. Horizontal cedar cladding is proposed both to the ground floor rear extension and to the dormer front with a framework and cheeks clad in anthracite grey zinc (See Figure 2). This will create a crisper and more contemporary appearance while respecting the form and modernity of the 1970s

extension. An external boot store is also to be formed in cedar cladding on the raised patio area.

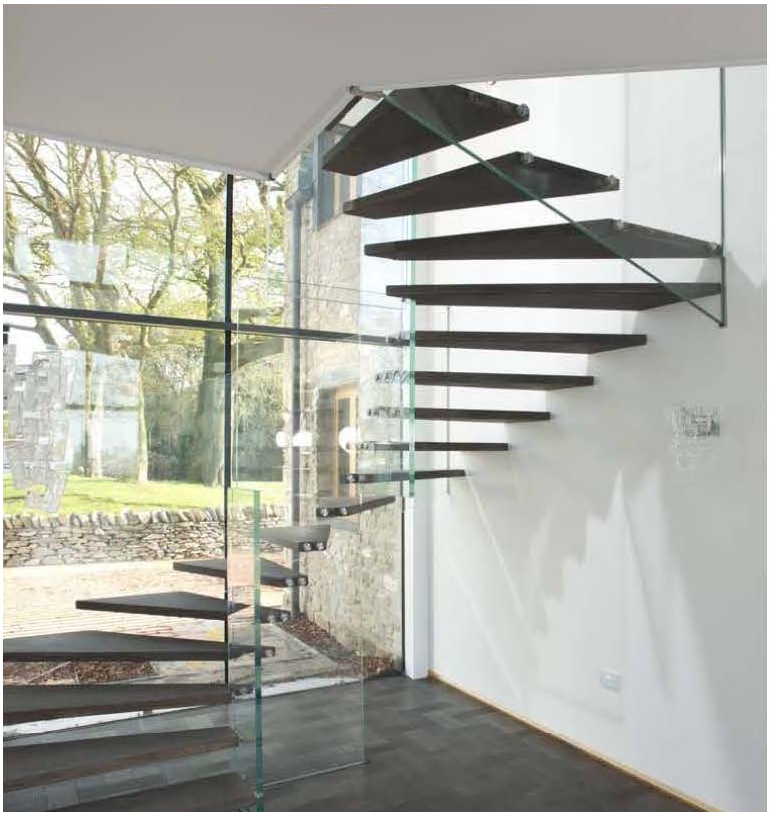


Figure 1: Example of staircase design



Figure 2 - Example of anthracite grey zinc with timber cladding

It is considered that the proposed extensions and alterations will be sympathetic to the listed building and faithful to the aspirations of the architect of the 1970s extension. The proposal will add a 21C element to the evolution of this interesting property.

The additions are very modest in scale and in their impact on the building and the conservation area. It is considered that the proposal is of high quality design and will not detract from the features of the building that contribute to its special architectural or historic interest as a grade II listed building and its significance as a designated heritage asset. It is also considered that the proposal will cause no harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area or its significance as a designated heritage asset. As the proposal will cause no harm it accords with the NPPF and with the applicable statutory tests for heritage assets, as identified in the Heritage Statement.

4. Use

The use of the property as a dwellinghouse will not change.

5. Amount

The increase in size as a result of the proposed rear extensions is very modest. Over the mill race at ground floor level the floor area will increase by 1.9 m^2 and at first floor level the increase is 1.3 m^2. The proposed sliding doors to the rear of the kitchen / living / dining space will increase the floor area by a further 1.2 m^2, as they will project slightly beyond the existing rear wall. An external Boot Store extension adds a further 1.0 m^2, making the total increase in gross internal floor area 5.4 m^2.

6. Layout

The layout of the site will not be affected by the proposal.

7. Scale

The scale of the building will not be affected by the proposal.

8. Landscaping

The existing more landscaping of the site will not be affected by the proposal. However, the existing patio area is to be raised to be flush with the internal floor level.

9. Appearance

The materials to be used for the proposed works are to be of high quality and include brickwork to match existing, cedar cladding, Anthra-zinc cladding and powder coated aluminium sliding glass doors and windows finished in anthracite grey. It is considered that in the context of the design of the 1970s extension to the grade II listed building that these materials are entirely appropriate and will not detract from the appearance of the building or the conservation area. Indeed it is considered that the proposal will enhance the appearance of the building.

10. Access

The proposal will not affect accessibility into or within the building but the flush threshold proposed between the kitchen / dining / living area and the patio area to the rear will improve accessibility for those with disabilities.

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