

Conservation Response.

Date: 07/11/2023.

File/Application ref: SMD/2023/0429 & SMD/2023/0486.

Case Officer: Chris Johnston.

Proposal: 'Proposed extension for an Indoor swimming pool' & 'Application for Listed Building Consent for – Proposed extension for an Indoor swimming pool'.

Site Address: Sharpcliffe Hall, Bradshaw Lane, Ipstones, Staffordshire, ST10 2LJ.

Dear Chris,

Objection.

The outbuildings or stable building concerning this proposal lie curtilage in heritage terms a short distance to the north west of GII* Sharpcliffe Hall. The structures are of a humble design, consisting of but not limited to; red brick masonry, stone quoins and coping stones, tall gable ends, uniform fenestration with some units survived and some with brick arch head design (the latter at the south elevation), most others have stone cill, lintel and quoin surround. To the east elevation affronting the courtyard area some barn doors are in situ, though the current units may be later replacements. The footprint is long and narrow, uniform in plan, and exhibits qualities of a typical coach or stable building, with other associated historic agricultural use. This is demonstrated through the survived placement and form, initially in location of the doors, and further demonstrated through its architectural qualities evidencing less of a domestic use and more of simple functional use. As seen on site it is well survived, exhibiting clear legibility therefore it is assessed as historically significant as part of the overall make-up of the site. This structure does contain an upper floor area though at this time without consistent use.

The plan form of the stable buildings note the plan form of the principal building, by lying lengthways north to south against the sloping topography. The topography is seen to descend gradually west, with on the east and north, substantial mature woodland and greenery hugging this vicinity.

This scheme shows the inclusion of a modern swimming pool area, appearing to be fairly contemporary in style and form, and appearing as functionally a 'stand alone' structure to the west elevation of the stable building. The proposal does not appear to include substantial physical construction works directly concerning the historic fabric. However, it does note some attention paid to the second four light mullion window as seen in drwg ref: 5965-001 *Existing conditions – floor plans and elevations*. (When viewing this drawing it is the second window in from the right at 'garden elevation'). Then in plan, see drwg ref: 5965-018 *Proposed conditions – scheme four floor plans*, this same four light mullion window is proposed to become a door for access into the proposed pool area. Currently, as the intervention is only shown in plan and not in section with relevant details, I cannot substantially comment on this element. I would like further clarity on the method of works, methods of affixing the glazed link at the new door reveal, and what concerns the historic fabric. I will also encourage the salvage of the existing fabric for use elsewhere, or where no use is found these elements if and when removed, should be retained. I will devise a detailed condition for this portion of the scheme. Happy to discuss.

The pool building itself noted to be fairly contemporary looks to create a 'light' or 'transparent' feature within this location. The Heritage Statement shares an artists impression of the concept, though it should be noted these are not technical drawings, the graphic does indicate that the structure has been designed to sit low and marginally nestled in to the landscape. Further, it appears to be designed to sit substantially lower than the core of the site and the GII* principal building at the south. By virtue of its scale and form, somewhat mirroring the plan form of the existing buildings lying lengthways, I assess that it does not create an incongruous form against the existing grain of the site.

With regard to material palette for the structure, I will devise condition to ensure highest quality and appropriate finishing and facing materials are used.

Notwithstanding the details above, the proposal lacks information regarding functionally what is seen to be a change of use in principle of the stable building, and works concerning its conversion or refurbishment to facilitate functions ancillary to the new swimming pool. I therefore request information is submitted with regards to this, as the proposed floor plans show works that include but are not limited to:

- New opening in existing brickwork, seen centre of the plan.
- New wall partitions to facilitate 'sauna'.
- New infrastructure to accommodate electrics/rewiring/lighting schedule, heating and hot water etc.
- Shower and changing facilities.
- New windows? Please confirm.
- New doors to courtyard.
- Drainage/rainwater goods.

This is most pertinent in this case as cumulatively, there will be imposed on the historic fabric an inordinate amount of moisture and humidity arising as a result of the new functions. There does not seem to be ventilation considered, nor a materials palette consisting of vapour permeable qualities, new or existing windows to ensure adequate opening mechanism, or door and general joinery details. This would amount to an overly lengthy condition, consequently I suggest this additional information be submitted in order to create a comprehensive scheme that covers the entirety of this project. This will ensure the health and integrity of the historic fabric is in mind.

In addition to this, some landscaping is seen to be included as in the proposed, however there does not appear to be a landscaping scheme included, noting hardstanding materials and their extent, and any details of earthworks. As the structure and pool are to sit lower than the stable building I anticipate and am concerned that there will be some conflict with regard to the footings and or plinth of the stable building. I suggest details are submitted in order to determine what harm if any may be imposed. Due to the extent of the earthworks in this area I suggest perhaps County Archaeology is notified in case they feel input is required.

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To conclude:

Whilst initially this scheme shows a confident presentation, there lacks in many areas clear supporting information and justification to enable me to fully assess the project. I encourage further details are submitted as noted above, and suggest the Heritage Statement is revised. Whilst it notes what *physical* impact may or may not occur, I am not confident it has fully analysed Setting and character, and any potential harm that may arise from the scheme with consideration to how this will be mitigated. There does not seem to be a conclusion reached with regard to harm, nor is there sound and convincing justification for heritage harm as per NPPF requirements at paragraphs 199, 201 and 202.

I will await additional information before providing final comment.

Regards,

E Holland.
Principal Conservation Officer.