

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 31st July 2026
Application Ref: SMD/2026/0269
Site Address: Hermitage Farm, Froghall Road, Froghall
Proposal: Listed building consent for a replacement of the current rotting single glazed windows with historically accurate wood-effect double glazed units. Replacement of all windows with wood-effect small pane double glazed units.

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	- The Hermitage – Grade II (listing ref: 1038049) - Barn approx. 20m N of The Hermitage – Grade II (listing ref: 1189123) - Barn approx. 300m N of The Hermitage – Grade II (listing ref: 1374641)
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would involve alterations to Hermitage Farmhouse, which is a Grade II Listed Building situated in close proximity to two Grade II listed barns.

Hermitage Farm (Grade II) is a late-17th century to early-18th century farmhouse, with mid-19th century alterations and additions. The building is constructed in coursed dressed and squared stone, M-plan tiled roof with stone copings and verge parapets. The significance of the building relates to its association as a rural dwelling, association with the development of farmsteads in the post-medieval period in North Staffs, continued phases of development, prominence as an isolated farmstead on a knoll along the lane and illustrative vernacular construction with some polite architectural influence.

The barns are Grade II listed and date from the late-17th and early-18th century. They are constructed in stone with tiled roofs. Their significance derives from their former

agricultural use and intrinsic connection to the main farmhouse. They make a positive contribution to the setting and significance of Hermitage Farm.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks to replace the windows with double glazed upvc alternatives.

The existing windows are a mixture of timber, metal and upvc casement windows, which appear to be modern replacements. It is unclear if the upvc windows on the front elevation benefit from permission. In any effect, the windows in the building do not make a contribution to the significance of the Listed Building as they are not historic.

Notwithstanding the above, upvc windows are usually discouraged in historic buildings as they are not a traditional material associated with historic building construction. This is particularly the case in Listed Buildings which are designated for their architectural interest of *national importance*. The significance of this Listed Building in particular derives from its vernacular construction influenced by the availability of local materials and historic craftsmanship, therefore, upvc is an alien and unsympathetic material.

In addition to the above, upvc window construction typically have a bulky frame which is unable to authentically replicate the finesse and quality of traditional historic joinery or metal window details. A technical sectional detail has been provided in the Heritage Statement which illustrates these would be flush fitting casements but also emphasises the bulkiness of their construction as a result. This bulkiness would be further exacerbated by the proposed standard double-glazed unit proposed which, again, is not a traditional detail. Features such as spacer bars between the panes of glass would emphasise the inauthenticity of the window details.

It is noted that the application refers to ‘wood-effect’ upvc windows, but no specific details of this have been provided. Even if a wood-grain effect was applied to the upvc, the proposed windows would still be a poor replica of a traditional window in terms of its design and construction.

The Heritage Statement argues that the upvc windows would enable uniformity across the design of all the windows and help to achieve thermal improvements in the property. This does not provide clear and convincing justification for the harm arising from unsympathetic materials and inauthentic detailing. The historic and architectural interest of this Listed Building derives from its multiple phases of development, in which uniformity is not a key characteristic. In addition, it is not been clearly demonstrated that thermal improvements and energy efficiency could not be achieved with a more sympathetic design and material window.

It is acknowledged that the existing windows are modern, but many of the windows have attempted to replicate historic detailing or are modest in their design so they do not detract from the overall architectural interest of the building. It is considered that a uniform appearance upvc window, with bulky proportions and unsympathetic detailing,

would worsen the visual appearance of the Listed Building and cause harm to its special interest and significance as a designated heritage asset.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting and special interest of the Listed Buildings (s.16)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within the setting), should require clear and convincing justification (par.213).

Where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (par.215).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in a moderate degree of harm to the special interest and significance of the Listed Building and setting of the adjacent Listed Buildings. This would fail to satisfy the provisions of s.16 of the Act. With reference to planning policies, this would be 'less than substantial harm' to the designated heritage assets (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework). There does not appear to be clear and convincing justification for this level of harm (par.213 of NPPF) and there would be no heritage-related public benefits arising from the proposal which would balance or outweigh this level of harm (par.215 of NPPF). Great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage (par.212 of NPPF). We, therefore, object to the proposal from a conservation perspective and recommend it is refused.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson