

CEDAR LODGE NORTH SIDE STEEPLE ASTON BICESTER OX25 4SE

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



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INTRODUCTION

Cedar Lodge is a large detached family house with origins in the late 18th Century. The Grade II Listed house is constructed of Cotswold stone under a Welsh slate roof and Cotswold stone tile, that has been extended in recent years to accommodate the needs of modern family living.

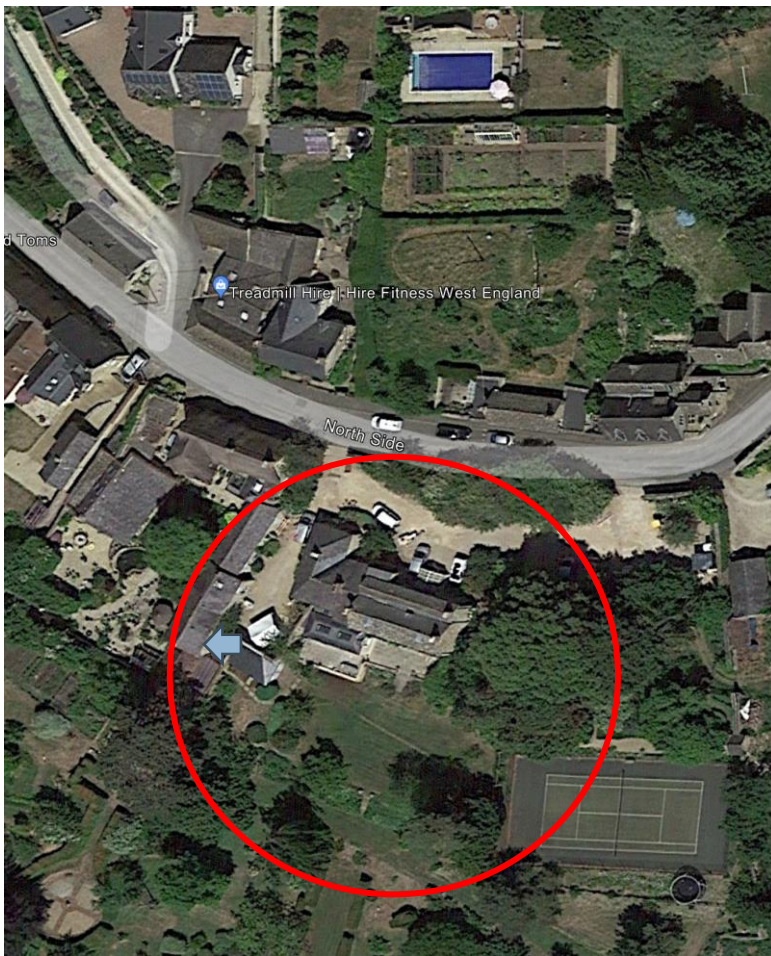
Outside there is a range of outbuildings including : small residential converted stable, workshop, stables and garden stores which provide scope for ancillary domestic accommodation and/or leisure facilities. There is a walled garden behind the range of buildings and this area was subject of a recent planning application for a swimming pool and terraced deck area (approved). The pool requires plant and associated changing facilities in order to serve the pool facility because it is dis-connected from the house.

The present owners seek to rationalise the outbuildings which are in a poor state of repair and now the application for a pool and terrace has been approved - the opportunity is presented to consider how these buildings can be appropriately and sympathetically utilised in support of the new facility.

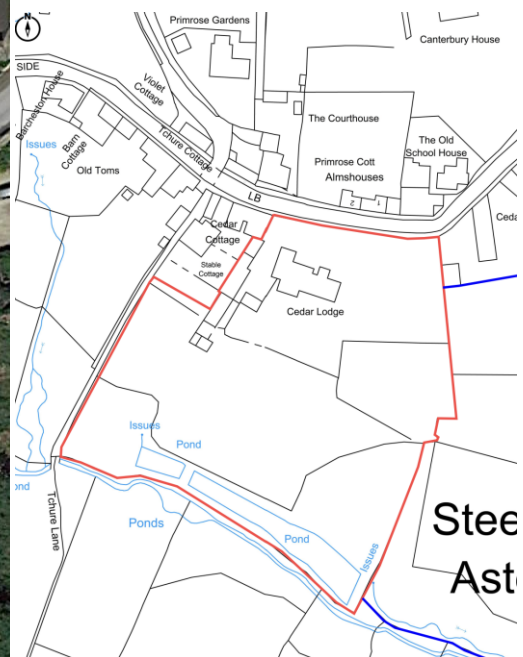
A gravelled parking court cuts across the north site area providing access to an avenue between the house inner boundary wall and the range of out-buildings. The proposals to provide an appropriate pool house and refurbishment of stables, with improved access to the extensive gardens is compatible with the conversion (part) of the outbuildings.

This report identifies the reasons for the proposed conversion and the benefits that will accrue by investing in the refurbishment of these outbuildings – improving the structural integrity of a heritage asset for further generations with a well-considered, appropriate and sympathetic solution.

LOCATION



Aerial View



Location Plan

DESCRIPTION

Steeple Aston is located in North Oxfordshire and is an ancient settlement with roots going back to Roman times. Today, with a population of around 1,000, it is a busy village with plenty of facilities and social activities. The village has its own shop and Post Office, Harris Stores, and a traditional pub and restaurant, the Red Lion. Much activity centres around the village hall which provides for everything from WI meetings, to badminton sessions and, from time to time, amateur and professional theatre. The village is known for its enthusiastic team of bellringers, and has thriving football and cricket teams.

Steeple Aston is an unusual village in that it has no natural focus, such as a village green. Instead it is built in a rectangle around a steep valley, through which runs a tributary of the River Cherwell. There are many ancient and listed houses in the village. The primary school, Dr Radcliffe's, was founded in 1640, now a private house. The parish church, St Peter and St Paul, goes back at least 1,000 years. Steeple Aston was designated as a conservation area in March 1988 - an area of special architectural and historic interest, which should be preserved and enhanced.

ENVIRONMENT

Steeple Aston lies in the Cherwell Valley, and there are plenty of footpaths providing access to beautiful views across the water meadows where the river, the Oxford Canal and the railway come together. The land surrounding the village is mainly agricultural, although there is a small industrial site between Steeple and Middle Aston.

The layout of the village has been determined by the boundaries of ancient plots and closes which run down the hillsides either side of the valley, using the stream as a rear boundary. Early development was probably located around the church and manor at the east end of North Side, with subsequent development spreading along the main street. North Side contains the largest concentration of older properties, with several dwellings dating from the 18th century or before.

The application site lies in the designated conservation area situated off North Side through timber entrance gates which give access to a spacious gravelled parking court. Cedar Lodge is a detached, Grade II Listed dwelling situated central to the north of the village of Steeple Aston, other Grade II listed buildings are situated to the north and west of the site. North Side, South Side and Paines Hill form three sides of the central valley area. Many of the properties are parallel to the road and set forward, providing a clearly defined highway which was common of traditional settlements. Cedar Lodge is an 18thC. detached stone house set back from North Side, built in 1767 on the site of an earlier property. The garden setting is closely connected to the architecture of the house, creating a series of outdoor rooms and linked to the building's siting within the plot. The layout with planted tree belts, formal and informal gardens and lawns form part of this setting.

The extensive gardens slope gently south towards the valley down towards a brook at the bottom of the garden which is bound by woodland.

PLANNING

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance; Cherwell Local Plan 2011 - 2031 PART 1 (CLP 2031 Part 1) · ESD15 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

Cherwell Local Plan 1996 Saved Policies (CLP 1996) · C18 – Development proposals affecting a listed building

Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan - PD4 - Important views and vistas

Other Material Planning Considerations ·

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) | Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

LISTED BUILDING AND RECENT APPLICATIONS

The building was constructed in 1767 with some later extensions and alterations. A Heritage Report by Worlledge Associates Oxford, was prepared for works to the main house and proposed swimming pool providing a description of the building *'The north (front elevation to the house) whilst imposing is relatively plain, in comparison to what appears to be a more refined and architectural south (garden elevation). The main range is 'double pile' with a central valley and gable ends, the west service range is single span, hipped and with a slate roof.'*

Recent works carried out include internal alterations to upper floors, removal of conservatory, addition of garden room/kitchen and conversion of out-building for home office. See below;

19/00703/LB – Creation of a jib door between bedroom and bathroom to create an en-suite with associated works – refused

19/01411/LB – Creation of new bathroom, removal of existing bathroom partition, realignment of existing bathroom wall, creation of new walk-in wardrobe/office and removal of staircase to attic rooms and insertion of loft hatch and ladder – approved.

19/01647/LB – Creation of jib door and associated stair – withdrawn Application 19/00703/LB (refused)

PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS :19/00012/PREAPP Internal alterations and reconfiguration and glazed link to existing buildings.

23/00462/F & 23/00463/LB

CONSERVATION AREA

The predominant character and interest of the village is derived from the quartering of the manor in the 16th century, the subsequent development of a number of substantial manors, the village's valley location and its development around four sides of an open square of land. The contrasts in building scale and style are complemented by the wide range of building materials. The conservation area is unified by the numerous connecting stone walls, paddocks, orchards, gardens and tree belts.

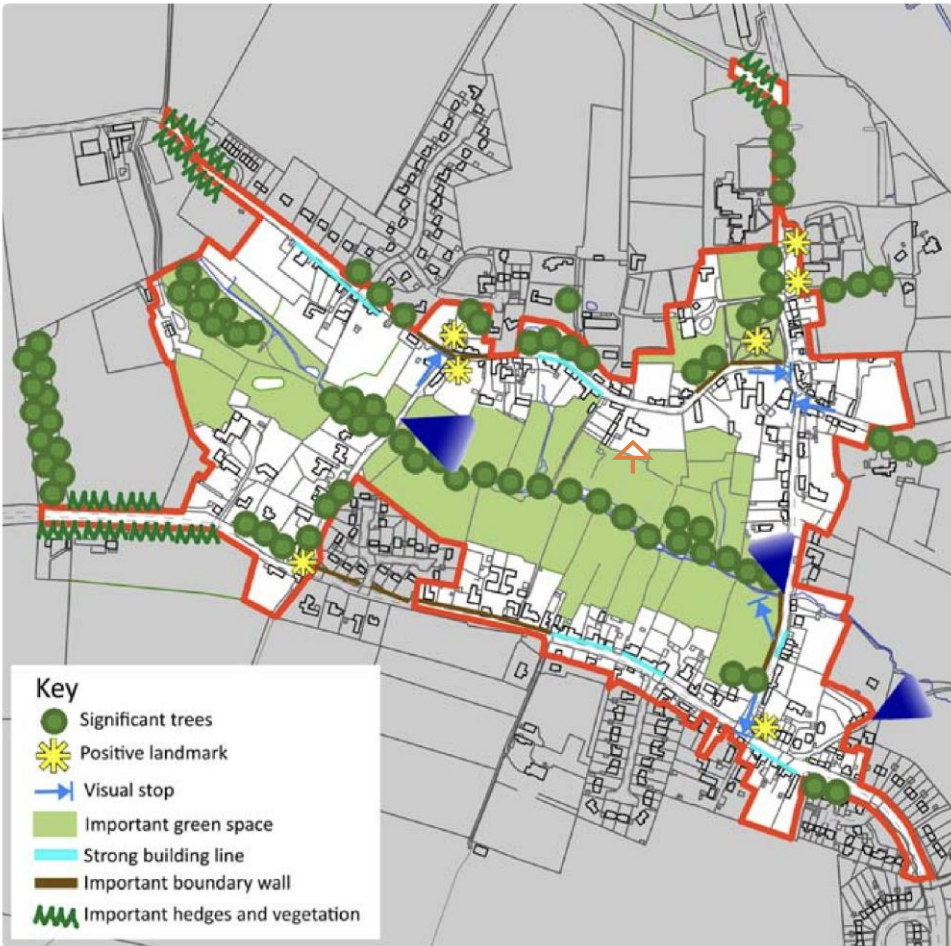
Cedar Lodge is a Listed Building and it is in close proximity to a number of Listed properties and lies within the Steeple Aston Conservation Area Bounday (2014). See Below;

HERITAGE IMPACT

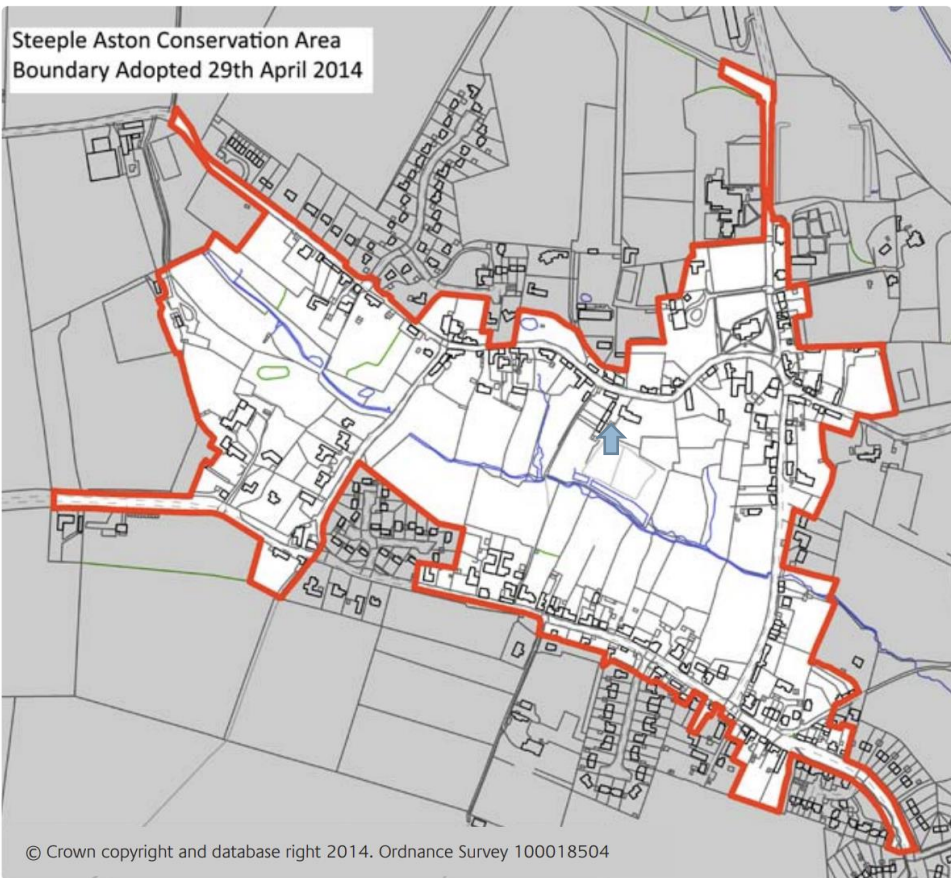
The designation of Cedar Lodge as a Grade II Listed Building means it is a heritage asset of importance.

The NPPF requires that applications include an assessment of heritage impacts commensurate with the importance of the asset; accordingly this application which supports a recently approved application for an in-ground swimming pool Appl. Ref; 2300462/F includes a Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken by Worlledge Associates. The assessment concludes: *"It is considered this modest proposal to install an in-ground swimming pool in a physically and visually removed part of the garden of Cedar Lodge, which evidence suggests was not part of a formal designed landscape, will have no impact on the identified heritage significance of Cedar Lodge, nor impact on the special character of the Steeple Aston Conservation Area"*. Consequently, the proposal meets the requirements of the Local Plan and NPPF to maintain the special character of heritage assets, it is therefore supported by Local Plan policy ESD15.

Worlledge Associates have adjusted their original Heritage Statement to assess the significance of the partial conversion of the outbuildings in providing supporting accommodation and service areas for the approved pool. See – under separate cover.



Key Areas in Steeple Aston



Conservation Area Boundary

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT :

This application seeks consent to create a small leisure area utilising a part of the retained out-buildings in support of a new outdoor pool and terracing. The proposed works will incorporate several structural measures including; timber roof structure, roof coverings and random coursed stone walling – all these elements require serious repair and refurbishment. An Outline Schedule of Works sets out the areas requiring repairs and alteration, including the boundary walls that are shared by an adjacent property.

DESIGN

The proposal to convert a part of the stables and workshops associated with Cedar Lodge is consistent with a recently approved application for an in-ground swimming pool. The stables already provide ancillary accommodation, garaging and workshops and screen the location of the pool so that it has little or no impact upon the mature landscape gardens.

A substantial part of the stable buildings are un-used and will benefit from essential repairs and refurbishments. The pool will require changing facilities and associated plant room that will support the leisure use of this part of the site and these facilities can be accommodated with very little alteration to the existing scale, form and fenestration of the stable complex.

In addition, a derelict linking lean-to will be removed - between the glass house which is set at the south end of the complex and the stone end gable. This area will be cleared out and re-constructed to provide a new entrance foyer with seating and services in support of the pool. As the ground levels require adjustment to address the pool deck, this area will have a new floor, roof and glazed doors inserted with openings through into the plant and changing areas. The profile of this linking building will be comparable to the existing removed section - in order to reflect the low profile appearance of this facility.

An existing derelict glass house will also be refurbished and integrated into the leisure area with repaired glass and timber mullions to match the existing profiles and a new glass roof. The glass house contains the concrete shell of a tank which may have served as a cold plunge many years ago. It is proposed that this feature is retained and refurbished as a water feature – a lily pond within the re-furbished glass house which will once again be a location for growing sub-tropical plants and over-wintering garden specimens.

Impact : Cedar Lodge sits centrally on the site, with an elevated view over its extensive gardens that are subdivided into a series of spaces each having differing characteristics and different functions - including lawned areas, wooded area, shrubberies and paddock. It has been stated in Worledge Associates Heritage Report that *'houses of this size and status historically, and commonly incorporate outside recreational facilities, such as, croquet lawns, tennis courts and pools. The proposed swimming pool is thus a facility that is consistent with the character and scale of a house such as Cedar Lodge'*.

The proposed location for the pool has been selected carefully, it is sensitive to the setting of the house in its landscape and reflects the way the pool will be used. The discreetly positioned pool, set behind the stables will be accessed through an appropriate zinc roofed glazed structure that replaces a ramshackle lean-to structure, providing changing facilities and a plant area accommodated in the adjacent stable block.

In addition, an existing ancillary accommodation unit will be re-furbished to provide an improved residential unit providing flexible space for guests and visitors to Cedar Lodge – a tradition that has been in place for several generations.

Ecology – Impact on Design; The stable and two storey structure have been identified by the 2022-2023 bat surveys undertaken by Nicholsons as supporting day and hibernation roosts of low numbers of common bat species (soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle and brown long-eared). Further details are provided within the reports referenced 22-1190 and 22-2015 (Nicholsons, 2022). The Ecological Appraisal report (22-0480) also identifies the pole barn structure as of moderate suitability for roosting bats due to observable gaps within the roof and external walls, although no use of this structure by bats has been identified through survey work.

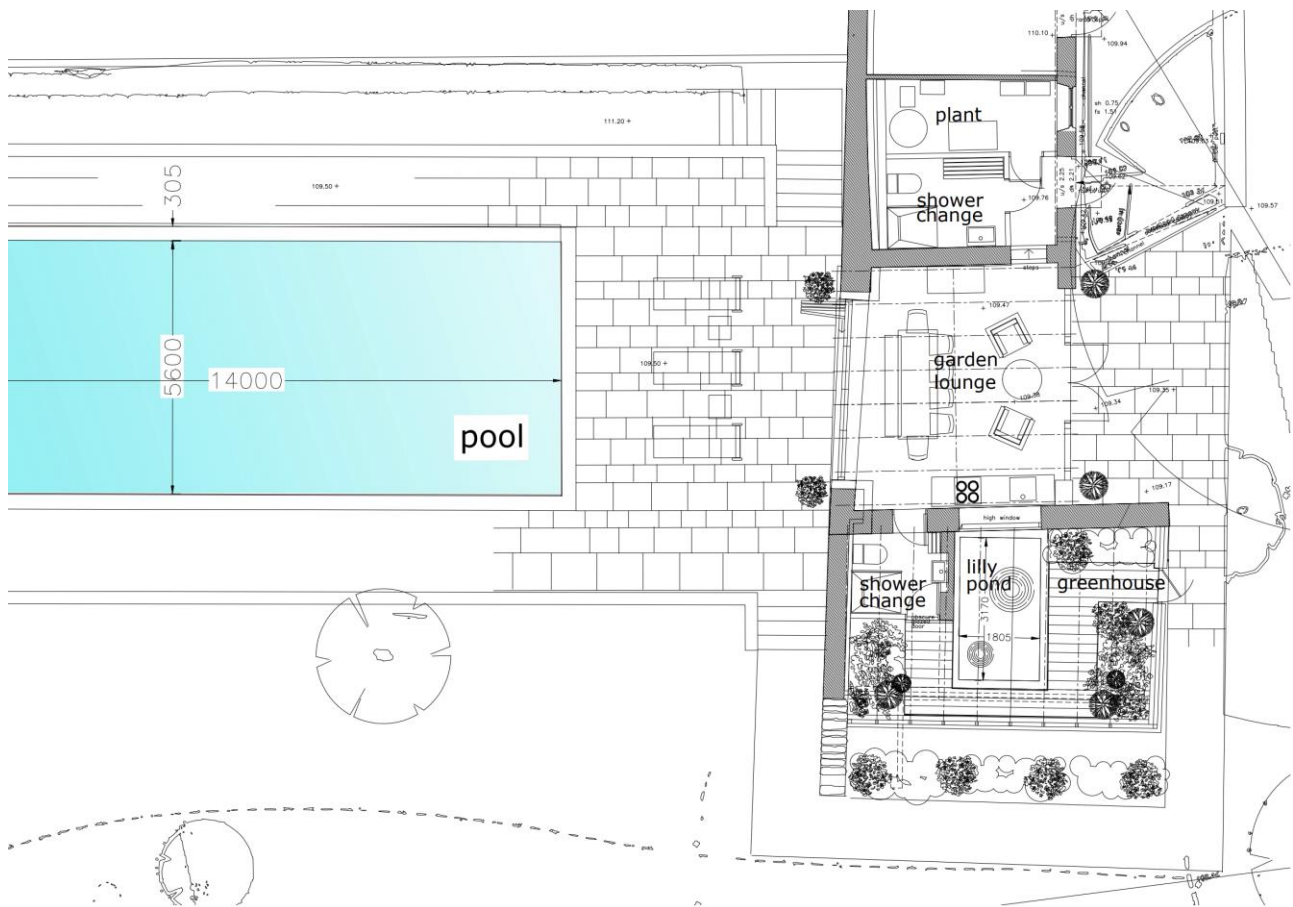
The Proposed Development will require significant structural works to parts of the out-building range, which has therefore potential to impact on bats roosting within these. To ensure that works progress with full compliance with wildlife law, an ecologist (Kate Rooney at Nicholson's) has been appointed to support the application.

On receipt of approval of planning permission, and following discharge of any planning conditions pertaining to ecology, the applicant will apply for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) from Natural England. Full details of the mitigation scheme will be specified as part of this licencing process, but are expected to follow the measures described within the reports referenced 22-1190 and 22-2015.

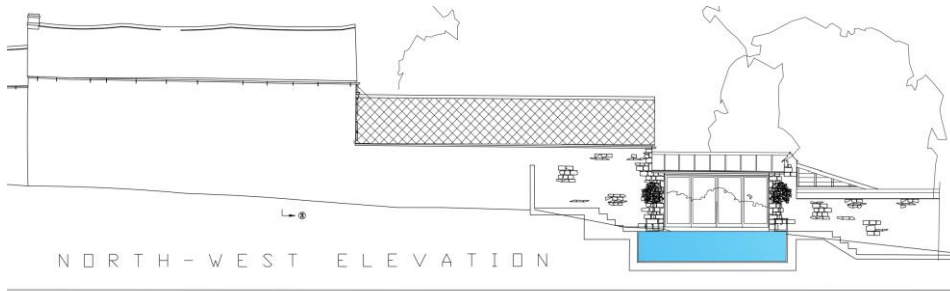
These measures will include:

- Strictly controlled refurbishment programming : April – October
- Sensitive stripping of all areas with potential to support roosting bats under supervision of the Named Ecologist or Accredited Agent.
- Retention of existing roosting features where feasible.
- Creation of new integrated roosting features within the fabric of the structures so they provide continued roosting value post-refurbishment.

Prior to commencement the applicant and their appointed Ecologist will also draft a Method Statement which sets out the methodology for protection, disturbance of habitat and mitigation measures so that the appointed contractor can incorporate key measures into a programme for the works.



The proposed alterations and refurbishments will be carried out with care and sensitivity within the existing structure using random coursed stone, natural slate and traditional joinery. Other than the glazed link between the glass house and the stables the conversion / adaption will require no alteration to the scale, form or appearance of the existing elevations.



Proposed North Elevation

ACCESS

Steeple Aston is a rural village set away from main roads but well-connected to both Oxford and Banbury via the nearby A4260. The village is close to the main Oxford – Banbury road and this links with the Oxford By-pass - M40 (J10) circa 6.5 miles. Rail - Lower Heyford 0.6 miles, direct link to Oxford, 13 minutes, Bicester North and Bicester Village Station (8.5 miles) for direct Chiltern Rail service to London Marylebone, from 43 minutes. There are also services to London Paddington from Oxford Parkway and Oxford. Air - London Oxford Private Airport 10 miles, Heathrow Airport 62 miles, Luton Airport 52 miles. There is also an hourly bus service into Oxford.

Cedar Lodge is accessed off North Side via a set of timber entrance gates into a gravelled forecourt which serves the north side of the house with vehicular parking and access to the associated traditional outbuildings.

Parking arrangements and access to an existing workshop at the west perimeter of the site will remain unaltered. There is space in the forecourt for several vehicles with plenty of space for turning. An additional set of gates already provide egress for vehicles from the site onto North Side.

Access for people of limited mobility is possible at present as visitors can arrive close to the front door. However, the site is contoured with steps, ramps and levels. As far as possible access will be improved with the laying of a new stone terrace and low-rise steps connecting the several levels around the pool area. New and existing door openings will have an accessible threshold for improved accessibility under Part M of The Building Regulations.

Additional low level LED lighting will highlight steps and surface hazards for improved safety.

CONCLUSIONS

The repair and refurbishment of these outbuildings will incorporate structural improvements including repairs to masonry, that will stabilise and protect the structure for many generations into the future.

These outbuildings have historically provided ancillary accommodation for the occupants of Cedar Lodge and the rising expectations of living standards, coupled with the applicants commitment to sensitively refurbish these outbuilding is a positive endeavour. The proposed conversion and refurbishments will not harm the fabric or indeed the immediate environment and so the 'harm' is less than significant.

APPENDIX I : SURVEY PHOTOGRAPHS



West Range of Outbuildings for (Part) Conversion



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9 Derelict Horticultural Glass House



10



11



12 Upper floor of West Outbuildings



13



14



15 Defective Roofs Over Outbuildings



16 Front Elevation/ Parking Court