Design & Access Statement: **Stables at Cedar Hall**

July 2026



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Introduction & Proposal Summary

This application proposes the conversion of the former stable block at Cedar Hall, Gresford, into ancillary residential accommodation to the main hall. The stables are currently redundant, and the proposed change of use will secure their long-term conservation through sensitive adaptation and ongoing maintenance.

Cedar Hall and its associated stable block were constructed in 1850 and were designated Grade II listed buildings in 1996. The stable block is located to the south of the main house, separated by a courtyard which provides a clear functional and visual relationship between the two buildings.

The stable block comprises two principal wings arranged around a yard, with a canted entrance reflecting the chamfered entrance detail of the main house.



Cedar Hall Stables; North Elevation (approach from main hall)

Summary of Proposed Changes

The proposed works are largely internal, with minor external alterations strictly limited to existing openings. Conversion to residential use ensures the repair, ongoing maintenance, and long-term survival of the historic fabric.

Previous inappropriate interventions, including visqueen and timber battens on solid brick walls, have compromised the structure's breathability. These will be replaced with a lime plaster parge coat and breathable woodfibre insulation, restoring the building's original hygrothermal performance. This envelope upgrade, combined with improved insulation, will also manage moisture levels and halt the deterioration of roof rafters identified in a recent condition survey.

To secure habitable ceiling heights without extending the footprint, the first-floor levels will be sensitively adjusted in a central walkway over the north-facing carriage entrance and within the east wing. These localised adjustments provide necessary volume without impacting the external appearance or harming significant internal features.

The character of the main carriage entrance will be fully safeguarded; the external gates are retained to maintain the historic elevational treatment, with new glazed screens set internally to allow uninterrupted views through to the courtyard.

The scheme prioritises the retention and reuse of historic elements. A significant stall divider will be preserved as a feature dividing the kitchen and stair areas, while original hay baskets will be relocated for external use within the courtyard.

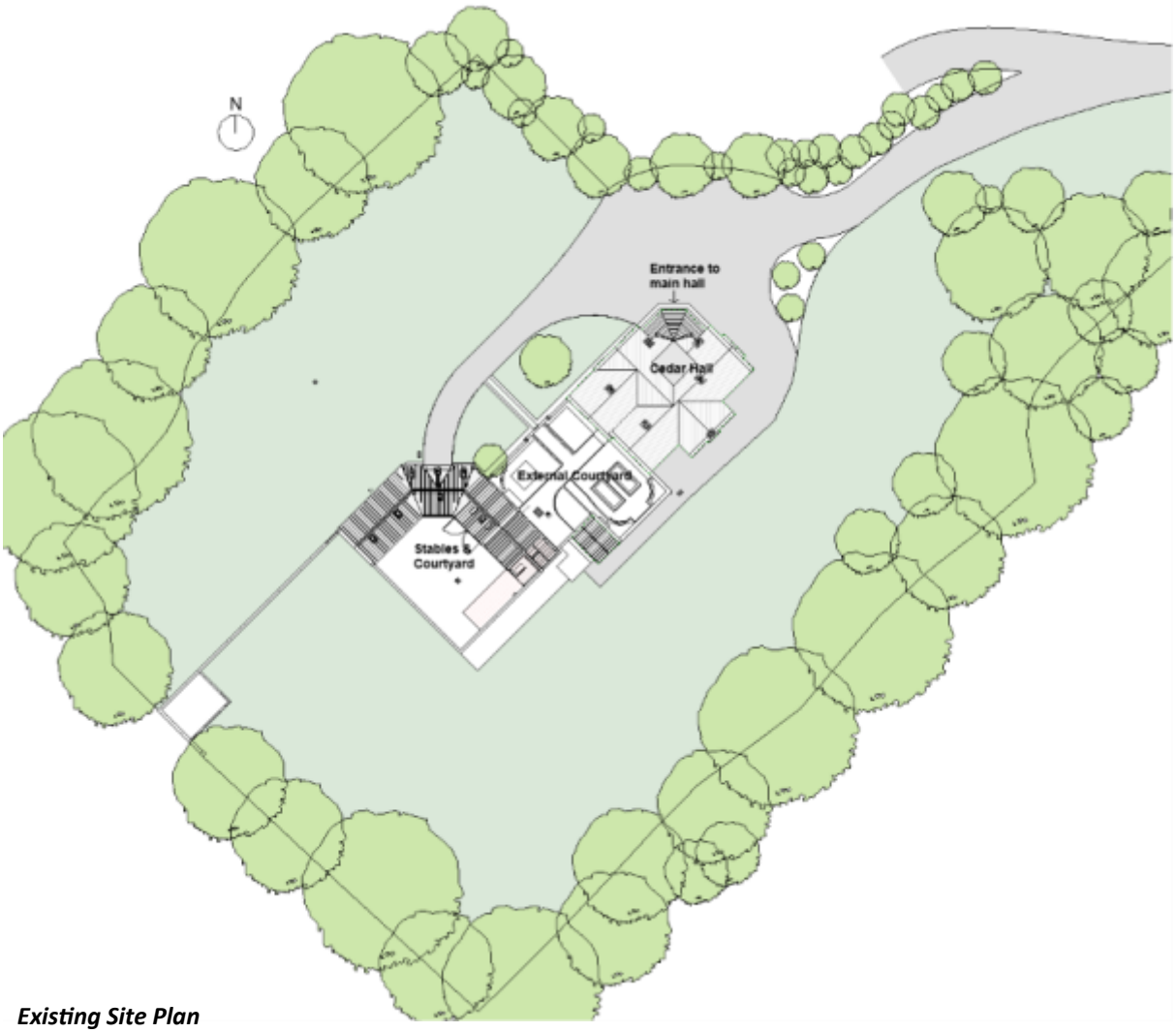
Design Brief

The brief for the proposed development at the Cedar Hall stables is to sensitively convert the building into ancillary residential accommodation whilst improving its fabric and maintaining its historic assets and important features.

The brief calls for living accommodation to the ground floor with bedroom and private art room to the first floors.

Development vision

- Adaptive reuse of existing building to provide its sustainability for the future
- Improved access routes within the building, with a more efficient layout
- Adaptive re-use of vacant and dilapidated areas of the building
- Improving existing services to the building
- Retention of the historic character and relationship to the main house



Existing Site Plan

Site & Context Analysis

Location

Cedar Hall is located in Gresford (to the South West of the B5373), positioned just North of Wrexham city centre and South of Chester. It sits close to the A483, providing links to the North Wales Expressway and South into Wrexham and Shropshire.





Cedar Hall is positioned on *The Green*, which represents part of the historic common land and outer boundary of the village core. Unlike urban expansions, this immediate pocket maintains a rural, country-estate character.

The historic core of Gresford sits on a ridge of high ground. To the north, the topography drops steeply into the River Alyn valley. Cedar Hall sits on the periphery of this higher ground, offering open, elevated views over rolling agricultural fields and countryside.

The property benefits from expansive open aspects, utilising mature tree boundaries and a walled garden to maximise privacy while framing views of the rural landscape. The established woodland and hedging on site act as a key ecological asset and wildlife corridor.

Character of The Stables at Cedar Hall

The building is constructed in browny-red brick and features a prominent four-centred brick arch to the former carriage entrance. It incorporates both two-storey and single-storey elements forming the historic stable yard. Internally, the building retains several original features, including stall dividers and sections of cobbled flooring, although some later alterations have occurred.

The stable block makes a positive contribution to the historic and architectural significance of Cedar Hall as part of a planned mid-19th-century estate complex. The stables form an integral component of the original designed ensemble, which includes the main house, gardens and service areas and views from the northern approach to Cedar Hall incorporate the stable block, reinforcing the Tudorbethan character of the estate.

The building retains legibility as a historic ancillary structure associated with the principal residence

and the proposed works will not materially change this visual relationship. The proposals seek to preserve the architectural character and significance of the stables while enabling their viable reuse.

Built Form & Heritage

The stable court at Cedar Hall was intentionally positioned north-west of the main house. Its angled entrance aligns visually with the house's entrance loggia, mirroring its design.

The arrangement features a two-story, L-shaped main section and a single-story eastern extension. Together with two high brick walls, they form a enclosed courtyard. The walls are consistent with the main building, built of hand-made browny-red brick, and show evidence of former structures, including a missing eastern range. The main section displays a formal English bond on its outer north and west faces, and a looser English Garden Wall bond elsewhere.

The Entrance & Roof: The main cartway sits within a distinct, angled north-western corner featuring a four-centred brick arch, multi-paned windows, and a raised gable with a chimney. The slate roof follows this unique footprint with a mix of hips and coped gables, supported internally by a king-post truss and some re-used timbers.

Ground Floor: Carriageway & Side Rooms: The central carriageway connects to two small, triangular rooms. The eastern room served as a loose box (featuring a cobbled floor and manger), while the western room served as the groom's room (featuring a quarry-tiled floor and a stone fireplace).

East Wing: Houses a tall, cobbled coach house with a wide timber-lintel opening facing the yard.

West Wing: Contains the primary stables, preserving four historic stalls equipped with cast-iron columns, "swan's neck" top rails, and a brick-paved floor.

The Loft: An open loft spans the entire upper level. It is lit by rooflights and divided by internal brick cross walls, with varying floor heights that mirror the ground-floor spaces.

At the furthest end of the East wing a single storey section includes an open-fronted cart shed facing the yard and a rebuilt lean-to shed. The exterior features several segmental-arched doorways and a narrow, multi-paned window.





Stables; North (front) elevation; Main Entrance



North East elevation; facing main house



West wing from inside of stables courtyard



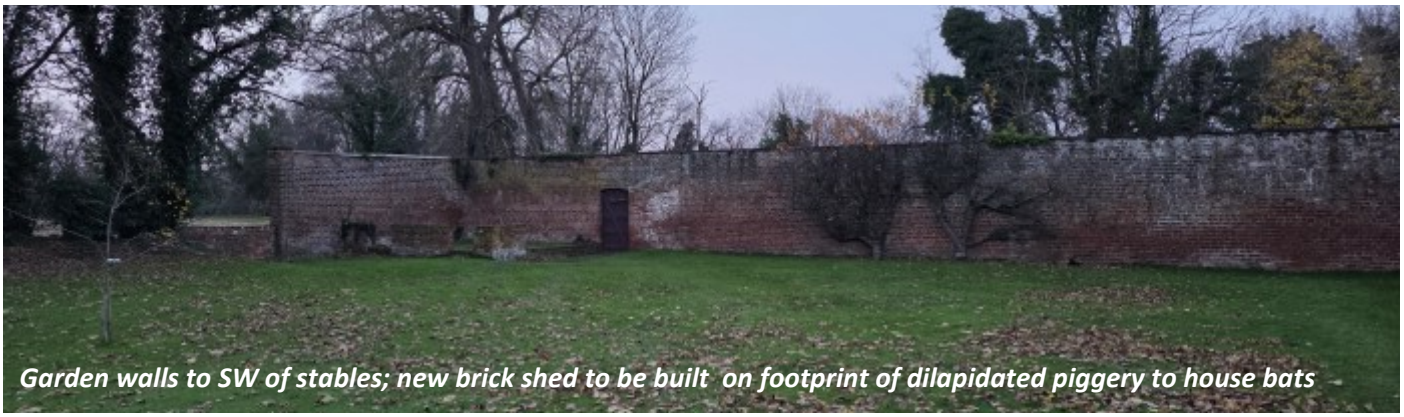
East wing; inside of stables courtyard (carriage shed)



Stables dividers and hay baskets in West wing



First floor over carriage shed

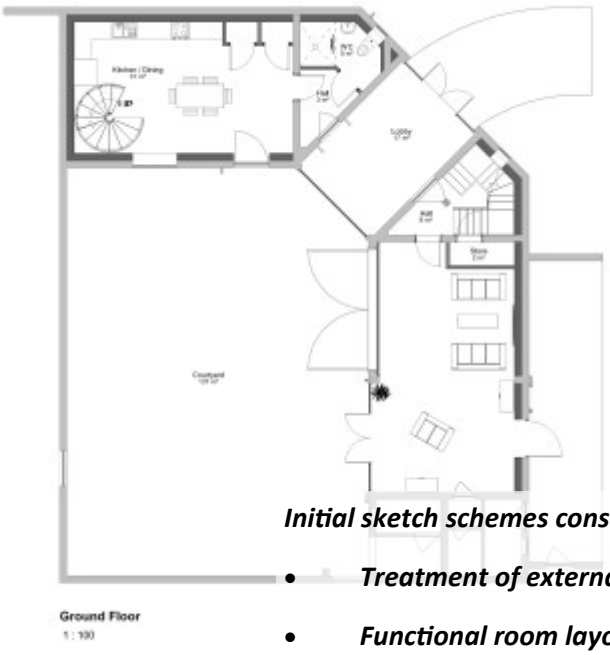


Garden walls to SW of stables; new brick shed to be built on footprint of dilapidated piggery to house bats

Design Development

A proposal for the conversion and alteration to provide ancillary living accommodation, art studio and store was granted planning permission in 2008 for the stables under application P/2007/1397. This has since lapsed and new owners are seeking permission for a new scheme with the same change of use to secure an adaptive re-use of the building.

The design process for this new application began with taking a sensitive approach to the reconfiguration and options for residential layout, minimising impact to external features, whilst also incorporating upgrades to the thermal fabric where viable.



Sketch Layout 01

Initial sketch schemes considered:

- ***Treatment of external gates and setting/aesthetics of the carriageway entrance***
- ***Functional room layouts that can retain existing features and aren't constrained by head heights/existing structure etc. without the need for extending***
- ***Upgrade of thermal elements where possible***
- ***Different staircase configurations and locations***



Sketch Layout 02

Design Development

The initial sketches were developed to create ancillary residential accommodation with design centred on retention of historic features where possible such as: External entrance gates retained but held open to allow integration of new fully glazed archway; retained stable divider as partition separating new staircase; hay baskets relocated to external courtyard; floor levels adjusted over entrance archway and carriage shed to provide usable head room and relaying of duck pebbles to carriageway and courtyard.

The works include a kitchen/dining room, living room, WC, utility and entrance lobby at ground floor, with an art studio, bathroom, snug and single bedroom at first floor. As part of the proposal, one existing toilet will be removed, and a small new storage building is proposed on the footprint of a former structure. The scheme involves internal alterations and some external changes, all intended to be sympathetic to the building's historic character.

The proposals provide an adaptive and sensitive re-use and upgrading of the redundant sections of the property without impacting on the significance of the building. The works will bring a long-term benefit by creating a use for the building that will aid with its future maintenance and upkeep.



Initial pre-app submisison

Proposal

The final design strategy for the conversion of the stables at Cedar Hall has developed in response to, a formal pre-application submission and ongoing dialogue with the Local Planning Authority.

The proposal aims to preserve the character, heritage value and capture the evolution of the stables. The works will help prevent further deterioration, retaining elevations, internal layouts and features as much as possible. A Heritage Impact Assessment is submitted as part of this application and should be read in conjunction with this document and the submitted drawings.

The final scheme has been directly informed by, and developed from, the pre-application submission, incorporating the following core principles:

Retention of the existing gates to the carriageway and localised floor adjustments to the first floor over the carriageway: The proposal seeks the retention of the existing gates to the carriageway, which is to remain in its historic state as viewed externally. This approach preserves its character as an external space and safeguards a key feature of the building's principal approach from the East. To facilitate the conversion, a new glazed screen will be installed internally behind the entrance gates, ensuring it remains hidden from external view. At first-floor level, localized floor adjustments are proposed over the carriageway. The floor will be lowered locally to create a functional internal link between the two wings; however, this adjustment will not breach the apex of the external archway, thereby ensuring no visual impact on this significant external feature.

Sensitive adaptation of the first floor areas to create habitable space: The scheme efficiently utilises the existing first-floor areas to provide habitable living accommodation, entirely eliminating the need to extend the stables or introduce significant external changes to the building. To facilitate this layout, the floor level over the carriage shed will be lowered to create adequate head height. However, this floor will sit at a distinctly different level than both the link corridor and the West wing. By intentionally stepping the interior in this manner, the proposal retains the varied rhythm of floor levels across the upper story—safeguarding a distinct internal characteristic that directly reflects the building's historic layout, functionality, and structural evolution.

Re-use of existing openings: The scheme re-uses existing openings to maintain the historic elevational treatment as much as possible. As part of a sensitive, fabric-first upgrade, new polyester powder-coated (PPC) aluminium windows are proposed to replace the timber units, creating a highly energy-efficient building that works in harmony with the new woodfibre IWI, lime plaster system and new insulated limecrete floor. Where doorways at loft level will be glazed, their shutters will be retained in the ‘open’ position.

The specification of high-performance PPC aluminium allows for slender, low-profile frame profiles that respect the historic sightlines and proportions of the original windows. The new windows will also ensure the building envelope remains fully weather-tight, securing the future preservation of both the internal historic fabric and the breathable wall insulation system.

The proposal will also incorporate:

- Relaying of external cobbles to retain historic character
- Relocation of historic hay baskets to emphasise historic function and retention of stable divider internally
- Integration of vertical timber cladding to the NE elevation in the courtyard to replicate the vertical timber ledged and braced carriage shed doors.
- Localised repairs to brickwork (lime mortar pointing), remedial works to internal timberwork following structural report, ensuring longevity to the structure.
- Installation of new conservation rooflights, replacing standard style rooflights which have been previously installed.

Impact on Heritage Significance

The proposed works have been carefully designed to preserve the architectural and historic character of the stable block while enabling a sustainable and viable new use. Any limited loss of internal fabric is outweighed by the benefit of securing the building's future through adaptive reuse. The cumulative changes reflect the historic evolution of the building and preserve its special interest as a heritage asset.

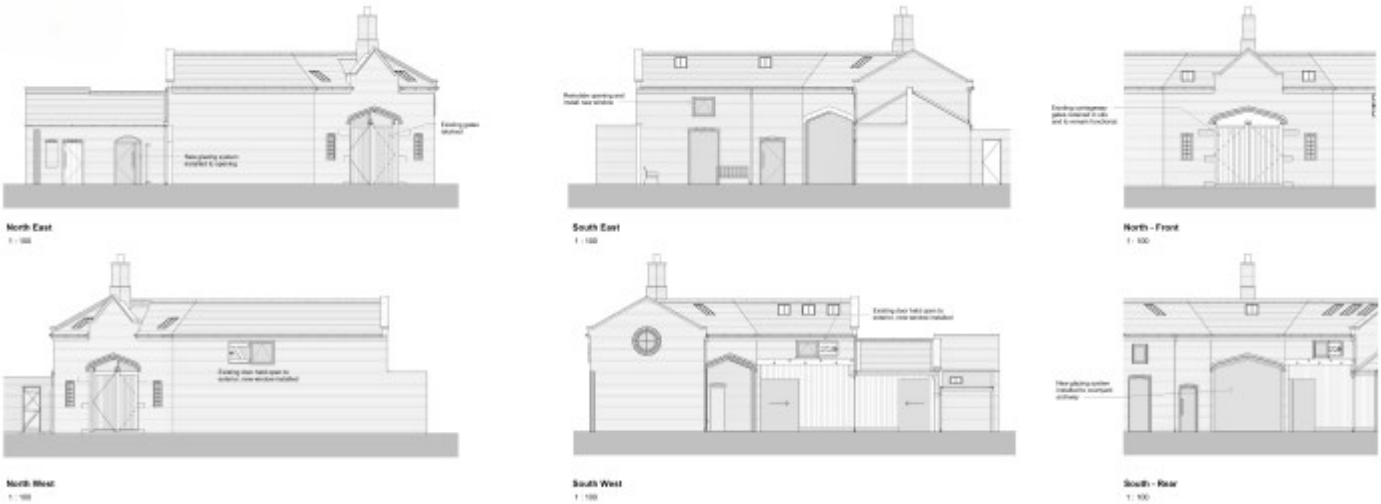
Overall, the proposals are considered to result in no harm to the significance of the Grade II listed building.

Setting and Wider Heritage Assets

The stables are located away from the village centre and are largely screened from other heritage assets, limiting any wider visual or contextual impact. The only adjacent designated heritage asset is Cedar Hall itself, with which the stables have a clear historic and functional relationship. The proposals respect and preserve this relationship, ensuring that the significance of both buildings is sustained.

Final Scheme





Character

The scale and the density of the development is restricted to the current building footprint.

The layout of the new proposals has been configured around functional residential requirements while entirely respecting the historic nature, volume, and cellular layout of the original spaces. By using the existing structural openings, the scheme eliminates the need for aggressive structural alterations, thereby preserving the elevational integrity of the Grade II listed building

The heritage value of the building has been enhanced with the proposals by the restoration and adaptive re-use of the currently vacant stables and store areas.

Materials have been chosen to match the existing or to compliment the historic fabric combining traditional and high-performance modern solutions e.g. PPC aluminium windows; new vertical timber cladding; breathable thermal upgrades and heritage cast aluminium rainwater goods.

Access & Movement

The current pedestrian access is via the central carriageway gates. These gates are to be retained with a new glazed screen installed behind these to act as a principal entrance to the stables accommodation.

As part of the proposal, level thresholds will be sensitively incorporated at the primary ground-floor entrance points. This ensures a seamless transition from the external courtyard paving into the internal living spaces, accommodating individuals with limited mobility while carefully protecting the historic brick plinths and fabric of the Grade II listed structure.

The existing vehicular access leads directly to the private driveway and secondary courtyard. No changes to this current strategy are proposed. Ample parking and turning provisions are already available within the extensive private curtilage, ensuring that all domestic vehicles can safely enter and leave the site without requiring any new hardstanding.

Environmental Sustainability

The proposals for the stable block include lining the walls, floors and roof with insulating materials to conservation details. This will improve the thermal efficiency of the building and protect the historic fabric. As part of the refurbishment, modern building services will ensure an energy efficient heating system.

Community Safety

In accordance with national planning guidance and Wrexham UDP Policy GDP1, the design proposals for the stables at Cedar Hall incorporate core crime prevention and security principles. Because the development forms a private, ancillary residential annex contained entirely within the existing domestic curtilage, it will have a negligible impact on the wider community safety of Gresford.

The physical configuration of the site naturally enhances security through established "Secured by Design" principles, focusing on natural surveillance and clear boundary definition:

Enclosed Layout and Access: The stables are arranged around a secure, historic walled courtyard set back from public vantage points. Access remains strictly private, heavily limiting opportunities for casual trespass or anti-social behaviour.

Natural Surveillance: The sensitive insertion of residential windows facing into the internal stable yard ensures continuous, passive surveillance over the immediate site, creating a self-regulating, secure environment.

Lighting and Detailing: External illumination will be designed sensitively to respect the historic Conservation Area and local ecology by avoiding excessive light pollution, yet it will be strategically placed to ensure safe pedestrian movement between the main house and the annex.

Planning Policy & Feedback

At national level, Planning Policy Wales, TAN 24 The Historic Environment, Chapter 5.13 advises on the considerations for determining a listed building consent application. The following points are relevant to this application:

- The physical features of the building which justify its listing and contribute to its significance, (for example its form and layout, materials, construction and detail) including any features of importance such as the interior, which may have come to light after the building's inclusion on the list.
- The contribution of curtilage and setting to the significance of the building, as well as its contribution to its local scene.
- The impact of the proposed works on the significance of the building.
- The extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial community benefits for example, by contributing to the area's economy or the enhancement of its local environment.

The proposals to Cedar Hall Stables included in this application provide an adaptive and sensitive re-use and upgrading of the redundant sections of the property without impacting on the significance of the building.

The works will bring a community benefit by securing a use for the building that will aid with its future maintenance and upkeep, while ensuring the development has no negative impact upon neighbouring residential amenity.

At local level, Wrexham's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies GDP1, H3, and EC1 call for the strict preservation of rural character, the protection of Green Barriers, and high design standards. Furthermore, policies EC7 (Conservation Areas) and EC9 (Listed Buildings) require that the historic fabric and setting of listed buildings are preserved throughout any proposals.

The principle of residential use has already been firmly established at the site via the 2008 approval for an ancillary annex (Ref: P/2007/1396). While a later application for a separate dwelling (Ref: P/2021/0779) was refused, local conversion policy has remained consistent since the original approval. As the building is shown to be structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial rebuilding, the proposed change of use accords with the development plan.

These local policies and supplementary guidance notes (LPGN 3, LPGN 30, and LPGN 32) have been considered at each design decision made within this proposal. To ensure full compliance, a structural report and a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) for bats and breeding birds will be submitted to support the formal application. Materials will be used to match or compliment the existing, following recommended conservation detailing for the sensitive upgrading of the existing historic fabric.