



Heritage Statement:

Proposed Replacement Dwelling,
Hirst Cottage, Chapel Lane, Billingley, S72 0HZ

Value Added Design

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Introduction

This Heritage Statement is submitted in support of a part retrospective application (2025/ 0153) for the demolition of Hirst Cottage, Chapel Lane, Billingley, S72 0HZ, and the proposed erection of a similar scale replacement dwelling and integral garages within the plot. The application follows an earlier approved application (2024/0467) on the site for the alteration of Hirst Cottage, including works to the existing structure that involved the removal of significant parts of the rear of the property and internal cross walls. These works commenced early in 2025, before concerns were raised over the apparent instability of the remaining sections of the structure, and ultimately a decision was made to demolish the building entirely, resulting in subsequently enforcement action to regularise. The proposals therefore seek to replace the original dwelling, with a new dwelling that is sited similarly, deep within the large 994m plot, and is of equivalent scale and footprint of what was previously approved under application 2024/0467 including the original dwelling and proposed extensions.



The application site is located in the almost entirely residential village of Billingley, around 8 miles to the east of the town of Barnsley, which historically emerged as a small farming settlement with its origins in the medieval period. The modern village is designated entirely within the Green Belt, and Billingley Conservation Area that encapsulates almost all the buildings in the village, and the Policy implications of these two designations, has seen restricted modern development of the village, resulting in a relatively small village in comparison to nearby settlements. As the application site currently forms a relatively prominent position within the Conservation Area, situated with a small cluster of domestic properties on Chapel Lane that branches off from High Street, the proposed newbuild dwelling must be assessed to ensure it is of a sympathetic appearance that represents appropriate development in the context of the Conservation Area.

It is notable that this document does not outline evidence to justify the demolition of the original building, nor provide commentary on any other documents within the application pack such as Engineers report that do, as the author is not qualified to assess the extent of structural damage and provide judgement on the requirement for the buildings demolition, and ultimately the Local Authority will need to satisfy themselves with the context surrounding the buildings removal. However, it is noteworthy that the now demolished original building, while considered a historic building of generally positive appearance, was not identified to be of unique or unusual design, nor is it known to have housed notable historical figures that would provide additional special historic interest or understanding of the history of the area. The application building was not designated as a Nationally Listed Building, or included within the curtilage of, or List Description for, any other nationally Listed Building, and as such was subject to no greater legislative protections than any other property within the Conservation Area.

The original building's loss is unfortunate and considered by the Local Authority to be harmful under NPPF 213, with the Authority outlining that its loss must be sufficiently mitigated by the replacement building, which should have an equally positive contribution to the Conservation Area as that of the historic building. To this purpose, this Heritage Statement will examine the history of the application site, and include an appraisal of the previous building and its prior significance and importance to the surrounding Conservation Area, to provide a baseline impact assessment of its loss. However, its demolition, if sufficiently justified and evidence to be due to the instability of the remaining structure after demolition, and the case can be made (through a structural assessment) that the building was dangerous or at risk of collapse, should not prejudice

the current application, and the proposals should not be held to a higher standard of design than any other development proposal within the wider setting of the Conservation Area when assessing the impact of the proposals. Therefore, the assessment of the proposal will focus primarily on its appropriateness within its current and historic context, and whether or not the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, rather than merely comparing how closely the replacement building is to its historic counterpart which has now been lost, though it is notable that the applicant has chosen to replicate quite closely the form and appearance of the now lost building.

This statement forms part of that application and should be read in conjunction with all the submitted information.

Site History

Billingley is a small historic farming village with its beginnings likely in the medieval period, originating and developing around two main small farm holdings, with a small collection of farmhouses and associated agricultural buildings, and a small hamlet of workers cottages. Billingley village is marked on a map of the then West Riding of Yorkshire in 1610, and described as having 800 acres of land, with the proprietors listed as Earl Fitzwilliam, Mr Micclewait, Mr Denton and Mr Pigott.

Billingley village is one of the few villages in this area of the borough that was not subject to major expansion and development during the growth of the mining industry in the late 19th and 20th centuries, resulting in the modest scale of the modern village. This was in contrast to surrounding settlements such as Thurnscoe and Goldthorpe whose populations expanded considerably from the late 19th Century onwards as new mines were sunk in these areas to provide coal to the fuel industry, transport and housing throughout the country. This is evidenced in the historic maps, with the village changing little over the next 100-150 years, except for occasional ad-hock infill development or demolition, and a great number of the buildings in the Conservation Area originate from the main period of development before the 20th Century.



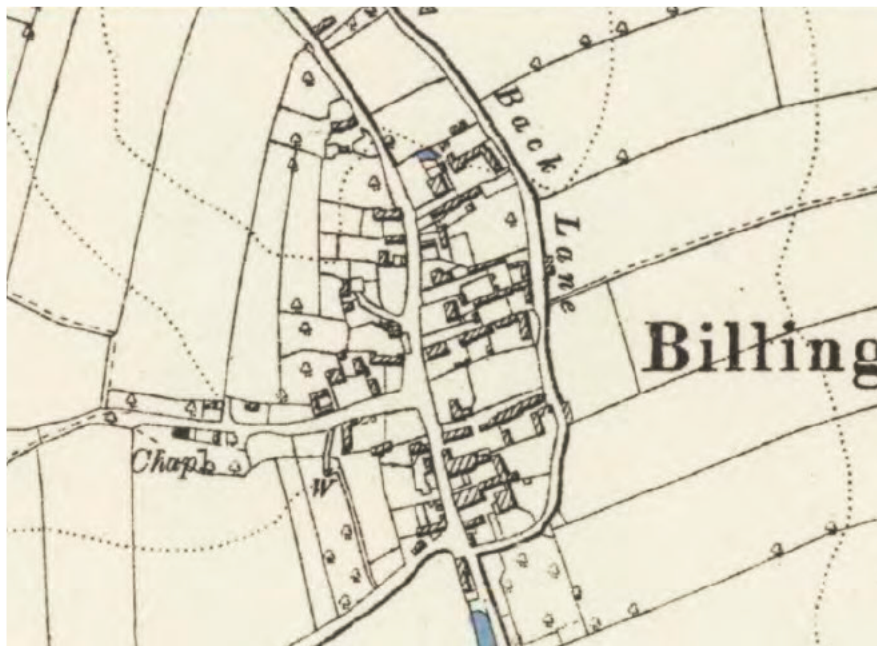
Ordnance Survey map of c1854

The now lost Hirst Cottage within the application site, appears on the first Ordnance Survey map of 1855, indicating the application building to the south of a courtyard with the neighbouring property 'The Barn' positioned to the northwest as it is today, but with a small square building

within the application site fronting Chapel Lane directly north of the application building and aligned with the short projection northeast of The Barn. The hatching of this early map suggests that the unhatched area within this courtyard to the north of the application building was not grassed amenity space as it exists today and may have been hardstanding surface at this time. The boundary illustrated on this map and subsequent maps indicate that these three structures once formed a single site and were likely linked in some way.

The linear footprint of the building steps back to the south of the cottage, indicating the two-story cat slide gable element to the rear, still present prior to the building's demolition.

Given the proximity and position facing Poplar Farmhouse to the North, it is possible this collection of buildings were historically associated with the operation of the farm, possibly originally workers cottages for the agricultural workers and barns. The official List entry for the neighbouring Poplar Farmhouse dates it to the mid C18, however it is unclear as to what point the cottages forming the application building were constructed between the construction of the farmhouse in the mid C18, and the first OS Map in 1855.



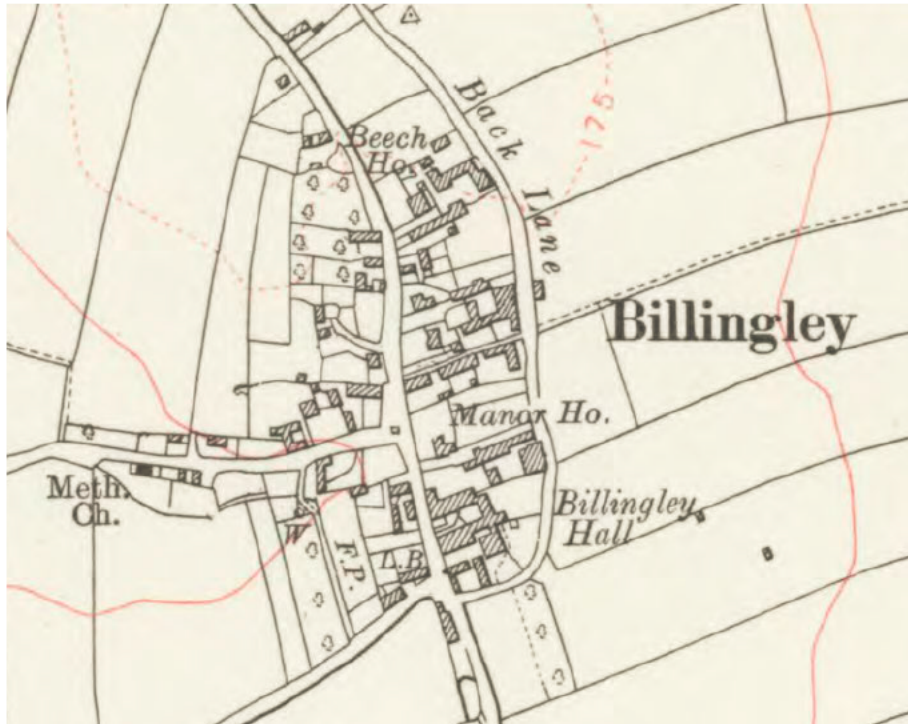
Ordnance Survey map of c1894



Ordnance Survey map of c1906



By 1894, the detached structure to the north of the application site is illustrated as connected to The Barn to the west forming an extended 'L'-shape, almost entirely enclosing the front and west of the application site. This remains the case until the OS map of 1931, in which the structures to the north of the site, including both the original detached structure and the later connection, are removed leaving the modern form of The Barn. Also at this time, the area north of the application building is indicated as subdivided, likely representative of landscaping elements such as the sweeping access drive. It is noted that the application building throughout this period is indicated as a slightly smaller simple rectangle than previously depicted without any projections to the south. It is believed this is simply a result of the fidelity of the cartography, rather than indicating demolition, however it is possible that the building was historically shorter before being extended to the west.



Ordnance Survey map of c1931



Ordnance Survey map of c1950



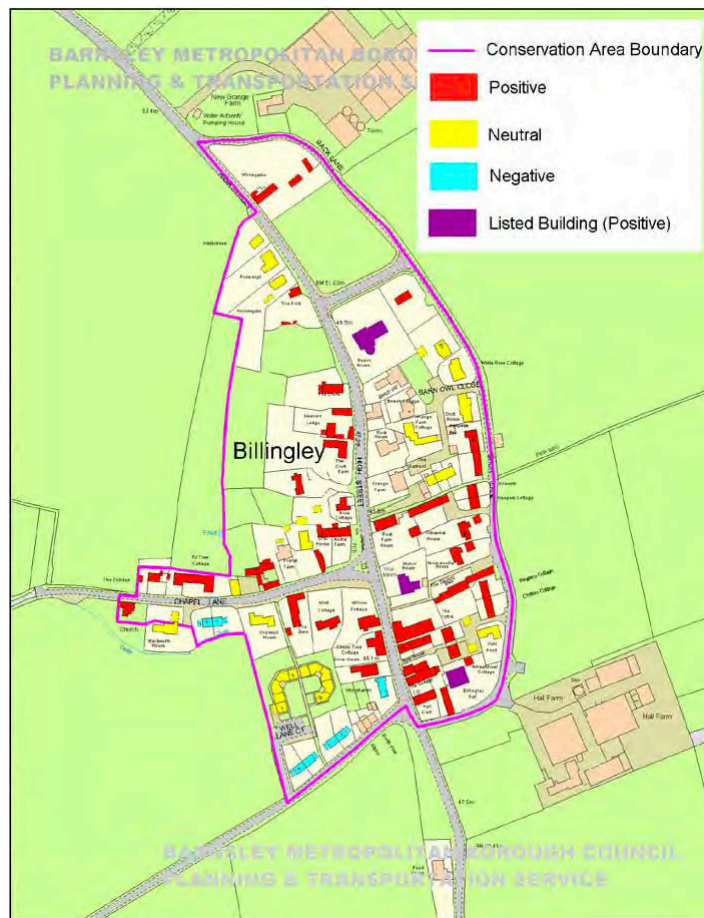
The site context remains largely the same without any notable development in the area up to the last available historic Ordinance Survey map of 1950, with a minor degree of infilling creating council housing carried out on Chapel Lane and Flat Lane just after this map, having been built in the 1950's. The neighbouring Willow Cottage to the east does not appear on this 1950's plan, indicating this was of more modern construction.

As outlined in the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal, the two main original farm buildings relocated to more appropriate modern accommodation to the northern and southern edges of the village, leaving a large number of farmstead buildings, including farmhouses, cottages, and barns, within the centre of the village empty. However, as the entirety of the village was 'washed over' with a green belt planning policy, there was a presumption against development other than for agriculture, forestry and other countryside uses, and many of these buildings remained vacant for extended periods becoming derelict.

The area of Billingley was designated as a Conservation Area in 1974 for its special historic character, and the original farmstead buildings that remain were considered to contribute greatly to understanding the area's history, and provide a major aspect of the special historic character of the village. As such, given their vacant and derelict condition, and Policy restrictions imposed on the village, the requirement for new residential uses were regarded as an exceptional case requiring special treatment, if the historic building fabric of the village was to be retained and its character preserved. Therefore, in the early 1980s a Section 52 (now section 106) planning agreement was created to allow for the restoration, conversion from their original use, and re-use of many derelict original farm buildings in the village providing new residential properties, with the agreement also permitting the construction of limited new housing to the north of the village.

Conservation Area

The village of Billingley was first designated a Conservation Area in June 1974 by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, with the 7.99 hectare Billingley Conservation Area covering nearly the entire extents of the village as outlined on the below Conservation Area Map.



Billingley Conservation Area



An appraisal of Billingley Conservation Area has been undertaken by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council in 2006, describing the main features of the Conservation Area, and outlining the elements that help form its special character including any areas of special architectural or historical interest.

The appraisal identifies that the primary character of the conservation area derives from the historic sandstone built former agricultural buildings, barns and small cottages from the settlement's early development. The design and form of these building is typically of a simple vernacular style and composition suited to the building's original use, often rectilinear and relatively utilitarian, reflecting their agricultural origin, with the design standard and architectural interest varying between individual structures. However, it notes that the conservation area includes a variety of buildings and housing styles, including 19th Century brick-built terraces, and more modern semi-detached council housing, along with modern infill properties to the north of the village that utilise natural and artificial stone to help the new buildings harmonise with the existing character of the conservation area.

It identifies that every building within the limits of the conservation area is exclusively residential in use, with the Methodist Chapel at the western end of Chapel Lane being the one exception, and almost all buildings are two storeys except for the landmark properties of a more formal architectural composition that are 3 storeys, notably Billingley Hall and Beech House.

The appraisal highlights that Chapel Lane, to which the application site is located, has a particularly varied development with a variety of different styles, sizes, materials, and periods of construction, providing no distinct theme to the architecture on this street, but nonetheless, give it a unique character within the village. Along the lane, the appraisal notes the presence of the Methodist Chapel originating from 1818, identifying that the building does not hold a large amount of architectural interest, and the grade II listed Poplar Farmhouse which originates from the mid 18th Century, which while being an important building in its own right is assessed to *"not have a significant or positive effect on the character of the surrounding Conservation Area"* due to it being set back from the street behind large mature gardens, trees and a wall.

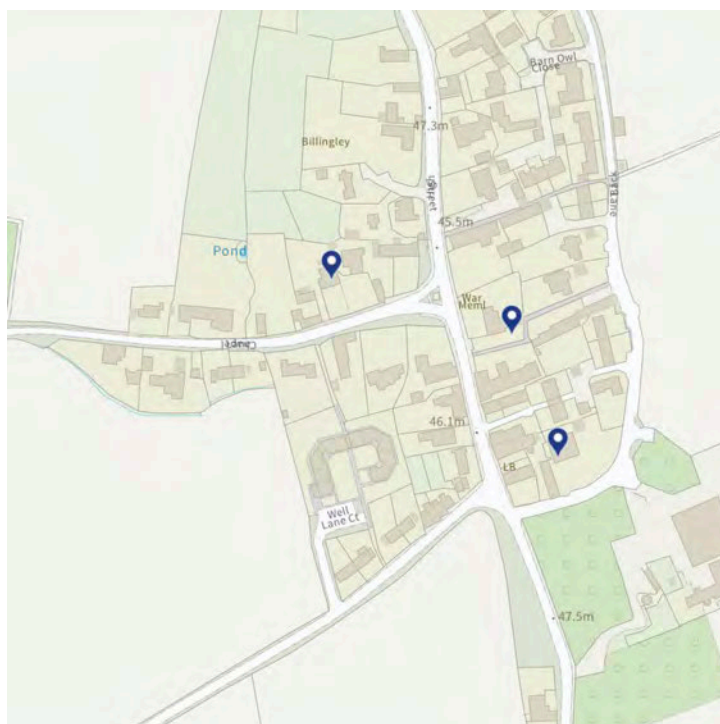
It is noted, that beyond a general assessment of the desirable historic features of the Conservation Area, and a suggestion of prevalent building materials used in the area, very little consideration or guidance has been put forward within the appraisal as to what development is likely to be acceptable within the conservation area, and where best to locate it. Despite this, it is recognised that the original dwelling on the application site had a positive historical appearance with its use of traditional building materials and design, and as such contributed to the visual amenity of the Conservation Area setting. This is reflected on the conservation area map included above, which identifies the former application building as having a generally positive impact on the character of the conservation area. Given this context, the application must be given suitable scrutiny to ensure that the proposed replacement development reflects the former positive impact of the historic dwelling, is sensitive to the historic context, and of complimentary design in order to prevent potential impact to the character of this designated area.

Listing

One of the primary purposes of the Listing Building process is to safeguard against the partial or entire loss of a Heritage Asset's significance, through either the loss of identified features or wholesale demolition. However, these legislative protections must be selectively applied only where it can be clearly articulated how a heritage asset would fulfil the statutory criteria for inclusion of on the Listed Building register, requiring the identification of a genuine unique quality of architectural or historical Interest. The original application building, while considered a visually attractive historic building that contributes to the historical character and appearance of the conservation area, was not identified to be of unique or unusual design, nor is it known to have housed notable historical figures that would provide additional special historic interest or understanding of the history of the area. Despite the Local Authorities previous opportunities for consideration of the buildings merits under the most recent application, and opportunity to identify the building as being worthy of possible Listed Building status, it is notable that the now demolished Hirst Cottage has never been designated as a Nationally Listed Building, or included within the curtilage of, or List Description for, any other nationally Listed building. Therefore, the proposed development is not subject to additional statutory constraints above that of any other site located within a Conservation Area.



The site does however form part of the greater context of a number of Listed Buildings in Billingley, with the most direct relationship being to the Grade II Listed Poplar Farmhouse (Listing NGR: SE4378004770), which is positioned 27m northwest from the application site's closest boundary and 51m to the closest point of the application building. It is noted that while these properties are sited almost aligned at opposite sides of Chapel Lane, as the appraisal for Billingley Conservation Area outlines, the boundary treatment of walling and mature trees obscure much Poplar Farmhouse set back from the lane, to such an extent that their assessment is that the building does *not have a significant or positive effect on the character of the surrounding Conservation Area*. The relationship between the application site and Poplar Farmhouse, is further obscured by, the original building being equally set back within a large plot, and positioned behind both boundary wall, mature trees, and the neighbouring structure of The Barn that prevents direct line-of-sight between the two properties.



Listed Buildings In Billingley

At a similar proximity, 45m from the application site's closest boundary and 49m to the closest point of the application building, but orientated perpendicular to the application building is the Grade II Listed Manor House, on High Street (Listing NGR: SE4387804740). While on a different street to the application building, and with the High Street, another property (Willow Cottage), and its mature gardens positioned between the buildings, it is noted that the application site does still share notable views from this building to the proposed development area within the front garden, and it can be said that the application building forms part of the wider street scene context for this Listed Building. As such, particular consideration must be given to the potential impact of any proposals on the street scene from this vantage point.



View From High Street In Front Of Manor House

Finally, the last Listed Building in Billingley is the Grade II Listed Billingley Hall, on Back Lane 89m to the south. It is assessed that this property does not have a meaningful direct relationship with the application site, or clear line-of-sight between them, and as such, it is not considered that greater assessment of the proposals impact on this Listed Building specifically is required above the consideration of the overall acceptability of the proposals within the context of the Conservation Area.

Appraisal

Prior to the building's demolition, Hirst Cottage was considered a visually attractive historic building, with an rural stone cottage appearance, that contributes to the historical character and appearance of the conservation area. This positive character is aided by being set within a large ornate garden with perimeter stone walling and mature trees, accessed off twin iron gates that open onto a sweeping block paved driveway.

The form of the building was simple, mostly forming a pitched rectangle, however, had two single storey mono-pitched projections to the front, and a two-storey projecting gable with a cat-slide to the rear abutted by a modern glazed conservatory. The simple, restrained original structure's appearance was diminished by the fragmentary nature of development to the building over the years, having been significantly altered both externally and internally over the years. These alterations include the wholesale replacement of windows and doors with modern UPVC, and extended with an un-original later addition forming a large section of the building to the west. This extension contained the utility and garage at ground floor and- a bedroom and ensuite at first floor, and had an awkward layout and access to these rooms from the original part of the dwelling through a modern conservatory, inconsistent architectural language within the extensions, and purpose-built opening containing a modern garage door to the front. These numerous modern additions and alterations to the building over the years had clearly diluted the significance the simple agricultural cottage building once had, however the majority of the historic fabric was still in evidence externally, and contributed positively to the rural setting of the village.



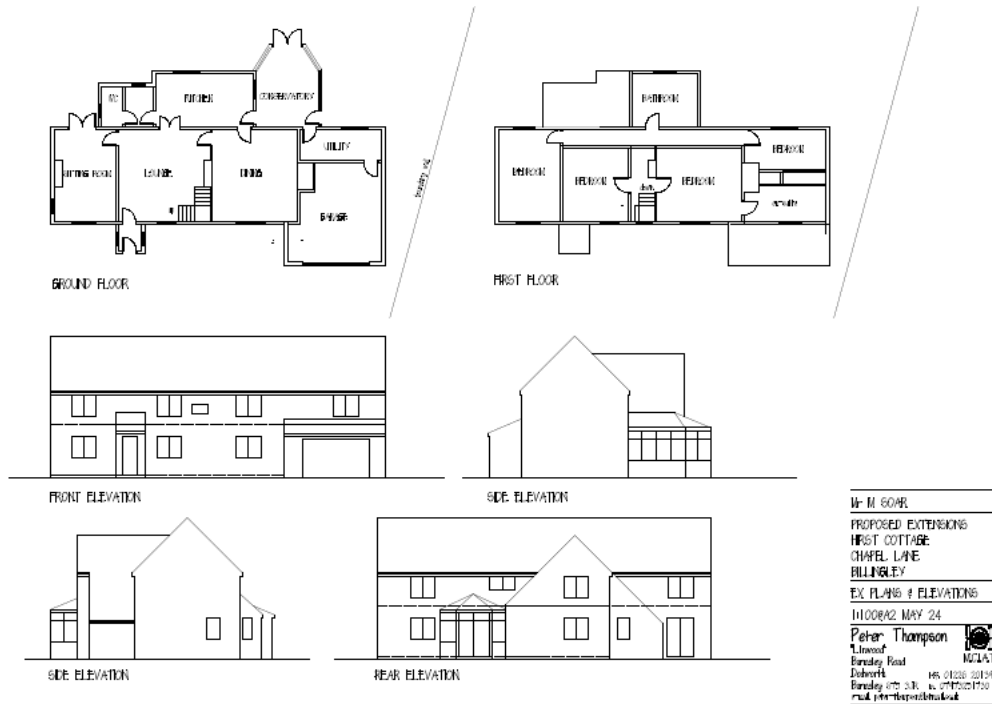
View Of Hirst Cottage From Chapel Lane



Building Frontage



Building Rear



Existing Plans And Elevations

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provide guidance on weighing the heritage interest embodied in a heritage asset, that provide a useful defined assessment criteria to understand a site’s overall significance. The heritage interests should be identified, whether that be Architectural, Historical, or Archaeological, and then the heritage value of these identified features determined, with the framework outlining that heritage value is to be assigned to all or part of a heritage asset in relation to that identified interest in accordance with defined levels, high, moderate, limited, neutral, negative, or uncertain.

In relation to the historic interest, the historic parts of the original building were clearly old, erected sometime between the mid C18 and the first Ordinance Survey map of 1855, however the age of a property does not always directly correlate directly with significance, and government guidance outlines that the relevance of age to a building’s significance is often correlated predominantly to the rarity of surviving examples of its kind that have survived to the present. Given Hirst Cottage’s age, it clearly had some historical significance and value in interpreting the villages early development, however, despite the building’s pleasant restrained historic design it was considered to have no unique features of particular architectural interest, and was not considered a fully intact example due to past extensions resulting in some loss of historic character. Furthermore, it is noted that this type of historic agricultural cottage is not unique as there are a great number of equally or more distinctive and attractive examples of similarly aged cottages within the village and wider district, some of which have been afforded statutory protections under Listed Building designations, and as such, it can be argued that the former building on the application site would be considered to have a moderate interest and significance.

It is notable that following the building’s demolition as discussed in the subsequent section of this document, the now vacant site has lost much of its historical significance and the wider plot alone is considered to have limited significance, which could be argued to drop to neutral given the visual disruption to the site caused by the development construction and subsequent demolition works. Given this assessment, there is little desirability of sustaining the site in its current vacant form, a position that is shared by the Local Authority Conservation Officer who stated on initial feedback to the application (now altered) *“on balance, a properly detailed and sympathetic scheme for the site could be acceptable”* and *“I feel I may be able to support the proposal, but a redesign and negotiation over the details will be required.”*



The proposal

The proposals include seeking retrospective approval to demolish the historic building of Hirst Cottage, after the structure became unstable and potentially dangerous or at risk of collapse, after work commenced to remove significant parts of the rear of the property including later extensions and internal cross walls to facilitate the approved development of application 2024/0467. The demolition of the building of significant age, in a prominent position within the Conservation Area positioned opposite a Listed Building, is clearly harmful and will result in the total loss to the sites historic significance. NPPF 213, requires clear and convincing justification in such a scenario where any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. As outlined in the document, this assessment of the proposals has been conducted without sight of any other documents within the application pack such as Engineers report that provide evidence to justify the demolition of the original building, however, their findings would be accepted as presented given that the author is not qualified to assess the extent of structural damage and provide judgement on the structural stability or the requirement for the buildings demolition. This assessment must ultimately fall to the Local Authority, but it is noted that while the Conservation Officer articulates the belief that the instability *“appears to have occurred due to the heavy-handed demolition works that exceeded the approved scheme”* there is no indication that there is any evidence of deliberate intent to neglect or damage the asset in accordance with NPPF 209.

A proportional approach to assessing the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset is outlined in NPPF 212, stating the more important the asset, the greater the weight of the potential impact should be, and NPPF 213 outlines exceptional justification is required for substantial harm to or loss of grade II listed buildings, or wholly exceptional justification of substantial harm to or loss of grade I and II* listed buildings. It is acknowledged that the building was not statutory listed or even identified as a building of local interest and is determined to have a moderate interest to the setting of the Conservation Area. As such the proportional standard of justification would fall below the exceptional justification level, requiring only convincing justification for the asset's loss.

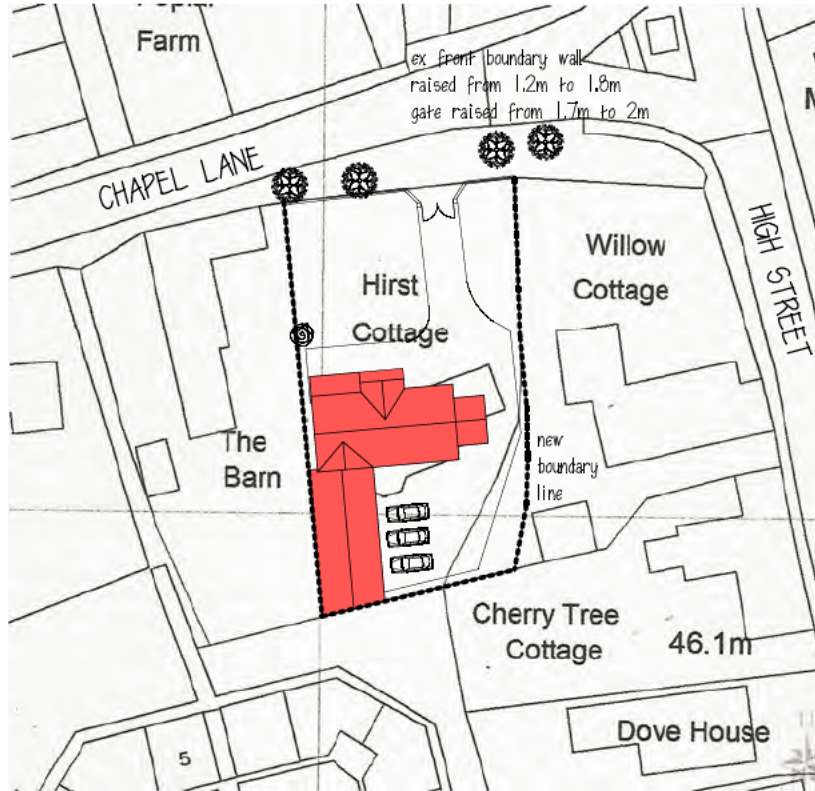
Altering or part demolishing historic buildings presents unique dangers, due to their potential degradation of structural elements weakened by age, weather, or poor maintenance over time, and older buildings often have shallow or inadequate foundations, which can be vulnerable to movement and settlement. All these qualities make historic buildings more prone to partial or complete structural failure, instability, and even unexpected collapses during substantial development or demolition works to the building. For this reason, greater consideration of these risks is required prior to executing these works, and additional care is considered necessary throughout the development process. For the purposes of this document, it is assumed the chosen contractor was sufficiently experienced with working with historic buildings, and these best practices were undertaken. With the information provided to date regarding the instability of the application building, and the author being aware of an Engineers report having been received by the LPA during the demolition, it is accepted as presented that the building was sufficiently unsafe to continue the alteration works, and recognised that this discovery while significantly into the demolition works and removal of key structural elements, represented a meaningful risk to continued operations within the structure, and the only safe way to proceed was to securely demolish the remainder of the building.

Examining the current site condition, as outlined in the appraisal section of this document, there is little desirability of sustaining the site in its current vacant form and a suitably sympathetic dwelling on the site, of at least a matching architectural interest to the original cottage, is likely to best enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

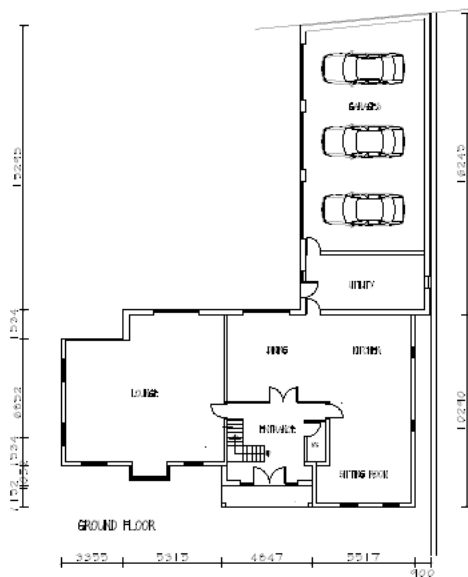
The proposals therefore seek to replace the original dwelling, with a newbuild dwelling that is sited similarly within the plot, retaining an extruded gable form along its east west axis, and is sufficiently equivalent in scale, footprint, and layout to the combined original dwelling and proposed extensions approved under application 2024/0467. While the total demolition of the historic fabric represented a 'blank slate' plot and it is recognised that the applicant could have sought to fundamentally redesign the layout of the building, it is commendable that the current proposals see a near identical layout to both floors as that previously approved through application 2024/0467, with a couple of notable exceptions. At Ground floor the current scheme retains the repositioned central grand entrance hall, open plan kitchen / sitting / dining accommodation to the west, partially projecting to the front where the garage projection previously was located, and lounge to the east, with the lounge becoming markedly larger having



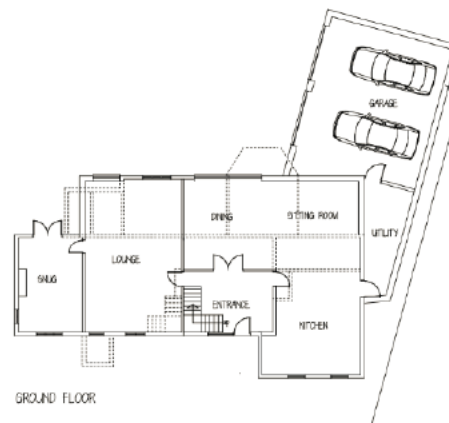
incorporated the formerly proposed snug and the eastern projection increasing in size from the previous approval. At first floor level, the proposal follows the historic room layout, with the same amendments proposed in application 2024/0467, relocating one bedroom to the south where the cat-slide roof projection was previously located to facilitating the creation of a feature double high, galleried entrance hallway and staircase, and creation of a master bedroom suite to the west. To the rear, the previously approved single storey hipped garage projection has been rotated to be perpendicular with the dwelling, increased in length to 16.2m to the south, and expanding from a two car garage to provide increased secure garaging for 3 cars along with a larger utility space, and adding accommodation within the roof to serve as the en-suite and dressing to the master suite. The proposed garage projection is single aspect, with the large rooflight windows and garage doors facing into the driveway and amenity areas to the east, and the remaining elevations being blank.



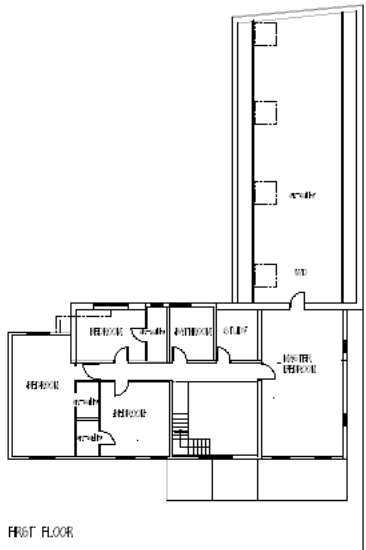
Proposed Site Plan



Current Proposed Ground Floor



Approved Ground Floor, Application 2024/0467



FIRST FLOOR

Current Proposed First Floor



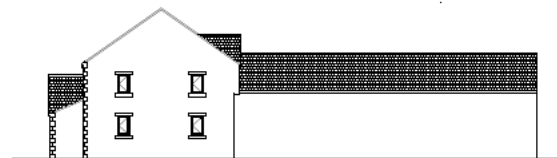
FIRST FLOOR

Approved First Floor, Application 2024/0467

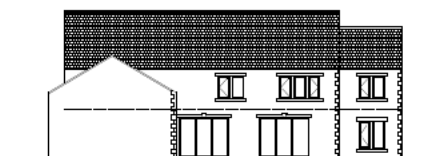
These changes to the garage represent the greatest deviation in layout from the previous approval, and a sizeable increase in the overall scale of the property, however, while an increase in building mass within the Conservation Area can be considered generally unfavourable, the layout changes are considered relatively restrained, with the increased garaging amounting to an estimated increased footprint of 39m² which can clearly be accommodated within the large plot without appearing disproportionate. Furthermore, it is noted that this increased footprint and massing is not disproportionate to some of the larger properties both on Chapel Lane and within the wider village context, with the current proposed footprint of a similar scale to that of the neighbouring Willow Cottage and The Barn. Additionally, its positioning to the rear of the dwelling significantly reduces the potential impact this may have, due to the screening from public areas provided by the rest of the proposed dwelling itself, neighbouring properties, and significant screening from mature trees along boundaries. It is acknowledged the proposals in this location would be less impactful on the character of the conservation area than the more visible elements of the development to the site frontage, and it is noted that a number of properties in the area have 2 or 3 car detached garages that are typically situated more prominently to the front of these properties. The positioning of the garaging tight up to the western boundary has been identified as being a potentially dominant and overbearing feature to the neighbouring properties, however, it should also be acknowledged that given the village's agricultural history the long extruded 'barn' form positioned on site boundaries is considered part of the vernacular, and this element would reference, albeit loosely, the form and orientation of 'The Barn' which neighbours the site to the west. In addition to meeting the applicant's desire for increased accommodation, and secure garaging requirements, the garage can be considered to also provide a degree of enclosure to the site and its amenity.



FRONT ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION (building)



REAR ELEVATION



Proposed Elevations

Given the proposed internal layouts similarity to previously approved application 2024/0467, the developments position within the site, and primary east-west orientation to replicate that of Hirst Cottage, it is felt that the current proposals must broadly be considered to represent appropriate development within the Conservation Area. Therefore, the impact of the proposed mass is considered appropriate, and the main consideration of the proposals remains whether the specific design of the building's external appearance would preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area.

In relation to the design, while merely rebuilding what was there before may seem like the most sensitive approach, and certainly does produce a building that works within the specific context that has evolved around it, it is important to identify that a pastiche replica would not hold the same historical interest inherent to the original heritage asset, but would still replicate the less desirable and fragmentary elements of the building which detracted from the assets prior contribution. A more authentic approach is to design a bespoke proposal which responds to the surviving site context, adopts appropriate elements from the surrounding buildings to harmonise with the existing character of the conservation area. As Chapel Lane, to which the application site is located, has a particularly varied development with a variety of different styles, sizes, materials, and periods of construction, providing no distinct theme to the architecture on this street, there is a relatively wide range of potentially appropriate appearances that could be adopted on the site. It is clear that the proposals take heavy influence from the appearance of the historic building without simply replicating the demolished building features, with a small bay window projection where the original entrance projection was located to the east of the front elevation, and a longer lean-to projection to the west where the later-addition garage previously stepped beyond the building frontage. Similarly the proposals replicate the stepped roof form to the east with the narrower side projection, and lower projections to the front and rear, aiding the historically appropriate rambling roofline appearance characteristic of the ad-hoc development often associated with historic agricultural development. The height of the new dwelling to ridge does not appear to exceed that of the demolished cottage, and appears to be of a comparable height to neighbouring properties.

It is also acknowledged that the scheme has been altered positively from the design originally submitted, to accommodate initial Conservation Officer comments, resulting in a more restrained and sympathetic appearance, which is commended. Most notably, these amendments relate to the removal of a previously proposed centrally aligned gable which was not present on the demolished building, and would have contrasted quite sharply with the simpler form and character of the vernacular cottages. This has been altered to what appears to be a single storey projecting canopy porch in front of the entrance, supported with a timber frame king truss and posts design. While this remains an uncommon feature in the conservation area, the timber frame porch does broadly reference both the agricultural vernacular and historic exposed timber framing located within the now demolished building, and the single storey nature of the canopy along with the open nature of the framework drastically reduce the dominance and impact of this element. While the drawings do not identify the proposed material or detailing of this frame, it is assessed that a high quality, traditionally designed, solid oak frame design could be considered to enhance the appearance of the building, and aid in creating a clear entrance point.



Demolished Exposed Timber Structure



The alterations also include changes to the fenestration, as the originally submitted design (illustrated above) had a regimented and symmetrical window pattern that presented a more contemporary character, not typical in the surrounding vernacular, that more commonly has variation in window size and position. As recommended by the Conservation Officer, the current design employs a mix of window widths across the front elevation, with variation in height between floors, which is generally considered a positive change to the appearance, though it is identified that some height variation within the same floor may further aid in delivering a harmonious appearance. The proposals also adopt the recommended stone mullions seen elsewhere in the conservation area, to complement the previously proposed stone heads and cills. It is however felt that the number of proposed openings in the front elevation remains high compared to similar sized historic properties in the area that are more utilitarian, leading to a relatively crowded elevation, and any reduction in this number would be considered an improvement.

To the rear, the current proposals have reduced the number of openings proposed from both that originally submitted under current application 2025/ 0153 and the previously approved application 2024/0467, creating a more ordered and restrained elevation, while increasing the opening size to create a pair of bi-folding doors linking the house to the rear amenity. In addition, the current proposal replaces the previously proposed four dormers with rooflights, as recommended by the Conservation Officer, due to them being considered a none-typical feature of the conservation area. The proportions of the rooflights look particularly large and square, not typical for conservation rooflights, however, the annotations on submitted drawings suggest that these are to be genuine low profile conservation style with a vertical divider (not drawn) which would provide a vertical emphasis and create a more in-keeping appearance.

In relation to the materials, it is acknowledged that the opportunity to salvage and re-use of any materials from the previous building appears to have been missed, with historic material having been removed from site. Nevertheless, the annotations on submitted drawings suggest, that the current proposals have adopted all of the Conservation Officers suggestions regarding proposed materials, which should significantly aid the new dwelling in embedding within the street scene harmoniously, and maintain the positive character of the conservation area. The proposals outline that the walls are to be faced in natural sandstone to match that of neighbouring buildings, pointed in lime mortar that is brushed off to create slight recess. The roof is to be artificial sandstone roofing slates laid in diminishing courses with matching ridge tiles, and simple mortar fillet verge finish which is characteristic of the simple barn aesthetic. The windows and doors have been altered from brown UPVC to metal PPC units in heritage Tudor Brown colour, set with a minimum 100mm reveal, which will have slender profiles and are considered a positive change to the character of the building. While the stone detailing around the windows is noted to be natural ashlar sandstone, it is noted that the quoins to the building corners are to be art stone. While this is not preferable, the use of art stone quoins and artificial slate roof will closely resemble their traditional counterparts and would not diminish the appearance, if they are of sufficiently high quality.

It is acknowledged that the application site currently forms a prominent and pleasant open space within the conservation area, and while the submitted drawings do not mention landscaping, it is assumed that the mature trees to the site frontage are to be retained, and recommended that additional planting in-keeping with the verdant character of the street could be considered to secure some visual improvement to Conservation Area.



Conclusion

While the loss of the historic Hirst Cottage is of clear detriment to the character of the Billingley Conservation Area, it is noted that the former cottage was not Listed, nor does the site fall within the visual setting or contribute to the significance of any designated heritage asset as recorded on the National Heritage List for England, and as such is not subject to any policy restrictions. However, beyond the buildings age and generally having a positive character, the demolished building had limited specific historical or architectural value and was assessed to have a moderate interest and contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole.

The Applicant has put forward a case for the necessity of the demolition of the historic Hirst Cottage, following the buildings instability caused by the delivery of approved works, and with no indication of evidence of deliberate intent to neglect or damage the asset, the supporting evidence for the building's removal is accepted as presented.

In considering the heritage issues and the key matter of the impact of the development upon the significance or character and appearance of the Conservation Area, consideration should have regard to the current contribution of the site to this significance following the demolition, and the clear benefit of securing the future use of the site rather than allowing it to remain vacant.

The proposals closely replicate the prior building form, with some additional accommodation proposed increasing the scale of the building above that of the combined original property and extensions approved under Application 2024/0467. The degree to which this increased scale of development would give rise to harm to the sites significance, must be balanced against the positioning of the increased building massing to the rear of the property, allowing for a more restrained building frontage that has the greatest contribution to the character of the conservation area. Additionally, it appears that the site could comfortably accommodate the proposed additional development in this location without detrimentally affecting the prevailing density and rhythm of development along the road.

The proposals do introduce some minor contrasting modern architectural features not typical within the village, such as the large timber framed entrance canopy, and the use of artificial stone products that are considered to have a very minor detrimental impact on the historical character of the site. However, the variety of development along Chapel Lane, in terms of different building styles, sizes, materials, and periods of construction, mean more modern elements of the proposed development and a larger built form can be accommodated more easily than areas where there is a distinct architectural form.

These relatively minor elements of harm which have been identified should be balanced against, significant improvements to the design secured after submission, with alterations made during the application process toward a simplified, more traditional form reflective of the neighbouring cottages and barns, using mostly traditional materials.

Overall, the proposed new dwelling is determined to be of sufficient quality, and in combination with landscape treatment has the potential to secure enhancements to the visual character of the site and improve the quality of views within the Conservation Area from High Street and Chapel Lane.