Conservation and Heritage Statement

Mill Farm House, Bersham, Wrexham, LL14 4LL

1. Introduction

This Combined Conservation and Heritage Statement has been prepared to support applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for proposed works at Mill Farm House, Bersham, Wrexham, LL14 4LL.

The statement has been prepared in response to pre-application advice issued by Wrexham County Borough Council under reference ENQ/2025/0271, including comments from both the Planning Officer and the Council's Conservation Officer.

The purpose of this document is to describe the site and its heritage significance, set out the proposed development, and demonstrate how the proposals preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and the character and appearance of the Bersham Conservation Area.

2. Type of Application

The proposal seeks:

- Planning Permission for a single-storey rear extension; and
- Listed Building Consent for works to a Grade II listed dwelling.

3. Location of the Property

Mill Farm House is located within the historic village of Bersham, south-west of Wrexham, and lies within the designated Bersham Conservation Area.

The property occupies a generous plot with extensive, established gardens to the rear. Due to the site's orientation and topography, the rear elevation — and therefore the proposed extension — is not visible from the public highway or wider conservation area viewpoints. Established hedgerow along the site boundary and an existing brickwork garden wall also provides screening, refer to photograph below:



View from roadside with established screening.



View from within curtilage showing screening from existing garden wall.

4. Description of the Proposed Development

The proposal comprises the construction of a single-storey extension to the rear of the property, providing a new dining space to serve the existing kitchen.

Key elements include:

- The extension will use natural, locally resourced materials to include render to match the existing property and a natural slate roof.
- Conservation-style aluminium sliding doors, in a toned white finish to match existing.
- Two heritage-style conservation rooflights.

The extension is deliberately modest, visually lightweight, and clearly subordinate to the main house.

5. Site Description

Mill Farm House is a Grade II listed building that makes a strong contribution to the rural vernacular character of the Bersham Conservation Area. The building is historically associated with the Clywedog Valley industrial landscape and the wider Bersham Ironworks heritage, as noted by the Council's officers.

The property retains a clear historic form and legible plan layout. The kitchen occupies its original location and remains an important part of the historic internal arrangement of the building.

The rear garden is large, well established, and forms part of the setting of the listed building, contributing positively to its significance.

6. Policy Considerations and Land Designation

The site is:

- A Grade II listed building.
- Located within the Bersham Conservation Area.
- Situated within Flood Zone C2 (TAN15).

The proposal has been assessed against the following policy framework, as identified in the pre-application response:

National Policy

- Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12).
- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24 – The Historic Environment.
- TAN 12 – Design.
- TAN 15 – Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion.

Local Policy and Guidance

- Wrexham Unitary Development Plan:
    - GDP1 – Development within the curtilage of a dwelling.
    - PS1 – New development within settlement areas.
    - EC7 – Conservation Areas.
    - EC9 – Listed Buildings.

- **Local Planning Guidance Notes:**
    - LPGN04 – Conservation Areas.
    - LPGN20 – Housing Extensions.

- LPGN30 – Design.
- LPGN06 – Access to and Use of Buildings.

The proposals are considered to comply with these policies by preserving the listed building, its setting, and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

7. Heritage Impact Statement

Heritage Status and Context

Listing Authority: *Cadw*
Reference Number: 16540
Designation Date: 8 December 1995

Mill Farm House sits within the Bersham Conservation Area, designated in 1975 (with amendments in 2003) reflecting its contribution to the historic character and settlement pattern of the village. It forms part of a group of listed buildings around Mill Terrace and close to the industrial heritage of the Bersham Ironworks site to the west.

The farmhouse dates from the early 18th century (with later extensions), indicating it has historic vernacular origins in the rural landscape of Bersham. Its style and age place it in the same broad era as much of the village's building fabric and estate cottages that developed alongside local industrial and agricultural growth.

Mill Farm House (and the adjacent Mill Terrace cottages), form a cohesive historic building group, with a strong and consistent building line. Mill Farm House is understood to have originated in the first half of the 18th century and was extended later in the same century.

Further extension and alterations were undertaken during the 19th century, reflecting the continued adaptation and use of the building over time. The slate roof is punctuated by chimneys at the gable ends of the original house, a recurring local architectural feature that reinforces its contribution to the wider historic townscape.

Architectural detailing includes timber casement windows, with dormers featuring fretted bargeboards and pendant finials. The principal entrance comprises a six-panelled door beneath a scalloped barrel canopy supported on decorative brackets. The late 18th-century extension retains a plank door and a two-light casement window at ground-floor level, while an original six-over-six pane sash window survives at first-floor level, cutting through a raised string course. Together, these elements illustrate the building's historic development and contribute to its architectural and evidential significance.

Assessment of Significance

The significance of Mill Farm House derives from:

- Its listed status and architectural interest as a rural vernacular dwelling.
- Its historic association with the Bersham industrial landscape.
- Its contribution to the character and appearance of the Bersham Conservation Area.
- The survival of its historic plan form, particularly at ground floor level.

This significance is assessed as high, with sensitivity to inappropriate scale, visibility, and loss of historic fabric.

Impact of the Proposal

The extension has been designed to:

- Avoid harm to significant historic fabric.
- Retain the original kitchen layout, preserving the historic internal arrangement.
- Be located to the rear, where impact on the conservation area is minimal.
- Remain clearly subordinate in scale, form, and massing.

The proposal results in no harm to the significance of the listed building and preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area.

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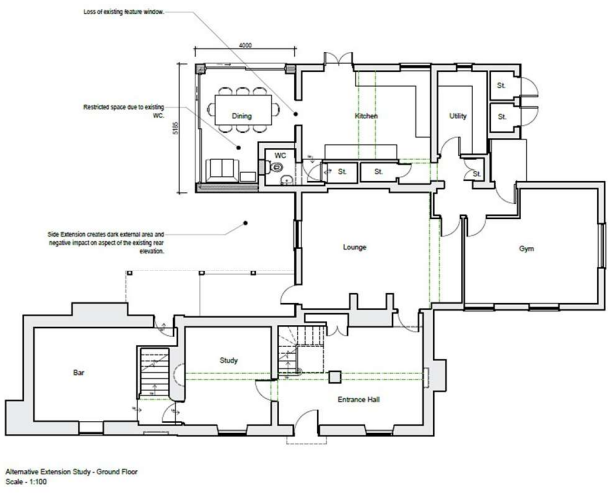
8. Conservation Officer Comments

Pre-Application Advice: Ref ENQ/2025/0271
As part of the Pre-Application given, the Conservation Officer comments have been considered as follows:
• Justification for additional space: The property appears to be of substantial size. Could the desired facilities be achieved through reordering the existing layout rather than extending? • Positioning of the extension: As shown, the extension would be visible from the road and wider conservation area. Could the south elevation, within the angle, offer a less prominent location?

Alternative Positioning on South Elevation:

The option of locating the extension on the south elevation, as suggested by the Conservation Officer, was carefully explored. However, this approach presents a number of design and heritage-led constraints. Due to the presence of existing bedroom windows at first-floor level, the roof pitch of any extension in this location would need to be uncharacteristically low, resulting in a form that does not sit comfortably with the proportions or roof hierarchy of the listed building. As a consequence, the extension would appear visually incongruous and disproportionate when read alongside the host property.

In addition, positioning the extension on the south elevation would create a U-shaped courtyard arrangement, which would restrict views from the principal rooms of the house to the rear garden, introduce a dark and enclosed corner, and adversely affect daylight and aspect to the rear elevation as a whole. This configuration would result in a poorer relationship between the house and its garden setting, diminishing the spatial quality and legibility of the building and its curtilage. For these reasons, the south elevation option was discounted as it would result in greater visual and heritage harm than the proposed.

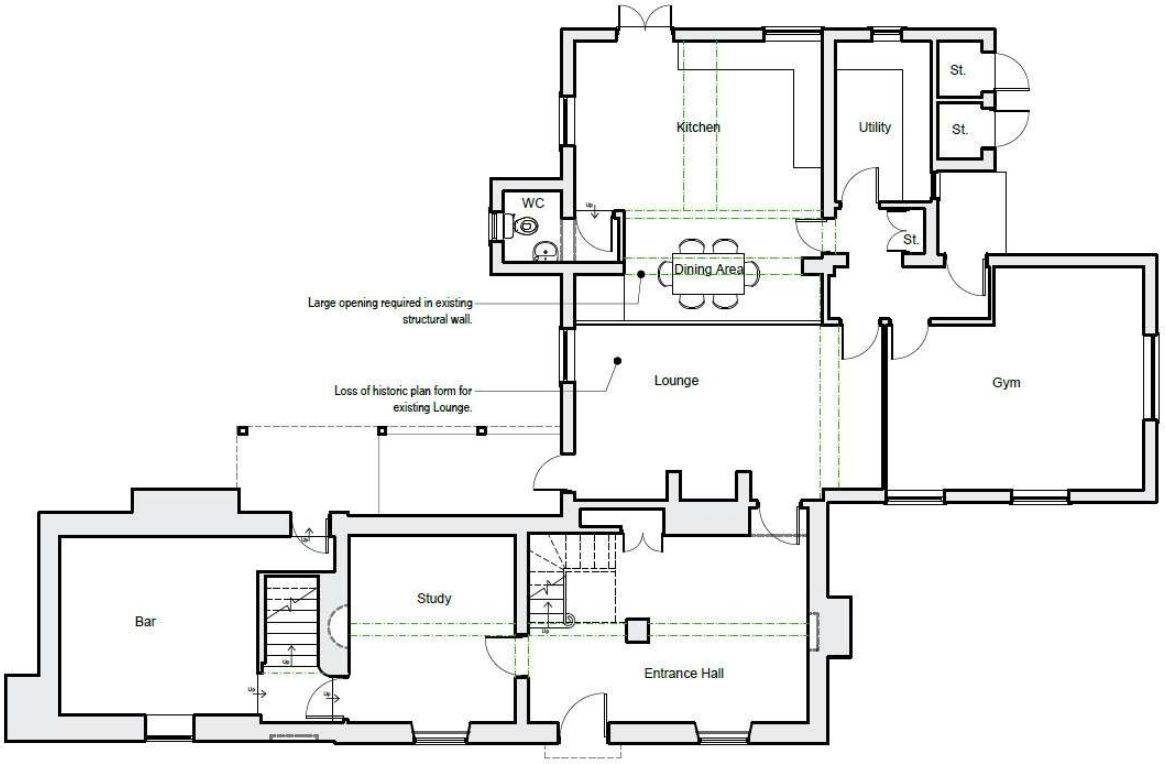




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CHARTERED PRACTICE

Alternative for Internal Re-Ordering:

The alternative option of reordering the existing internal layout was explored in detail however this would result in the loss of the historic floor plan and disrupt the spatial integrity of the existing rooms. Specifically, reconfiguring the layout would disproportionately alter the adjacent room, undermining its historic character. This would require the removal of a significant internal wall, which forms an important part of the building's fabric and historical structure. Consequently, this approach was deemed unsuitable as it would cause greater harm to the building's significance than the proposed rear extension, which preserves the original layout while meeting the functional needs of the property.



Alternative Internal Reconfiguration 2 - Ground Floor
Scale - 1:100

9. Design

Amount & Layout

The extension provides only the space required to form a dining area. The additional floor area is modest and proportionate to the host building. The layout intentionally avoids reconfiguring the existing kitchen, which would result in greater intervention into historic fabric. Instead, the extension allows the existing plan form to be retained.

Scale and Massing

The extension is single storey, visually subordinate, and carefully detailed to avoid competing with the main house.

Landscaping & Parking

The established rear garden is retained, preserving its contribution to the setting of the listed building. No changes are proposed to parking arrangements.

The proposal does include a small amount of new and replacement external paving around the area of the property in order to provide safe and practical access around the perimeter of the building.

The introduction of new perimeter access paving is required to improve safe pedestrian movement and maintenance access around the historic building. The works are confined to areas immediately adjacent to the house and do not extend into the wider garden or setting.

In addition, an existing area of concrete external slab is proposed to be replaced with natural slate paving. The use of slate is considered more appropriate to the character of the building and reflects traditional materials commonly associated with historic rural buildings in the area.

The proposed paving will be modest in scale, sensitively detailed, and subordinate to the host building. It will not affect any historic fabric and will not result in the loss of significant historic features.

Overall, the landscaping works are considered to result in no harm to the significance of Mill Farm House or its setting and represent a minor enhancement.

Appearance

Materials and detailing reflect the existing building. The glazed gable end provides transparency and reduces visual mass while allowing views into the garden. The glazing also promotes a lightweight and subordinate addition to the dwelling.

10. Conservation Principles and Design Approach

The assessment of proposals affecting historic buildings should be rooted in an understanding of significance and the degree of harm arising from change. As Lee Evans notes in '*An Introduction to Architectural Conservation: Philosophy, Legalisation and Practice'*, it is important to "identify if the impact and level of harm of the proposals on the significant parts or whole building is low, moderate or substantial," recognising that even where a building is highly significant, "if alterations can be restricted to parts of the building which are modern or of little architectural/historical significance, the impact of the proposals will be low [and] consent is much more likely to be granted" (Lee Evans, An Introduction to Architectural Conservation). This principle underpins the approach taken, whereby proposed works are carefully directed to less sensitive areas of the building in order to minimise harm to its overall significance.

A further core principle of conservation practice is that new work should complement historic fabric rather than imitate it. Lee Evans is explicit that "new work should express modern needs in a modern language," stating that this is "the only [way] in which new can relate to old in a way which is positive and responsive at the same time." He further cautions that, where additions are essential, they "should not be made to out-do or out-last the original" (Lee Evans). This supports an approach which deliberately avoids pastiche, replication of historic styles, or the unnecessary matching of traditional materials, instead favouring a clearly legible and subordinate contemporary intervention.

The need for sensitive alteration to secure the long-term use of historic buildings is also clearly recognised. Lee Evans observes that "often such buildings become redundant when they no longer suit their original uses, needing sensitive alteration to ensure their survival." He goes on to note that "the design skills of conservation architects can ensure a building has a continued use without destroying its architectural, historical or cultural value," acknowledging that well-considered change is frequently essential to the ongoing viability of historic and listed buildings. This guide, he explains, "recognises the need for change," and provides an introduction to "the philosophical and legislative framework which should guide those who seek to work on historic and listed buildings" (Lee Evans).

These established conservation principles are reinforced by Cadw guidance for Wales. Managing Historic Character in Wales states that "this does not mean that design should be a pastiche or copy, but it should respect and respond to the local context; for example, in terms of scale, massing and orientation." Cadw further confirms that "innovative, contemporary design can make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness" (Cadw, 2019). This guidance explicitly supports the use of high-quality contemporary architecture within the historic environment, provided it is proportionate, context-led, and respectful of significance.

Taken together, these principles support an approach that avoids pastiche, does not seek to replicate historic materials or detailing, and does not rely on heavyweight construction where this would increase intervention into significant fabric. Instead, the proposed scheme adopts a lightweight, contemporary design language that is clearly legible as new, remains subordinate to the host building, and conserves its architectural, historic and cultural significance in accordance with both conservation theory and Cadw guidance.

11. Accessibility

The proposal improves access between the house and garden through new glazed openings, enhancing usability without compromising historic fabric.

12. Conclusion

This statement demonstrates that the proposed single-storey rear extension at Mill Farm House:

- Responds directly to pre-application advice from the Planning and Conservation Officers.
- Preserves the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building.
- Preserves the character and appearance of the Bersham Conservation Area.
- Provides a sensitive solution to modern family needs while retaining the historic plan form.

The Heritage Impact Assessment demonstrates that the proposed single-storey rear extension at Mill Farm House has been carefully designed following a clear understanding of the building's significance and sensitivities in that the proposal:

- Preserves the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building
- Preserves the setting of the heritage asset
- Preserves the character and appearance of the Bersham Conservation Area
- Represents the least harmful and most appropriate solution to meeting modern living requirements

The proposals are therefore considered acceptable in heritage and conservation terms and are supported by relevant national and local planning policy.

References

Lee Evans, N. (2013) An Introduction to Architectural Conservation: Philosophy, Legislation and Practice. London: RIBA Publishing.

Cadw (2019) Managing Historic Character in Wales. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Bersham Conservation Area Assessment and Management Plan, Adopted December 2009.