DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT FOR CONVERSION OF EXISTING BUILDING (UNIT 3) INTO OFFICES, WATLING STREET FARM, SMOCKINGTON, HINCKLEY

1 SITE ANALYSIS

Existing features and characteristics

Watling Street Farm is an old farm complex which was built in the nineteenth century which is located immediately adjacent to the A5 Watling Street at Smockington, some 5 km to the south east of Hinckley. The adjacent farmland has been sold off by previous owners to leave a residual development site of around 0.75 ha. The buildings are generally arranged in a U shape around a courtyard with a large two storey barn, which is currently being converted into two residential units (Unit 1 and part Unit 2), adjoining the farmhouse with two separate single storey barns on the two other sides. Unit 3 abuts the A5. There is a separate detached barn (Unit 4) to the west of the complex which is visible when travelling south along the A5.
Refer to photographs A to H inclusive.

Ownership

The farmhouse and Unit 4 have been sold by the developer and are in now in separate ownership.

Appearance

The farmyard complex is exceptional in Leicestershire in that all of the buildings are finished in cement render, rather than traditional red brick. The roof of the farmhouse is finished in natural blue slate and the other buildings are roofed in reclaimed plain clay tiles, which are a mixture of brindle, red and orange.
Refer to site plan.

Site Access

The original gated vehicle access to the development site off the A5 is to be kept locked to restrict vehicle access onto the A5 and an improved vehicle access is being implemented from the B4114 Wolvey Road, in accordance with the requirements of Warwickshire County Highways. This access is located within the Rugby Borough Council constituency area.
Refer to photographs I & J.

Existing Site Features

The development site is generally level and is surrounded by open fields with boundaries of hedgerows. There are also several large trees within the hedgerows. There is a pond in the western corner of the site which in the past has been used for the watering of beasts.

Adjacent built form

The development site is reasonably isolated from surrounding buildings. There is a pair of Victorian semi detached dwellings (originally farm cottages) to the east of the site. Also, on the other side of the A5 is the range of buildings at Red Lion Farm, which is the international base for Hunt Brothers (Smockington) Ltd. There are some derelict buildings located some way further south along the A5, which may in the past have been a petrol filling station.
Refer to photograph K & L.

PREVIOUS PLANNING HISTORY

The original planning permission for the development site when purchased by the developer was for the conversion of the disused barns to create four dwellings with double garages, which was granted by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council under reference 89/1369/4 on 20 February 1990. It was associated with a separate planning permission for alterations to the access to the B4114 in conjunction with the conversion of the barns, which was granted by Rugby Borough Council under reference R/89/1321/12083/P on 10 January 1990.

A variation of condition 7 of the original planning permission was granted on 20 February 1990 to allow continued use of the vehicle access off the A5, subject to alterations, was granted by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council on 13 November 2000.

A second planning permission for the vehicle access to the B4114 was granted by Rugby Borough Council under reference R04/1217/12083/P on 14 January 2005, because the original permission had expired.

An enforcement notice was served by the LPA on 22 December 2005 for substantial re-building of Units 3 and 4, when all construction work was stopped on these two units.

Subsequently planning permission was granted for operational development comprising the rebuilding of walls to Unit 4 under planning permission 06/00625/FUL on 19 July 2006. However, a similar application for planning permission for Unit 3 was refused.

A second enforcement notice was served by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council on 3 November 2006 for erecting a new residential building without planning permission, which was subsequently upheld on appeal.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal has evolved after discussions with the LPA to convert the building into offices with the provision of associated car parking in accordance with the parking standards required by Leicestershire County Highways, whilst using the existing improved vehicle access from the B4114 Wolvey Road.

The LPA has commented that it did not wish to see this building demolished because it had stood alongside the A5 for over a century and forms an important part of the original farmyard whilst providing visual and acoustic screening from the busy A5.

Whilst new residential development in the countryside would not be approved by the LPA it has been necessary to seek alternative use and a small office unit would appear to be a more favourable use which would also have the potential to provide employment for the local community.

2 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Appearance

The existing building (Unit 3) contributes towards the character of the courtyard development, whilst maintaining visual and acoustic screening to the approved residential development (Units 1 and 2) from traffic using the busy A5.

Landscaping

The boundary with the A5 is to be screened with trees and hedge to the highway in accordance with the landscape scheme which was previously submitted to and approved by the LPA. This includes the retention of the existing Hawthorn hedge to the north of Unit 3 and the timber post and rail fence which follows the highway boundary. Additional planting is to be implemented along the A5 boundary which has already been approved by the LPA.
Refer to photograph A.

Traditional details

Traditional materials and construction details, including corbelled brick eaves with gutters on rise and fall brackets, are in keeping with an agricultural building in the countryside.

Local Employment

The offices are to be designed to meet current building and health and safety regulations, including energy conservation, lighting, toilets facilities and provision for persons with disabilities. The layout should allow for a variety of potential end users and will provide local employment. The building has a gross office floor area of 192.85 square metres measured outside of the external walls.

Car parking provision

Adequate on site car parking and turning space is to be provided to minimise problems with vehicle parking and use of the garages for the adjacent residential units within the development site. Car parking standards required to meet Leicestershire County Highways requirement of one car parking space per 35 square metres of office space.

Provision for persons with disabilities
Level external access and hard smooth surfaces is to be provided for persons with disabilities, including wheelchair users, with easy access from the vehicle parking area to the main entrance and must comply with Approved Document Part M of the Building Regulations.

Vehicle Access
The vehicle access from the B4114 Smockington Lane is to meet the requirements of Warwickshire County Highways and to ensure that adequate visibility splays are provided at the site entrance.
Refer to photograph J.

Pedestrian Access
There is an existing pedestrian footpath which runs along the A5 from the existing cottages to the Burbage turn at the B578, although it is anticipated that persons visiting the site will use private transport.
Refer to site plan.

Local Public Transport
There is a bus route along the A5 Watling Street, which serves Hinckley, Nuneaton and Leicester but there are no pick up or setting down places along the busy A5. The nearest shopping facilities are available in Burbage, including the Three Pots post office, but it is assumed that journeys would be made by car for local shopping.

Cycles
Provision is to be made within the site for employees who wish to cycle to work although it is considered that this will not be along the busy A5 trunk road which is regularly used by motor vehicles including large articulated lorries and is only single carriageway adjacent to the site.

3 DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Building Structure
Structural changes to the building have been made to re-instate the general appearance of an agricultural building and the number of openings to the external walls has been reduced whilst several existing windows are to be adapted to resemble stable doors.
Refer to drawing.

Courtyard Appearance
Plain clay tiles are retained with a smooth cement render to reflect the style of the adjacent dwellings (Units 1, 2 and 4) and enhance the courtyard appearance.
Refer to Photographs E & F.

External Appearance
The rear elevation facing the A5 has only one window opening along this boundary to retain the external appearance of an agricultural building in accordance with the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance for Conversion of Rural Buildings, adopted June 2004.
Refer to photograph A.

Retention of Existing Features
The original timber trusses have been retained within open plan office areas to retain the feeling of an open plan agricultural building.

Access
Level access for persons with disabilities including wheelchair users is to be provided within the site from the vehicle parking area to the main entrance and is to comply with Approved Document Part M of the Building Regulations.

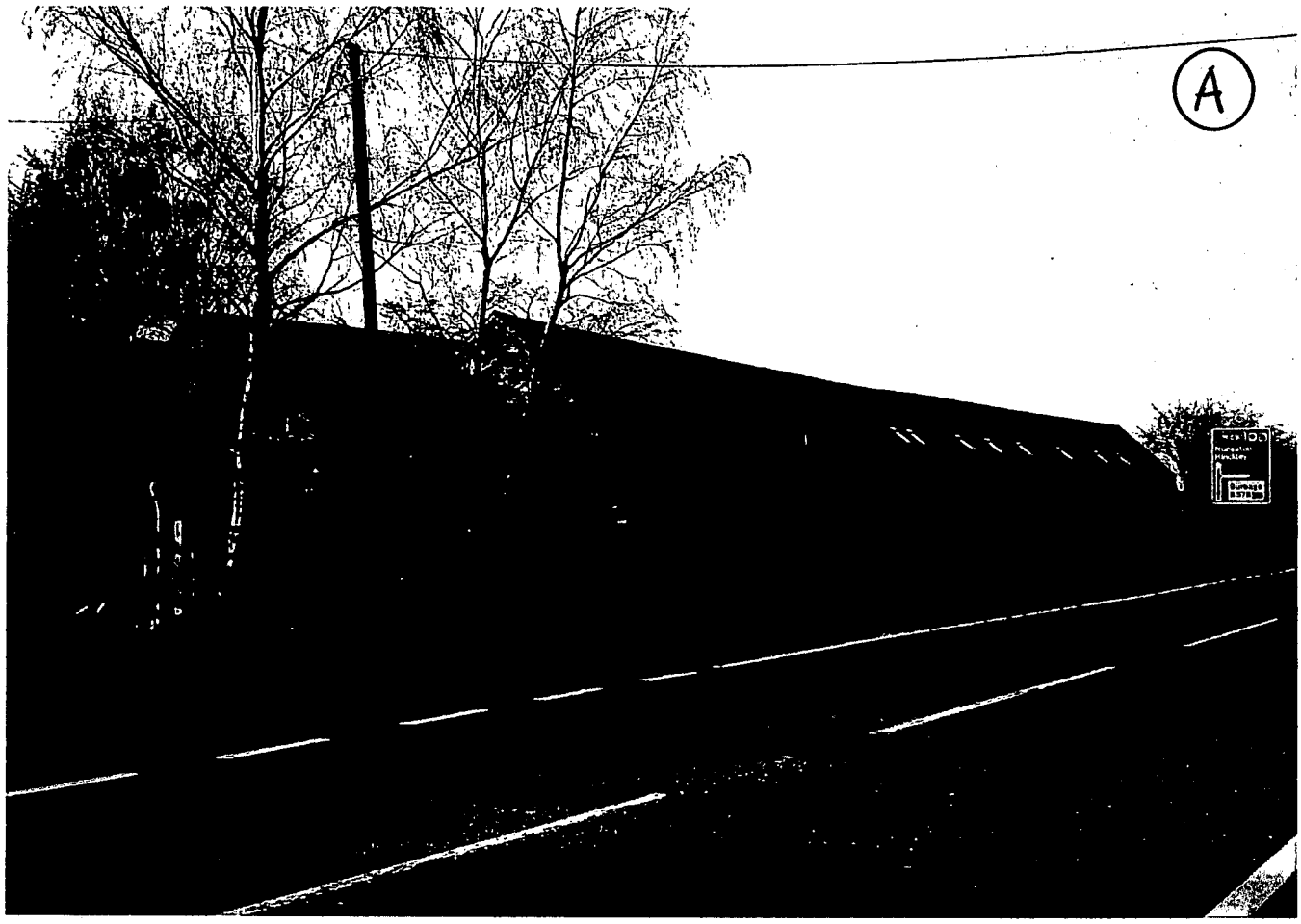
Provision for persons with disabilities
The internal layout of the building has been designed to permit easy use of the building including toilet provision, circulation space, and suitable door widths.

Landscaping
The existing hedge and trees within the site are retained, with additional planting particularly along the site boundary with the A5.

Car parking
Parking provision for 9 no vehicles plus one disabled parking space is included within the site which exceeds the requirements of the Leicestershire County Highways Requirements for Development and to prevent problems with on-site parking.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph A	View of Unit 3 from south along A5
Photograph B	View of Unit 3 from within the site facing west
Photograph C	View of gable of Unit 3 from A5 facing south
Photograph D	View of Unit 3 from within the site facing east
Photograph E	View of Unit 2 from within the site
Photograph F	View of Unit 1 and farmhouse from within the site
Photograph G	View of Unit 4 and Unit 2 from north along the A5
Photograph H	View of Unit 4 from the east
Photograph I	View of vehicle access from the A5
Photograph J	View of vehicle access from the B4114
Photograph K	View of Hunt Brothers (Smockington) Ltd (Red Lion Farm)
Photograph L	View of Watling Street farm Cottages from the A5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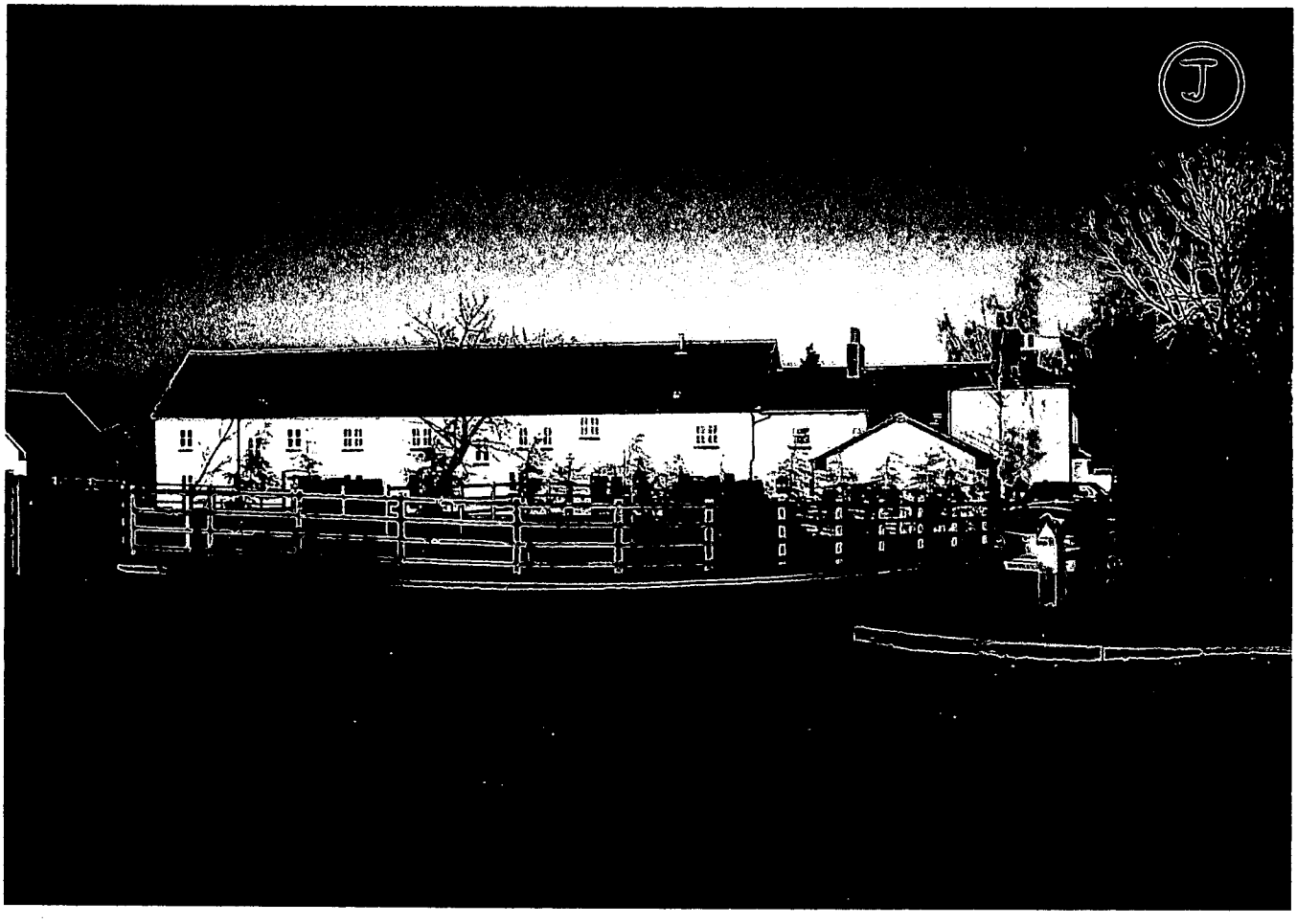
J


K
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