
From: Chris Johnston
Sent: 25 January 2024 11:21
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: FW: SMD/2023/0630

Please also add to SMD 2023 0631

From: Emily Holland
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 12:00 PM
To: Chris Johnston
Subject: SMD/2023/0630

Hi Chris,

Catswall Farm, Huntley Road, Denford, Leek, ST13 7JX.

This barn is listed and included for group value with respective Grade II Catswall Farmhouse of which is situated closely adjacent. Historic and aesthetic association is extant and remains well read, with the open courtyard plan and long sense of approach, it forms a good example of a Moorlands vernacular farmstead. The surviving structures are of a fair size, seen first along this road* (Huntley Road) with the farmhouse of an intricate design, offset fenestration, legible wings to the floorplan and particularly handsome facades.

Whilst I have no issue in principle with a project of this nature, i.e conversions/reuse etc there are a number of potentially contentious elements that need addressing.

1. Gypsum plasterboard, tanking membranes, damp proof flooring, gypsum plaster skim and polythene 'vapour barrier' are not acceptable materials. None of these items are vapour permeable, and none have the health and integrity of the building fabric in mind. Long term, the accumulation of these types of modern materials will guarantee humid, sweaty and condensation filled spaces with little hopes of warm and dry accommodation. These items are commonly found at modern dwellings with block or brickwork walling incorporating a cavity wall. This barn is not of the same construction, was never built as domestic in purpose and its traditional construction requires methods appropriate to its long term conservation. I encourage revisiting this portion of the project, and it would be useful to have a comprehensive materials list per area/room.
2. Similarly, whilst the layouts of the proposed floorplans have their respective functions; it appears that the rooms and areas, including bathrooms and ensuites are directly up against the solid stone walling. It would be wise, certainly in the areas guaranteed to create inordinate amounts of moisture; i.e bathrooms and kitchens, for these items to be away from the solid walling and have a more bespoke method of installation. I would not encourage for example shower units and cooker, including tiling and the like to be directly against the stone walling paired with plasterboard. Unfortunately this is a recipe for disaster. Additionally, it is not clear how the new stud walling partitions will be affixed to the masonry. I will also query the proposed lounge area, as I am not entirely clear on whether the stove/log burner is a freestanding component or whether it will be within a portion of walling to house the flue etc. In light of this, I am not sure the project includes or discusses heating....i.e biomass, oil, gas, Aga, electric etc. Have we any radiators for example.
3. I cannot see a purpose for reinstating the door heading into the proposed lounge space, where we have a door in situ going directly up the stairs, immediately next to it. I feel perhaps reinstating the one located into the lounge is without purpose and will suggest leaving it as is in order to provide some interest, and retain evidence of past activity/sense of age. There are already three working doors across this elevation.

Other items to mention:

- We would need to see a method of installation for the tie bars or rods for the structural movement, and the type of item to be used, locations of which marked on plans. From preliminary I can see there is a traditional S shaped anchor plate in situ. I am keen to retain this again as legibility of age/original features.
- I feel six rooflights is too many, and their symmetry is contrived. As above this building was never built as domestic and the vernacular of the construction does not see rooflights naturally occurring, it is not traditional. The character of the vernacular is irregular and simple features.

It is interesting that the Historic England summary has appraised the front as what is being addressed as the *rear* in this project. *The front, as H.E have stated has five windows three being to the right of the large buttress. It appears the front called as such in the project, has been noted by modern standards due to the relationship to the doors at the courtyard elevation, as would be a typical elevation at a cottage or villa. However, how H.E have appraised it has a substantial bearing on the location of these types of features such as the rooflights, and will also include the flue and tile vents. Again because it is not a domestic building, it cannot be forcibly read as having a *standard* back and front. (This would of course confuse the buildings history and legibility). Because the *frontage of the overall site* is quite intricately placed at this curve in the road, paired with the principal farmhouse, I encourage the concealing of these alien features and their locations to be focused to the courtyard facing elevation (in the project terms this is the front). It would not be an enhancement to the farmhouse, or the barn, to have this proliferation of modern functional pieces made unnecessarily obvious.

In light of this, I encourage the omittance of the rooflights at the road facing elevation. To be clear, this elevation has been called the rear, by the project. In addition to this, I will also encourage the omittance of the rooflight to the stairwell at the courtyard facing elevation, to be clear, this elevation has been called the front, by the project. There is already a good size window to the new stairwell directly below the proposed rooflight. Consequently, don't see the requirement for a rooflight directly above this, and it appears to make for quite a visually uncomfortable elevation, to have the two sited in such close proximity to one another.

This then makes for two rooflights, at the courtyard facing elevation, or front in the project terms, located above the two bedrooms. I believe this has the naturally irregular qualities of the character of the building in mind, whilst being more subservient and allowing the new items to harmonise better at no detriment to the setting and overall character of the site.

Please arrange to discuss the above point if the explanation regarding locations and elevations is not interpreted clearly. I have done my best to explain this as the project has accidentally confused the orientation of the building.

With regard to the flue, I encourage this to be located on the courtyard side of the roofscape, its position in the floorplan will remain unaffected but the flue unit will be the other side of the roofline. I can see that it has already been made an appropriately small size so I anticipate this being well hidden in connection with the roofline.

With regard to the tile vents, I recognise they are in connection with the locations of the bathrooms etc so I would like to see an example of these types of vents in a roofscape to gain a better insight into this.

The manoeuvring of these features will be more respectful to the currently undisturbed appearance of the barn, and setting of the principal farmhouse. Consequently allowing for a quieter and less obtrusive alteration to occur.

- With regards to joinery; double glazed slimline timber windows may be acceptable in this case due to the building never having been formerly a domestic private residence. The joinery including that of which for doors will be secured by condition, including fittings and fixtures, which windows are opening and which are fixed units, colour, method of installation and the materials, beading/puttys and oils, glass type and timber type. Notwithstanding this the style of two of the doors currently are not appropriate - D101 & D102 show a

narrow door with a strange and very slim glass side panel. This is more typical in a post war semidetached dwelling or maisonette, and unfortunately I don't think it adds anything to the character of this barn. The doors already have small central glass panels in and I feel that this is enough.

- A method or summary of works for the roof will be required. From preliminary most if not all roofing materials are well survived and remain extant. I would not permit the loss of these, in reflection of the rooflights we will need to see sectional drawings for the two rooflight units. Going back to the roof structure, natural movement in the roof is evidence of age and provides character. I am hesitant to allow complete sanitisation of this and perhaps suggest piecemeal repairs where absolutely necessary. I do not feel the appearance of a completely perfect roof and again almost contrived roofscape is an enhancement and would in fact be harmful to the character of this barn. The inclusion of steel supports will need clearly marking on plans and sections, a summary of the method of approach and how they are going to work. In addition to this, any other relevant materials such as insulation and such like need to be compiled into a materials list for this area. I am also interested to see the traditional construction of the roof in order to ensure a faithful match. Do the tiles have cleats or pegs, is torching in situ etc. Are there queen or king trusses in situ?
- Rainwater goods. Barns of this nature do not see extensive lengths of rainwater drainage systems. However, in light of the conversion I will encourage they be concealed as best as possible and downpipes limited to the ends of the elevations, i.e not in the middle of facades. I can see two are proposed but it may be worth exploring whether downpipes are required at both sides. This is a fair size roof to impose a lot of water onto two downpipes. They may also require hoppers – which would relate well to the built date. I would also like to see where this water is being directed once it reaches ground level. It should not be directed into the footings and should be directed at ample distance away from the masonry. With regard to gutters at eaves levels, we can invite a condition for the style and method of attachment to the eaves. From preliminary, the barn does not have gutters at eaves to one elevation at all. I will also invite condition of colour. I will note it may not be necessary to have cast iron rainwater goods, many aluminium heritage components are also nice. Happy to discuss that if needs be.
- Lime mortar. As noted a specification will be required. There appears to be some surviving in situ near the eaves, though a lot is lost altogether. Because this is an extensive portion of this project and will have a substantial bearing on the appearance of the barn I advise mortar analysis is undertaken of the surviving in order to prescribe an accurate match. This will also secure the colour, sand type and size and lime.
- I will query the inclusion of a second flue at front (courtyard facing) elevation. I am not sure whether this is a mistake on the plans as it is not shown in the other elevation? It matches that for the one for the new fire. If it is not required it needs to be removed from the drawing.
- I am not sure what is meant by glazing the bird holes to the side elevation. I cannot see a door detailed sheet? Do we have preliminary joinery details?
- Replacement shutters to the windows at courtyard facing elevation. No issue with this but would of course like to see the colour, timber type and accurate panelling design with any relevant ironmongery/fittings. If they are to be functional it may be worth including a traditional catch and stay in order to be able to shut them etc.
- Ventilation – this is largely addressed insofar that bathrooms are covered although I am not too clear on the kitchen. I would be keen to see how the infrastructure is to be installed for this extraction system and it should be marked in plan for clarity. I presume it may be capped or boxed in on the interior? Although this ties in with how the interior shell of spaces will be installed and affixed.
- Stairwell. I would like to see a design or style of this, and section drawings of installation in this area of the first flooring.

Thanks

In your communications with me please always quote the planning reference number if you have one.

Please note, due to work levels at this current time I may not be able to respond to your query immediately, however, I shall endeavour to do so as soon as possible.

Advanced notice of planned leave: 25/01/2024 - 29/01/2024

Emily Holland. Principal Conservation Officer.
Development Services.

High Peak Borough Council / Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

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