

Design and Heritage Statement

Basing House
Old Basing, Hampshire
Community Conservation and Developing Skills
Cow Byre: conservation of fabric and conversion works

Introduction

Between September 2009 and August 2010 Hampshire County Council carried out a Heritage Lottery Fund grant aided project of conservation and alteration works on the Grange Farm and Basing House sites. This resulted in the following outcomes:

- provision of public access to the Grange Farm site
- conservation and repair of the existing historic farm buildings
- enhancements to the Great Barn including lighting
- conversion of the Little Barn to a new visitor centre
- conversion of the existing stable block to provide a new learning centre
- conservation work on the exposed ruins of Basing House
- provision of new visitor facilities and interpretation across both the sites
- improving visitor flow around the sites and access for the disabled

Basing House is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and contains a number of Grade II listed buildings. The Grange Farm site contains a collection of Grade II listed farm buildings along with the Great Barn, listed Grade I and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Further detail of the significance of each of the sites and buildings is included within the Conservation Management Plan attached to this application.

This Application covers further conservation and repair work on the Cow Byre within the farmyard and its conversion for use as an education and training room.

It should be noted that a separate Scheduled Monument Consent Application covers the proposed works on the Basing House site.

Background and outline of proposals

Grange Farm operated as a working farm until 1984 and was subsequently purchased by Hampshire County Council to ensure that its future as a significant part of the Basing House story was secured.

Following a successful stage 1 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, this application is made to further improve the facilities at Basing House and so increase the visitor numbers to this significant historic site.

Basing House is currently open to the public from March to October and all year round for group and school visits. The farmyard, now known as Basing Grange because the farmhouse

is now in private ownership and is itself known as Grange Farm, is the principle point of entry to both sites. Basing Grange is also used for other activities on days when the site is closed and during the evenings, such as concerts and other functions in the Great Barn.

A protected species survey undertaken on the site as part of the earlier project recorded evidence of bats, water voles and nesting birds. As a result provision for the bat population was included in the project. Further survey work will be undertaken and licences obtained prior to work commencing on site which will disturb any of these areas ie the Cow Byre roof space.

The Senior Keeper of Archaeology at Hampshire County Council is part of the project team and has been kept fully informed on the proposed work and likely ground disturbance. Service trenches have been kept to a minimum. A watching brief will be undertaken during any excavation work.

Approach to the treatment of the buildings

The adaptation and alteration of the existing building will be carried out with minimal impact on the historic fabric. Traditional materials will be used where appropriate and new interventions will be clearly distinct from the original elements. A soft touch will be adopted to ensure that the character and history of the building is respected.

Repairs to the fabric of the building will be sensitively undertaken and traditional methods and material used such as lime mortars and handmade brick and tile. Repairs to joinery will be undertaken in a way that will preserve as much historic fabric as possible and this will be achieved using scarfing-in repairs, partnering of joists and rafters to provide additional strength, and stitching and repointing brickwork wherever necessary.

Condition, measured, structural, and timber decay surveys were undertaken as part of the earlier project and these informed the structural repairs and conservation work which was subsequently undertaken. A further full measured survey of the building's interior has been recently undertaken along with a more detailed condition survey and physical site investigations.

Access to Basing Grange and Basing House

Please refer to the separate Design and Access Statement document for details.

Basing Grange (Grange Farm)

The new visitor centre in the recently restored Little Barn accommodates reception and ticketing, an introductory exhibition, gift shop and refreshment area. The visitor's route leads through to the other buildings grouped around the farmyard: the Tudor Great Barn, the Milking and Shelter Sheds and, in the former Victorian Stable Block, the new Education Centre and toilet facilities. The Cow Byre is currently not open to the public and is currently only used for occasional storage. The route continues on through the adjacent Cow Byre Store into the Duke of Bolton's Mansion Field and then across the road to Basing House.

The Cow Byre

Description and History

The Cow Byre is part of the Basing Grange farmyard which includes the Tudor Great Barn. Together with the open Milking Shed, the Bull Pen and the Cow Byre Store, it forms the eastern range separating it from the adjacent Duke of Bolton's House field. The Cow Byre is a two story brick building with a hipped tiled roof. It is a simple animal barn with a cobbled floor, wood mangers along the rear wall and a hay loft above. The walls are horizontally 'reinforced' with bonding timbers built in flush with the inner face, a common feature in early 19th century agricultural buildings, though not long lasting since, as in this case, these timbers eventually rot within damp walls. The hayloft floor is laid shiplap fashion, something which achieves greater strength from a given board thickness as well as reducing the number of nails required to fix them down.

There is evidence at the north east corner of the building that the rear wall is built off the earlier farm yard boundary wall which may date from the seventeenth century. Recent investigation of the building's fabric carried out in connection with condition survey work suggests that it was originally a single storey open-fronted structure similar to the Shelter Shed opposite. The random relationship between the principle carriage beams and the window and door openings in the front wall, the continuous timber lintel beam embedded within the front wall, and the poorly keyed in joints between side and front walls all indicate that this was the case. The side and rear walls reduce in thickness from 13" to 9" above the hayloft floor while the front elevation is 9" thick over its full height and of uniform appearance externally. The later brickwork is finished with a well executed cornice with dentil corbels at eaves level. The original older side and rear walls are clearly visible on the lower part of the rear elevation. It is likely that the original open-fronted structure dates from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century and the second phase from the middle of the nineteenth century. The complete farm yard complex appears on the 1872 Ordinance Survey map.

Condition

The hipped roof is carried on four queen post trusses connected by wall plate, purlin and ridge board. This structure and the rafters are generally sound, however, further investigation of the condition of the wall plates when the roof is removed may reveal decay and the need for some pieced in replacement. The plain tile roof is in poor condition with widespread failure of battens. In some areas the battens have become detached from the rafters and have slipped down the roof slope leaving some of the tiles precariously supported on nothing more than the adjacent courses. Many of the tiles are spalled and brittle. Externally the walls are sound but typically have lost pointing near ground level. Some areas have recently been re-pointed including brickwork over a sagging timber lintel over one of the high level hayloft doors. Relatively recently the south door has had brick piers added internally on either side to carry an additional lintel to support the carriage beam bearing above. These piers are built off chalk rubble and on one side this has been completely washed away.

There is more undisturbed original fabric inside the Cow Byre than in any of the other 19th century farmyard buildings on the site. The timber ceiling consisting of the exposed beams, joists and boards is complete and has flaking lime based paint on it. The brick walls which are generally lime-washed have a number of areas where the inner skin of brick is missing or

has been roughly repaired. The hay chutes, wooden mangers and some tack pegs and internal shutters survive with some damage. There is also a section of detached timber hay rack with some missing bars. The floor has been cleared and selected areas cleaned (of compacted dung) to reveal an almost complete rough cobble floor laid to falls to a brickwork channel running the full length of the building. There are some areas where the cobbles are missing, notably along the back wall under the mangers and in the south west corner.

It was possible to include critical structural repairs within the scope of the earlier project, the building having suffered significant movement as a result of the settlement of the structure. The repairs were only intended to halt this movement not reverse it. Ties were installed on the principal beam lines to provide a better connection between them and the external brick walls. This resulted in there being visible steel pattriss plates on the outside face of the building. Repointing and minor repairs to the brickwork were undertaken and scarfing-in repairs carried out on the external joinery.

Proposals

The following further works are now proposed in order to complete the conservation and repair of the building and enable it to function as an education workshop.

- Re-roofing and repair. This will involve a bat licence to remove the existing roof covering and undertaking some localised repairs to the roof structure. Sound existing roof tiles will then be re-laid on a new breathable sarking and battens. The shortfall of tiles will be made up with new matching hand made clay tiles.
- Repairs to the floor. Most of the original cobble floor survives. It slopes towards a central brick channel and is uneven with potential trip hazards. Unfortunately it is impractical to use this floor so it will be preserved and overlaid with a level floating timber floor. Areas of the floor immediately inside the doors and under the mangers which will remain visible will be repaired with matching flint cobbles. The remaining floor areas of missing cobbles will be infilled with limecrete slab to create a consistent sub-floor to the original levels.
- Floating floor. Simple pine tongued and grooved floor boards will be laid on individually scribed joists, set on dpc strips. A ramp and steps will connect the existing entrances with the raised floor level. Double hatch doors will be incorporated in the floor which, when raised to the vertical and held open with guard rails, will allow the cobbled floor underneath to be exhibited.
- Doors and Window. The existing doors will be re-built to be robust and well-fitting while preserving the inner ledged and braced faces intact. Double glazed window casements will be set into the recently repaired open oak-framed openings with the top hung internal timber shutters repaired or where missing, replaced.
- Internal walls. The walls internally will be repaired by piecing in missing brickwork and re-pointed where necessary. The existing horizontal bonding timbers are generally decayed. They will be removed and replaced with recessed brickwork with a rendered face creating a permanent record of this feature. A lime wash finish will be applied. The bearing of the carriage beam on top of the south door will be reinforced with a purpose made steel bracket connecting to and reinforcing the timber wall plate / lintel. The redundant brick piers either side of the doorway will then be dismantled and the original wall jambs re-pointed as necessary.

- Hay Loft. The hay loft is accessed from external high level doors over both the main doors. There is no intention to provide public access at this level because the floor to underside of truss is low and also because it has been designated as a bat loft
- Ceiling. The ceiling is the underside of the hay loft floor structure consisting of the ship-lapped boards, joists and carriage beams and it is all still coated with flaking lime based paint. Minimal repair is required and the existing flaking finish will be stabilised and re-coated. Thermal Insulation with board protection on top of it will be laid onto the hay loft floor to reduce heat loss from the space below. There will be cut out areas in this to allow the hay loft doors to open inwards. The hay chutes will be preserved by building an insulated vertical partition along the edge and a short section of return ceiling level with the top of the truss tie beams.
- Existing Fittings. The mangers will be preserved and repaired using matching timber and the hay rack section will have missing spokes replaced and be mounted in position on the manger.
- Fittings. A simple worktop and storage units will be provided at one end with sinks that can be used for washing archaeological finds etc. Interpretation boards, permanent and temporary will be mounted on the walls
- Services. New lighting and a simple radiant heating system will be installed and connected to the existing distribution board. Cabling will be run in galvanised conduit surface mounted with careful consideration of layout. The ceiling mounted fittings will be fed from conduits running within the new insulation zone above and dropped through. Water services will be fed through the wall from the Bull Pen.
- Fixings. For wall mounted services, fittings and display panels, generally plug and screw into joints between bricks
- External Works. A strip of stone flagged pavement will be added outside the two doors and the hoggin farm yard surface will be locally re-graded to make level entrance thresholds. and reduce the amount of grit which gets walked in.

Designation:

For Use Class definition the whole site and all its buildings taken together were, under the Planning Permission covering the previous project, designated as Class D1: Non-residential institutions.

Basing House - Management and Maintenance Plan

The Management and Maintenance Plan for the Basing House site has been provisionally updated to cover the proposals included in the current project 'Community, conservation and developing skills' as of November 2011.