

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT and HERITAGE STATEMENT

Poplars Farm, Lower Road, Hardwick, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 4DZ

March 2021

ACH Planning Ltd

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Local Planning Authority:

Formerly Aylesbury Vale District Council amalgamated with Buckinghamshire County Council, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils in April 2020 to form the single unitary of **Buckinghamshire Council**.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF Feb 2019)

Paragraph 184 states that heritage asset sites and buildings of local historic value are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

Paragraph 189 requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by any development proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Planning policy guidance states that conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change, requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of the asset. HA's must remain in active use and its value requires sympathetic changes to be made from time to time. It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also its future conservation and its optimum viable use. It is not the degree of harm to the asset's significance, but rather the scale of the development that is to be assessed.

In this respect, LPA's are required to look for opportunities and treat favourably new development within CA's and within the setting of heritage assets that make a positive contribution by taking into account:

- a) securing the optimum viable use
- b) making a positive contribution to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

In the absence of any record other than the listing text noted below, in accordance with paragraph 189, the owner of the property has engaged ACH Planning Ltd to provide a record of the listed building and its setting for the LPA and public record. The report is based only upon information and evidence available at the time and makes no attempt to theorise or speculate as to what may or may not have occurred in the past.



Listing Text

'The Poplars' Grade II - Listing NGR: SP8047719268

House. Early C19 re-modelling of older building. Red and vitreous brick, some herringbone brickwork hidden in left gable, right gable of thin early C18 brick with remains of band course and moulded eaves-line cornice. Old tile roof, brick chimneys between left bays and to right, C19 cusped bargeboards to right gable. 2 storeys, 3 bays. Wooden casements with single horizontal glazing bars, ground floor windows with narrow top lights. 3-light windows to first floor and left bays of ground floor, 2 2-light to ground floor right and another over door between left bays. All windows have cambered heads except that to ground floor left. Lobby entry with C20 door in moulded architrave frame below flat wooden hood on shaped brackets.

Range attached to right is of thin brick with old tile roof, half-hipped to left and C20 off-centre brick chimney. 2 storeys, the ground floor having 2 3-light barred wooden casements with segmental heads. Interior: ground floor room to left has chamfered spine beam with elaborate stops.



Relevant planning history:

A bungalow for an agricultural worker was approved (75/00441/AV), together with a static caravan (19/00475/AV), but neither seemed to have any physical connection with the 'Poplars'.

The only record of planning applications in respect of the 'Poplars' relates to the erection of a conservatory to the rear of the property which was approved, subsequently built and remains to this day, namely:

A/96/1925 and ALB/96/1924 - Erection of conservatory to rear of property

Validated - 11/10/1996 Approved - 27/11/1996

The case officer described the site features as:

Detached listed cottage with farm buildings to sides – Secluded site.

Bell PH next door not visible from site – open countryside

Policies/guidance applicable – RCD 13 and RCD 27

Case officer's comments and recommendation:

This is a conservatory extension to the rear of a large detached listed building. The extension would not be visible from any public highway and hidden to the rear. It is an appropriate design for building and CA.

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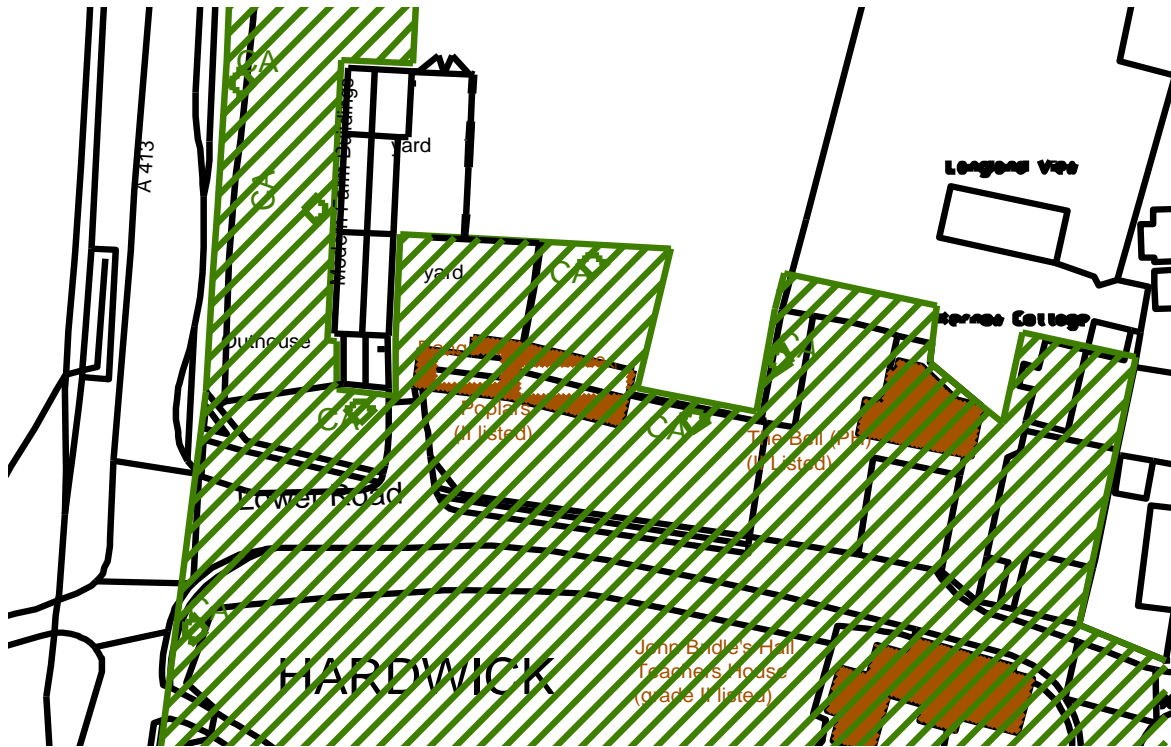
The Hardwick Conservation Area (CA)

The Hardwick Conservation Area (CA) was designated on 18th July 1990 and updated in September 2008. The area in the vicinity of 'Poplars' is hatched green on the plan shown below. It is evident that the CA in this vicinity was designated to provide additional protection to the listed buildings and the Lower Road street scene. Poplars Farm is noted as a prominent Listed Building together with the nearby listed buildings of The Bell PH and John Bridle's Hall (Teachers House) are crossed hatched brown on the plan and there are no 'non-designated heritage assets' (NDHA) listed or identified in the CA document.

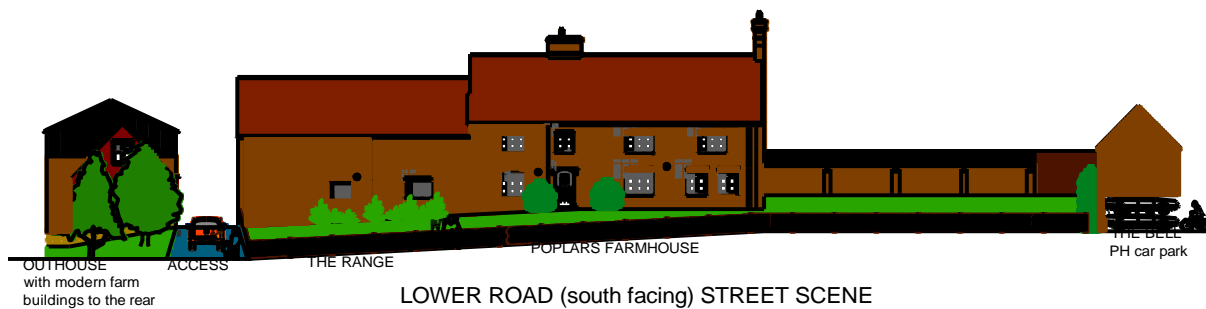
NDHA's are defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance, which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. Buildings should not be classed as NDHA unless they meet the tests set out in HE's note 7 of: soundness, accountability, transparency, consultation and ratification by elected Members.

The extent of the CA deliberately excludes the modern farm buildings, part of the yard and traditional brick outhouse from the CA. The modern farm buildings are of no architectural or historic merit and make no positive contribution to the CA or the setting of the listed building, however, it is considered that the outhouse and the adjoining stone wall make a visually important contribution to the character and appearance of the CA, the Lower Road street scene and the setting of the listed building.

In other respects, the CA extends from 'Yards End' (north of the barns and not shown on the plan) southwards along the eastern side of the A413 sandwiched between the modern farm buildings and the western boundary with the A413. Views into the CA from the A413 relate to a boundary screen of evergreen trees and bushes.



Hardwick Conservation Area and Listed Buildings (double hatched)



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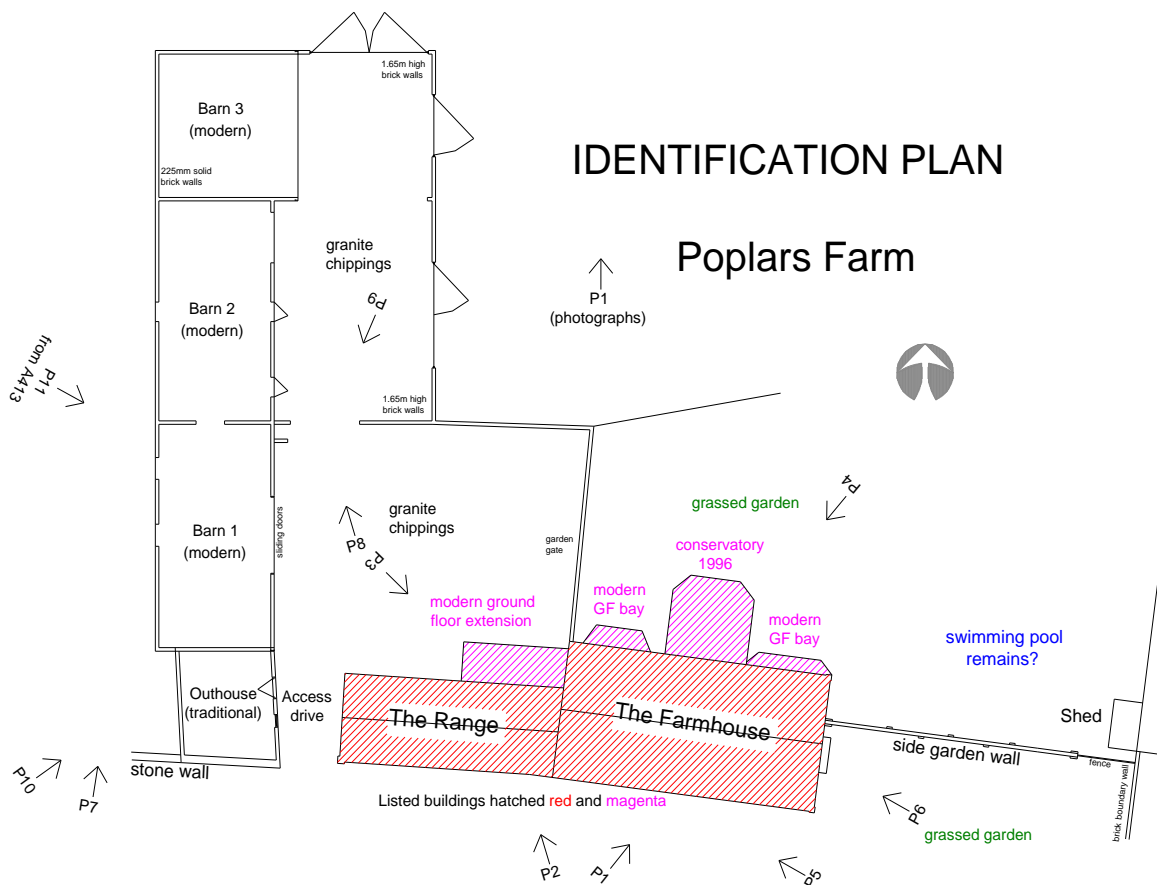
Poplars Identification:

For the avoidance of doubt and to assist in identifying the various elements that make up Poplars Farm as a whole, an identification plan has been drawn up clearly showing the buildings described in the listing text and the nearby buildings that are not listed but are considered to fall within the setting of the listed buildings and their curtilage.

It is evident that 'The Poplars' comprises two distinct structures that, for the purposes of identification, have been described separately as 'the Farmhouse' and 'the Range', the name of which has been adopted from the listing text. In other respects, the 'street scene' above shows the garden wall stretching eastward from the Farmhouse toward The Bell PH.

Between the garden wall and the boundary with The Bell is a section of timber fence approximately 3.6m in length.

On the opposite (western side) of the Range lies what remains of a traditional brick outhouse with stone wall to the lower part stretching to a southern boundary stone wall. The outhouse has also been deliberately omitted from the Conservation Area together with the modern barns, nevertheless, this is considered to represent an important building in terms of the setting of the listed buildings and the Conservation Area and street scene of Lower Road as shown in photograph 10.



1. Farmhouse - south elevation



2. The 'Range' - south elevation



3. Farmhouse and 'Range'



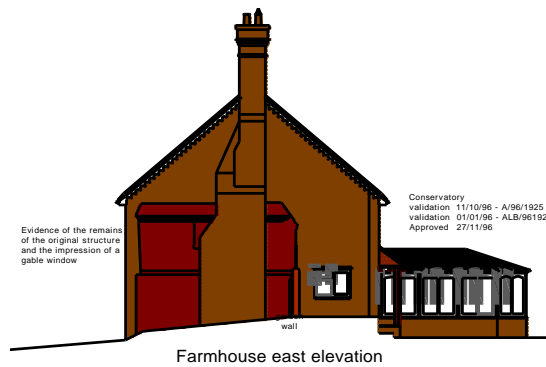
4. The Farmhouse



5. Lower Road looking toward the A413



6. Farmhouse – east gable wall



7. Modern farm buildings



8. Modern farm buildings and yard



9. Views of the modern farm buildings and their close proximity to the 'Range'



10. Views of the Outhouse and stone wall from the SW



11. Views from the A413

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Recent History:

Poplars Farm was vacated in approximately 2015 and laid empty until the current owner purchased the property in late December 2019. Prior to that the property was first placed on the open market in September 2018. Three prospective purchasers were unable to proceed because the buildings were in such a poor state of repair that mortgages could not be raised using the property as security. The current owner was only able to proceed on the basis that a mortgage loan was not required.

Following several years of vacant neglect, at the time of purchase in late December 2019, the building had fallen into a poor state of dilapidation with evidence of substantial rising damp, leaking roof and the stench of oil emanating from a leaking oil-fired boiler demonstrated that the building had been neglected through lack of use for several years. There was also evidence of damage caused by surveyors and builders acting on behalf of previous potential purchasers to ascertain the level of dilapidation and its causal effect.

In consideration of the necessary works, the owner followed the advice guidance set out in the Council's 'Listed Buildings 2.2' document dated February 2016. Given the diversification of individual listed buildings, the advice notebook, in the main, can only represent generalisations, with notable exceptions such as:

- the protection afforded by listing only applies to the parts built before 1948; and,
- that all buildings need to be repaired from time to time.

On this basis, the owner has only undertaken works to the parts of the building built after 1948, on a like for like basis. It is understood that any repair works should be incremental and kept to the minimum necessary, but that should not be interpreted as a 'papering over the cracks' approach when more comprehensive work is needed to tackle the underlying reason why the cracks have occurred.

On closer examination, it was evident that under previous ownerships the building had undergone significant alterations and repairs from time to time on a superficial ad hoc basis with the introduction of new elements that literally 'papered over the cracks' and allowed the underlying problems to continue. The only planning records related to the introduction of a conservatory in 1996.

The repairs that have been undertaken did not involve the demolition, alteration or extension that would affect its special architectural character or historic interest, nor the replacement of historic structural elements or fabric, however, every effort has been made to include all the repairs that have been undertaken to provide the Council with a record of the works.

In other respects, the subdivision of the two distinct buildings to create two separate dwellings only involved the blocking up of three recently introduced door openings connecting the two buildings and the introduction of a new first floor partition in The Range which have already been addressed in applications 21/00246/APP and 21/00247/ALB.

All the works undertaken will be addressed in detail in three parts, namely:

1. general works
2. works specific to The Farmhouse and
3. works specific to The Range.

1. General works

Rewiring:

Carefully remove all wiring circuits and fittings and make good.

Provide separate electricity supplies to the subdivided dwellings.

Provide new wiring and fittings in accordance with Part P of the Building Regulations and provide Part P Certificate to confirm the works comply with BS7671.

Replumbing:

Carefully remove all pipework connections, tanks the oil-fired boiler located in The Range and make good.

Provide new mains water supply to the subdivided dwellings.

Provide new pipework hidden from view, including new under-floor heating pipes to each dwelling, thus removing the need for modern radiators on the ground floor.

Provide new plumbing to the bathrooms and kitchens.

Provide new oil-fired boilers to each dwelling as shown on the plans.

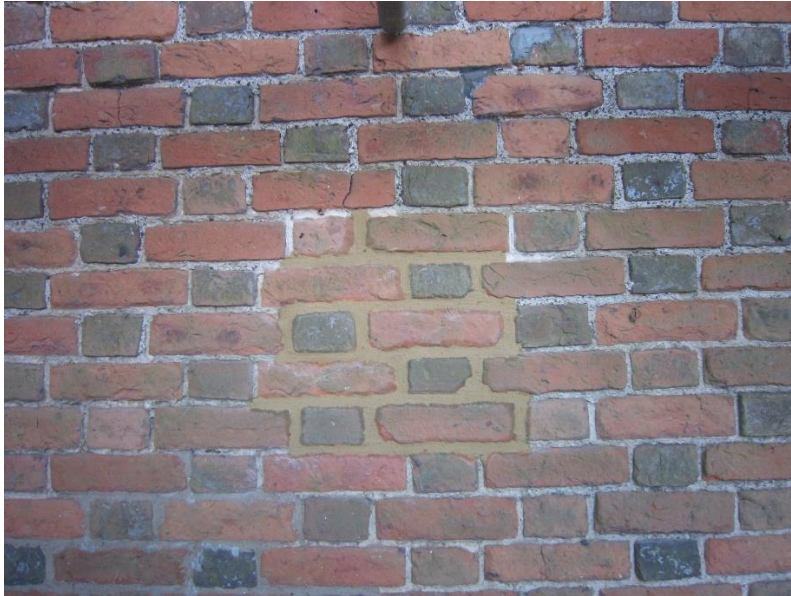
Provide new waste pipes to the bathrooms and kitchens in accordance with Part H of the Building Regulations and connect to the existing mains drainage system.



New boiler located in the utility room of The Farmhouse.

The boiler serving The Range is located on the external rear elevation near the eastern boundary with The Farmhouse.

Repointing:



Small sample area of repointing taken shortly after its application

The owner has employed the services of Gunpoint Ltd who specialise in repointing brickwork, in particular lime mortar in historic buildings. While the specialist equipment used to rake out the old mortar avoids any damage to the brickwork, it also penetrates deeper than normal raking out enabling a more comprehensive and longer lasting pointing. The pointing mix is well established and commonly accepted by heritage organisations and supplied by Secil Natural Hydraulic Lime certified to the current version of EN 459-1 (100% burnt limestone) 1:4 Natural Hydraulic NHL 3.5 (moderately hydraulic) bedding and pointing mortar with >3.5 to <10 MPa strength @ 28 days.

The external boundary walls also require attention because of previous repointing with sand and cement.

Roof retiling:

Carefully remove all existing roof tiles, brush clean and remove all moss and other debris. Stack all sound tiles for re-use. Carefully remove existing felt and battens, brush clean the exposed roof timbers and treat for woodworm and rot. Repair all damaged timbers by reinforcing the existing timber rather than replacing.

Line the rafters with lapped 'Cromar' Vent 3 premium performance breather membrane fixed with 38mm x 25mm treated timber battens. Re-lay the original tiles where possible to

the elevation open to public view and provide new handmade clay tiles where necessary. Spray two applications of soot wash to the new tiles to increase the ageing process.



Exposed roof structure over The Range showing poor and inadequate repairs and reinforcement undertaken in the past.

Rising damp:

The main defect of the building related to rising damp, both through the floors and the internal and external walls. Ill-advised attempts had been made by previous owners to rectify the problem by lining the walls with stud framework, plasterboard and skim attached directly to the walls and the floors laid with concrete and old plastic fertiliser bags used as a damp proof membrane. Not surprisingly, these futile attempts to resolve the situation only resulted in the problem continuing to cause further deterioration and damage to other parts of the building.



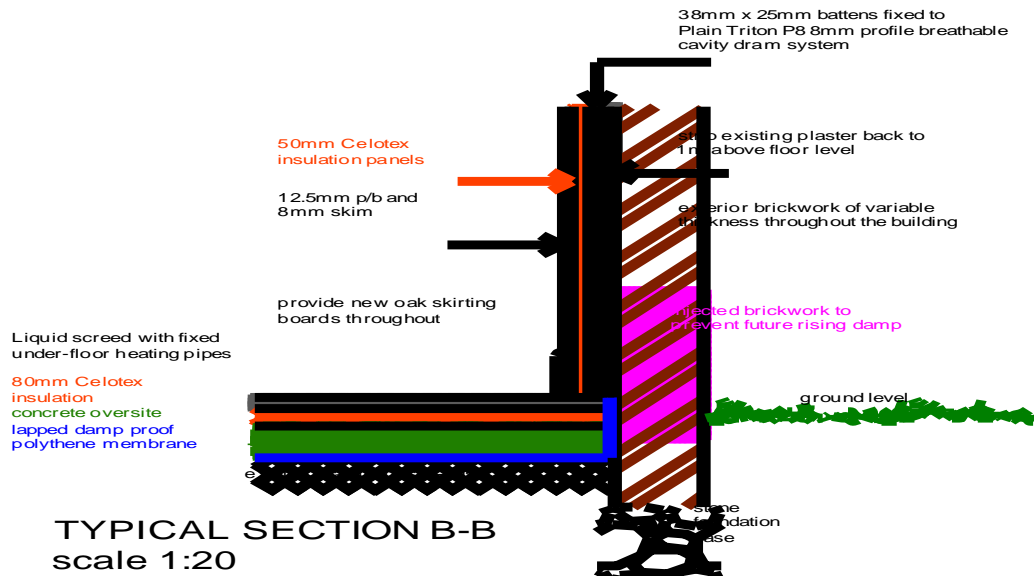
Examples of earlier remedial work and the extent of rising damp



Examples of earlier remedial work and the extent of rising damp

On further investigation, it was evident that the earlier makeshift approach was common throughout the entire building and minimal, incremental works or repairs on a like for like basis would not be cost effective or make any meaningful contribution to resolving the fundamental problem in the long term. Therefore, it was necessary to take a more comprehensive method.

Methodology

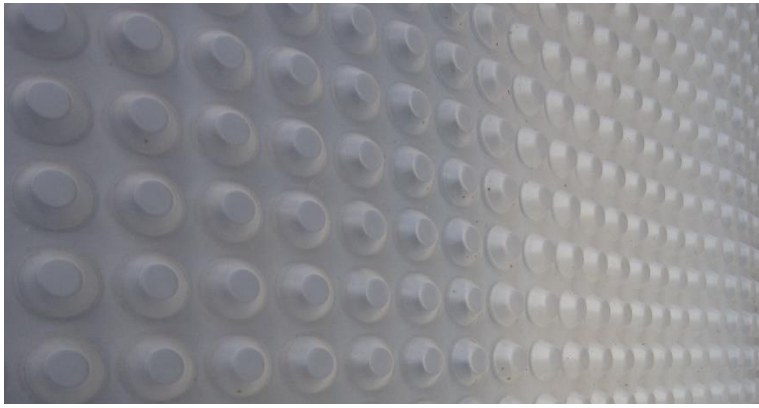


Ground floors:

Take up existing concrete floors down to the existing hardcore base, level and apply sand blinding to avoid any sharp corners puncturing the polythene damp proof membrane. Replace and lay concrete oversite over newly laid damp proof membrane. Lay 80mm Celotex GA400 insulation boards and fix 16mm underfloor heating pipes encased in 50mm self-levelling liquid screed.

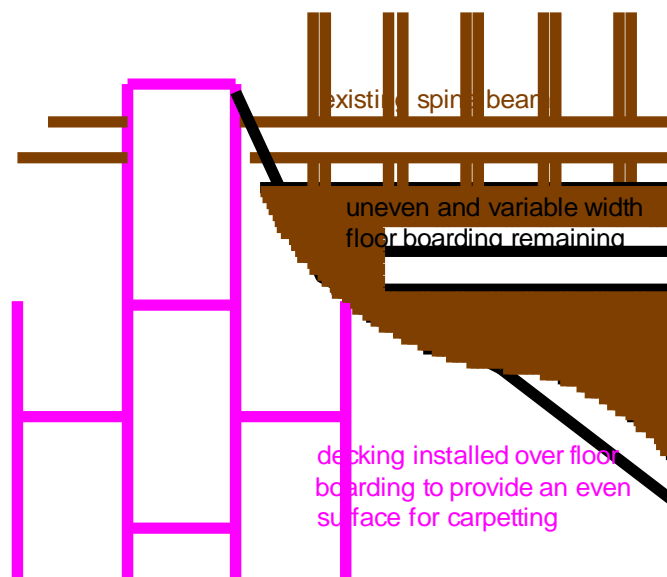
Walls:

Remove modern stud framework and plasterboard, strip back plaster to 1m above floor level and inject a chemical damp proof course into the brickwork. Scrape off all loose plaster and line the walls with plain Triton P8 cavity dram system wall tanking fixed with 38mm x 25mm battens. Line throughout with 50mm Celotex insulation and 12.5mm plasterboard and skim. Please note the Triton P8 system is specifically designed to allow the brick wall and remaining plaster to breath freely, thus avoiding any potential lack of ventilation problems.



Triton P8 breathable system

First Floors:



The original floor joists span between the front and rear walls are supported by spine beams that run the entire width of both The Range and The Farmhouse. In some areas the joists are exposed and in others covered by plasterboard and skim. Typically, the joists have dropped slightly at the outer edges and fall away from the level of the spine beams. The original floorboards vary in width and length and twisted with the floor joists. Many of the floorboards are damaged due to lifting for access in the past and no longer suitable for carpets or bathroom tiling. Accordingly, the original boards have been repaired and remain intact, but covered with flexible 12mm x 2.4m x 1.2m ply boards to provide a smoother surface in readiness for carpets and tiling.

Doors, architraves and skirting:

Three relatively new door openings linking The Farmhouse with The Range have removed and blocked up providing the necessary fire separation between the dwellings.



Door 'A' linking The Farmhouse and The Range removed and blocked in.

All other modern post 1948 doors and architraves have been removed and replaced with oak ledged doors with traditional latch and strap hinges.

The modern (post 1948) skirtings were suffering rot due to the rising damp through the walls and floors. All were removed and replaced with new moulded timber skirtings fixed to the new lining and painted white to match the architraves.



Typical modern post 1948 doors replaced by oak ledged doors



Typical replacement doors showing both sides of the same door

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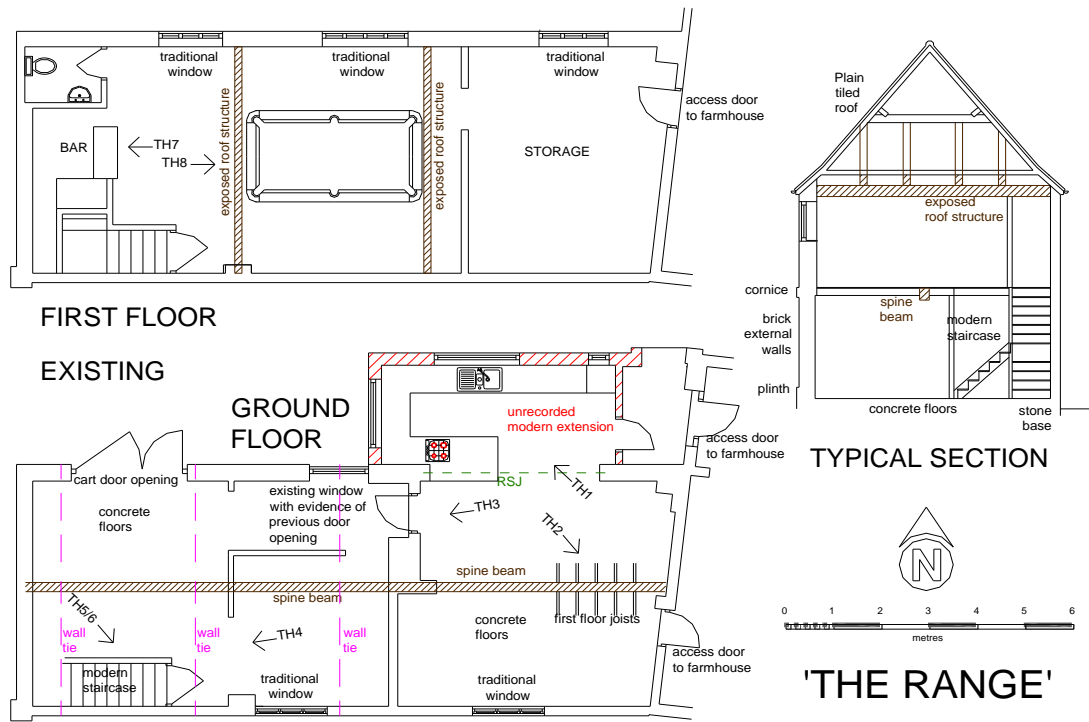
The Range

The Range was evidently a utility or working building compared with the distinctly residential character of the farmhouse, although in more recent times it has clearly been integrated as part of the living accommodation ancillary to the Farmhouse with access through two ground floor linking doors from the Farmhouse sitting room and a first-floor door.

The floor plans and section illustrated in the drawing below demonstrate the relative simplicity of the construction comprising 225mm thick brick outer walls with 3 course cornice at first floor level and widened brick plinth sitting on a stone base. Three tie rods with circular patress wall plates have been introduced to stabilize the brick structure invariably caused by failure of the first-floor joists to provide lateral restraint, a common result of ingress of damp and degradation of rot in the first-floor joist ends.

A ground floor brick extension has been added with plain tiled roof, modern windows and external door. No planning record exists of the extension, which is of no architectural or historic merit adding little to the character of the listed building other than the fact that it exists. The photographs show that it was used as the kitchen and dining area. The remaining

ground floor areas were used as a general storage and utility use. The first floor was used as a snooker/billiard room with its own bar and toilet.



TH 1



TH2



TH3



TH4



TH7 – the bar

TH8 - the snooker room

Staircase:

A modern post 1948 staircase had been introduced in the recent past to gain access to the first-floor bar and snooker room to avoid access through the bedroom area in The Farmhouse. The staircase was enclosed by modern partitioning and flush doors as shown in photograph TH5.



TH5 – original staircase

Having removed the staircase and the ceiling plasterboard the floor joists were exposed revealing what can best be described as a makeshift 'L' shaped stairwell with no reinforced trimmers or supporting structure as shown in photograph TH6.

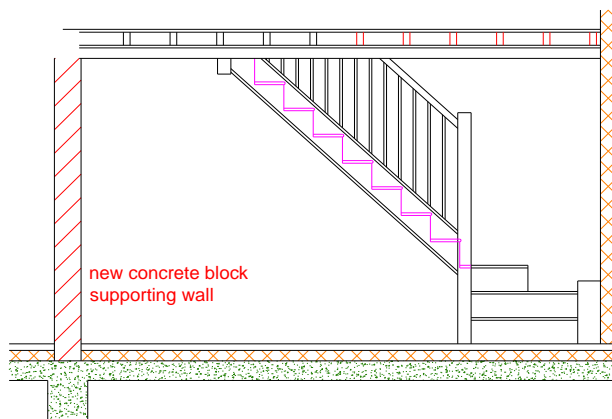


TH6 – the original stairwell

A new staircase was designed in accordance with Part K of the Building Regulations to fit within the original stairwell with a new floor structure and floor structure was introduced in accordance with the specification shown below.



New Range Staircase

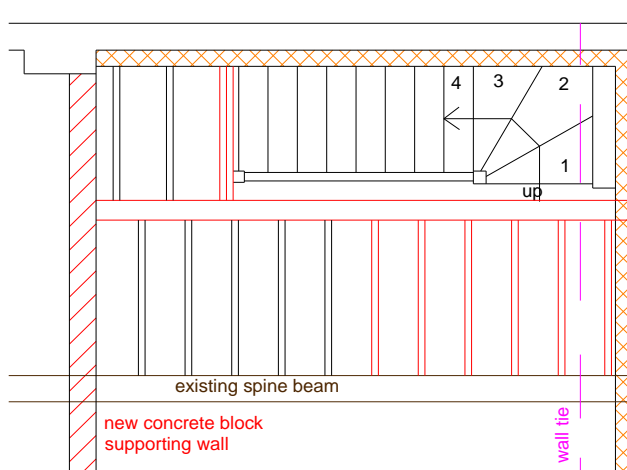


new 200mm x 150mm beam

**Staircase side view
and room section**

internal wall insulation
and tank lining

**NEW RANGE
STAIRCASE**

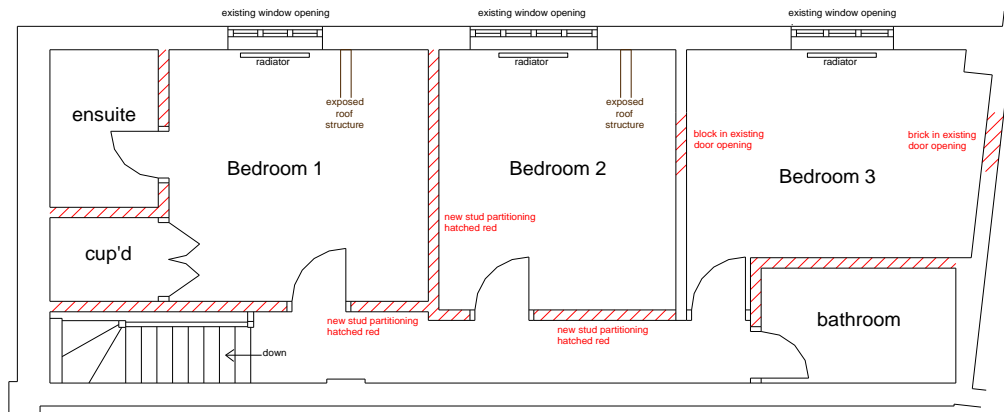


internal wall insulation
and tank lining

new 200mm x 150mm beam

new 100mm x 70mm
joists @ 400mm c/c

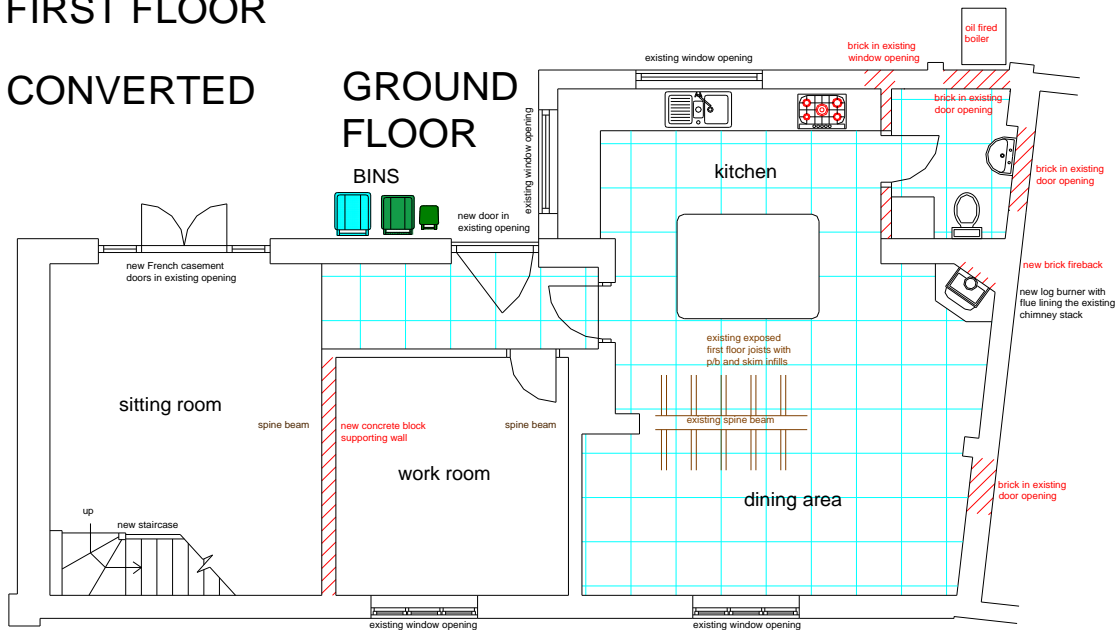
Staircase Plan



FIRST FLOOR

CONVERTED

GROUND FLOOR



West Gable:

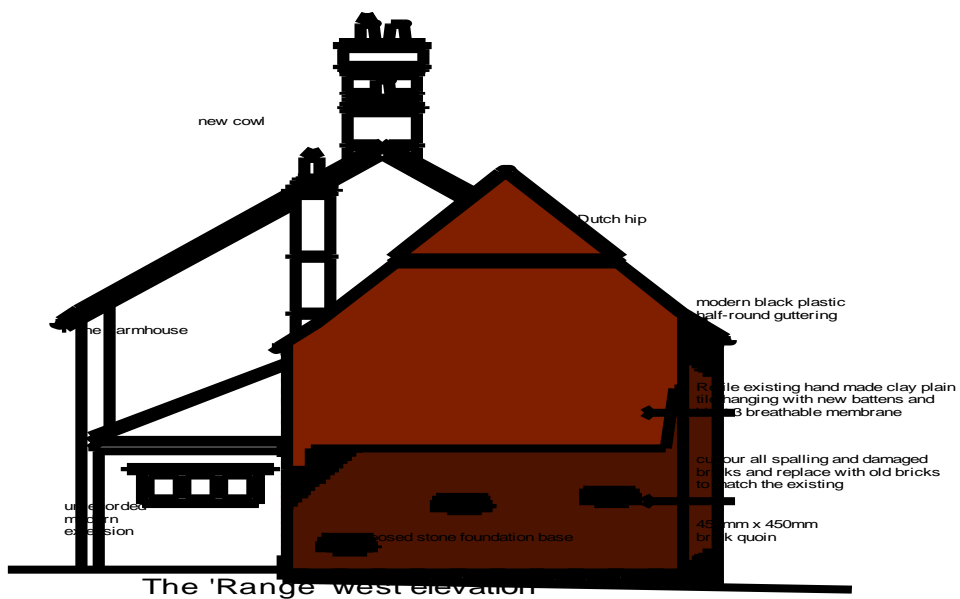
The photograph of the west gable end elevation shown below provides evidence of the general condition of this part of the building. Tiles had fallen from the tile hung wall and some were hanging precariously, having been dislodged from their fixings. The fascia board and soffit of the Dutch hip was irreparable and required replacing on a like for like basis.

It was necessary to carefully remove the vertical tiles and battens to expose the structure behind and any repair work necessary to make it sound. The structural integrity of this part of the structure is particularly important because it supports the tile hanging, which, if not correctly constructed, will jeopardise the safety of anyone below. Accordingly, any rotten timbers were either replaced or repaired and all timbers treated for infestation or rot.

Vent 3 breathable membrane was fixed together with 38mm x 25mm battens and handmade clay tiles fixed with galvanised double nailing to the battens.



The Range west gable end elevation

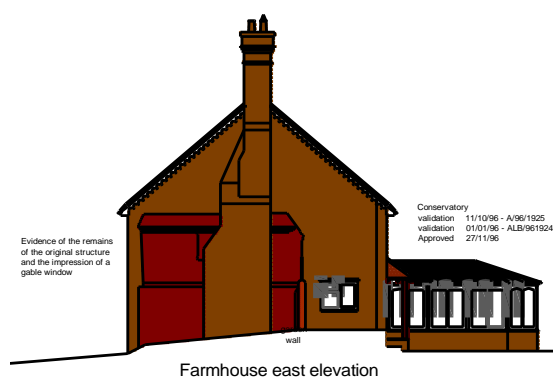


The 'Range' west elevation

The Farmhouse:

The Farmhouse is distinctly residential in its character compared with The Range. The fenestration to the front elevation is more traditional than the rear where contemporary French casement doors, canopies and bays have been introduced and more recently a modern conservatory approved in 1996 and erected shortly afterwards.

Distinctly different brick patterns in the east gable provides evidence of the remains of an earlier building, the right-hand side of which coincides with the remains of a broken line of internal wall running from east to west in the Farmhouse, which may represent the scant remains of the original structure, otherwise described in the listing text as, '*re-modelling of older building*'. The left-hand front corner provides evidence of subsidence to the front wall. Evidence was also found of the remains of a cellar under room 3 in the south east corner, but no records are available.

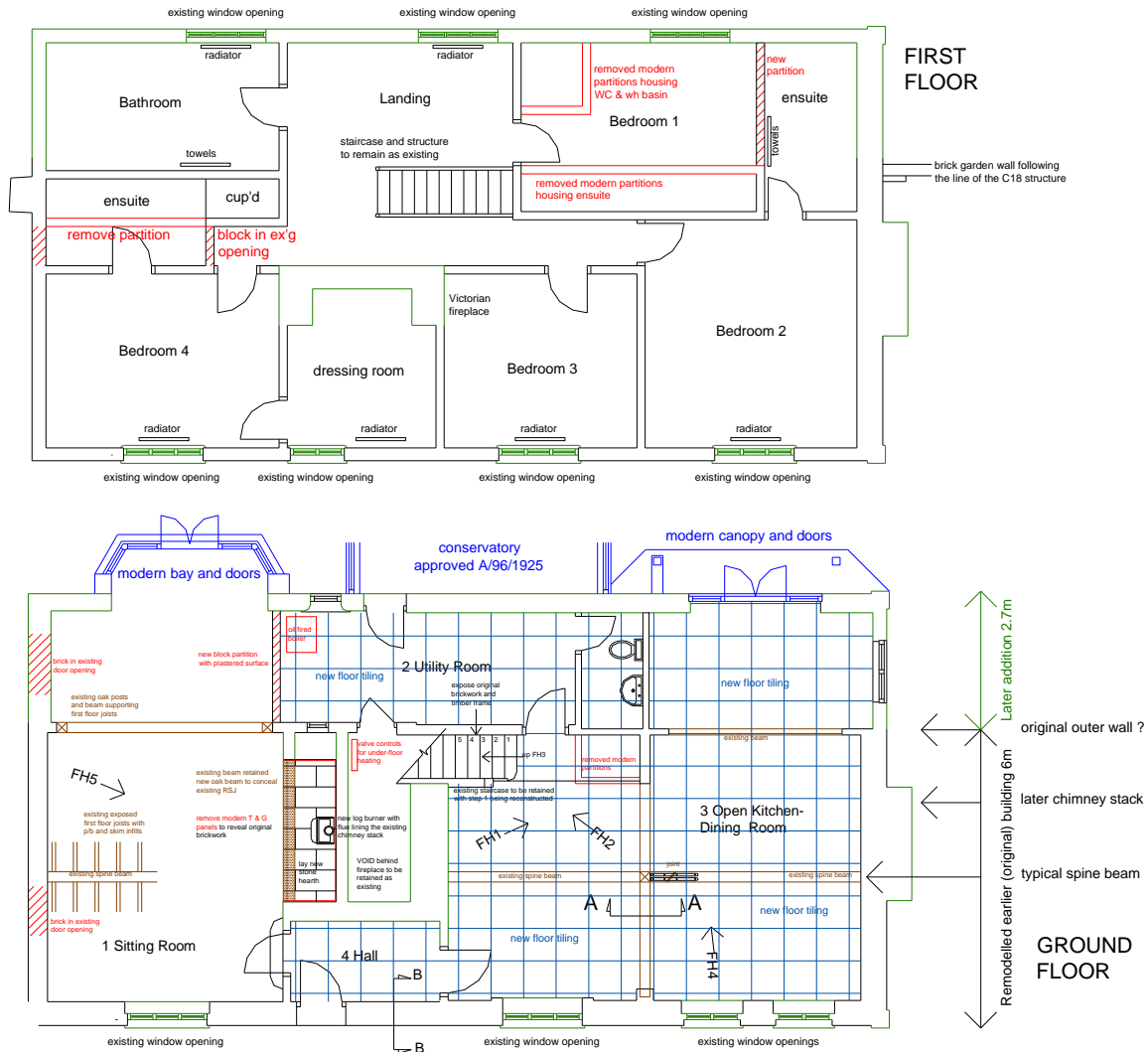


6. Farmhouse – east gable wall

The plan shown below attempts to identify the building history, but due to the lack of historic data, it is not intended to represent a definitive record but only a glimpse of what is available at the time of this report. The building appears to fall broadly into three different periods and categories, namely:

1. The original brick building approximately 6m depth with stone foundation base and central spine beam is dated in the listing text as early C18 (none of the original roof structure is evident).
2. The remodeling (**outlined green**) including: 2.7m rear additions, wooden casement windows, central chimney complex, west gable chimney stack and roof structure are dated C19 in the listing text.
3. Unrecorded French casements, bay and canopy were added post 1948 and **outlined in blue**, together the conservatory approved in 1996 and erected soon after.

The C19 remodelling of the structure, as described in the listing text, visually defines the building context and its contribution to the Conservation Area from a public perspective.



Windows



Typical ground floor windows prior to refurbishment



Typical ground floor refurbished windows

All windows have been meticulously refurbished to weatherproof working order, replacing hardware as necessary, with brass hinges, traditional black iron 'monkey tail' latches and handles.

Staircase area:



FH1 – showing the modern framework, door and partition – now removed.

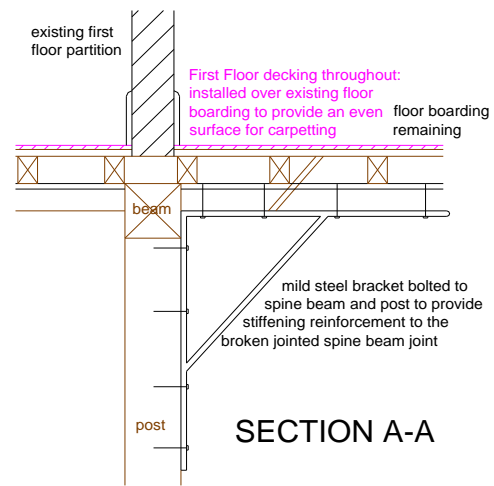


FH3 – existing staircase.

FH2 – showing the exposed original wall.

Photographs FH1, FH2 and FH3 show how the recent modern doors and partitions have been removed and the plasterwork above the staircase has been removed to expose the original brick and framework of the early C18 outer wall. New oak post and beam have also been introduced to support the first-floor structure, previously unsupported.

Repairs to spine beam:



FH4 – showing the steel bracket reinforcing the broken spine beam.

Photograph FH4 and Section A-A shows how the broken spine beam joint was repaired using a purposely fabricated mild steel angle iron and bracket bolted to the oak post and spine beam resulting in stiffening the structure and avoiding any major intervention to the original structure. No attempt has been made to hide the renovation that is considered better seen as demonstration of the works undertaken.

Fireplace:

Photograph FH5 shows how the fireplace has been renovated, including:

- exposing the C19 brickwork of part of the chimney complex in the centre of the building,
- the cleaned brickwork, repointed using lime mortar,
- a new stone slab hearth is presently covered with protective cardboard,
- a newly installed log burner and
- a new oak lintel covering a previously installed RSJ.



FH5 – showing the refurbished open fireplace and new log burner.

Appendices:

This report should be read in association with documents and drawings identified by the following drawing numbers, namely:

<i>Drawings:</i>		<i>scales</i>	<i>paper size</i>
PFH.LP1250	Location/site plan	1:1250 and 1:500	A3
PFH.FH1	Farmhouse floor plans/sections	1:50/100 and 1:20/40	A2/A4
PFH.TR1	Range existing plans/sections	1:50/100 and 1:20/40	A2/A4
PFH.TR2	Range proposed plans/sections	1:50/100 and 1:20/40	A2/A4
PFH.EL1	Poplars elevations	1:100/200	A3

Documents:

Conservation Area Map

Lime mortar detail

Design and Access statement and Heritage statement including photographs.

