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LOWER COURT FARM

North Wraxall



Design & Access Statement

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1. CONTEXT

1.1. Lower Court Farm is a 17th century Grade II Listed Farmhouse located in the village of North Wraxall

1.2. Works were completed to refurbish the farmhouse following consents granted in 2017.

1.3. There are several barns and outbuildings within the grounds of the property which are the subject of these applications. These are curtilage listed and this statement should be read in conjunction with the heritage statement also submitted with the application.

1.4. This application follows on from the 2017 applications in terms of bringing the buildings on site back into use, preserving and enhancing them through sensitive conversion.

1.5. The site is located within the North Wraxall Conservation Area and the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS

2.1. Conversion of the Cross Barn into ancillary residential accommodation associated with the main house. The barn is currently used as storage.

2.2. Conversion of the Columned Barn into an ancillary leisure facility to the farmhouse which will include an indoor swimming pool, changing room, yoga studio and outdoor dining area. Like the adjacent Cross Barn, the Columned Barn is currently used as storage.

2.3. Conversion of the Cart Shed into a home office, retaining a portion of the floor plan for externally accessed garden storage. In its present state the Cart Shed is used as a covered space, with the lean-to as garden storage.

2.4. Form a new flight of stone steps to link the upper and lower portions of the garden to the east of the main farmhouse.

2.5. Associated landscaping works to connect the conversions and provide additional parking and EV charging points.

3. CROSS BARN



Figure 1. The southern gable of the Cross Barn

3.1. Design

3.1.1. The design of the conversion of the Cross Barn utilises the existing building footprint, volume, and openings as much as possible.

3.1.2. The proposal is to retain the central volume of the main barn as a large open plan living area, with a kitchen, dining space, and living room.

3.1.3. Two mezzanine floors are proposed which will provide bedroom accommodation without reducing the characteristic open volume of the barn. These new insertions will be constructed with contemporary timber detailing to delineate them from the historic fabric of the barn.

3.1.4. The single-storey extension to the north-east will be converted into an ensuite bedroom.

3.1.5. Two new timber glazed screens will be set back from the existing barn entrances to allow natural daylight into the space. These will have external timber shutters.

3.1.6. The existing openings to the barn will have hardwood casement windows inserted into them. The lancet windows in the southern elevation will have fixed glazing in hardwood frames.

3.1.7. Externally the existing log store to the west will be taken down. This area will become an outdoor dining terrace.

3.1.8. The existing LHS Bat Maternity Roost will be retained in-situ with the door to this area kept locked to restrict access.

3.1.9. A new bat loft for GHS Bats will be inserted in the roof at the northern end of the barn.

3.2. Materials

3.2.1. The floor finish of the barn will be natural stone tiles with timber floorboards on the mezzanine levels.

3.2.2. The existing walls of the barn will be internally insulated with wood fibre insulation to improve the thermal performance of the barn and reduce energy demand. The walls will have a lime rendered finish.

3.2.3. The primary roof structure will be left exposed. The area between the A-frames will have a timber boarded ceiling.

3.2.4. The new floor insertions and partitions will have contemporary timber detailing to delineate them from the historic fabric of the barn.

4. COLUMNED BARN



Figure 2. The southern elevation of the Columned Barn

4.1. Design

4.1.1. The proposals utilise the existing footprint and layout of the building, using the enclosed spaces for the changing room, yoga studio and plant room and the more open and dramatic space for the pool.

4.1.2. The proposed swimming pool will be enclosed be a minimal aluminium glazed sliding screen set behind the stone columns. This will be recessed into the floor and ceiling giving a “frameless” appearance which will be recessive relative to the historic columns.

4.2. Materials

4.2.1. The floor will have natural stone tiles.

4.2.2. The thermal performance of the walls will be upgraded with internal wall insulation to make the internal environment of the pool area more stable and reduce energy demand. The walls will have a rendered finish.

4.2.3. The primary roof structure will be left exposed. The area between the kingpost trusses will have a boarded timber ceiling.

5. CART SHED



Figure 3. The eastern elevation of the Cart Shed

5.1. Design

5.1.1. It is proposed to strip out the existing timber structure and replace it with a new timber structure capable of spanning the space with no columns.

5.1.2. The volume will be divided into a central section that will contain the home office, with two outer bays for storage and service. The lean-to structure to the south will continue to be used as garden storage.

5.1.3. The existing opening on the western elevation will be retained with a new glazed door inserted to provide light into the building and access to the arboretum to the east. New clerestory windows will be introduced along this elevation to bring light and ventilation into the back of the building.

5.1.4. The eastern elevation will be clad in larch boards, with full height glazing in the central section and boarded doors to the garden storage on each side.

5.2. Materials

5.2.1. The existing stone walls will be internally insulated with wood fibre boards to improve their thermal performance and will be finished with lime render

5.2.2. The new walls and partitions will be clad in larch.

5.2.3. The roof will be corrugated metal to retain the agricultural aesthetic of the barn.

5.2.4. The floor will be covered with larch floorboards.

5.2.5. The glazed sliding screen to the east will be a minimal, powder coated aluminium screen set behind the external timber structure.

6. EXTERNAL STEPS



Figure 4. The existing retaining wall.

6.1. Design

6.1.1. The steps are designed to connect the upper and lower portions of the garden, through what appears to be a former opening in the retaining wall.

6.1.2. The retaining wall will be curved back to retain the informal aesthetic of the wall. With planting incorporated into the steps to soften the design and grow up the wall, breaking up its mass.

6.1.3. The treads will be rubble stone to tie in with the informal aesthetic of this area of the garden.

7. ACCESS & PARKING

7.1. The existing access to the property is along a single-track road via a five-bar gate at the site boundary.

7.2. The track leads to a parking area in the centre of the site with parking for six cars. The track returns up the slope past the Cross Barn, terminating in an additional informal parking area for a further two cars to the north of Lower Court Farm.

7.3. There are eight existing parking spaces on site, this number will be retained in the proposals and is sufficient to cater for the demand of the conversions.

7.4. Two EV charging stations will be provided in the northern parking area which is proposed to be reconfigured and formalised in the same material as the track.

8. LANDSCAPING

8.1. The site has already been landscaped and only a small amount of additional work is required to adapt the garden to the proposals.

8.1.1. The parking area to the north will be reconfigured and formalised, with new EV charging points in this location. The parking spaces will be covered with the same material as the track.

8.1.2. The hoggin garden path will be extended to the cart shed.

9. SUSTAINABILITY

9.1. It is proposed to upgrade the building fabric of all three conversions to reduce heating demand. This reduced demand will be met by Air Source Heat Pumps.

9.2. Sustainable and breathable insulation materials have been chosen to retain a healthy indoor environment and reduce condensation risks.

9.3. The walls and ceilings will be insulated using wood fibre insulation. The amount of insulation installed will be sufficient to meet the "upgraded" value within the building regulations.

9.4. Wood fibre insulation is a breathable material, allowing moisture to pass through the building fabric and reducing condensation risk.

9.5. The new floor structure will have underfloor heating which will be powered by Air Source Heat Pumps to maintain a stable temperature in the thermally improved barns.

10. PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

10.1. A pre-application response was issued by Jane Fuller on the 22/05/23 ref: ENQ/2022/01289. The response was broadly supportive with the proposals being acceptable in principle subject to further information submitted with the full application.

10.2. Natural England were consulted prior to engagement with the council through their discretionary advice service. The survey information, lighting studies, and mitigation strategies formed an integral part of the design process. The proposals were acceptable in principal subject to further detail and Natural England's representative commented on site that the proposals went above and beyond in their approach to dealing with ecological aspect of the scheme.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1. The design approach to the conversion of the three barns is sensitive to the historic, ecological, and climatic context. The use of the existing building footprints and volumes, as well as the existing openings means that almost all the historic fabric of the building is retained, and the historic form is preserved.

11.2. The existing structures are at risk of deteriorating further without work being done to stabilise them. Finding a viable use for the structures conserves them for future generations and the sensitive design approach will enhance and highlight the historic features of the barns.

11.3. The sensitive ecological context within which the barns are situated has been at the core of the design approach, with early engagement with Natural England and lighting studies informing the design process. The result is a design which respects the bats' habitat and habits, providing space for them to co-exist with the owners of Lower Court Farm.

11.4. It is proposed to upgrade the building fabric to greatly improve its thermal performance. This will dramatically reduce the energy demand of the property and create a healthy internal environment within the buildings.