

Combined Design & Access and Heritage Statement

**Erection of Oak framed Extension to existing Garage building to create
ancillary accommodation.**

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Combined Design & Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by Prime Oak to accompany a Planning Application seeking permission for the extension of an existing detached garage building at Maxcroft Barn, Maxcroft Lane, Hilperton Marsh in Wiltshire. The proposal comprises a modest extension to the existing structure with the creation of first-floor accommodation within the roof space, intended for incidental residential purposes such as a home office. The ground floor is to be converted to allow necessary step free accommodation for the residents of Maxcroft House. The development has been carefully conceived to respect both the physical characteristics of the site and the historic setting arising from the proximity of the Grade II listed Maxcroft House.

1.2. Although the application building itself is not listed, its location within the established historic grounds of Maxcroft House means that the proposal must be considered in heritage terms. National planning policy makes it clear that the setting of a listed building forms part of the significance where it contributes to how the asset is experienced, understood and

appreciated. Accordingly, this statement assesses both the design and heritage matters in an integrated manner, ensuring that architectural, spatial and material considerations are fully aligned with heritage conservation objectives.

1.3. The document therefore explains the site context, outlines the proposed development, evaluates the significance of nearby heritage assets, and assesses the impact of the proposal upon their setting. It also addresses access considerations, sustainability credentials and the ongoing ancillary domestic use of the building. The overarching objective has been to produce a scheme that remains subservient, visually sympathetic and entirely appropriate within its historic context, while still providing functional modern accommodation suited to contemporary domestic needs.

2.0. SITE CONTEXT AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1. The site is located within Hilperton Marsh, a semi-rural settlement characterised by a mix of historic canal-side buildings, converted agricultural structures and later domestic development. The Kennet and Avon Canal, situated nearby, has historically influenced the character and development pattern of the area, with many properties originally associated with canal trade, agriculture or small-scale industry. Over time, these functions have evolved into predominantly residential uses, resulting in a layered built environment where historic structures coexist with later additions and ancillary outbuildings.

2.2. Maxcroft House, the principal designated heritage asset in the vicinity, is an early nineteenth-century Grade II listed dwelling constructed in coursed rubble stone with slate roofing. Its architectural significance derives from its vernacular construction, historic association with canal-related activity and contribution to the character of Maxcroft Lane. The building retains a clear visual presence within its immediate setting, although that setting has inevitably evolved through the subdivision of land, conversion of associated buildings and the introduction of ancillary domestic structures.

2.3. The existing garage building associated with Maxcroft Barn which is subject to extension forms part of this evolved development. It is physically separated from the listed dwelling which lies to the northeast and already reads as a later ancillary addition, rather than part of the original historic fabric. Its presence therefore does not define the significance of the listed building but instead reflects the continued residential adaptation typical of historic canal-side properties across the region.

2.4. Importantly, as already outlined, the garage sits to the south-west of Maxcroft House and is visually secondary within the overall site hierarchy. Existing landscaping, boundary treatments

and varying built form limit intervisibility between the structures, reinforcing the ancillary character of the garage. These spatial relationships form a key consideration in assessing the acceptability of the proposed extension.

3.0. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The proposal seeks to extend the existing detached garage building by approximately 5.5 metres by 5.8 metres, with the ridge height maintained at approximately 6.3 metres to match the existing building. Retaining the existing height has been a deliberate design decision to ensure that the building continues to read as a modest ancillary structure rather than an overly dominant addition within the setting of a listed building.

3.2. The extension will facilitate improved internal functionality at ground floor level and provide a first-floor space suitable for incidental domestic uses such as a home office, hobby room or ancillary storage. No independent residential unit is proposed, and the building will remain functionally and legally ancillary to the main dwelling. This distinction is important in planning terms, as it avoids intensification of use or introduction of additional residential curtilage impacts.

3.3. Material selection has been guided by a desire to achieve visual continuity with both the existing building and the wider historic context. Weatherboard cladding will match the existing garage, natural stone detailing reflects nearby traditional construction, roof tiles will match the established roofscape, and timber framed windows and doors provide a high-quality traditional finish appropriate to rural ancillary buildings. The intention is not to replicate historic fabric artificially but to ensure a sympathetic and coherent architectural response.

3.4. No changes are proposed to vehicular access, parking arrangements or the wider site layout. Construction activity will remain confined to the immediate footprint of the existing garage and its extension, meaning that landscape character, established vegetation and the spatial relationship with the listed building remain unaffected.

4.0. HERITAGE STATEMENT

4.1. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

4.1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) sets out the Government's overarching planning policies for England and establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Within that context, it makes clear that the historic environment is an irreplaceable resource whose conservation should be given considerable weight in planning decisions. Given the proximity of the proposal to the Grade II listed Maxcroft

House, Section 16 of the Framework forms the primary national policy context for this application.

4.1.2. The NPPF establishes several key principles that are directly relevant to this proposal:

- Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- The contribution made by setting must be understood when assessing impact.
- Proposals should provide proportionate information sufficient to understand potential heritage effects.
- Great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets.
- Where harm is identified, this must be clearly justified and weighed against public benefits.

These principles collectively require a balanced and evidence-led assessment rather than a presumption against all change within historic settings.

4.1.3. In terms of assessing impact, the Framework distinguishes between substantial harm and less than substantial harm to heritage significance. Substantial harm to Grade II listed buildings is expected to be exceptional, whereas proposals resulting in less than substantial harm require a balanced judgment having regard to the scale of harm and the benefits of the development. In the case of modest ancillary extensions such as this, the critical considerations are typically scale, material compatibility, visual hierarchy and preservation of key spatial relationships with the listed asset.

4.1.4. Beyond heritage-specific policies, the NPPF also places strong emphasis on good design as a fundamental component of sustainable development. Well-designed places should respond positively to the local character, reinforce existing settlement patterns and use materials that integrate development into its surroundings. The proposed extension, which maintains the existing ridge height, extends away from the listed building and employs a sympathetic and matching material palette, has been consciously developed to align with these design objectives while safeguarding heritage significance.

4.2. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.2.1. At the local level, the statutory development plan includes the Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted 2015). Within this document, Core Policies 57 and 58 are particularly relevant, addressing design quality, local character and the conservation of heritage assets. These

policies broadly reflect national guidance but provide locally specific emphasis on contextual design and the sensitive evolution of historic environments.

4.2.2. Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping) requires development proposals to demonstrate a clear understanding of local context and to integrate successfully into their surroundings. Key policy expectations include:

- Responding positively to local character, landscape setting and historic context.
- Respecting scale, height, massing, building line and plot relationships.
- Using materials and architectural detailing appropriate to local distinctiveness.
- Creating development that complements rather than competes with existing buildings.

The proposed extension reflects these objectives through its retained scale, continuity of materials and clearly subordinate relationship to Maxcroft House.

4.2.3. Core Policy 58 (Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment) focuses specifically on safeguarding designated heritage assets and their settings. It confirms that development should:

- Protect, conserve and where appropriate enhance heritage assets.
- Preserve the significance of listed buildings, including their setting.
- Ensure new development responds sensitively to historic landscapes and townscapes.
- Support sustainable uses that secure the ongoing viability of heritage assets.

In this instance, the proposal does not affect the fabric of the listed building and has been designed specifically to preserve its architectural primacy and historic setting.

4.2.4. The wider character of Hilperton Marsh and the canal corridor also informs local design expectations. Traditional materials, modest ancillary structures and an evolved domestic landscape characterise the area. The proposal aligns with this established pattern by extending an existing outbuilding in a manner that reflects local vernacular construction rather than introducing discordant contemporary form.

4.2.5. Overall, the proposal is considered to accord with both national and local policy by delivering a high-quality contextual design that preserves the significance of the Grade II listed Maxcroft House while supporting the continued practical residential use of the site.

4.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LISTED BUILDING

4.3.1. Maxcroft House is designated Grade II for its architectural and historic interest as a representative early-nineteenth century canal-side dwelling. Its significance derives primarily from its vernacular rubble stone construction, traditional roof form, historical association with canal trade and contribution to the local historic townscape. These characteristics reflect a broader pattern of development along the Kennet and Avon Canal during the period when inland waterways played a central role in regional commerce.

4.3.2. The architectural qualities of the listed building, including its materials, proportions and detailing-form the principal basis of its significance. While its surrounding land historically formed part of a functional curtilage associated with canal-related activity, that curtilage has evolved substantially over time. Subdivision, residential conversion and the addition of ancillary domestic structures have all contributed to the current character of the setting.

4.3.3. It is therefore important to recognise that the significance of Maxcroft House does not derive from an undeveloped landscape setting or strict historic spatial purity. Rather, it reflects an ongoing pattern of adaptation typical of historic canal-side properties. Ancillary buildings such as garages, outbuildings and extensions are a normal part of this continued residential evolution.

4.4. CONTRIBUTION OF SETTING TO SIGNIFICANCE

4.4.1. The contribution of setting to the listed building's significance can broadly be understood through spatial relationships, visual prominence and historic contextual associations. The listed dwelling retains clear architectural primacy within its immediate context, and that primacy is not dependent upon the absence of ancillary structures but upon their subordinate scale and sympathetic design.

4.4.2. The existing garage building does not contribute positively to the architectural significance of the listed asset; however, nor does it detract from it. It simply reflects modern domestic requirements. Extending this existing ancillary structure in a sympathetic manner therefore does not materially alter the heritage value of the listed building.

4.4.3. Furthermore, the proposed extension is positioned so that it extends away from the listed building, reinforcing rather than undermining the spatial hierarchy between principal heritage asset and ancillary built form.

4.5. IMPACT ON THE SETTING OF THE LISTED BUILDING

4.5.1. The proposal does not involve any physical alteration to Maxcroft House itself and therefore preserves its historic fabric entirely. The primary consideration is the potential effect on setting, particularly visual relationships, spatial hierarchy and perceived prominence.

4.5.2. Because the extension maintains the existing ridge height and adopts matching materials, it will read as a natural evolution of the existing garage rather than a new competing structure. This ensures that the listed building remains the visually dominant architectural element within the site.

4.5.3. The separation distance between the garage and the listed dwelling, combined with existing landscaping and boundary treatments, means that intervisibility remains limited. The proposal therefore does not materially alter key views toward or away from the listed asset.

4.5.4. In heritage policy terms, any impact would clearly fall within the category of “less than substantial harm” as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework. Instead, given the modest scale, sympathetic materials and existing ancillary context, it is reasonable to conclude that the impact is neutral overall.

4.5.5. Where less than substantial harm is identified, national policy requires this to be weighed against the benefits of the proposal. In this instance, those benefits include improved functionality of an existing building, continued viable domestic use of the site, and the use of high-quality materials that reinforce local character.

5.0. APPEARANCE, SCALE AND DESIGN APPROACH

5.1. The overarching design objective has been to produce an extension that reads as a natural and proportionate evolution of the existing garage building rather than a visually assertive new addition. This approach reflects established good practice in historic settings, where subordinate scale, material continuity and restrained detailing are generally more appropriate than overt architectural contrast. The intention has therefore been to reinforce the ancillary character of the building while ensuring that it remains clearly secondary to the listed Maxcroft House.

5.2. Maintaining the existing ridge height of approximately 6.3 metres has been a key design decision. Increasing the height would have risked altering the perceived hierarchy between the principal listed dwelling and the ancillary structure, whereas retaining the existing roofline ensures that the extension remains visually recessive. The extension therefore expands the

building laterally rather than vertically, which is typically less intrusive in heritage terms and helps preserve the established spatial balance across the site.

5.3. Material selection has been equally important in achieving a sympathetic design response. The proposed weatherboard cladding reflects the existing garage treatment and is consistent with the informal domestic outbuilding character already present. The incorporation of natural stone elements responds directly to the traditional construction of Maxcroft House and neighbouring historic structures, helping visually integrate the extension into the wider context without resorting to pastiche replication.

5.4. Roof finishes will match the existing tiles, ensuring continuity across the roofscape and avoiding visual fragmentation. Similarly, the use of timber framed windows and doors reflects the rural vernacular typical of ancillary buildings in canal-side settlements. These details contribute to a cohesive architectural language that supports rather than competes with the historic environment.

5.5. Taken together, the design approach ensures that the extension remains clearly identifiable as an ancillary domestic building while demonstrating a level of material quality and architectural sensitivity appropriate to its historic setting.

6.0. USE AND FUNCTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1. The proposed first-floor accommodation is intended solely for incidental domestic use associated with the main dwelling. Typical use may include a home office, hobby space, storage or similar ancillary functions that reflect contemporary patterns of flexible home working and lifestyle requirements. Importantly, no independent residential unit is proposed, nor is any subdivision of the site anticipated.

6.2. Retaining ancillary use is significant in both planning and heritage terms. Independent residential use could potentially introduce additional activity, servicing requirements and landscape impacts that might affect the character of the setting. By contrast, ancillary domestic use maintains continuity with the established residential function of the site and avoids intensification.

6.3. The proposal therefore supports the continued viable occupation of the wider property without fundamentally altering how the site functions. National planning policy recognises that enabling heritage assets and their associated properties to remain in active, sustainable use is often key to their long-term conservation.

6.4. From a practical perspective, the additional space will improve functionality without requiring expansion of residential curtilage, additional parking provision or significant changes to landscape character. This efficient use of an existing building footprint aligns with broader sustainability and land-use efficiency objectives.

6.5. Overall, the proposed use represents a modest enhancement of existing domestic facilities rather than a material change in how the site is experienced or operated.

7.0. ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

7.1. There are no proposed alterations to existing vehicular or pedestrian access arrangements. The site currently benefits from established access via Maxcroft Lane, and the garage building is already served by appropriate parking and manoeuvring space. Retaining these arrangements avoids any additional pressure on local infrastructure and ensures continuity of established circulation patterns.

7.2. From an accessibility perspective, the design will incorporate reasonable measures to facilitate inclusive use where practical, particularly at ground floor level. While the first-floor accommodation will necessarily involve stair access, this reflects the ancillary nature of the space and is typical for domestic outbuildings of this type.

7.3. Construction access will utilise existing routes and will be managed to minimise disruption to neighbouring properties and the surrounding environment. Given the modest scale of the proposal, construction impacts are expected to be temporary and limited.

8.0. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. Extending an existing building rather than constructing a new standalone structure inherently represents a more sustainable approach to development. It makes efficient use of existing built fabric, reduces land take and typically results in low embodied carbon compared with entirely new construction.

8.2. Material choice further reinforces the sustainability credentials of the proposal. Timber framing and cladding are renewable resources sourced responsibly from PEFC-certified forests. Natural stone detailing offers durability and longevity consistent with traditional construction methods.

8.3. The modest scale of the extension means that operational energy demand will be limited. Modern insulation standards, efficient glazing and appropriate ventilation measures can be incorporated without affecting the external appearance of the building, thereby balancing sustainability objectives with heritage sensitivity.

8.4. The proposal therefore aligns with the core sustainability objectives of national planning policy, which encourage efficient use of resources, minimisation of environmental impact and adaptation of existing buildings where feasible.

9.0. OVERALL HERITAGE BALANCE AND PLANNING CONCLUSION

9.1. The proposed extension represents a modest, carefully considered addition to an existing ancillary garage building with immediate domestic curtilage of Maxcroft Barn, but also the historic surroundings of Maxcroft House, a Grade II listed building. It does not involve any alteration to the listed building itself and has been designed specifically to remain subordinate in scale, material character and visual presence.

9.2. Assessment of heritage significance confirms that the listed building derives its primary value from its architectural qualities, historic canal-side associations and contributions to local character. The existing garage already forms part of the evolved domestic curtilage and does not define that significance. Extending it sympathetically therefore preserves the key attributes that underpin the listed building's heritage value.

9.3. Any impact on the setting of the listed asset is clearly limited and falls well within the "less than substantial harm" category identified in the NPPF. Indeed, given the modest scale, matching materials and established ancillary context the effect is best characterised as neutral.

9.4. Balanced against this limited impact are the clear practical benefits of the proposal, including improved functionality of an existing building, continued viable residential use of the site and reinforcement of local architectural character through sympathetic material choices. National policy explicitly supports such balanced outcomes where heritage conservation and sustainable use are mutually achieved.

9.5. The proposal also complies with Wiltshire Core Strategy Design and Heritage policies, which seek high-quality contextual design that conserves designated heritage assets while allowing appropriate evolution of historic environments.

9.6. For these reasons, the proposal represents a proportionate, policy-compliant and heritage-sensitive form of development that preserves the significance of nearby heritage assets while meeting legitimate contemporary domestic needs.

