THE ASHES WEDDING & HOSPITALITY VENUE, ENDON, STOKE-ON-TRENT

NEW PROPOSED GLAZED CANOPY 'LINK' BETWEEN THE EAST & WEST BARN



CONSERVATION DESIGN & ACCESS AND PLANNING STATEMENT

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1.0 HISTORY & STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

History :

The Ashes is a fine 'H'-shaped 17th century gentleman's country house and pastoral farmstead with a collection of substantial 17th/early-18th century stone outbuildings including cow sheds/'barns', bull pen, stable & cart shed with granary over. Its history is well documented with original Deeds covering the purchase of the tithes and freehold to the surrounding land and property dating from the 16th century.

The earlier farmhouse saw extensive re-modelling in the early-18th and 19th centuries, and the farm buildings altered and adapted to suit changing farming patterns with the introduction of 'state-of-the-art' cow and milking stalls in the main cow sheds/barns, and the construction of a brick, stone and tile diary building in the early 1940's as a replacement for an earlier and larger building in the same location.

Today, The Ashes farmhouse and farmstead remain in single ownership. The collection of outbuildings have been sympathetically restored and converted into a high-quality hospitality venue (Planning Approval No. 07/00843/FUL, LBC No. 07/00850/LBC), *The Ashes exclusive country house, wedding & hospitality venue,* which opened for business in May 2008.

Local context:

The Ashes farmhouse is Listed Grade II*. The two substantial cow houses/shippons, or 'barns', to the northeast and northwest of the house and the bull pen to the far north and stable & cart shed to the south, are a unique collection of buildings that form the wedding and hospitality venue. These farm buildings date from the 17th & 18th centuries and are Listed Grade II in their own right.



Fig. 1 Site Plan, The Ashes farmhouse and farmstead, 2009

Historical Significance:

The Ashes is probably the finest surviving example of a 17th-18th century traditional 'vernacular' Staffordshire Moorlands farmstead. Original Deeds to the property go back as far as 1570 and there is a well-documented history. The Ashes stands at 500 ft. (150 metres) above sea level, at the foot of the Lask Edge ridge above the Endon Brook pastures and is clearly visible from the main

road (A53) from Stoke to Leek to the southeast. This unspoilt rural setting in open countryside, its history and the quality and extent of the relatively unaltered historic character identify The Ashes as an outstanding example of a 17th-18th century complex of farm buildings in the District. Without doubt The Ashes complex is of special architectural and historical importance because of its age, its context and its completeness and justifies its statutory protection and Listing.

Summary:

The Ashes exclusive country house, wedding & hospitality venue opened for business in May 2008. The collection of outbuildings forms a unique venue, which focuses around a courtyard space. The West barn is the civil ceremony room and the East barn is the banqueting hall, party room and bar.

Now that the venue has been open for some 14-months, it has become clear that there is a need for a covered walk-way to connect the west and east barns to provide shelter for the bride entering the ceremony room principally.

As a temporary measure, a galvanised steel frame structure and off-white coloured vinyl roof covering and side panels has been erected, which provide shelter and connects the south door of the West barn and the north door of the East barn (see fig. 2, 3 & 4).



Fig. 2 View looking west towards the Grade II* Listed farmhouse and Grade II Listed stable & cart shed, 2009





Fig. 3 & 4 Views looking east towards the Grade II Listed West & East barns, 2009

Without doubt, the current temporary canopy, visually interrupts the views of the open countryside, beyond the barns to the east and restricts the aspect of the Grade II* Listed farmhouse and Grade II Listed stable & cart shed, looking west from the north courtyard.

It is therefore proposed to replace the current structure with a new semi-permanent, good quality, carefully considered, steel and glass canopy 'link', which is more sensitive and appropriate to the historic setting.

2.0 CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHY

English Heritage define conservation as 'the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting, in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce these values for present and future generations'[1]

Philosophy:

The general conservation aim of the proposed glass canopy 'link' to The Ashes *exclusive country house, wedding & hospitality venue* is *'to preserve the historic setting of the farmhouse and farmstead; and to maintain and enhance its heritage value and long-term sustainability as an example of one of the finest group of traditional farm buildings in the district'.*

Contributing to this aim the **conservation principles** to be adopted are;

- to maintain the historic and architectural integrity of the site;
- to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the farm buildings and their setting.

Policies:

In line with English Heritage's latest Conservation Policies and Guidance the principal and design of the proposal has evolved from a policy of practical and 'informed conservation' - that is from an understanding and assessment of the history and importance of the farmstead and its setting, to establish its heritage 'significance' - and a realistic analysis with practical and authentic designs of 'comparative significance' and of 'benefit to the place'.

The impact of the proposal has in principal been considered so that it preserves or enhances, rather than detrimentally alters, the character and significance of the surviving structures and their setting through;

- careful & considered design;
- necessary and informed design;
- by fitting new work to existing/old finishes & details, so that destruction of original fabric is minimised;
- the use of appropriate and quality materials, techniques & workmanship.

Reference:

BS 7913 Guide to The Principles of the conservation of historic buildings

PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment

The repair of Historic Buildings : Advice on principles and methods by Christopher Brereton that includes English Heritage's 'Principles of repair'

The SPAB Principles

English Heritage *Conservation Principles : Polices and Guidance*, April 2008

[1] English Heritage : Conservation Policies & Guidance, 2008 p.71

3.0 DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Use: The collection of farm buildings forms *The Ashes exclusive country house, wedding & hospitality venue*.

Amount: The proposed new glazed canopy 'link' will comprise of 2no. 102x127mm painted steel 'T' beams and 2no. painted 60x60mm posts, which span approximately 6.5m between the West and East barns with minimal fixings to the historic structure.

The proposed glazed roof to the canopy 'link' will be offset 50mm from the stonework face of the barns. A new 2.7m long glazed screen, which will sit 700mm above the finished ground level will be fixed to the east barn with minimal fixings. The glazed screen will sit within a channel and welded to the new steel post.

Layout: The layout and function of the space, both internally and externally, will remain unchanged by the proposal.

Scale: The scale of the proposed canopy 'link' is modest and appropriate in its context. The predominance of the historic farm buildings and the character of their setting - the farmstead - will not be harmed by this proposal.

Landscaping: The proposal will not have an effect on the existing landscaping between the barns.

Appearance: The appearance of the proposed painted steel structure and glazed canopy 'link' will not detrimentally impact upon the collection of farm buildings. The steel structure and glass canopy has been design to have a minimal visual impact.

The proposal is a practical response to a real organisation and venue management problem and seeks to improve upon the current temporary solution and enhance the character and appearance of the farmstead as a collection of buildings.

4.0 ACCESS PROPOSALS

Access throughout the site and to the wedding and hospitality venue will not be affected by this proposal.