Design, Access and Heritage Statement

for the conversion of an existing brick built barn into garaging, workshop and hobby space

Beech House, 20 High Street, Spaldwick



Introduction

This statement is prepared in support of an application for the conversion of an existing brick built barn, at Beech House, High Street, Spaldwick, Huntingdon. The works involve external and internal alterations, the removal of the existing asbestos roof and the re-pitching of the roof to 35 degrees – the roof will then tiled with clay pantiles. In addition, works include slight adjustments to the external openings, the partial cladding of the end gable elevations, and internal structural intervention to facilitate the construction of a mezzanine floor within.

The works are to be carried out to a building within the curtilage of Beech House, a Grade II listed property within the Spaldwick Conservation Area. The application therefore accounts for the need for listed building consent, in addition to the planning consent required for the changes proposed which result in an increase in building mass.

Although the curtilage of the listed building includes a handful of 'outbuildings', the property currently does not benefit from any form of covered/secured parking. For a property of this size, in a rural village, parking and secure storage for vehicles is considered to be essential.

Use

The proposal seeks the use of an existing ancillary building for the purpose of secure vehicular parking, a workshop and for hobby space. The building will remain ancillary to the host dwelling, Beech House, and incidental to the enjoyment of the property. The proposal does not result in the ability to sub-let the building or to use it independently from the main property, and thus uses such as holiday let, air BnB and/or rentals will not occur. Such restrictions on use can be secured through an appropriately worded condition to any approval.

Layout

The accompanying detailed drawing package illustrates the layout of the site and the position of the outbuilding within this context. The drawings also illustrate the proposed internal layout of the building, as well as the proposed changes to the elevations, with the principal change being the increase in height by circa 1m, through the re-pitching of the existing roof (eaves height remains the same).

In re-pitching the roof, a mezzanine floor is achievable. It is considered that the roof structure currently on the outbuilding is not original. The rafters, trusses and purlins are all modern metal, and the roof covering is a profiled asbestos sheeting.

Although no historic photos have been able to be located, it is believed that the original roof would have been of a much steeper pitch (akin to the buildings surrounding it). In addition, it is understood that the building may have once been thatched.

The proposal does not require any alteration to the footprint of the building, nor does it propose any significant alterations to hard-landscaping. As such, the proposal has a negligible impact upon the site layout, and does not adversely impact upon any of the mature hedges or trees which lie within the boundary of the site.

Scale

The existing footprint of the outbuilding is 99sqm, with an internal gross internal floor area (GIA) of 81sqm.

Beech House occupies a large plot, with the outbuilding occupying less than 2% of the site.

The proposal does not increase the footprint of the barn, however it is proposed to insert a partial mezzanine, creating an element of first floor whilst retaining the full height volume of the barn in the remaining area. The proposed mezzanine GIA is 46sqm, increasing the overall internal GIA by circa 55%.

The X, Y and Z dimensions are identified on the accompanying floor plans and elevations, with dimensions provided to the neighbouring barn and nearest boundaries. Other than the slightly raised ridge height, the dimensions of the outbuilding remain as existing, and thus the existing hierarchy of structures within the site is maintained.

Materials and appearance

The proposed materials pallet is illustrated within the detailed drawing package.

A ‘subservient’ pallet of materials has been selected to enforce the hierarchy of structures on site. The materials selected are considered sympathetic to the adjacent barns and those within neighbouring sites.

Landscaping – Trees (LP31)

The proposal does not include any alterations to hard and soft landscaping within the site.

The site contains a selection of trees of varying maturity, including street fronting trees benefiting from tree preservation orders.

As the works do not propose any increase in footprint, there will be no adverse impacts on the trees or their root protection areas. Although the ridge height is proposed to be increased, this will not require any crown raising or crown reduction.

Access

No alterations to access onto the site are proposed as part of the works. The host dwelling is accessed by a vehicular access/ highway cross-over to the west of the outbuilding. There is also an existing gated vehicular access/ highway cross-over immediately to the east of the outbuilding, which provides vehicle access to the paved courtyard to the south of the outbuilding.

As the outbuilding will remain ancillary to the host dwelling, there will be no change to vehicular movements to and from the site, and thus the safety of the highway will not be impacted.

Ecology

The outbuilding is of brick construction under a profiled asbestos roof. In the main, the building is fully weathertight, but given the deterioration of some elements of the external envelope (timber doors etc) and ivy clad norther elevation it could provide habitat for nesting birds and roosting bats. The outbuilding also lies within close proximity to a pond on site.

As such Greenwillow Associates were instructed to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Preliminary Roost Assessment of the building and site. Further to these initial assessments, further surveys were conducted on the outbuilding to assess the presence of protected species utilising the building and its fabric. The results of these surveys are included within this submission (Ecological Impact Assessment), and conclude that no further action is required, save for the installation of bat and bird boxes within the east and western elevations. Due to the alterations to the ridge height, including the application of timber cladding to each gable end, such requirements can be easily integrated within the structure. The location of the bat boxes are illustrated upon the 'as proposed' elevations.

Heritage

The application site forms part of the curtilage of Beech House, a grade II listed property at 20 High Street, Spaldwick. The property lies within the wider Conservation Area of Spaldwick, and is situated within the locality of other listed Buildings such as The Limes, and Manor Farm House. To that end, the impact of the proposal needs to be assessed not only on the host property and its curtilage, but the wider locality, ensuring that the proposal does not significantly harm other heritage assets.



KEY:
Orange: Beech House - Grade II (application site)
Purple: Ivy House - Ivy House - Grade II
Red: Baptist Church - Grade II
Blue: The Limes - Grade II*
Yellow: Manor Farm House - Grade II
Green: The George - Grade II*
Brown: Barn east of Manor Farm - Grade II
Pink: The Gables - Grade II
Grey: Kings Croft - Grade II

Host dwelling:

The host dwelling (Beech House) is a farmhouse of two building periods. Double pile early C17 timber framed and plastered ranges with gables to the street, with later C17 red brick wing to the east with hipped roof; all roofs are plain tiled.

Application outbuilding and adjacent buildings within the same curtilage:

The application outbuilding structure is a red brick built single storey barn, with a ridge height of circa 5.5m at the western end, and 5.2m at the western end. As previously discussed, the roof pitch appears not to be original, and it is believed that this would have originally been a much steeper pitch, akin to other outbuildings along the High Street. The corrugated roof material and the metal roof structure below it clearly indicates that it is not the original structure, and the modern brickwork at the top of the gable end elevations suggest that the roof pitch has been altered in the past

The barn fronts the High Street with a mostly blank façade, including only two small window openings. To the rear (south) elevation the barn has a single large opening and two further window openings, with evidence of many other previous openings having been infilled with brickwork.

To the west end of the outbuilding there is an additional single storey timber clad annex to the barn, which houses an oil tank and general storage. This is constructed of modern materials, thought to be added late C20.

There is a further small single storey structure to the south-east of the outbuilding, currently used as a small workshop and storage. This structure is viewed as a garden store/outbuilding in the context of the site as a whole, and the interest of this is considered not to be significant. Notwithstanding this, the setting of this structures is not impacted by the proposals, as there are no significant alterations to the external appearance, and no encroachment upon the structure through an increase in footprint.

To the south of the outbuilding is a timber clad structure with a corrugated roof. Again this is currently used for storage. The roof is clearly not original, and it is thought that this could have once been thatched. The proposal will not impact upon this structure.

Conservation Area

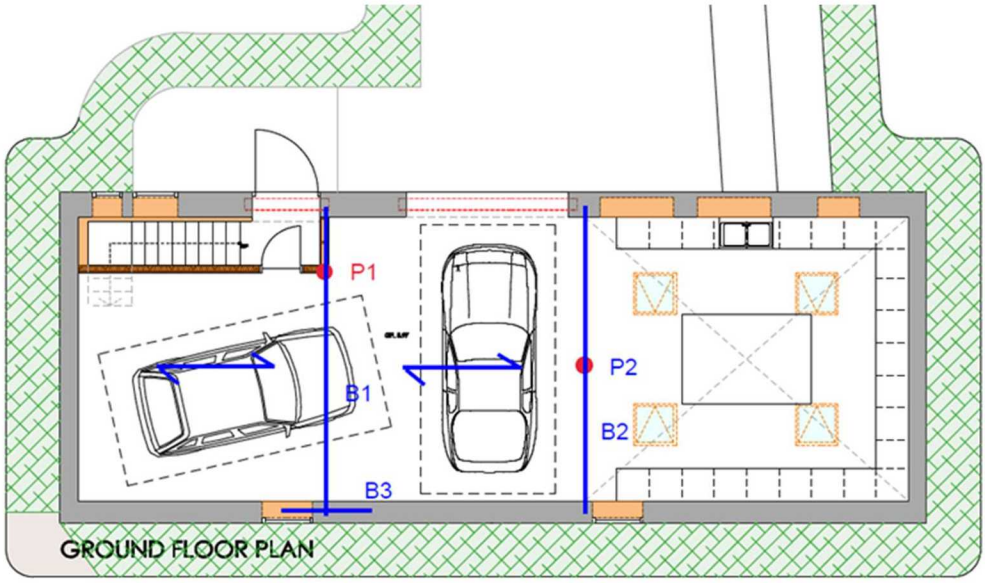
The application site lies within the Spaldwick Conservation Area, and the frontage of the site, including its mature trees flanking the driveway add significance to the locality, and contribute to the special interest of the street scene. In addition, an established hedge fronts the High Street and provides enclosure and screening from the residential activity within the site.

During the design of the proposal, both structural engineers and professional Arboriculturalists have been consulted and have provided constraints within which the proposal has worked within, to ensure that significant damage to the trees and hedge does not occur.

The proposal requires only minor alterations to the outward appearance of the outbuilding. The streetscene in particular will remain unchanged, save for the modest increase in ride height. The eaves height will remain as existing and the openings visible within the north and eastern elevations will retain a very similar appearance. Although some alterations are proposed to the south elevation, these are slight adaptions to existing/historic openings, and will not be visible from outside of the application site. The replacement roofing material, with clay pantiles, is considered to be a significant improvement over the existing profiled asbestos sheeting. Although the proposed roof will contain conservation style rooflights, these are assessed to be sympathetic and modest in number considering the significant volume of the building. As such, the proposals are considered to appropriate within the context of the Conservation Area and are assessed as improving the visual appearance of the outbuilding and streetscene as a whole.

Structure

As part of the initial feasibility exercise for the conversion of the barn, a Structural Engineer and Ground investigations team was appointed to conduct soil testing and to excavate test pits to validate the existing foundations. Although the foundations were found to be sufficient in the main, to accommodate the proposed conversion, the engineer has preliminary designed a beam and post arrangement to facilitate the insertion of the first floor. A basic layout of this is included below.



Otherwise, the engineer has confirmed that the structure is "substantial in construction" and would therefore be appropriate for conversion. Additional strengthening will be added through the insertion of the aforementioned beam and post arrangement, as well as the new roof structure being designed to provide replacement lateral restraint to the walls. Additional comments form the engineer include:

"The two posts would have their own pads, and P2 would also support the ridge beam."

"B3 would be a spreader beam, as the end reaction would be high."

"The connections between the posts and beam would be moment connections, to provide some stability."

"We could also have intermediate "east-west" beams and span the joists the other way, to reduce their size, if required."

Conclusion

The outbuilding is of substantial masonry construction and following a structural condition assessment of both the below ground and above ground structures, the building has been assessed by a structural Engineer as being appropriate for the proposed works. Due care and consideration have been given to the structure required to facilitate the insertion of the mezzanine floor, to ensure that the existing walls are capable of supporting the additional weight.

The outward appearance of the outbuilding remains largely as existing, reducing any impact upon the setting of the adjacent listed buildings or wider Conservation Area.

The increase in ridge height is modest and likely returns the roof pitch to that closer to the original roof. The material pallet selected replicates that used on the adjacent subservient outbuilding structures and helps maintain the hierarchy of structures within the site.

The intended use of the outbuilding remains ancillary and is not considered to be detrimental to the residential area within which the building resides. The application seeks a meaningful future use for the redundant outbuilding, whilst meeting current deficiencies within the property (i.e. lack of secure parking).