

HERITAGE ASSET STATEMENT & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

BELFRY BARN, CHURCH END, BARLEY SG8 8JW

Proposed external & internal alterations involved with the re-ordering & remodelling of the interior at ground & first floors

Introduction

The purpose of this **Heritage Asset Statement & Impact Assessment**, together with a brief Historic Building Appraisal, is to inform & support the application for Listed Building Consent. The statement will provide the **description of significance** of Belfry Barn, as a Grade II listed building, its setting- including the conjoined Brandt Barn together with the other former agricultural buildings of the former Manor Farm, Manor Farmhouse (all Grade II listed buildings) & the immediate wider context, together with the settings of the other nearby listed buildings, located within this part of the Barley Conservation Area.

An assessment of the **impact of the proposals** (& any consequential potential possible harm) to the interest & special interest, character, appearance & significance of these heritage assets will be considered, appraised & evaluated.

The statement has special regard to sections 66(1) & 72(1) of the Planning (Listed buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990, as the site includes the listed building, settings of listed buildings & is within the designated conservation area, & is to satisfy the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (December 2023) 12- Achieving well-designed places &, in particular, 16- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment; Statements of Heritage Significance- Analysing significance in heritage assets- Historic England Advice Note 12; & North Herts DC local planning policy & other relevant design guidance advice.

This HAS & IA concentrates specifically on the heritage assets involved & the historic environment- & is to be read alongside the Design & Access Statement (G2), which gives the general background to the application & the site, surroundings & further detail of the proposed works, record photographs & the detailed annotated design drawings.



View northwards from Church End looking, beyond the farmyard, towards Belfry Barn (to the left) & Brandts Barn (to the right). The Staddle Barn is at the near left of the vehicular & pedestrian access.

Background

Belfry Barn, a Grade II listed barn, now converted to residential use in the late 1990s, is located within the former farmyard of Manor Farm, which includes a number of former Grade II listed agricultural buildings also now converted to residential use- The Tack Room, The Staddle Barn, Daubentons Barn. Manor Farmhouse (Grade II listed) is to the west of the former farmyard.

This group of former farm buildings is situated on the north side of Church End, between the junction of London Road/ High Street/ Crossways & Pudding Lane, to the west & Shaftenhoe End Road, Picknag Corner, Picknag Road & Chishall Road, to the east.

Cannons Cottage (Grade II listed) is to the east of the group adjacent to the former farmyard. There are a number of other listed buildings on Church End, to the west of The Manor Farmhouse. All of these buildings are located within the designated conservation area.

The Historic England official list entry description of the barn is shown below.

[BARLEY CHURCH END TL 4038 \(North side\) Barley](#)

[8/76 Barns about 50m NE of the Manor Farm House- GV II](#)

Two conjoined barns. C17. Timber frames on brick bases. Weatherboarded. Steeply pitched corrugated asbestos roofs. 12 bays and 5 bays. Larger barn is in 2 sections of 6 bays each. Openings in 3rd bay from centre of each section, doors to left. Short lean-to to rear of right hand open bay. Interior: high brick base. Jowled posts with arched braces to cambered tie beams. Double butt purlins with angled struts and collars to principals, curved windbraces. Studding, mid-rails and tension braces in walling. Slightly lower 5 bay barn adjoins at right end at right angles. Large central doors, small lower and loft doors. High brick walling to rear. Interior: jowled posts with arched braces to cambered tie beams. Single butt purlins, angled struts and collars to principals.

[Listing NGR: TL4021338544](#)

Proposals affecting heritage assets

The former barn was converted to a residential use back in the 1990s. The conversion was in accord with the then contemporary approach to such conversions & has retained the key significance of the listed building- the heavy timber frame & the irregular ridge silhouette to the dominant steeply pitched roof &, in part, the dramatic sense of enclosed space- & minimized new openings in the walls & roofs.

The interventions required for making an agricultural industrial building into a comfortable functional family house, however, inevitably, originally, required some degree of compromises to the special interest of the barn & involved a new brick base plinth to the walls, sub-division of the open interior & the loss of historic fabric & replacement with new material (e.g. weatherboarding & internal finishes)- together with an inevitable domestication of the immediate setting as well as the wider context of the other former farmyard buildings (also converted to residential use) & past relationship to the farmhouse.

The other heritage assets involved are: The nearby listed barns of the former farmyard, The Manor Farmhouse & the closest of the listed buildings on Church End- together with the Barley Conservation Area.

The extent of the proposed alterations is set out in detail on a schedule of works with the accompanying Design & Access Statement & the submitted annotated design drawings.

The proposed works involve- the re-ordering of the internal space, stair access between the floors & arrangement of rooms with the alterations to the ground floor & first floor required by the re-modelling of the layout, together with some new windows & doors & general making good.

All making good, consequent localised repair & any required re-instatements necessary following the alterations will accord closely with usual conservation good practice &, where relevant, SPAB Technical Guidance & advice principles.



Interior of Belfry Barn looking east, showing existing staircase

Considering potential impacts

The proposed alterations must inevitably have some, albeit relatively small, degree of impact to the special interest, character, appearance & significance of the Grade II listed barn/ house.

However, this impact- & indeed the possibility of any significant degree of any *harm*- needs to be carefully & objectively evaluated in the context of the whole barn in total as well as the relationship to the conserved historic structure, other nearby listed buildings within the former farmyard group, Church End & the wider conservation area.

The extent of alteration & change has been modified & amended after careful consideration to limit any possible harmful or detrimental effects to the principal elements of the timber frame & most of the secondary framing & studs. The insertion of the new doors & windows necessitates some minor interventions affecting the exterior but on balance these are not considered to be damaging in the context of the totality of the interior & exterior appearance & character of the barn.

All alterations are intended to be able to be accommodated within & around the significant elements of the structure without detrimental harm.

The nearby dwellings, including the conjoined Brandts Barn, are essentially unaffected to any possible measurable degree by the proposed relatively minor alterations. Any possible impact or harm to the public realm of the wider conservation area- as viewed from Church End at some distance- is negligible or non-existent.

Conclusion & comment

It is axiomatic that historic buildings & historic areas, as an irreplaceable *precious & finite resource*, must continue to be relevant, sustainable & viable for use & life in the 21st century. Historic buildings need to adapt to current circumstances & spatial requirements for varied social, economic, environmental, technological & cultural reasons. Many old buildings- such as the former farmyard of The Manor House- have been substantially adapted, with the settings altered considerably, & some changed quite dramatically over time.

Change is inevitable. Permanence is an illusion. The key significances, the character & appearance of Belfry Barn, the Barley Conservation Area & of the setting of nearby listed buildings, can continue, thoughtfully conserved for existing & future generations, so long as the character & appearance of the proposed works respect this sensitive context & provides a meaningful viable & sustainable long-term future for the former barn.

The proposed alterations & the adaption of the interior space of the barn are considered to be appropriate & sympathetic- positively adapting & thoughtfully enhancing the character of what is now a family house to meet current family needs.

The applicants are committed to a sustainable approach to any alteration works & highly sensitive to much needed climate emergency measures. The proposed new windows & rooflights would add natural lighting in key areas to the existing rather gloomy interior & sunlight, especially in winter conditions, will add greatly to a sense of well-being (helping with SAD) & raise the spirits- reducing the need for artificial lighting.

Should there be any possibility of it being considered that there may be some small measure of *less than substantial harm* (in terms of NPPF paragraph 208) the *public benefits* (in terms of NPPF paragraph 208), as well as the identified private benefit of the proposals (including the amended design), will require careful judgement of the essential significance, character & appearance of the setting of Belfry Barn, as a designated heritage asset, providing ongoing beneficial & *optimum viable use* as a sustainable, but constrained, dwelling & with the essential alterations fit for 21st century family living requirements.

Alterations... to listed buildings are widely accepted as a part of the inevitable process of change to meet current day requirements- & that, *from time to time, old buildings may need sympathetic alteration, adaption or extension to ensure their continuing usefulness. Generally, modest, sympathetic new works allow continuing life for old buildings & can contribute positively to their story.*

(The SPAB Approach, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 2020).

Conservation should be about positive change for the future & not be seen as being about resisting change... A creative, pragmatic & flexible approach, with informed judgements & thoughtful compromises to encourage the best overall outcomes... So long as historic structure, fabric & character are respected, alterations & extensions can add greatly to the character & appearance of a building in a changing world.

(Conservation Professional Practice Principles, IHBC 2017, re-issued 2021 & 2024).

In the light of these principles, the amended design of the proposed alterations, to adapt the living space to more closely accord with current day family expectations & requirements, seem to only amount to sympathetic & harmonious changes that would be relatively modest to the overall intrinsic character & appearance of the barn, in itself, & in the wider general conservation area context. The character, appearance, special interest & significance of the barn/ house, the setting & the conservation area are, it is considered, preserved & enhanced.