

Restoration and Conversion
Lower Castleton
Westhide Herefordshire

**Design and Access Statement
incorporating
Heritage Statement**

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a revised Planning and Listed Building Consent Application for the restoration, conversion and alteration of Lower Castleton, Westhide, Herefordshire. It has been prepared with reference to the CABE guide on design and access statements (published 2006). We have also studied the relevant planning policies published by Herefordshire Council and consulted previously with the Council's Planning Officer Roland Close and the Conservation Officer at the time Chris Partrick prior to submitting the original application. We have not re-consulted prior to submitting this revised application as the changes envisaged are principally internal.

This application is a revised submission following approval on the 5th October 2011 of Planning & Listed Building Consent applications DMN/111853/F & DMN/111854/L respectively.

The work approved under these permissions relating to the main house and the first two bays of the barns was undertaken between 2012-2014. This revised application is focused primarily on changes to the remainder of the attached barns and the adjacent Bothy outbuilding.

Permission was originally granted for the conversion of the barns into a culinary school and offices whilst the Bothy was to be rebuilt to provide on-site accommodation for those attending residential cookery courses at the culinary school.

The property is in the process of changing hands and the new owners have no wish to operate a commercial venture from the site. Instead they see the future for Lower Castleton as being purely residential with the barns converted to further residential space and the Bothy rebuilt as garaging with a games room over.

Introduction

Lower Castleton is a Grade II Listed farmstead situated in a rural location midway between the villages of Westhide and Ocle Pychard.

The current owners have embarked on a programme of work intended to restore the buildings to prime condition and the new owners wish to continue this work

A separate Structural Engineers Report and outline Schedule of Repairs has been compiled and is enclosed. This should be read in conjunction with the Design, Access and Heritage Statement.

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Existing Building

The group of buildings at Lower Castleton are laid out on a north south axis on the east side and parallel with the lane which comes south from Ocle Pychard.

There are three distinct sections to the property when viewed from the lane. To the north lies the main farmhouse, in the middle of a range of barns and to the south The Bothy.

Main Farmhouse

The main building is an imposing early Georgian double fronted farmhouse constructed in 1724. It is Grade II listed and the Listing description describes it as "Red brick with rusticated stone quoins and band at first floor level. Two storeys. Three windows, three light casements, centre window has stone key block inscribed "1724". Central panelled door with glazed top panels. Porch with slender wood columns. Brick dentil eaves. Steep hipped slate roof."

Though described as two storey the building sits on a heavy stone plinth (which may date from an earlier structure) and as the ground falls away from north to south the building appears three storey when viewed from the south. The listing description dates from 1962 and a number of unsympathetic alterations have been carried out to the property since that date.

The original plan of the house is actually U shaped with a indented entrance in the centre of the rear facade with hipped gables to either side. At some point this indented entrance area was been infilled and roofed over to create the rectangular plan building we seen in 2011. The original windows had also been removed and replaced.

Barns and Hop kilns.

Lying immediately to the south of the house and attached to its southern flank lies a long range of two storey barns. Due the changes in level on the site ground floor in the barns is level with cellar level in the main house.

The barns themselves are also Grade II listed for group value and the Listing description describes them as "C17/18 stone rubble barn with upper floor timber frame with red brick nogging. Tile roof with gable ends. Including adjoining twin-rounded red brick hop kilns with slate conical roofs."

The building can be split down into two separate sections. Whilst the exact sequence of construction is unclear it appears that the southern 4 bay section of the range was once a free standing building. The middle three bay section is of a later date and post-dates the construction of the main house in 1724 as windows within the house have been modified or blocked in entirely to facilitate the construction of the roof over this central section. Though difficult to prove the ground floor of the southern range appears contemporary with the cellar of the main house and seems to indicate that there were once two single storey stone structures here. Later generations added the house, the upper floor to the barn, infilled the gap between the two and then built the hop kilns to the east to create the range of buildings we see today.

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The Bothy

To the south of the main range of buildings lies The Bothy. This was originally a two storey red brick structure with slate roof built to house seasonal workers on the farm upstairs with cartshed storage beneath and pig styes to the rear.

The design of the building was inherently weak as the cartshed opening in the northern gable end was too wide and the slender brick piers on either side too narrow to cope with the weight of the brick gable above. The cutting in of a dormer window on the eastern flank further weakened the structure and by 2010 the building was in a dangerous structural condition. The owners under the advice of a structural engineer have carefully taken down the unsafe structural elements and set aside the salvaged timbers, bricks and pantiles for rebuilding.

Detailed Proposals

The proposal is to carry out a complete restoration and modernisation of the property to properly equip it to function as both a home in the 21st century whilst simultaneously preserving and enhancing the character of this delightful range of existing buildings.

Taking each building in turn the detailed proposals are as follows:-

Main House.

Front (West) Elevation

The intention is to turn the clock back and return the front elevation to its former glory.

The porch will be restored on a like for like basis and the current windows replaced with new painted timber windows that faithfully reproduce the section sizes and sight lines of the original windows. One surviving example of which has been found in pieces in the cellar and will be used as a template for the new. Other than that no changes are proposed for the front elevation. *Work now carried out.*

Side (North and South) elevations.

No changes proposed other than restoration/replacement of windows. *Work now carried out.*

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Rear (East) Elevation

The proposal is to remove the unsympathetic and badly constructed infill to the rear of the building so the original U shaped plan of the house can be read. The space will then be enclosed within a glazed screen and glazed roof to provide a light filled hallway. *Work now carried out.*

The Velux rooflights will be replaced with Conservation rooflights more in keeping with the character of the building.

Interior

Within the main body of the building changes are kept to a minimum. The internal changes to the property have already been approved under Listed Building Consent no. DCNC2007/3841/L. These alterations included changes to the internal layout (shown on our proposals drawings) and opening up of blocked in fire places. *Work now carried out.*

The current proposals envisage stripping out the wc from the rear hall I (so the original space of the building can be read) and reinstating the openings from the rear hall into the Kitchen and Living Room to their original width.

Work now carried out.

Access to the first floor bathroom is now from the first floor half landing rather than second floor. Access is via an original blocked in window opening currently partially obscured by the later addition stairs in the bathroom which are to be removed. *Work now carried out.*

The blocked in window opening on the southern flank will be reinstated as a doorway to provide access from the Kitchen through into the Barns. *Work now carried out.*

Barns and Hop Kilns

The proposal is to use the barns for three distinct but inter related uses.

Immediately adjacent to the kitchen the first three bays of the barn at first floor will be used to provide additional living accommodation. The first bay will provide space for a new staircase. A short flight of steps will take you up to a new open plan Play Room area. *This work has now been carried out.*

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A longer flight of steps takes you down to the ground floor of the barn, a wc and storage for coats and boots etc. This is to be the "dirty route" into the property. *This work has now been carried out.*

Gym & Study

The remainder of the ground floor is given over to a home office/study and a personal gym.

The ground floor of the first hop kilns will be used as a changing area and the second one left as a double height space as part of the gym. A further double height space will be created in the first bay of the barn. Access to a mezzanine floor for a rowing machine and exercise bike will only be possible via climbing apparatus installed as part of the gym.

First Floor

Beyond the Play Room two further bedrooms will be created, both with en-suites. The en-suite for the second bedroom will be housed in the upper part of the first oast house.

External alterations to the barn buildings are kept to an absolute minimum. No new openings are requested through the stone walling and all existing openings are reused. Glazed inner doors are inserted behind the original shutter doors so that additional light can be created without changing the character of the building. *A pair of incongruous velux rooflights over the three bay section have already been removed and replaced with a more sympathetic bank of roof glazing between trusses and purlins under the existing permission.* Hop kilns roofs will be restored by the reintroduction of the timber cowls. The existing Velux rooflights will be removed and glazing incorporated into the new cowls to provide subtle top lighting into the hop kiln interiors.

The Bothy

As there are no longer any plans to run a residential culinary school the new owners seek permission to rebuild the Bothy as simple garaging with an open plan Games Room above. Lean-to structures will be rebuilt to house gardening equipment and an outside toilet will also be provided.

The building will be modified to overcome the structural weaknesses in the original design with openings in the flank wall instead of the gable end and wider brick piers.

Environmental Sustainability

The applicants are keen to produce a building that is highly energy efficient and economic to run.

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Central to this approach is the concept of "build tight ventilate right". This involves creating a building that is very well insulated and has low rates of air leakage combined with efficient and controllable natural ventilation. This is proven to be the most cost effective way of reducing energy bills by reducing the need for heat in the first place. Central to this is the restoration of the windows. Draught free double glazed windows will dramatically improve the thermal performance of the house whilst restoring the original appearance of the property. *This work has already been carried out to the main house but is yet to be done on the barns and oast houses.*

Size and Scale

The existing building and the proposals occupy the same footprint so there is no alteration to the size or scale of the property.

Access

The property is situated in a rural location mid-way the villages of Ocle Pychard and Westhide. The 469 Hereford - Bromyard bus passes through both Westhide and Ocle Pychard as does the 405 market day service. The main 420 Bromyard to Hereford bus service passes close by via the A465 and Burley Gate roundabout. The property has extensive grounds and a large courtyard area suitable for the parking and turning of vehicles. Local service are available in Withington (less than 3 miles away) and all regional services in Hereford 7 miles away. There is ample space for the parking and storing of bicycles on site.

Ecology

Updated Ecology Surveys will be forwarded in due course.

Drainage

A new bio-disc sewage treatment has been installed under Building Regulations approval no. I20027

Conclusion

Taking collectively these proposals offer the opportunity to give a new lease of life to an important group of Listed Buildings. We trust the enclosed meets with your approval and we look forward to hearing from you in due course