

Conservation Response.

Date: 11/01/2024.

File/Application ref: DET/2023/0040.

Case Officer: Lisa Jackson.

Proposal: 'Prior approval for conversion and alteration of former agricultural building to form 1 no. dwelling'.

Site Address: Rakeway Farm, Rakeway Road, Cheadle, Staffordshire, ST10 1RA.

Dear Lisa,

Objection. Recommended refusal.

Rakeway Farm though not a listed building is a Historic Farmstead, part of the relationship between the trio in this area consisting of Rakeway Castle Farm to the north and Rakeway House Farm to the south west. The latter have monument UIDs: MST21346 and MST251674. Whilst the former does not, nonetheless the survival condition and courtyard arrangements across them exhibit historic value and therefore heritage interest.

An appraisal conducted by myself on site at a prior time in 2023 consists of the following:

The farmhouse at Rakeway farm is generally in good condition, though barns and former agricultural storage are in an expected deteriorated state. The main farmhouse is of an unusual orientation with no obvious frontage or approach, such a thing is typically seen for example through symmetrical fenestration or obvious entrances. This further adds to its vernacular charm and significance.

Access was gained around the property and barns. It appears very little interior features remain, fireplace surrounds appear modern though chimney breast and flue placement in the floorplan are original. Original flooring materials - Quarry tiles in situ at ground floor, possibly laid straight to earth.

Farmhouse roofs and chimneys appear in good condition, lintels, cills and some guttering remain. No decorative bargeboards are seen, there are only basic fascias possibly added at a later date. Fenestration is of a simple scale and size, no real intricacies or decoration to note.

At the barns there is an expected mix of modern materials. It was seen on site large quantities of spare clay roof tiles were stacked up against some walls. Peg holes evident in the pattern of the lip demonstrative of a historic build date, possibly related to the site. Confident if so these can be retained or salvaged for patch repairs if relevant.

The elevations of the barns are basic, some timber shutters and doors remain in the first floors. timber shutters in slightly better condition to doors. Rhombus brick patterns with alternating holes remain in some elevations, the small ones decorative though larger ones are often demonstrative of small or basic dovecotes or bird entries. One rhombus appears blocked up altogether with cement but still legible.

At the south west elevation of the barns (facing Rakeway Road) a set of stone steps to the first floor of the one barn remains, it was seen a top piece of the steps contains a benchmark masonry symbol.

The current proposal sees the conversion of the later barns to the east into substantial and contemporary living accommodation. They are sited in a prominent gateway location and principal elevation to the site in relation to the road, with long ranging views east and west afforded by the lay of the topography here. The lane is quite open, and there are also long ranging views north and into the rest of the site.

The scheme looks to transform the later barns into quite overbearing modern dwellings. The style has been confused between what reads as agricultural, yet contains uncomfortable fenestration, cladding and extensive glazing. There is no precedent for this concept in this vicinity, with the traditional and quiet farmhouse adjacent.

I draw attention to the previous and now approved scheme at the farm SMD/2023/0117 which actively looks to reinstate and restore the vernacular of the traditional English farmhouse, with other further sensitive interventions. On the contrary, the proposed scheme under DET/2023/0040 looks to drastically 'undo' any efforts to restore this historic farmstead to its former glory, and instead creates a particularly unsightly addition in immediate proximity, that contributes nothing to the historic interest of the area.

To conclude:

By virtue of the scale, material palette, design and its prominent location at the top of the site, the scheme is not harmonious with the surroundings and looks to cause substantial visual obtrusion.

This scheme contravenes the following Local Policy:

Policy DC1. In particular:

"...be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance".

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD.

Regards,

E Holland.
Principal Conservation Officer.