

## Design & Access Statement

Project Title:       Deerbolt Cottage  
Project Number:    1801 / 17.01  
Date / Revision:    02.10.2023 / \_

### 1.00 Introduction

This statement has been prepared to assist with the understanding of proposals for the above site as currently submitted to Mid Suffolk District Council for planning and listed building approvals.

This document should be read in conjunction with the further supporting documentation submitted for consideration.

### 2.00 The Site and Context

The proposal site comprises the private residential property of Deerbolt Cottage, Blacksmiths Green, Wetheringsett and its immediate curtilage.

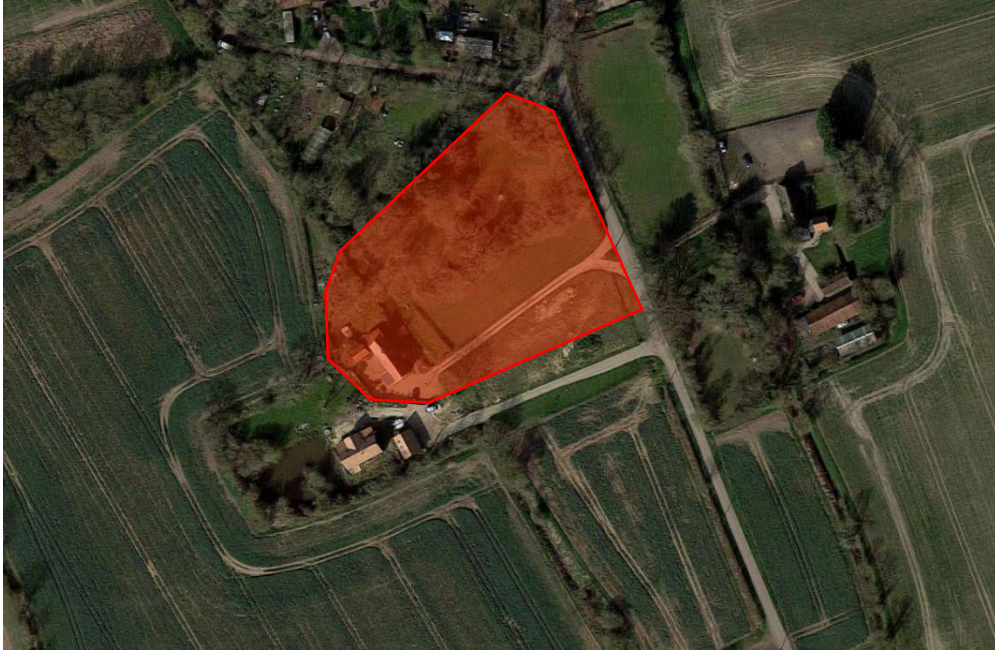
The property is sited to the east of Blacksmiths Green, set some 76m back from the road, within a wider curtilage of 6,800m<sup>2</sup>. The majority of this area is in front of the house, which has been severed from the larger farmstead, with the main barn having been converted to an additional dwelling, with curtilage to the rear of Deerbolt Cottage. Whilst the area of curtilage to the immediate east, between the house and the road is open, grassed land, the area to the north east, is heavily wooded, with mature trees and hedgerows, and benefits from a separate point off access from the road to the north.



*Contemporary aerial view of the application site in wider context (site indicated by red star)*

The wider setting is largely rural and agricultural, as illustrated above, and typical of the surrounding 'plateau claylands', as set out within the Suffolk Landscape Character

Assessment. The area is also set out within an historical context within the attached HAA prepared by Jane Blanchflower.



*Contemporary aerial view of the application site*

The dwelling, a timber framed former farmhouse which dates from the late sixteenth century, is aligned on a roughly north west / south east axis. The principal element is based on a simple 3 bay module, comprising two stories under a steeply pitched thatched roof. A lean-to element exists to the north west gable, as is typical, but on this occasion is a later rebuild of an earlier similar element, which was approved in 2004, along with the conversion of an existing outbuilding, to form a study, and its connection to the rest of the property via a new glazed link.

A further rear lean-to, in the form of a glazed sun room was added following approval in 2007.



*View of Deerbolt Cottage from the road to the east, with converted barn to the left, and treed area of curtilage to the right*



*View of the front of the house from the south east, with sun room to the left, and boundary wall to the barn development*



*View across the rear from the south west, with sun room to the right, and converted outbuilding and link beyond*



*View of the rear from the west*



*View of the northern gable, with replacement lean-to, and converted building beyond (black clad), plus lean-to log store and oil tank*



*View of the northern gable etc from the north west, with barn conversion beyond to the right*

As set out within the HAA, the property is largely in good condition, and well cared for, with recent works approved to remove insensitive and unlawful internal alterations; these include a number of first floor partitions to form a lobby, and subdivide a bedroom, and install a stair access to existing roof void.

The property currently extends to 116m<sup>2</sup> at ground floor level, and 65m<sup>2</sup> at first floor level, and provides three first floor bedrooms, plus ground floor living spaces and study.

### **3.00 Planning History**

As noted above, a number of planning and listed building applications are available to review on the Mid Suffolk planning pages.

#### 4.00 Proposal

The proposal comprises a number of elements as set out below:

- 4.01 Removal of existing lean-to log store from northern elevation of study, and relocation of existing bunded oil tank

These elements of work are proposed to enable the following.

- 4.02 Extension of existing study (converted former outbuilding) to form new bedroom.

Whilst the removal of the unauthorized partitioning at first floor was undoubtedly the correct thing to do, it has left the property with only three bedrooms, where it formerly had four. As a result, there is no spare bedroom for guests when visiting.

It is therefore proposed to create a new fourth bedroom, with an associated shower room at ground floor level. This will provide for guests, particularly elderly family members who would otherwise find it prohibitively difficult to access first floor bedrooms and bathroom.

A thorough analysis of the building, its site and setting has been carried out to understand potential threats and opportunities, and in order to limit potential impact upon the listed building, and its setting. Considerations included visual impact, character, amenity and potential loss of historic fabric, as well as in-use practicalities.

The area to the rear of the main farmhouse is demonstrably the most appropriate location for any such addition, however the private amenity space to the west is quite constrained by the rear boundary line. The area to the immediate north west was therefore considered as it is currently a largely utilitarian area which is largely visually obscured from public realm. An extension in this area would also limit potential impact upon neighbours, and reduce the impact upon existing historic fabric.

The extension is accessed via the existing glazed link, and a new lobby space created in the front of the former study which in turn provides access to a modest double bedroom, and ensuite shower room. In all, the proposal will increase floor area by 19m<sup>2</sup>

The proposed extension here then has been designed to be in keeping with the form of the existing former outbuildings, taking a largely additive form, as would have been the case with agricultural buildings, with further elements being added in a cumulative manner as space or function dictated. The proposed form is simple, with a narrow floor plate and low pitched roof, to be in keeping with the existing study, but also to remain diminutive, and subservient to the study and the wider form. The ridge is set at a right angle to the existing to further achieve these stated aims.

Materials are proposed to match the existing adjacent, being a black stained timber weather board over a nominal brick plinth, with clay pantiled roof and stained timber joinery. As well as fitting in with the context of the immediately adjacent, the darker form will help this new element to disappear into the background against the darker treed backdrop, with the light colour of the rendered farmhouse and lean-to to the fore remaining visually dominant. Visual impact is further reduced by distance to the public highway and principal vantage point, as well as the tree and mature hedge which exist in close proximity to the front of the house.



Please refer also to the HIA prepared by Jane Blanchflower for further narrative.

## 5.00 Planning Context

The property is not within a conservation area but is listed at Grade II as noted within the accompanying Heritage documents.

Applicable planning policy would appear to be contained within the current Mid Suffolk District Council Local Plan 1998, as well as the Core Strategy and Focussed Review 2012, and the National Policies contained within the NPPF and NPPG documents.

Applicable local policies would appear to comprise GP01, HB1, HB4, and H18.

GP01; Notes that poor design and layout will normally be refused. Proposals should maintain or enhance the character and appearance of surroundings and respect the scale and density of surrounding development. Materials should be traditional, or compatible with traditional materials and finishes.

HB01; The DPA places a high priority on protecting the character and appearance of all buildings of architectural or historic interest. Particular attention will be given to the setting of listed buildings.

HB03; Confirms that proposals for the conversion of, or alteration to, listed buildings or other buildings of architectural or historic interest will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and will be required to meet high standards of design, detailing, materials and construction. Listed building consent will be granted if the district planning authority is satisfied;

- that the proposal would not detract from the architectural or historic character of the existing building or its setting

HB04; Listed Building consent will be granted for the extension of listed buildings if the DPA is satisfied that;

- the proposed extension will not dominate the original building by virtue of its siting, size, scale or materials;
- the proposal does not detract from the architectural or historic character both externally and internally for which the building is listed.

In addition, paragraphs 192 – 197 of the NPPF (2018) set out the manner in which Local Authorities should assess any potential for harm to heritage assets, and weigh this against the public benefits of the proposal.

Further guidance from Historic England notes that *'listing is not a preservation order, preventing change. It does not freeze a building in time'*, and that *'listed buildings are to be enjoyed and used, like any other building. Listed buildings can be altered, extended and sometimes even demolished'*. Overall though local authorities are to *'make decisions that balance a site's historic significance against other issues, such as function, condition and viability'*.

## 6.00 Conclusion

The proposals set out in this application are firmly in line with the above stated MSDC policies. They seek only minimal changes, with minimal loss of historic fabric. The intent of the scheme also has to be viewed in the wider context of recently approved works to remove unlawful additions, and the applicants desire to respect and enhance the building and its setting.

The proposal will also serve to benefit the long term viability of the asset, providing adaptable accommodation which will allow those less mobile to also visit and stay, and provides for long term adaptability for the current owners and their successors. As such the proposal demonstrably enhances inclusivity, and social cohesion and is therefore of wider societal benefit.

The proposal will also allow the current owners to remain in the property and continue their sensitive approach to the upkeep and maintenance of the property in the long term.

As a whole, the proposed works will not impact detrimentally on the heritage asset, and will arguably only enhance it. In consideration of the scheme as submitted, and the context and support for the proposal provided by the Heritage impact assessment, we believe on balance that the application is both in line with local plan policies, and appropriate for approval.