

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

35 High Street, Ashwell, SG7 5NP Creation of 3-Bay Cart Lodge (Removal of Existing Outbuilding and associated Cellar). New External Storage & Vehicular Parking Alterations.

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement supports a householder planning application for the erection of detached three bay cart lodge following demolition of existing outbuilding and associated cellar. Installation of external storage area and hardstanding to provide additional parking spaces at 35 High Street, Ashwell, together with associated external works, adjustments to boundary treatments and the enlargement of the courtyard and driveway area. The proposals have been carefully developed to respect the historic character of the site and its setting within the Ashwell Conservation Area, while improving the functionality, safety and long-term usability of the property.

Site and Surrounding Context

35 High Street occupies a prominent position within the historic core of Ashwell, a designated Conservation Area characterised by its linear settlement pattern, traditional building forms and enclosed rear plots. The principal dwelling fronts the High Street, with a clunch-built outbuilding and vaulted cellar positioned within the rear courtyard. These elements form part of the layered historic fabric of the site and contribute to its architectural and evidential interest.

Historical Context

Historic building recording undertaken in 2012, which included 35 High Street as part of a wider assessment of former Whitby Farm buildings, provides valuable insight into the development of the site. The study indicates that No. 35 formed part of an extended farmstead associated with Whitby Farm during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the Angell family expanded and reorganised the holding. As the farm grew beyond its earlier core on Silver Street, agricultural structures were introduced along High Street, including the outbuilding at No.35.

The outbuilding's clunch (chalk) construction, its simple agricultural form and its relationship with the courtyard and cartlodge are consistent with early nineteenth-century farm ranges identified elsewhere in the complex. Later alterations, including the blockwork gable, reflect incremental adaptation during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The vaulted cellar beneath the outbuilding is a characteristic feature of historic agricultural buildings in the area, providing cool, stable storage conditions that supported farm operations. It is also plausible that the outbuilding served historically as a small stable or ancillary agricultural structure.

Although the wider farmstead has evolved significantly, the surviving elements at 35 High Street retain clear evidence of their agricultural origins. The clunch walls, vaulted cellar and spatial relationship between the outbuilding, courtyard and cartlodge all contribute to the understanding of the site's historic function and development.

Design

The design approach prioritises the retention and enhancement of the site's historic character while addressing functional constraints associated with the existing layout. The proposal involves the complete dismantling of the existing outbuilding, with the exception of the retained clunch boundary wall, to which the structure is partially connected. The removal will be undertaken in a controlled and sensitive manner to protect the boundary wall and surrounding historic fabric.

The existing basement/cellar will be infilled where appropriate, and the external stepped access will be sealed, creating a continuous, level vehicular surface across the courtyard. This significantly improves access, manoeuvrability and overall safety, while supporting increased parking provision. Any surviving below ground elements will be recorded in line with good conservation practice.

A replacement vehicular cart lodge is proposed in the same location. This will comprise a three-bay structure, providing covered parking for up to one vehicle; including two bays for secure storage. The new cart lodge (outbuilding) will be constructed in two parts, the storage using masonry; with low level brick plinth and (white) render to the external walls to replicate the original chalk structure. In addition to a part open-sided vernacular form, constructed using traditional timber frame construction in keeping with the site's historic smallholding character. The roof will be pitched and finished in solar tiles with a natural slate format to reflect the former building; the new dual pitch roof will have 'conservation appropriate' slate effect solar tiles as part of a renewable energy approach. The structure's scale and design have been carefully considered to ensure it remains subservient to the host dwelling and preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Rainwater goods will comprise traditional black cast iron effect gutters and downpipes, such as the Alumasc Heritage range or similar approved, chosen to reflect the traditional architectural detailing and material character prevalent within the Conservation Area while providing a robust and durable modern equivalent to traditional cast iron systems.



Traditional Timber Post-Frame – Style

The more recent existing two-bay cart lodge within the site will be retained and used for covered parking, as indicated on the submitted plans.

The existing clunch boundary wall and the brick wall/gated entrance facing the public highway will be retained in full, preserving key historic features. Internal timber fencing will be adjusted to improve parking and manoeuvring space, and a discreet bin storage area will be provided adjacent to the driveway entrance.

Justification for Outbuilding Removal

The existing outbuilding has undergone substantial alteration, including later blockwork sections and modified roof forms, reducing its architectural and historic integrity. While of historic origin, its significance is moderate and primarily derives from its relationship to the wider former farmstead rather than its fabric alone.

The retention of the clunch boundary wall preserves an important historic feature, maintaining the site's enclosure and character. Complete removal of the outbuilding allows the creation of a functional, level courtyard and driveway, improving safety, circulation, and reducing reliance on on-street parking.

The replacement three-bay cart lodge has been designed with a conservation approach in regard to the proposed new form and structure, ensuring minimal impact on the historic setting; maintaining openness and preserving the character of the site.

Overall, the proposals balance heritage conservation with functional improvement, preserving the most important elements while enabling the long-term sustainable use of the property.

Structural Assessment

"The outbuilding has masonry walls and pitched roof with slate finish, divided to two sections with a masonry cross wall between. It has a brick vaulted cellar. The roof is vaulted structure with no ceiling ties at the bottom of the rafters to connect the front and rear walls together. It has 3 to 4 inadequate trusses. The lateral load from the roof structure has pushed the front wall out, creating a significant vertical crack at the junction of the cross wall and front elevation wall. The roof has a significant sag due to deflection of the rafters particularly on the High Street side. This may become an issue in the future. The structure has been altered in the past, part of the roof structure has no felt and gable wall on one side has a new block wall. The cellar has inadequate access with an existing steep stair with a reduced headroom. In order to provide a proper access to the cellar a significant part of it will need to be demolished. The structure will require significant remedial works and alterations in order to provide long term structural stability and acceptable access to the cellar. Therefore my recommendation is to demolish the structure, infill the cellar and retain the boundary wall with the adjoining property"

A. Karbassi BSc(Hons), PhD, CEng, FStructE, FICE; Chartered Structural Engineer & Party Wall Surveyor.

Existing Boundary Wall

The proposal has been carefully developed to ensure the protection and preservation of the existing chalk (clunch) boundary wall, which forms an important element of the character and appearance of the site. A retention first approach has informed both the design development and the proposed construction methodology, with all reasonable measures taken to minimise disturbance to existing historic fabric and adjoining traditional structures.

The existing outbuilding is proposed to be dismantled in a controlled and phased manner, with the removal of the roof structure and associated elements undertaken carefully to avoid unnecessary loading, vibration or structural stress being transferred to retained masonry. Temporary works, support systems and stabilisation measures will be implemented where necessary to maintain the integrity and stability of the retained clunch wall and any adjacent boundary walls associated with neighbouring outbuildings and surrounding properties situated in close proximity to the proposed works. Temporary support arrangements and protection measures will be informed by appropriate structural engineering advice where required.

Given the age and sensitive nature of traditional chalk/clunch construction, demolition works adjacent to retained walls will utilise low-vibration methodologies and careful manual dismantling techniques in sensitive locations. Protective hoarding and exclusion zones will also be established where appropriate during the construction phase. Prior to commencement of works, a photographic condition survey of retained boundary walls and adjoining structures will be undertaken in order to record existing condition and safeguard all parties throughout the construction process.

The works will proceed in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Party Wall Act 1996, with a suitably qualified Party Wall Surveyor appointed where necessary to oversee adjoining structures and coordinate protective measures between affected parties. Any localised repairs or making good works to retained historic masonry will utilise compatible breathable and lime based materials appropriate to traditional chalk/clunch construction to ensure the continued performance and integrity of the historic fabric.

Subject to these measures, the proposal will preserve the significance, integrity and setting of the retained boundary structures and will safeguard the wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with established conservation and heritage planning principles.

Access Considerations

The proposals significantly improve vehicular access by creating a level courtyard and driveway. The previous arrangement was constrained by the footprint of the former outbuilding, the internal boundary fencing, and the sunken cellar access. The removal of the outbuilding and infilling of the basement allows a continuous, unobstructed surface, improving turning space and creating a safer, more functional layout for vehicles. These changes reduce reliance on on-street parking, which is particularly beneficial within the Conservation Area.

Pedestrian access to the dwelling and garden remains unchanged, and the proposals do not introduce any barriers to inclusive access. Overall, the works enhance circulation and usability while maintaining the historic character and appearance of the site and wider Conservation Area.

Heritage and Policy Compliance

The site contains no listed buildings; however, it lies within the Ashwell Conservation Area and in proximity to several listed buildings along High Street. The proposals have therefore been developed with full regard to the statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, and with appropriate consideration of the setting of nearby designated heritage assets.

Although the outbuilding itself is not listed, the scheme adopts a proportionate, conservation minded approach that retains the boundary wall, maintains the historic character of the site, and ensures that the cart lodge and principal frontage structures remain unchanged. These measures collectively safeguard the contribution the site makes to the wider Conservation Area and ensure that the proposals do not adversely affect the setting of nearby listed buildings.

The proposals accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), particularly paragraphs 131 and 180, which encourage biodiversity enhancement and require development to respond positively to local character. The works also comply with Section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in relation to tree works within Conservation Areas. Local planning policy within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan supports the retention and enhancement of heritage assets, the provision of adequate parking and the sensitive integration of landscaping. The proposals meet these objectives by improving the functional aspects of the site while maintaining and reinforcing its historic character and appearance.

Conclusion

The proposals represent a heritage sensitive and proportionate response to the site's historic context. The complete removal of the existing outbuilding, with retention of the clunch boundary wall, allows the creation of a level and functional courtyard and driveway, improving vehicular circulation and safety. The introduction of a new three-bay open cart lodge with one bay providing enclosed storage provides practical facilities without compromising the openness or character of the site.

Overall, the scheme preserves and enhances the visual and historic qualities of the property and the wider Conservation Area, while delivering practical, long-term benefits for the occupants of 35 High Street.

Photos >



Site Entrance > No.35 Front Elevation / Street Scene



Rear Garden / T1



Outbuilding > Courtyard > Cellar Access



Outbuilding > Courtyard > Cellar Access



Clunch Wall > Central Wall / Outbuilding



Blockwork Wall > Gable End Wall / Outbuilding



Cellar / Underneath Outbuilding



Cellar > Stepped Access



Driveway > Courtyard



Driveway > Courtyard



Driveway > Coutyard



Existing Two Bay - Cart Lodge