



# J.Bell designandconservationltd

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## Heritage Statement

**Site:** Grade 2 listed barn West of Hill Farm, Duck End, Stebbing, CM6 3BS

**Proposal:** Retrospective application for conversion of barn to annexe.

**Date:** December 2023



## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been written and prepared by JBell Design and Conservation Ltd, to accompany a listed building consent and retrospective planning application for conversion of a grade 2 listed thatched barn to the West of Hill Farm house, Stebbing.
- 1.2 The building is individually grade 2 listed, whilst being positioned within the curtilage of the grade 2 listed Hill Farm House and within the curtilage of the other surrounding buildings that are also grade 2 listed (refer to appendix A for list description). Any changes to listed buildings need to be carefully designed and will need to be sympathetic to the fabric, appearance and character to ensure no harm to the significance of the building. Due to the building also being located within the curtilage of the surrounding listed buildings, the proposals also need to ensure no impact on the setting and character of the surrounding buildings and no harm to the significance of the surrounding designated heritage assets.
- 1.3 The heritage study covers the following headings;
- Understand the history and evolution of the building subject the application, plus the surrounding buildings.
  - Identify the significance of the building subject the application, plus the surrounding buildings.
  - Describe the proposals and work already completed
  - Assess the impact of the proposals and work completed on the character and significance of the building and surrounding buildings
  - Justify the proposals
- 1.4 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared in conjunction with Section 16 of the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

*194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

(P56, NPPF, 2023)

## 2.0 Description and history of the building and surrounding buildings

- 2.1 Hill farm is located to the North of Duck End on the North side of the road between Dunmow and Great Bardfield. The farm comprises of a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse, 2 large historic barns, an old cartlodge adjacent to the road frontage and a number of later constructed surrounding agricultural buildings.
- 2.2 The barn subject to the application is a 4-range timber framed barn to the West of the farmhouse. The central bay has a single storey lean-to projection to the rear, which formerly could have been a porch with large doors, similar to the large doors to the central East elevation and in the typical form an Essex threshing barn. The main posts are jowled with braces to the tie beam. The roof is a clasped purlin arrangement constructed from rafters, purlins and collars with a thatched roof covering. There are passing braces from the main bay rafters to the purlins also. The barn has mezzanine 1<sup>st</sup> floors either side of the central bay, inspection of the building suggests the South 1<sup>st</sup> floor level has historically been extended, most likely due to former changes in the use for storage or grain. To the South end of the barn is a single storey section with a separate stable door. To the North end of the barn is a 2-bay cart lodge with lean-to to the rear, this part of the building does not form part of the application.
- 2.3 The barn is grade 2 listed (refer to appendix A). The date the building was listed was in 1984.
- 2.4 From inspection of the barn, it is clear that internally some alterations have occurred historically in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but prior to 1984. Whilst some of the works have been carried out recently as part of the conversion. These items include;
- The floor, which is a concrete floor that appears to have been constructed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Work has already been started to install underfloor heating over the concrete floor.
  - The removal of a stud and cutting of the soleplate to access the single storey section to the South end of the barn. This appears to be a historic alteration and was altered prior to the conversion works.
  - The single storey room to the end of the barn has had plasterboard installed over timbers and plastered finish to the walls. The ceiling in the single storey room has been finished with pine tongue and groove timber boards installed under the rafters. The stable door to this section of the building appears to have been replaced with a softwood stable door. These works are recent works that are part of the conversion works.
  - Plasterboard has been inserted and plastered between the rafters and beams to the main barn. The applicant stated this work was already completed prior to commencement of the conversion works.
  - The mezzanine floor to the South bay has been historically been extended. This appears to have occurred prior to the commencement of the conversion works. However, handrails have been added as part of the conversion works. These have been constructed from reclaimed Oak studs and plasterboard infill. It also appears the ceilings beneath the mezzanine levels have been plasterboarded and plastered.
  - The staircases are softwood and appear to date from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and were already inserted prior to the conversion works.

- Internal partitions have been constructed to subdivide the spaces on the ground and first floor. These have been constructed using modern studwork and plasterboard. These are part of the conversion works.

2.5 Externally the barn has only a few openings. The main barn has the large doors to the East elevation and a 1<sup>st</sup> floor window inserted over studs, both of which appear to be original openings, but doors and windows replaced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To the single storey section there is a stable door, which has recently been replaced, and a Georgian timber window with obscure glazing, which appears also to date from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To the rear (west) elevation there are 2 large windows on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor level that are timber Georgian style fixed windows that are late 20<sup>th</sup> century additions. There is a door opening in the ground floor where the door has been replaced with a pine stable door as part of the conversion works.

2.6 To summarise; The external appearance of the barn is mostly original, with the exception for some window openings, which would appear to pre-date the 1984 listing date. The only external alteration to the building that is part of the conversion works is the insertion of the 2no. pine stable doors.

Internally, there are alterations that are not original but pre-date 1984 and new alterations that are part of the conversion works. The new alterations that form part of the conversion works include;

- Internal linings to the single storey room to the South end of the barn
- Plasterboard to the underside of the mezzanine levels
- Construction of handrails to the mezzanine levels
- Construction of internal partitions
- Construction of underfloor heating over concrete floor and new floor finish over

2.7 The barn subject to the application is part of the group setting and within the curtilage of 4 other grade 2 listed assets. This includes; Hill Farmhouse, The cartlodge to the South/West of the barn, The pump to the North of Hill farmhouse and Hill Farm Barn to the North of Hill farmhouse. Refer to the image below;

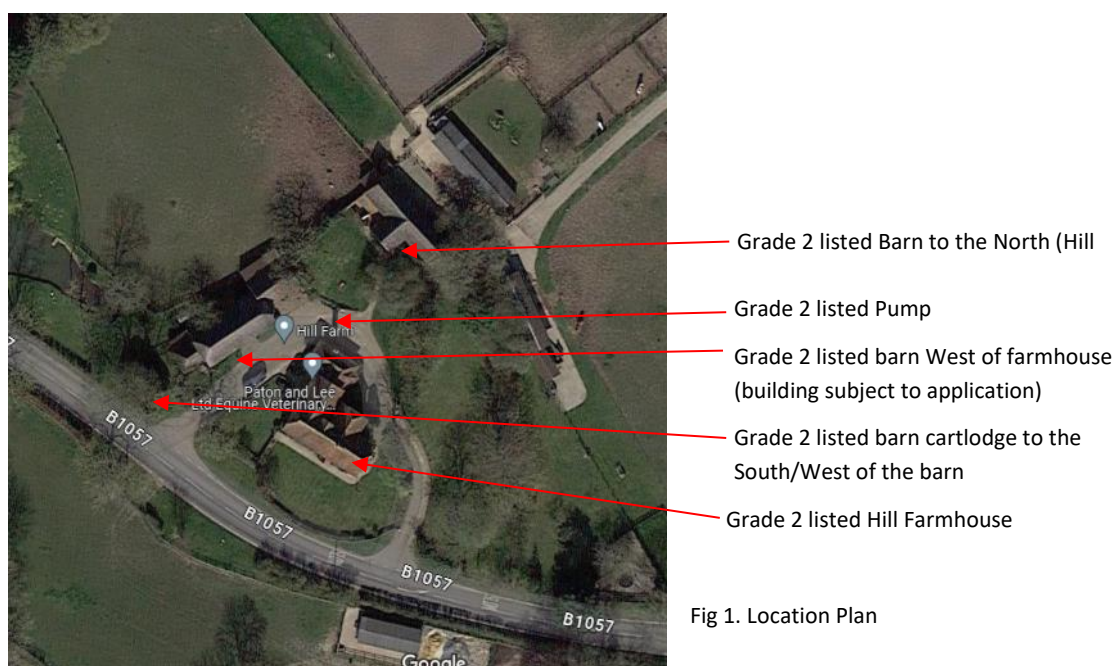


Fig 1. Location Plan

3.0 Photographs



Fig 2. East elevation (looking from South)



Fig 3. East elevation (looking from North)



Fig 4. Rear elevation (West)



Fig 5. Rear elevation, Single storey store (West)



Fig 6. Internal view of South Bays



Fig 7. Internal view of South Bays



Fig 8. Ground floor South Bay



Fig 9. Ground floor single storey section

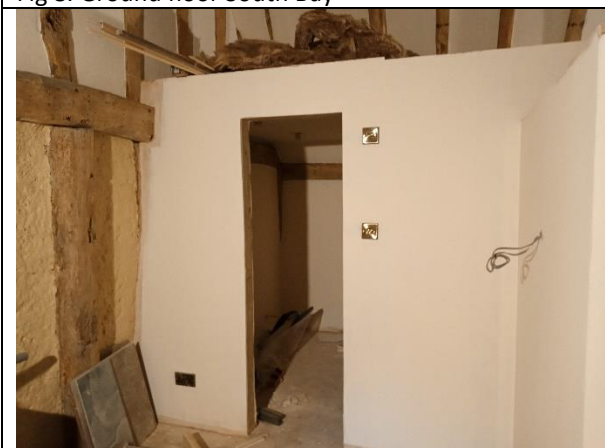


Fig 10. En-Suite stud wall to South mezzanine level



Fig 11. Central bay rear elevation (former porch)



Fig 12. North Bay and mezzanine level



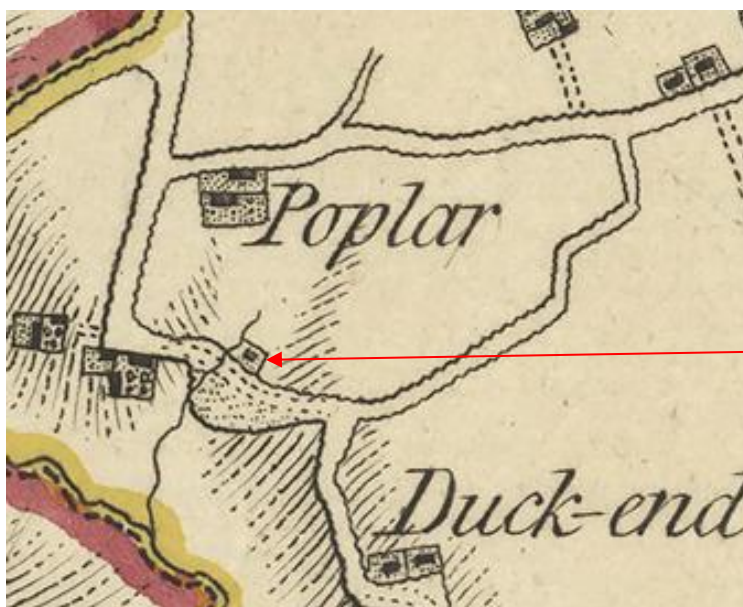
Fig 13. Rear door and stud wall forming WC



Fig 14. Vaulted ceiling and braces to purlin

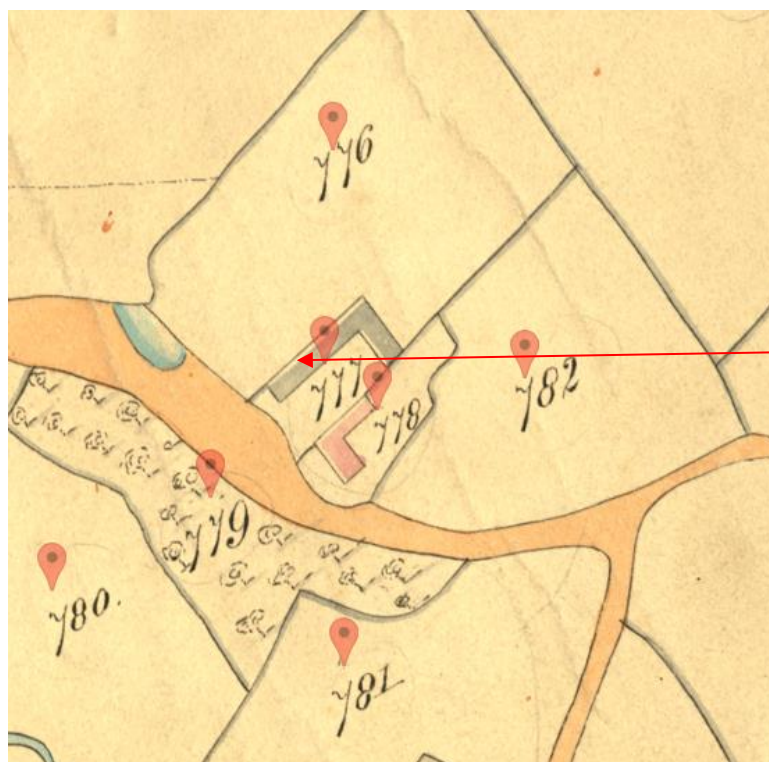
#### 4.0 Historic Maps analysis

4.1 Analysis of historic maps reveals the evolution of buildings on the site. The house is indicated on the 1777 Andre and Chapman Maps (although un-named). None of the surrounding barns are indicated on the map. So either the barns are of late 18<sup>th</sup> century construction and the listing is incorrect, which is common, or the buildings are just not shown.



Hill farmhouse

Fig 15. 1777 Andre and Chapman map



Barn subject to application

Fig 16. 1839 Tithe map



Fig 17. 1875 OS map



Fig 18. 1896 OS map



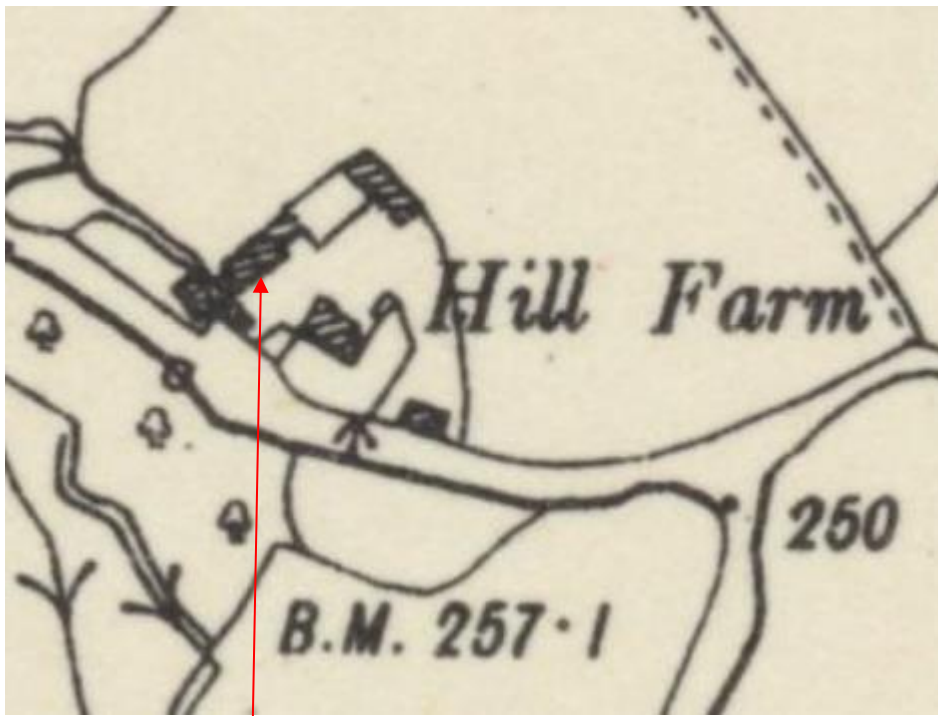


Fig 19. 1946 OS map

## 5.0 Statement of significance

5.1 The barn subject to the application is a good example of a timber frame threshing barn that most likely dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> or late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The building positively contributes to the group setting of the farm, the setting of the surrounding listed buildings and the historic development of agriculture. It is therefore a building of high significance.

5.2 The barn has been subject to alterations at some point in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the listing in 1984, which include the insertion of windows, concrete ground floor, extended mezzanine floors and insertion of staircases.

## 6.0 Proposals

6.1 The proposals are part retrospective as most of the works to convert the barn to an annexe have already been completed. The works include;

- 6.2
- Internal linings to the single storey room to the South end of the barn
  - Plasterboard to the underside of the mezzanine levels
  - Construction of handrails to the mezzanine floors
  - Construction of internal partitions
  - Construction of underfloor heating over concrete floor and new floor finish over
  - Plasterboard between studs and rafters
  - Replacement timber doors
  - Glazed entrance doors and existing doors pinned back

6.3 *Internal linings to the single storey room to the South end of the barn.*

The single storey room to the South end of the barn has been lined with plasterboard over the studs and plastered. The plaster is gypsum plaster not lime plaster. Some original wattle and daub panels have been retained and exposed to the room. The wall plates have been retained and exposed to the room. The internal wall between the single storey room and main barn is an oak stud wall. This has been retained and exposed to the room. The roof has been lined with pine tongue and grooved boards. The access to the single storey room is through an area where the soleplate has been cut (this appears to be historic) and a stud removed. There is a small concrete ramp down to the single storey room to negate the change in level.



Fig 20. Wattle and daub panels above exposed studs between lean-to and barn



Fig 21. Historically cut soleplate

#### 6.4 *Plasterboard to the underside of the mezzanine floors*

The mezzanine floors have been lined with plasterboard to the underside to form a void for services and spotlights. The mid rail and any other main posts and beams have remained exposed to the room

#### 6.5 *Construction of handrails to the mezzanine levels*

Handrails have been constructed to the mezzanine floors to protect occupants from falling from the mezzanine levels into the midstrey. These have been constructed from reclaimed Oak beams with plasterboard infill. The handrails have been set back from the tie beams that appear to have been inserted historically (prior to listing) to extend the length of the mezzanine floors. The handrails are also set back from the main roof tie beams and braces also.



Fig 22. Handrails to mezzanine level

#### 6.6 *Construction of internal partitions*

Internal partitions have been constructed to form bathrooms and W/C's. These have been constructed from studwork and plasterboard. To the ground floor the partitions form a W/C and utility to the North end of the barn. On the 1<sup>st</sup> floor a stud partition forms a shower room to the South end of the barn. The height of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor stud partition has been kept to a minimum so to form a false ceiling over.



Fig 23. Stud wall to 1<sup>st</sup> floor en-suite

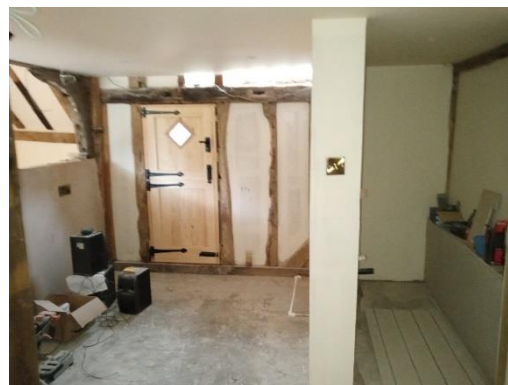


Fig 24. Stud wall to ground floor W.C

6.7 *Construction of underfloor heating over concrete floor and new floor finish over*

Works have started for the installation of underfloor heating over the existing concrete slab. The existing slab appears to be modern, but installed prior to the conversion works, so most likely pre-dates the 1984 listing. The underfloor heating is being installed within pre-formed plastic grids. The proposal is to then lay a sandstone slab floor finish over the underfloor heating.



Fig 25. Installation of underfloor heating system over existing concrete slab

6.8 *Plasterboard between studs and rafters*

Throughout the entire barn, plasterboard has been inserted between studs and beams and gypsum plaster finish over with a white paint finish. This has resulted in every timber being exposed (with exception for the single storey section of the barn as described in para 6.3). Some panels of original wattle and daub have been retained and exposed. These works have been completed prior to the conversion works, but after the 1984 listing date, and therefore listed building consent is required.



Fig 26. Plasterboard between rafters



Fig 27. Exposed wattle and daub panel to South end of barn on 1<sup>st</sup> floor  
Plasterboard between rafters

## 6.9 *Replacement timber doors*

As part of the conversion works, 2no. personal doors have been replaced. These are located on the East elevation (front) within the single storey section and West elevation (rear) within the end bay. The openings are original openings, but the doors have been replaced with softwood timber stable doors with diamond window.

## 6.10 *Glazed entrance doors and existing doors pinned back*

The proposal is to insert glazed entrance doors within the existing opening to the front (East) elevation and pin the existing barn doors back. The glazed entrance doors will be timber construction and painted black. The pinned back barn doors will remain usable so when the annexe is not in use the doors can be locked shut.

## 7.0 **Heritage Impact Assessment & Justification**

### 7.1 *Internal linings to the single storey room to the South end of the barn*

The single storey room to the South end of the barn would have historically been used as a storage room, tack room or a stable. It has a vaulted ceiling and a door and window opening within the front wall. Originally the room would have had exposed studwork walls. It is unclear if the stud walls had infill wattle and daub panels or open panels so the back of the weatherboarding was visible, but it is most likely the panels were not infilled.

As part of the conversion, plasterboard has been installed over the studs. This results in the only visible studwork being the wall plate, tie beams within the roof and the dividing stud wall to the barn. The installation of the wall linings does impact on the internal appearance and character of the building as the historic studs and frame are not visible. It is assumed a void has been retained behind the plasterboard so the frame will retain breathability through the external timber weatherboarding.

The level of harm on the significance of the building, in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF, can be calculated as being on the low scale of 'less than substantial', however, the impact does need to be weighed against other factors which include; the benefit of the conversion of the building resulting in the long-term conservation of the building, the single storey room being less significant than the main barn and just a small area of the barn without the timbers exposed when compared the entire main barn having all exposed timbers.

The stud wall between the room and main barn has been exposed to the room and so it is considered this is a positive change. The soleplate appears to have historically been cut to form the opening prior to the listing, and the slot in the mid rail above for the missing stud, is still visible, so this change cannot be assessed as part of the application.

### 7.2 *Plasterboard to the underside of the mezzanine floors*

Plasterboard has been fixed to the underside of the mezzanine floor levels, with a plaster finish and spotlights inserted. In most instances the mezzanine floor levels were added within threshing barns latterly when the agricultural use of the barn evolved and barns were used for grain storage, floors added and hoppers in the

floors created. In many instances this was within the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century where pine floor joists would have been used. This is most likely the case and therefore covering the underside of the joists with plasterboard will not impact on the original timber frame of the barn. The proposals therefore will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the barn in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF due to covering fabric of little significance.

### 7.3 *Construction of handrails to the mezzanine levels*

Handrails have been constructed from reclaimed Oak and plasterboard infill to the edge of the mezzanine floors. The handrails are in-keeping with the appearance of the building, however, the plasterboard infill does obscure internal views of the upper levels of the barn. At present, the handrails could be considered to be on the low scale of 'less than substantial' level of harm on the significance of the building. However, if the handrails were re-designed to remove plasterboard infill so the full height space of the barn could be enjoyed, then the handrails could result in no impact on the appearance and character of the barn and 'no harm' to the significance of the barn in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF.

### 7.4 *Construction of internal partitions*

Timber stud partitions have been constructed to form a W/C and part utility on the ground floor and shower room in the corner of the 1st floor level. The stud partitioned areas are small discrete areas that do not impact on the character or experience of the barn and therefore result in 'no harm' to the significance of the barn in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF.

### 7.5 *Construction of underfloor heating over concrete floor and new floor finish over*

The floor is a modern concrete floor that also appears to have been constructed in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century prior to the listing. It is not considered best practice to pour a concrete floor in historic buildings where there is a soleplate and soft red brickwork as it pushes the moisture to the edges of the brick plinth walls. However, in this instance the soleplate is raised up from the floor level with a plinth brick wall. This ensures that any moisture in the brickwork plinth walls will not reach the soleplate. It also means any moisture within the brickwork can continue to evaporate internally or externally. On visiting the building, there does not seem to be any evidence of damp or deterioration of the walls. A new sandstone floor finish will be installed on top of the underfloor heating to maintain some breathability of the floor finish.

The underfloor heating system will not result in any impact on historic fabric and the existing concrete slab has not resulted in any deterioration of the fabric. The sandstone slab finish will be a permeable floor finish that will appear in-keeping with the character of the building. Removal of the concrete slab would result in more harm to the fabric of the building. It is therefore considered the proposals will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the barn in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF.

### 7.6 *Plasterboard between studs and rafters*

Plasterboard has been inserted between studs to the walls and rafters. This appears to have been completed in the last 10-20 years. The best practice when converting barns is to insert lamb or sheeps wool between

studs and woodfibre board between timbers with a lime plaster finish. Although what has been done is not considered best practice due to plasterboard being a non-breathable product, every stud and every rafter has been exposed internally. This results in the timbers being able to breathe within the open internal environment, whilst also continue to breathe through the thatched roof finish over. This will ensure timbers will not reach the water content levels to support rot or insect infestation.

Therefore, although this is not the best practice, the plasterboard between the timbers has resulted in retaining the internal appearance of the timbers and the character of the building, whilst not impacting on the condition of the fabric. Reversal of the work that has been carried out would result in more harm to the fabric of the building. It is therefore considered the proposals will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the barn in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF.

#### 7.7 *Replacement timber doors*

2no. Personnel doors have been replaced with timber pine stable doors with diamond windows. These doors have been inserted within existing door openings. The doors that have been replaced were most likely ledged and braced timber plank doors that had deteriorated beyond repair. The replacement timber stable doors are in-keeping with the character of the building. They will need to be painted black to ensure the doors result in 'no harm' to the significance of the barn in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF. The replacement doors are the only external change to the building.

#### 7.8 *Glazed entrance doors and existing doors pinned back*

The proposed glazed entrance doors is a typical detail for barn conversions and by retaining the barn doors, pinned back, the proposals will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the barn in accordance with para 199 of the NPPF.

## 8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The building subject to the proposals is a grade 2 listed timber framed barn within the setting of a number of other listed buildings forming a farmstead group of buildings. The proposal is for a number of alterations and changes to support the change of use to an annexe. This heritage statement has been produced to assess the level of impact of the proposals on the appearance, character and significance of the building.
- 8.2 The barn is a thatched 4 range threshing barn that dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. Over time the barn has been subject to alterations, which includes the alteration of the rear (West) gable door to the midstrey, the insertion of the mezzanine floors and staircases, construction of a concrete floor, insertion of windows and removal of soleplate to access the store area. From inspection of the building, it is apparent that these changes all occurred prior to the listing in 1984. (the listing is not very accurate as the barn is stated to be 3 bays when it is 4 bays).
- 8.3 The barn represents a good example of a typical Essex threshing barn that would have been constructed around the time of the agricultural revolution. The building positively contributes to the group setting of the surrounding listed buildings.
- 8.4 Construction has started on the conversion of the building to an annexe. The alterations and changes to support the conversion include;
- Internal linings to the single storey room to the South end of the barn
  - Plasterboard to the underside of the mezzanine levels
  - Construction of handrails to the mezzanine floors
  - Construction of internal partitions
  - Construction of underfloor heating over concrete floor and new floor finish over
  - Plasterboard between studs and rafters
  - Replacement timber doors
  - Glazed entrance doors and existing doors pinned back
- 8.5 The majority of the alterations and changes will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the building. Some of the changes will result in 'less than substantial' harm, on the low end of the scale. This includes the Internal linings to the single storey room to the South end of the barn and the handrails to the mezzanine floors.
- 8.6 The level of harm of the internal linings to the single storey section need to be weighed against the enhancements of the scheme. The proposals will result in the long-term conservation of the building, whilst the entire remaining main barn has the entire frame exposed and the single storey room being of lesser significance when compared to the main barn, it maybe considered on balance that the level of harm can be counterbalanced.
- 8.7 Alterations to the handrails have been suggested which could result in the level of harm reducing from 'less than substantial' to 'no harm'.



- 8.8 The proposals will result in very little changes to the external appearance of the building. It is therefore considered the proposals will result in no impact on the external appearance of character of the building and therefore 'no harm' to the setting of the surrounding listed buildings. The change of use of the building will not split the building from the curtilage of the listed farmhouse due to it being converted to an annexe.
- 8.9 In accordance with paragraph 199 of the NPPF it is considered the proposals will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the building. Where proposals result in 'less than substantial harm', enhancements have been proposed or the proposals can be weighed against securing its optimum viable use in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF to counterbalance any impact.

## APPENDIX A – LIST DESCRIPTION

### Official list entry

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1251425

Date first listed: 06-Aug-1984

List Entry Name: HILL FARM, BARN WITH ATTACHED OUTBUILDINGS 10 METRES TO WEST OF FARMHOUSE

Statutory Address 1:

HILL FARM, BARN WITH ATTACHED OUTBUILDINGS 10 METRES TO WEST OF FARMHOUSE, DUCK END

Location

Statutory Address: HILL FARM, BARN WITH ATTACHED OUTBUILDINGS 10 METRES TO WEST OF FARMHOUSE, DUCKEND

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Essex

District: Uttlesford (District Authority)

Parish: Stebbing

National Grid Reference:

TL 65243 26717

Details

TL 62 NE STEBBING DUCK END 2/349 Hill Farm, Barn with attached outbuildings 10m to W of Farmhouse

### G.V. II

Barn and attached small outbuildings. Late C16 or early C17. Timber framed and mainly weatherboarded. Roof thatched and half hipped to central barn, hipped to left outbuilding and ½ hipped to right outbuilding. Board doors to each building. Barn with 3 bays, arched braces to tie beams. Jowled storey posts. Through bracing to walls. Arched braces to side purlin roof. Halved and bladed scarf to top plate. Good quality. The attached buildings with side purlin roof and straight tie beams.

Listing NGR: TL6524326717

Legacy

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