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FARM BUILDINGS FORMERLY BELONGING TO CHURCH FARM, BRADLEY IN THE MOORS, STAFFORDSHIRE ST10 4DF: HERITAGE STATEMENT TO ACCOMPANY REVISED CONVERSION PROPOSALS



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Cover: General view of the buildings looking south

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INTRODUCTION

1. The writer was commissioned via GRT Architects to undertake a heritage statement in connection with a new scheme for residential conversion of some of the farm buildings at Church Farm, Bradley in the Moors. A detailed site visit was made on Wednesday 24th April, 2019.

2. The heritage asset that invokes the need for a heritage statement is the Grade II listed farmhouse at Church Farm, which was first listed on 17/11/1986. The list description is as follows:

> *ALTON C.P. BRADLEY IN THE MOORS SK 04 SE 7/2 Church Farmhouse and attached garden wall and mounting block - II Farmhouse, wall and mounting block. Mid-C18 remodelling of a C17 house. Ashlar with red brick front; plain tile roof with coped verges; brick ridge stacks. T-shaped plan; 3-room main range aligned north- west/south-east facing south-west and rear wing aligned north-east/south west. 2 storeys and gable-lit attic with dentilled eaves band; 4 windows, horizontal sashes with rebated frames to ground and first floors. An C18 ashlar coped brick wall encloses a front garden in the south-east and south-west sides and has a stone mounting block attached to the south-west. Interior: central room has a wall cupboard with panelled oak doors; dog-leg staircase to the rear of the house with moulded and ramped hand rail, balusters removed.*

3. The need for heritage statements arises from paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) which says:

> *" In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation."*

4. Where harm is involved, the NPPF effectively requests an impact assessment by paragraph 194:

> *"Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification [….]"*

5. Given the continuing lack of clarity and consensus over what constitutes the "curtilage" of a listed building, there could be grounds for claiming that the farm buildings now proposed for conversion are not listed. However, they could reasonably be considered at least as a non-designated heritage asset, and their conversion clearly affects the setting of the listed building. Moreover, the authority has previously taken the stance that listed building consent is required, and in any event the general principles of conversion are applicable whether the buildings are listed or not.

6. Little original research, beyond a simple Ordnance Survey map regression, has been considered necessary to understand the significance of the buildings in the context of the present

proposals. However, the Alton Estate sale catalogue of November 1918[1] does usefully describe the farm buildings at Church Farm as follows:

> *"The Farm Buildings, Stone Brick Tiled and Slated, form a good Yard and comprise: Three Lean-to Piggeries with open Yards, three Bay Implement and Cart-shed with Lean-to Calf-house, Trap-house, with stone stairs to Granary over, Stable for three with Loft over, Cow-shed for thirteen with Byng[2] and Loft over, Gangway, Cow-shed for six, with Byngs and Loft over, Cow-shed for six with Loft over, do. for twelve with Byng, Calf-shed and four Bay Brick Pillared Iron Roof Hay Barn with Loading Bay."*

7. The buildings subject of this application appear to comprise the south-east end of the "cow-shed for thirteen" (Building 4b in this statement) and all of the buildings following it in the description, except the main part of the hay barn which is outside the application site.

8. The buildings are the subject of a recent listed building approval for conversion to dwellings, being Staffordshire Moorlands District Council application SMD/2016/0304, approved on 19th July, 2016. A previous Heritage Statement submitted as part of that application may be referred to as a further background paper to the current proposal.

9. The current statement focuses more on the detail of the buildings and the potential impacts of the amended scheme as now submitted. Some comparisons are drawn with the previous scheme, which can reasonably be regarded as a benchmark for acceptability.

THE BUILDINGS

10. The buildings are chiefly built of single-skin stone blocks, with some thicker walling to gable ends, and may be broken up into five sections for the benefit of description (see **Figure 1**):

11. Building 1 (see **Photos 1, 2, 4 and 5**) appears to be the oldest and in its current form is a cowhouse of three bays 1a, 1b and 1c. It does not look as though it was designed as a cowhouse, and perhaps had been adapted from other uses, such as a barn and stable. There is evidence at nearby Croxden of arable land being converted to pasture during the 19th century, with an associated emphasis on dairy farming and consequent adaptation of old buildings:

> William Townsend Carrington of Croxden (died 1881) wrote "a valuable paper for the agriculturist" called *"The Advantage of converting cold Arable Clay Land into Permanent Pasture, and the Best Method of doing it"*[3]. This paper presumably drew upon Carrington's own experience at Croxden, occasioning the conversion of the mediaeval barn there (for processing and storing arable crops) into a cowhouse and fodder store instead, with Derbyshire cheese the main end product.
>
> Mr. T. Wood, of the other farming family in Victorian Croxden, continued Carrington's promotion of cheesemaking at Croxden, and was similarly convinced that the land was better suited to grazing than arable. In an interview of 1917[4], he observed that the land at Croxden was stiff, being excellent grazing land but troublesome under the plough, hence the emphasis on dairy farming.

[1] Historic England Archive, Sale Catalogue SC00932. These particulars were cited in the Heritage Statement for application SMD/2016/0304.
[2] A bin or bing is a large, compartmented storage bin, often built-in and made of masonry or timber. They may be found in granaries as well as cattle sheds.
[3] Forestry: A Journal of Forest and Estate Management (1880)
[4] "Staffordshire Advertiser", 22nd September, 1917.

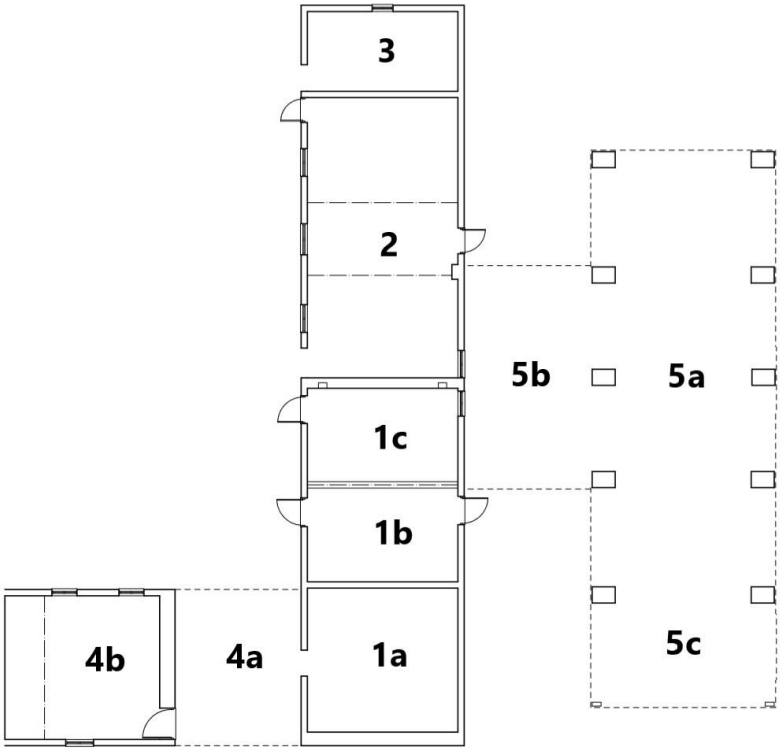


Figure 1. Outline survey plan of the buildings (not reproduced to scale) as submitted with application SMD/2016/0304. The public road is at the bottom. The uses listed below are from the 1918 sale particulars.

1a, 1b and 1c	Two Cow-sheds, each for six cows, with byngs and lofts over.
2	Cow-shed for twelve, with byng.
3.	Calf shed.
4a	Gangway.
4b	(Part of) cow-shed for thirteen, with byng and loft over.
5a and 5b	Four-bay, brick-pillared, iron-roof hay barn, with loading bay.
5c	Additional bay of hay barn, added since 1918.

12. Bay 1a has a first floor of machined softwood joists and boards, and is separated from Bay 1b by a full-height wall which has blocked openings in the ground storey and a single central doorway at upper storey level, currently only accessible by ladder.

13. Bays 1b and 1c are separated at ground storey level by a low wall and a break in the floor level, Bay 1c having a lower ground floor level than Bay 1b. At roof level, Bays 1b and 1c are separated by a king post truss, the kingpost being bolted to the tiebeam. The purlins, two to each side of the roof, are bolted onto the principal rafters, an unusual feature in the writer's experience.

14. Building 2 is a single-storey cowhouse (**Photos 6 and 7, and front cover**), probably built for that purpose. It appears to be the cowhouse for twelve cows of the 1918 description. The positions of the openings on each side, opposite one another, suggest an arrangement whereby the cows were originally in rows placed across the building, separated by feed and manure passages. The later arrangement, whereby cows were ranged along the length of a building instead, was a recommended Ministry of Agriculture practice designed to inhibit the spread of infection among cows that faced one another.

15. Building 3 (**Photos 8 and 9**) is a very dilapidated building of a single bay. From the sequence of description in the 1918 particulars, it would appear to have been a calf house. One end has collapsed.

16. Building 4 comprises the range fronting the road, including the gangway or covered way 4a. It is clear, from the roof structure of Building 1, that Building 4 postdates Building 1, although it may well have been a rebuilding of an older structure on the same spot. Building 1 has a plain eaves cornice made redundant by the later roof of the covered way, and the purlins of the covered way are supported off the roof structure of Building 1. Building 4b appears to be part of the cowshed for 13 cows of the 1918 particulars; the remainder of this building is separated off with makeshift timber partitioning, and is in different ownership. The roof structure includes a single queenpost truss (**Photo 10**).

17. Building 5 is a haybarn (**Photo 11**), which must be of c1890 as it was built between the 1st edition 25" Ordnance Survey surveyed in 1880 and the revision of 1898. Section 5a was the four-bay barn, and 5b was the loading bay, with an awkward abutment against the differing roof heights of Buildings 1 and 2 (**Photo 12**). 5c is an added bay at the roadside end. The corrugated iron roof, mentioned in the 1918 particulars, will be original to the building, as corrugated iron has a longer history than is generally supposed. It was patented as far back as the 1820s and was in widespread used by the 1850s.

THE PREVIOUS APPROVAL

18. The previous approval, granted listed building consent on 19/7/2016 (Staffs. Moorlands D. C. ref. SMD/2016/0304), was much more intensive than the present proposal. It comprised two two-bedroomed units and a one-bedroomed unit, the one-bedroomed unit having only a shared amenity space.

19. The desire to create three units resulted in greater internal subdivision than is now proposed (particularly in Building 2), and greater subdivision of the site to form private amenity spaces. In particular, it was necessary to subdivide the area between the subject buildings and the adjacent haybarn to provide private amenity space.

20. It may be noted, in passing, that there is a discrepancy on the previously approved plans: the lounge of Unit 1 (as then proposed) has a door (already existing) on the south-east elevation, but it is not shown on the elevation drawing. It is not a significant error, but of possible relevance when comparing the previous and present schemes.

THE PRESENT PROPOSAL AND ITS IMPACT

21. The current scheme proposes conversion to a single dwelling, the link-detached Building 4 being used for storage and office space. The scheme includes two double bedrooms on the first floor of Building 1 (each with an ensuite bathroom) and a third bedroom on the ground floor.

22. The former haybarn (Building 5a/5c) is now excluded from the scheme, except that the proposal still includes demolition of the loading bay (5b) that connects the hay barn to the historic buildings.

23. The scheme differs from the previous proposal in several respects, the principal ones being:

i) It is less intensive,

ii) It includes an extension, and

iii) There are more rooflights.

Items ii) and iii) may initially have a cautious reception from the local authority, but we consider that there are valid grounds to consider them favourably in this particular instance, and that their impact is more than outweighed by the beneficial effects of a less intensive scheme.

24. These three aspects will now be considered in turn:

i) It is less intensive

25. There was inevitably more parking in the previous scheme, which also included private amenity areas between the stone buildings and the adjacent hay barn. While this was a relatively discreet and obvious choice of location for the private spaces, it would be preferable to maintain a simple character here, which the present scheme facilitates.

26. The scheme is also kinder to the buildings themselves. Building 2 in particular can retain its open internal volume, and Building 1 can have a more dramatic internal treatment, exposing the king post truss to the entrance hall below. It is not in fact very clear whether this building originally had a complete first floor or not, but currently it does not, and it is an attractive space.

ii) It includes an extension.

27. It is common for local authority conversion guidelines to discourage extensions on barn conversions, and the Staffordshire Moorlands guidelines[5] are no exception. However, the general rule can only hold good if some demonstrable harm would result, offending against the reason for policy being made in the first place. In this particular case, the extension is designed in a simple, contemporary manner as commended by the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide in certain circumstances, and is subservient to the existing buildings in height and materials. We note that the Design Guide falls short of an outright statement that extensions will not be allowed.

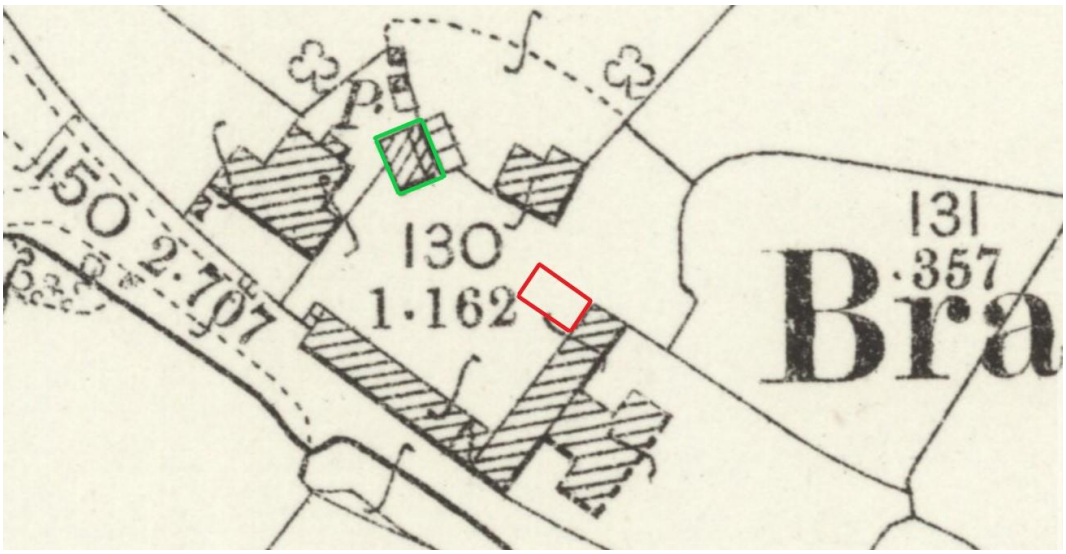


Figure 2. Extract from 25" Ordnance Survey, revised 1898, published 1900.

The red outline marks the position of the extension now proposed, showing that it respects the courtyard arrangement of the former farmyard, which in fact is now subdivided by a fence and hedge. The building outlined green no longer exists.

[5] Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide, adopted 21/2/2018.

28. Of equal importance is the relationship of the extension to the overall historic form of the farmstead. Unfortunately the overall form is now obscured by the fence and hedge that divide the two separately-owned parts of the former farmyard, but if one were to imagine that the boundary was not there, it would be apparent that the proposed extension would sit quite comfortably within the overall courtyard layout (see **Figure 2**).

29. The extension is therefore complementary to the overall courtyard form, and has the benefit of hiding the most domestic and private part of the proposed residential curtilage from view through the covered way alongside the road. It also gives the dwelling a good relationship to its immediate amenity space, taking the pressure off the more sensitive space along the south-east side of the buildings and in the central courtyard, which can remain simple and undivided.

30. The village setting of the farm should also be taken into account in considering the extension. It is not an isolated and exposed building where extension could have a greater impact on form, rural character and openness.

iii) There are more rooflights.

31. Rooflights on single storey cowhouses are not uncommon, and indeed the present sheeted roof of Building 2 has some translucent sheets which perform the same role. On two-storey farmbuildings, rooflights are less common in the writer's experience, but some roof lighting to Building 1 is important to the high architectural quality of the accommodation as now proposed.

32. It will now be possible to appreciate the roof structure and internal volume of Building 1 in a way that the previous scheme did not allow, hence the desire to light it. The nearby presence of the large overshadowing haybarn also gives a practical need to maximise the light from the south-east.

33. The normal request to restrict rooflights to an absolute minimum is understood, but taking this case on its merits the rooflights would in fact do little harm provided they were of a suitable type such as the "conservation" models by the Rooflight Company, Clement Windows, or the Lumen rooflight from Tuscan Foundry Products. There are no proposed rooflights in the roadside elevation, and views of the rooflights looking from the road would be largely hidden by the old hay barn to the south-east, and by the retained outbuildings of the farmhouse to the north-west; the rooflights to Building 1 would only be briefly visible from the road in oblique views. From the open countryside to the north-east the impact would be limited, as there are only two rooflights directly facing the view, as approved in the previous scheme.

34. It should also be noted that the risk of erosion to agricultural character from domestic paraphernalia is much reduced by this scheme:

Firstly, this scheme makes far more provision for domestic storage than the previous scheme did. Unit 3 of the previous scheme is now reserved for storage with office space over, and the proposed extension provides space for logs and bins.

Secondly, the proposed extension shields views of the private external space where domestic paraphernalia is most likely to arise.

35. I suggest that a revised application should take account of the following:

- The blue-painted sliding doors are an attractive feature which deserves retention.
- The most characterful windows are those of Building 2. While some rebuilding of Building 2 will be required, it would be beneficial to echo the design of these windows in the new work. The arch-headed window currently existing in the proposed ground floor bathroom of

Building 1c is to be removed, but clearly does not belong there and has been inserted at some time as a cheap expedient.

- Where plain glazing is proposed, there appears no good reason why standard double glazing would not be allowed. I understand the reasons to resist double glazing where the delicate profiles of historic joinery are involved, but that is not the case here. The exception is the hopper windows of Building 2 as already mentioned, but they are in a subordinate part of the building and I suggest that the proposal to replace these in metal is valid.
- The south-east window of the proposed master bedroom in Building 1a is a first-floor loading door which was originally much the same size as the window to bedroom 2 further along the elevation. It has been enlarged rather crudely by removing the stonework below it. I suggest that it would be better to treat this opening the same as the window to Bedroom 2, i.e. by building up the bottom again, and providing a shutter with band hinges hung on the original hooks in the jambs, which remain in place. It would also "space" better with the proposed new window below it.
- Areas of anticipated rebuilding should be specified in the drawings and supporting documents as they were in the previous permission.

CONCLUSION

36. This scheme is of higher quality, and better-considered, than the previous scheme and I consider that it represents a significant overall improvement:

37. There will be less subdivision both inside and outside, storage facilities are well-considered and "built-in" to the scheme, potential intrusion of domestic paraphernalia is much reduced, and the impacts of the extension and rooflights are demonstrably limited.

38. The differing floor heights in Building 1 are retained (which was not the case in the previous approval), and the rooflights are not on prominent roofslopes, which fits the SMDC guidance about limiting them to "reverse slopes".

39. The extension is well considered in siting, size and design, while being contemporary in nature. The air source heat pump is neatly housed and the woodburner and its flue are located where the flue will have minimum impact.

40. Overall, I consider that the proposal represents a scheme in which the owners can take a real pride, thus helping to ensure good standards of maintenance and presentation in the future.

Philip E. Heath, July 2019.

PHOTOGRAPHS



1. General view from the road, looking north. Building 1 in the foreground.



2. View from the road showing the gap between Buildings 1-3 on the left and the haybarn (Building 5) on the right. The roof (Building 5b) connecting the two was to shelter a loading bay, as described in the 1918 sale particulars.



3. View through gangway in Building 4 to yard beyond. The view is currently closed by a modern pent-roof shed.



4. The stone eaves cornice of Building 1 continues along the junction with Building 4, where it is a redundant. It is one of the pieces of evidence that shows the roof of Building 4 to be more recent than Building 1, including the triangular area of stonework built on top of the eaves cornice.



5. Bolted king-post truss of Building 1, between Bays 1b and 1c, looking north-east. Note that the purlins are bolted to the principal rafters.



6. Building 2, north-west elevation. The central window was clearly once a door.



7. The two bolted kingpost trusses in Building 2.



8. North-west elevation of Building 3 (former calfhouse).



9. Interior of Building 3 (former calfhouse) showing collapsed south-east end. The window in the gable end is cast iron, damaged and incomplete.



10. Queen post truss in Building 4, designed to give headroom in the former loft whose floor was at tiebeam level. The sheet boarding beyond the truss is modern, marking the separation line with the adjacent ownership.



11. The late 19th century haybarn (Building 5, seen here from the north) is of non-vernacular materials, but nevertheless of some interest to the development of the farmstead. It suggests that the land south-east of the farmbuildings was formerly a stackyard. The roof of the loading bay to the right is to be demolished, as previously approved.



12. The loading bay (5b) of the haybarn has an odd and unsatisfactory junction with the older Buildings 1 and 2 seen here, and obscures natural light to them. Its removal will allow the vernacular character of the older buildings to be better appreciated.