

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 25/00427/FPH & 25/00428/LBC

Date: 24/04/2025

Planning Officer: VW

Address: Gannock Green Farmhouse, Gannock Green, Gannock Road, Sandon, Buntingford, Hertfordshire, SG9 0RH

Subject: Erection of porch canopy and metal railings to entrance steps.

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 I have attached great weight to this asset's conservation including the significance of its setting. The significance of Gannock Green Farmhouse is derived in part by its architectural/ historic interest, principally its date and method of construction.
- 1.2 At my site visit on 15 April 2025, I sought to justify an alternative approach and which the architect and his client have considered. An amended scheme was received today, and it is considered that this respects the farmhouse's historic narrative more so than the more formal/grand open sided porch. Although the original submission was not considered harmful, the amended scheme is considered to more readily respect the listed building's special character and would satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) (LBC only) and 66(1) (FPH only) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will accord with Section 16 of the Framework or Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031. The proposal is therefore **UNOBJECTIONABLE** in heritage terms.

2.0 The Local Plan and NPPF (Dec 2024)

- 2.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of the NPPF:
- **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*).

3.0 Context

- 3.1 Gannock Green Farmhouse is grade II listed and is situated on a rural road that runs between the A505 Royston to Baldock road, and the A10 at Buckland. The list entry reads as follows:

Large house. C16 origins. Remodelled early C18. Extended and altered C19. Red brick with some timber framing probable, all roughcast. Machine tiled

hipped roof. Originally an L-shaped plan perhaps reflecting an earlier hall and cross wing, additions in angle of L to form a square block. 2 storeys and attics. 3 broadly spaced bays to front. Central entrance, 2/3 glazed and 1/3 panelled door, recessed with early C19 surround, pilastered jambs, dentils to shallow pediment all in a C20 gabled porch. High plinth, 2 plat bands. Ground floor: 2 tripartite glazing bar sashes in reveals, first floor central glazing bar sash, flanking tripartite sashes. Boxed eaves. Central gabled dormer. Left gable end C18 red brick stack. Plinth and plat bands continue on left end with 2 small sashes. Roof hipped to right return, 2 broadly spaced bays. C19 gault brick ground floor canted bay windows with slate roofs. First floor flush frame tripartite sashes. On ridge to centre is a large C16 axial stack with 6 conjoined octagonal flues. Roof hipped to rear with ground floor French windows. To rear inside angle of L are C19 lower 2 storey gault brick and knapped flint additions, a hipped wing to rear and a gable end to left with kitchen entrance. Interior: early C18 staircase with alternate fluted column and vase balusters, fluted newel posts, moulded handrail.

4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 The following extract from the list entry is noted: “.... Central entrance, 2/3 glazed and 1/3 panelled door, recessed with early C19 surround, pilastered jambs, dentils to shallow pediment all in a C20 gabled porch”.
- 4.2 As noted in the submission, the previous gable porch has been removed and the submitted Design & Access and Heritage Statements states the following:

It is proposed to add a new open sided porch with a traditional flat roof and plain classical columns following examples of Tuscan porticos. Before the 1990s photograph was discovered, the idea of having a pitched roof porch was considered problematic due to the fact that it would interfere with, and cut across, the lower of the two rendered plat bands. It also meant that the ridge of the porch roof would be close to the cill of the first floor window above. Whilst it clearly possible to construct a pitched roof porch, it was felt that, given the large Georgian style sash windows on the rendered elevations and the historic classical detailing around the existing entrance door, a porch of a similar style would sit more comfortably on the elevation without disrupting the existing decorative features. Similar examples of the proposal can be seen below.

The proposed porch will clearly be a change to the elevation but, as already outlined above, a porch structure is indicated in this location in 1878 and a subsequent 20th Century porch existed until probably the start of the 21st Century. Therefore, there is precedent for the porch in this location. It's impact on the listed building will be limited in terms of changing the appearance of the building from the public realm. The porch projects just 1100mm from the face of the existing render (reflecting the projection of the existing stone step) and, as can be seen from the photograph below, this means that it will only just be visible as a fleeting view down the drive from across the green due to the mature tree growth along the boundary.

- 4.3 At page 7 of the DAHS the image below centre is offered as an example of what exist on a similar type of house. My hesitation with supporting this approach is that Gannock Green Farmhouse is described as a large house with C16 origins which was remodelled in the early C18 and then extended and altered C19. As a farmhouse that has been ‘Georgianised’, what Gannock Geen Farmhouse is not a purposely designed Georgian house such as found at the former Ashwell Vicarage below right which is described as a circa 1830 house with ‘square projecting porch with 2 Greek Doric columns, a plain entablature and a thin shallow pedimented cornice’.

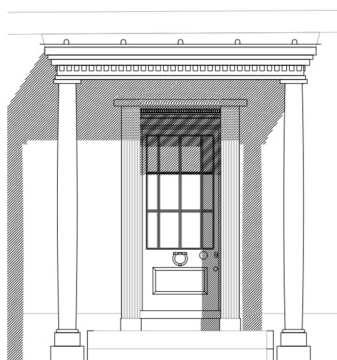


Examples of similar porches to the one proposed

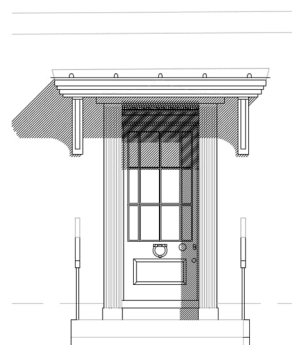


- 4.4 The proposed open sided porch canopy supported on Tuscan columns is certainly not poor design, quite the contrary, it is a well-designed statement entrance feature that would not occasion harm as such to the listed building. The question I raise is whether a simplified covered entrance canopy could be achieved that would perhaps respect the farmhouse's historic narrative more fully. I am also concerned that if application ref: 25/00430/FPH for the 'Erection of detached two bay cart lodge' is consented that the proximity of the cart lodge alongside the projecting porch may result in an overly busy frontage.

- 4.5 The architect agreed to explore the potential for something a little more modest (below right) which was received today. As the architect says, *"I think this is quite successful, and by absorbing the existing relief pediment into the new canopy depth, the canopy appears to be part of the door surround"*.



Current photograph of the entrance showing the dentil course and shallow pediment as mentioned in the listing



- 4.6 In my opinion, the alternative and somewhat understated canopy set on curved gallows brackets in the image above right enables the canopy to relate better with the fluted pilasters, would not be as high or project out as far and is considered more acceptable.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer