

Old Applecroft Farm, Great Henny, Essex

Heritage Impact Assessment



June 2021

AHP Architectural
History
Practice

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared on behalf of Mark Gallagher, owner of Old Applecroft Farm, Great Henny, Sudbury CO10 7NP. Lying in a beautiful, isolated setting, the property (NGR TL 869382) is a Grade II listed building, which in recent years has been used for holiday lets. The new owner wishes to make it his family residence and has instructed Project Orange Architects and Designers to prepare plans for alteration and extension. The proposals have been the subject of two pre-application submissions, and have been significantly amended in the light of comments received from Braintree District Council and their heritage advisers at Essex County Council.
- 1.2 The assessment has been prepared to inform and accompany the proposals, and has been written by Andrew Derrick BA AA Dipl Cons IHBC, a director of the Architectural History Practice (AHP). It considers the heritage significance of the site, the relevant designations and associated legislation and guidance, and assesses the likely impact of the proposal on the heritage asset, following Historic England criteria for assessment. The assessment has been prepared to enable the local authority to come to an informed view of the proposals; and meets the requirement of NPPF paragraph 189, that ‘in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, 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’. It also meets the requirement of Local Plan Policy LPP60 (d) that ‘the application submitted contains details of the significance of the heritage asset, within a Heritage Statement which should include any contribution made by their setting’.

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SITE



Fig. 1: Detail from Chapman and André's map of Essex, 1777 (<https://map-of-essex.uk/>)

- 2.1 The Essex Historic Environment Record holds very little information about Old Applecroft Farm. Its entry (SMR no. 28508) simply states 'sixteenth century or earlier timber framed farmhouse'. Another entry (SMR 48775) refers to 'cropmarks of former field boundaries, mostly depicted on OS 1st edition'.
- 2.2 The farm appears on Chapman and André's 1777 map of Essex, where it is identified as Maplecroft (fig. 1). This is likely to be an error; Morant's *History* (1768) identifies the estate as Applecroft, in the possession of Mrs Hannah Patrick of Mark's Tey Hall.¹ The 1777 map is schematic, but shows a subdivided rectangular plot orientated east-west and containing two buildings.
- 2.3 By the time of the tithe map of 1840 (figs 2 and 3) the farm was in the possession of Sarah Gregory, and the farmhouse occupied by Charles Harding. The tithe map shows the same rectangular plot with east-west orientation, and four buildings are shown: a small structure in the northwest corner of the plot, which is likely to represent the farmhouse, and outbuildings consisting of a long thin range to the south, an L-shaped building to the east and a small building to the south, on the site of the present cottage.

¹ Philip Morant, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, Vol. II, 1768, p. 274

Plot 209 is identified on the title award as 'yards, garden and premises', 210 as 'meadow (in three pieces), laid to pasture, and 208 as 'Dairy Field', in arable use.



Fig. 2: Detail from Great Henny tithe map, 1840 (Genealogist website)

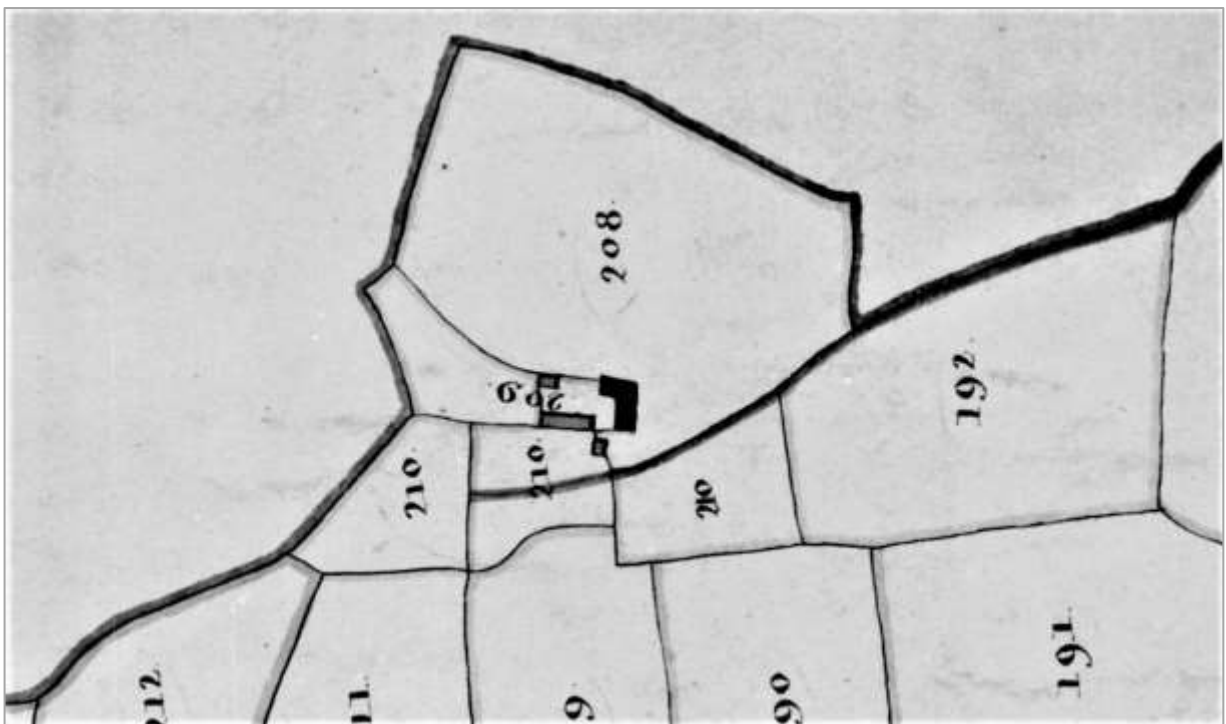


Fig.3: Enlarged detail from tithe map, 1840

2.4 By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876 (fig. 4) the long thin range shown on the tithe map had been removed and further buildings added. The farmhouse itself had by this time been reclad in brick and flint, and the small building to the south (the present cottage) rebuilt or remodelled. The buildings at the northwest and northeast corners of the farmyard had been joined by a long building occupying the centre of the northern boundary, larger in footprint than that currently occupying this position, and identified in later documents as a cow house. A further timber framed building had been added to the south, and the site was beginning to acquire its present north-south configuration. The OS map shows the small farmhouse within an enclosed yard with ancillary farm buildings on all sides. Essentially the same layout is shown in slightly greater detail on the 25-inch OS maps of 1896 (fig. 5) and 1920 (fig.6).



Fig. 4: Detail from 1st edition OS map (6-inch edition), surveyed 1876, published 1880, Essex sheet XII (National Library of Scotland)



Fig. 5: Detail from 25-inch OS map, 1896 (published 1897), Suffolk LXXIX.7 (National Library of Scotland)

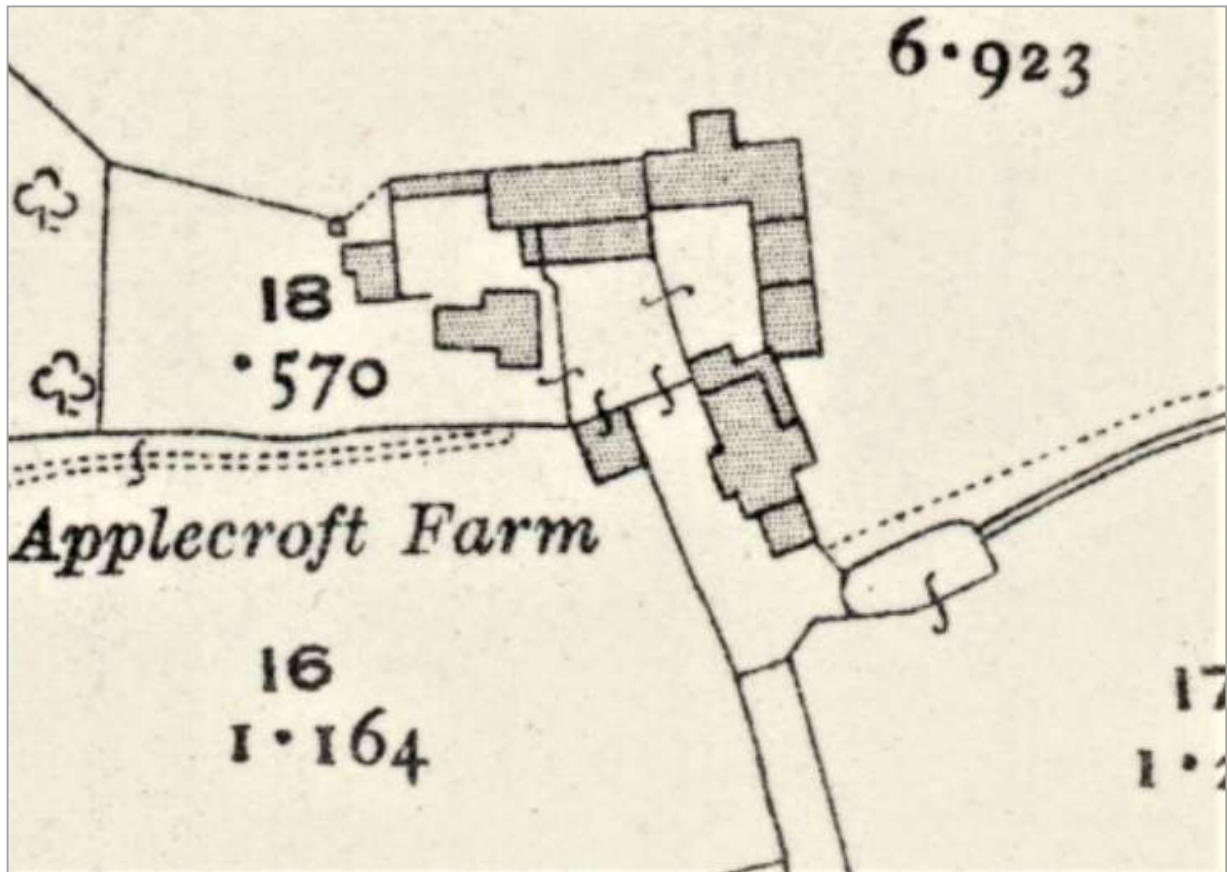


Fig. 6: Detail from 25-inch OS map, revised 1920 (published 1923), Essex XVII.2 (National Library of Scotland)

- 2.5 In 1938 plans were approved for a large new farmhouse at Applecroft Farm, a few hundred yards to east of the old farmstead. The architect was F. P. Earee LRIBA of Sudbury and the plans were prepared on behalf of the then owner, R. S. Pettit.²
- 2.6 In 1945 plans were submitted under the Housing (Rural Workers) Act, 1926 for the conversion of an open shed to a cowman's cottage. The plans were prepared on behalf of R. S. Pettit by George Grimwood and Sons, builders and contractors of Sudbury, and a schematic site plan accompanying the application identifies the farmhouse as 'Old Applecroft' (the new farmhouse having by now been built). To the north is a long building identified as a cow house, and opposite the proposed cottage is a barn (fig. 7). The proposed floor plan for the cottage shows the inserted stack, windows and doors required for the residential conversion of what is described on the drawing as a 'shed and loft' (fig. 8). The (presumably open-fronted) ground floor on the south elevation is shown enclosed and rebuilt to a slightly larger footprint; in the event the building was extended to its full height on this side.

² Essex Record Office ref. D/RH PB1/770

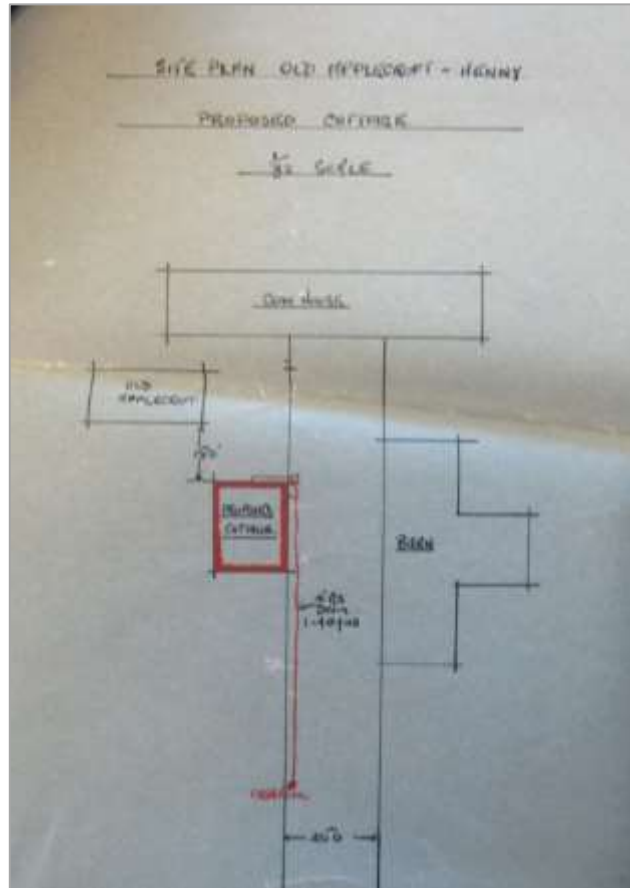


Fig. 7: Schematic site plan, 1945 (ERO D/RH Pb1/908)

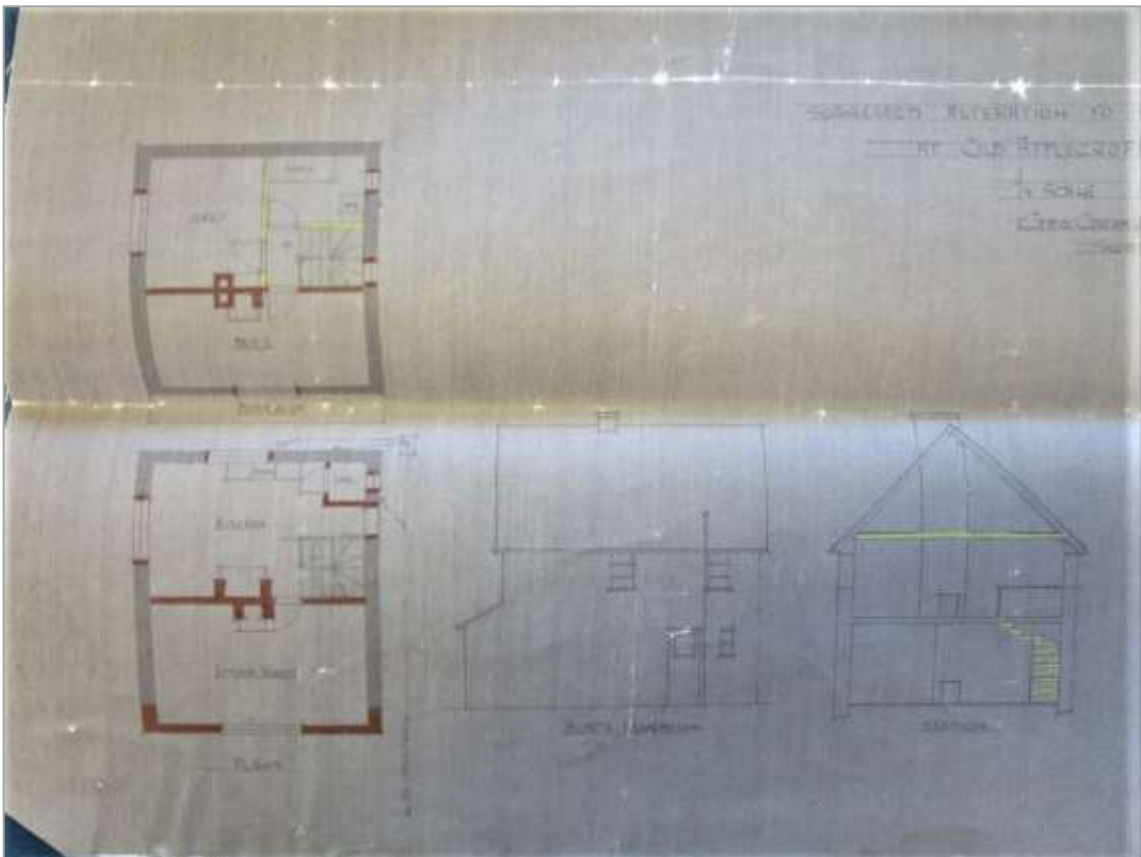


Fig. 8: Plans for conversion of shed and loft to a cowman's cottage, 1945 (ERO D/RH Pb1/908)

- 2.6 In 1947 Halstead Rural District Council approved plans for a prefabricated farm building, lying to the north of the L-shaped range at the northeast corner of the site (fig. 9). None of these buildings survive.

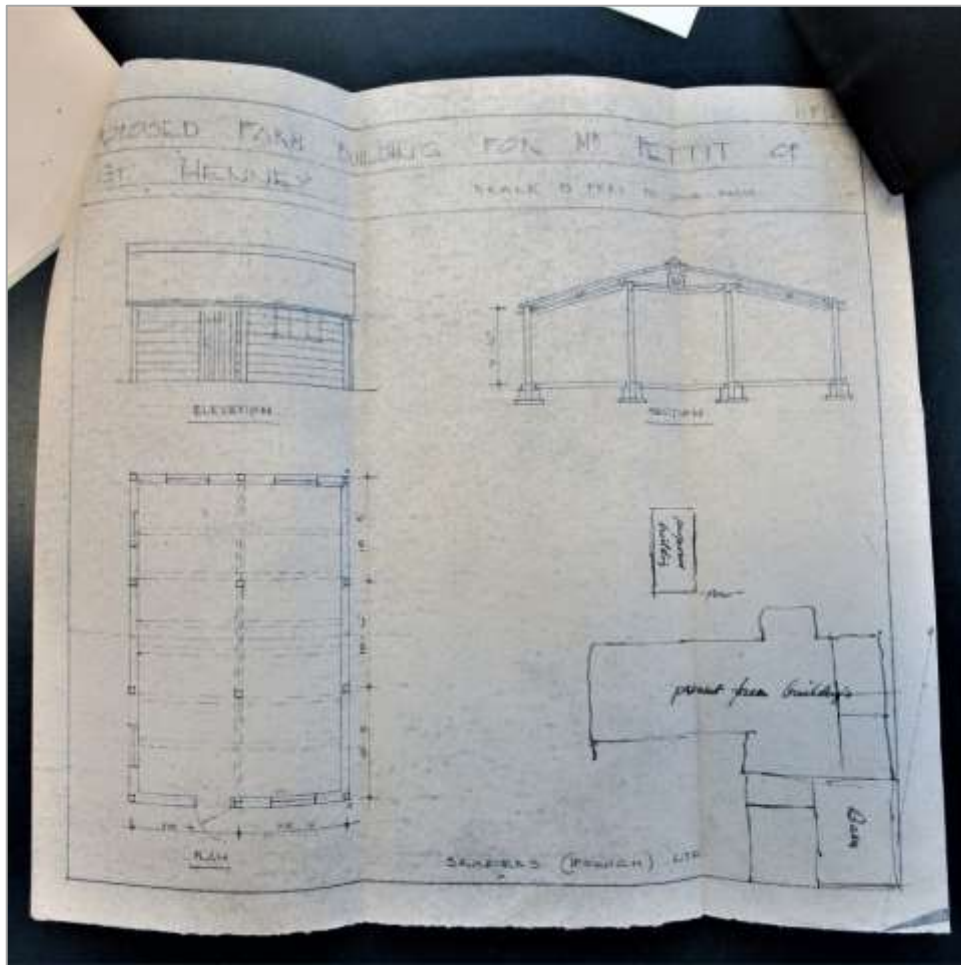


Fig. 9: Plans for prefabricated farm building, 1947 (ERO D/RH/ Pb1/1181)

- 2.7 The appearance of the south elevation of the farmhouse in 1984 (two years before the building was listed) is shown in sale particulars of that time (fig. 10). An open-fronted lean-to structure with a slate roof and rooflight was built against the south elevation of the rear range, with an area of garden in front bordered by a low wall with reconstituted stone or concrete balusters.
- 2.8 The sale particulars state that the house and cottage ‘have been modernised in recent years, with works including new wiring, replumbing, roof work, kitchen and bathroom fittings and the installation of part central heating and part double glazing’. The outbuildings comprised ‘a large ESSEX BARN, 42 ft x 18 ft, a good sized brick and tiled garage, 29 ft 6 ins x 15 ft, brick and tiled former dairy (now a GARDEN SHED), WORKSHOP and TWO GARAGES; brieze block (sic) and asbestos former turkey BROILER HOUSES. 130 ft x 30 ft, a timber framed outbuilding and two partially

covered CATTLE YARDS. To the rear of the house there is a secluded walled garden area where there is a 24 ft circular raised SWIMMING POOL with filter unit and a SAUNA’.



Fig. 10: South elevation of the old farmhouse, from Savills sale particulars, 1984 (ERO D/1259)

- 2.8 Further changes since the listing of the farmhouse since 1986 have included the addition of a large conservatory incorporating a swimming pool attached to the south side of the old farmhouse (approved in 1987) and the conversion of the old cow house (by then an office and garage) to provide a WC, laundry, bedroom, bathroom, office and garages, with a single-storey link to the house (approved in 1989). The most recent (not implemented) approval was for the replacement of most of the windows in the listed building with Slimlite double glazed sealed units (approved in 2016).

3. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

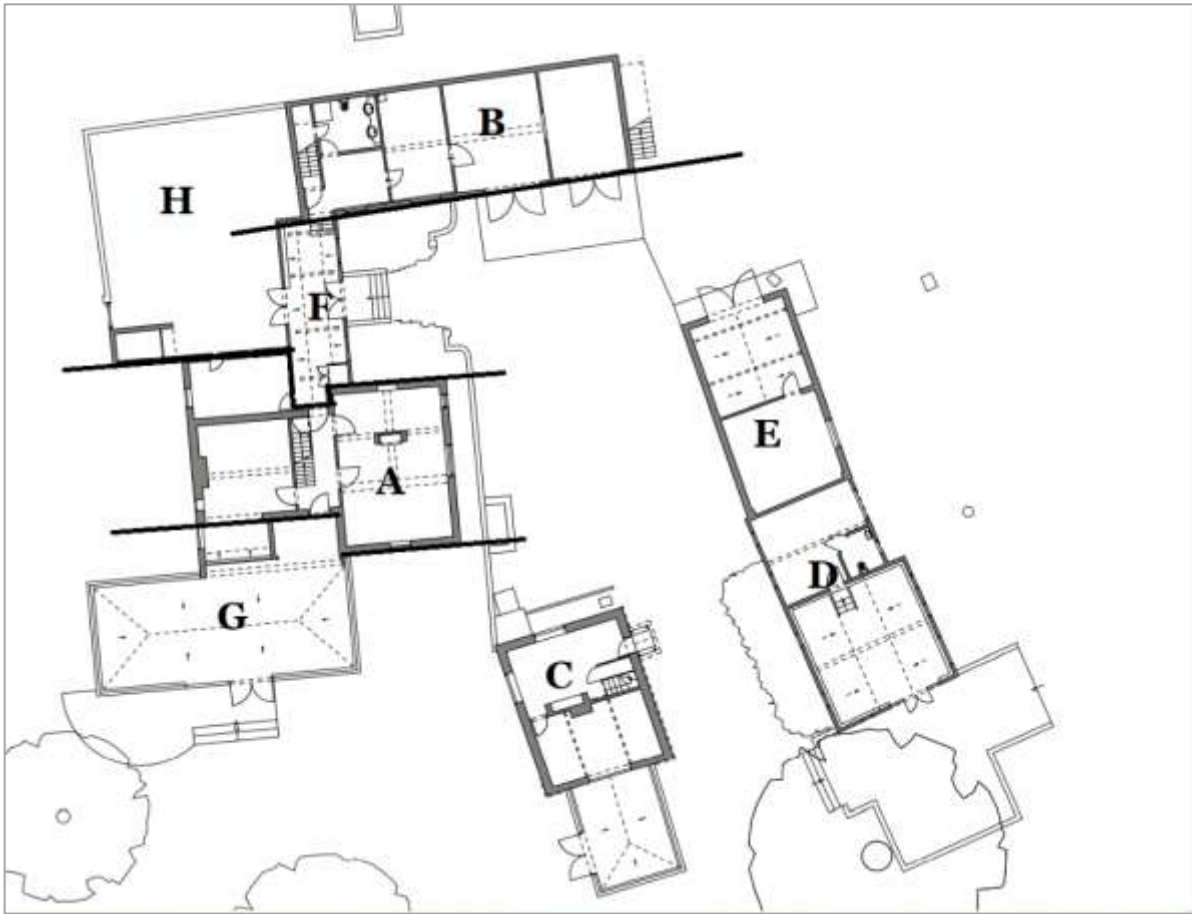


Fig. 11: Key (adapted from survey plan by Project Orange)

A: The listed farmhouse

3.1 The farmhouse (A at fig. 11, photographs at figs. 12-19) is listed Grade II. The list entry (appendix 1) describes it as follows:

Farmhouse. C16 or earlier and mid C19. Timber framed but clad in mid C19 flintwork with quoins and dressings of gault brick. Roofs are gabled of clay peg tiles. Of 'T' plan form and all of 2 storeys with crosswing at east end. C19 casements with a variety of glazing bar patterns under segmental brick arched heads. C20 single storey extension on north side of red brick with lean-to roof. Ridge line stack over west gable and off-centre ridgeline stack on crosswing. Crosswing is a 3-bay structure of heavy timber framing with double ogee chamfer mouldings on bridging joist. Jowled posts and straight bracing and remnants of late C16 roof with Jacobean carved timbers reused as collars.



Fig. 12: The listed farmhouse does not have a 'front' elevation in the sense of an entrance elevation. The current entrance is via the c.1990 link (just visible to the right). The early OS maps suggest a path approach to a door on the S side, in an area now rebuilt. This photograph shows the E elevation, facing towards the farmyard. It has two central windows and a small modern off-the-peg window to the right. The chimney stack is placed off-centre and is of C19 date.



Fig. 13: The S elevation, its appearance marred by the late 1980s conservatory.



Fig. 14: The N and E elevations viewed from the upper floor of the N range, with c1990 link to right. The listed building displays a variety of window types (consent was given for the replacement of most of these in 2016).



Fig. 15: Behind the link, a black weatherboarded lean-to structure is of C20 date. Alongside, a modern brick structure with shallow lean-to roof is in the small courtyard garden.



Fig. 16: The modern conservatory extends well beyond the line of the rear range. The W gable end of the rear range is of brick and flint, blind except for one modern ground floor window. On the SW corner the brick quoins are proud, reflecting the subsidiary nature of the N elevation of this range. To the left is the Fletton brick return of the C20 weatherboarded lean-to addition.



Fig. 17: Ground floor of 'cross wing' looking N, with moulded and chamfered spine beam and inserted C19 stack.



Fig. 18: C17 door with elaborate hinges, cross wing first floor, by stair to second floor



Fig. 19: Cross wing second floor, looking N, with collar purlin roof and inserted C19 stack

B: The north range

3.2 The north range (**B** at fig. 11, photographs at figs. 20-22) is identified as a cow house on older documentation. It was built as a single-storey red brick structure, between 1840 and 1876, and earlier maps show it with a deeper and wider footprint, with a (possibly lean-to) forebuilding and a thin extension to the west (both now demolished). By 1984 the building was in use as an office and garage. It was greatly altered in c.1990 when much of the building was incorporated into the main residential accommodation; a timber framed and black weatherboarded upper storey was added. The roof is clad with reclaimed black glazed pantiles.



Fig. 20: S elevation of the N range (Building B), which originated as a single-storey cow house. A forebuilding, possibly timber framed, lay in front of this elevation. The main structure was built of brick, and some original brickwork survives. Most was renewed in Flettons in the C20, and in c.1990 the building was much altered, with a timber framed and weatherboarded upper storey and new windows and garage doors.



Fig. 21: The N elevation of the N range, showing C20 brickwork on the ground floor. The upper floor dates from c.1990.



Fig. 22: The N range viewed from the NE

C: The Cottage

3.3 A square building is shown in this position on the tithe map of 1840 (figs. 2 and 3), but the present building (C at fig. 11, photographs at figs.23-25) was built or remodelled in the mid-nineteenth century, its west elevation with similar brick and flint detailing to that displayed on the farmhouse. The building was originally a shed with loft over, adapted and extended in 1945 to provide accommodation for an agricultural worker. The later elevations are of brick (some painted) and black weatherboard; the windows are off-the-peg modern units. It has a black pantile roof and a porch with a plain tile canopy. Attached to its south elevation is a modern conservatory on a raised brick plinth.



Fig. 23: The cottage (Building C) seen on the main approach to the house. From here it appears to be of entirely C20 date, with a later conservatory to the S.



Fig.24: The cottage seen from the farm courtyard to N



Fig. 25: The W elevation of the cottage has mid-C19 flint walling and brick quoins. The window openings are modern. The building has been rebuilt and enlarged to the S (see painted brick and weatherboarded section beyond the brick quoins to right).

D: East range (south)

3.4 This building (**D** at fig. 11 and photographs at figs. 26-28) is the rebuilt remains of a larger farm building built between 1840 and 1876 and shown on the OS map at fig. 4. It has been reduced in size, the original footprint still visible in the hard standing and retaining wall to the south. The building is faced in black stained weatherboard, with a low modern brick plinth on the east side. It has modern hardwood windows and a clay pantile roof. Inside it retains some of its timber framing. In recent years the building has been in use as holiday accommodation.



Fig.26: Building D from farm courtyard



Fig. 27: Building D from NE



Fig.28: Interior of Building D

E: East range (north)

3.5 This building is shown as **E** at fig. 11, and in photographs at figs. 29 and 30. The OS maps show only a wall in this position, enclosing the western side of the farm courtyard. This wall survives in part, incorporated in the east elevation of the present building. It is otherwise a modern (post-war) structure built of Fletton bricks and with a reclaimed pantile roof. Large doors under a concrete lintel on the north gable end.



Fig. 29: Building E viewed from upper floor of N range. It incorporates part of an older brick wall at the bottom, but is otherwise modern.



Fig.30: Building E from NW.

F: Link building

3.6 This was built in c.1990 to serve as a link between the listed farmhouse and the converted and extended north range. It is shown as **F** at fig. 11, and in photographs at figs. 14, 15 and 31. It is a single-storey structure, with black weatherboarded elevations with large areas of glass and with a black glazed pantile roof. On the ridge is a pyramidal cupola feature with weathervane.



Fig. 31: The link building viewed from the E.

G. Conservatory/swimming pool

- 3.7 Building G at fig. 11, shown in photographs at figs. 13 and 32. A large, sprawling structure, glazed and with painted timber framing, on a brick plinth, added to the south side of the listed building c.1988, at which time a large opening was formed in the ground floor south elevation of the rear range. The previous appearance of the south elevation is shown at fig.10.



Fig. 32: View from S.

H: Small courtyard

3.9 An area to the north of the listed farmhouse, landscaped in c.1990 (to replace a raised circular swimming pool and sauna) and enclosed by a brick wall, rebuilt in the twentieth century, when structures on the north and west sides were demolished. Shown as **H** in fig. 11 and in photographs at figs. 8, 22-24.



Fig.33: The courtyard from the SW, with wall largely rebuilt in Flettons following removal of nearby structures



Fig. 34: Courtyard wall from NW

4. SIGNIFICANCE



Fig. 35: Significance (Red – High, Yellow = Moderate, Green = Low)

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, annex 2, Glossary) defines significance as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’.
- 4.2 Significance is essentially a hierarchical concept, using descending levels of value. The levels adopted here are:
- **High (red at fig. 25):** of national importance
 - **Moderate (yellow):** of local value
 - **Low (green):** not of architectural or historical interest.
- 4.3 Any historic farmstead is the sum of its parts, and it would be inappropriate to assess any element in isolation. In this case the farm buildings grew from a small rectangular plot with east-west orientation to a later nineteenth century configuration with a north-

south configuration. Late nineteenth century growth is shown in the map regression. The farmstead had considerably expanded by the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876 (fig. 4), and this layout was basically unchanged at the time of the 1920 revision (fig. 6). There were further additions in the immediate post-war years, but towards the end of the twentieth century there was a programme of rebuildings and demolitions, a process not hindered by the listing of the former farmhouse in 1986. This process of change was inevitable, given that the buildings are no longer in agricultural use, and the farmhouse is no longer the centre of an agricultural estate. The annotated map at fig. 36 shows the extent of demolition and new building since 1920.

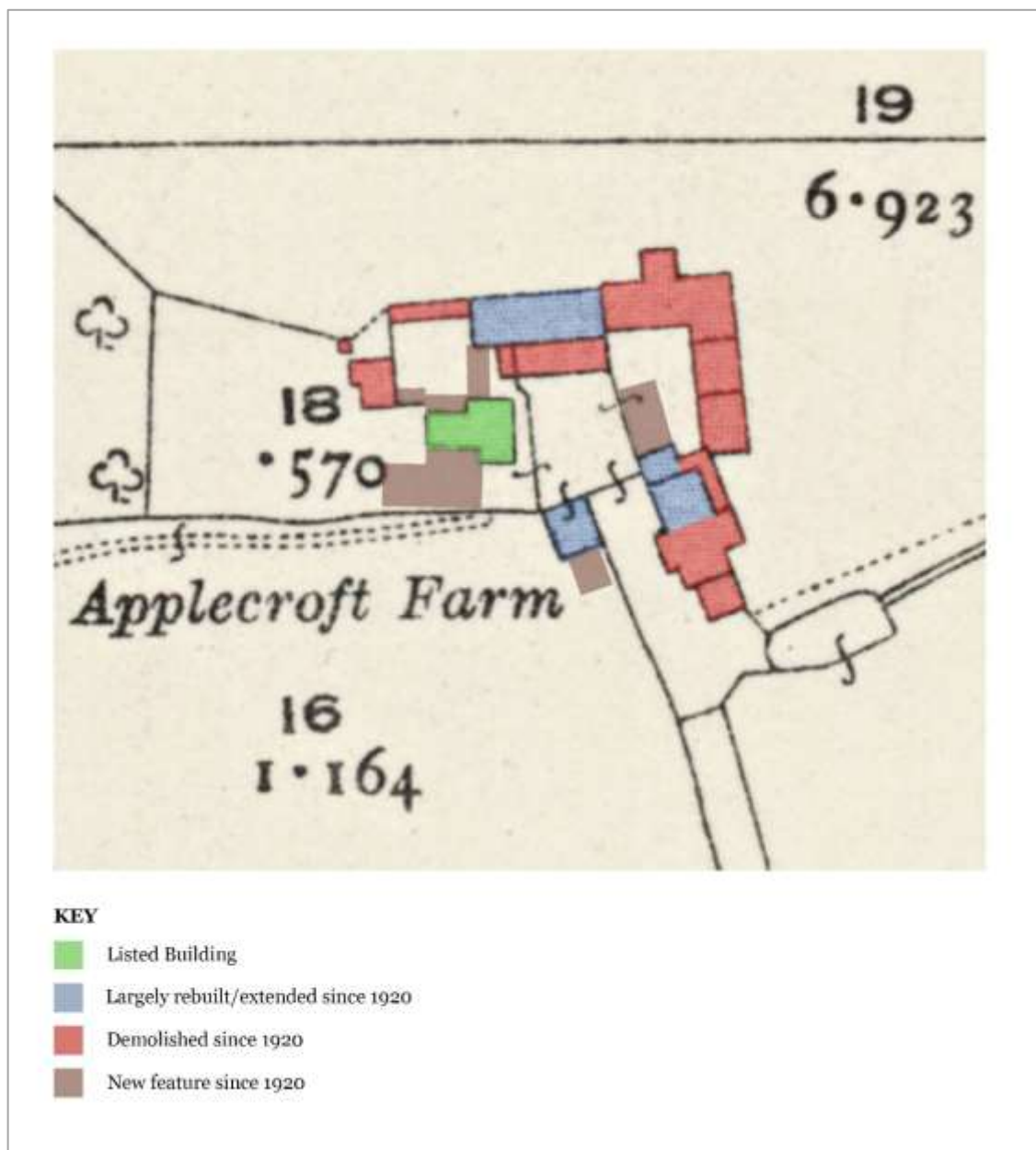


Fig. 36: Adapted 1920 OS map, showing extent of late C20 demolition, alteration and new build.

- 4.5 While the old farmstead is largely rebuilt in terms of historic fabric, the layout loosely follows that shown on earlier maps and (with the exception of the conservatories) visual coherence is conferred by the widespread use of traditional materials (particularly reclaimed pantiles). This aspect of the site's significance can be preserved, even with a high degree of rebuilding and adaptation, provided a traditional farmstead layout is maintained and a similarly unifying palette of materials is employed.
- 4.6 The only part of the site of more than local value is the listed former farmhouse, (Building A at fig. 11 and coloured red at fig. 35). It is the age of this range, and its timber framed construction, which make the building eligible for listing. Externally the building is attractive (despite unsympathetic changes) but architecturally modest. The farmhouse was never a substantial residence, and was replaced by a new and larger farmhouse in 1938. Since c.1990, Building B has been integrated into the main accommodation; the linkage is unsatisfactory, but serves to provide a residence of more suitable and sustainable scale than that of the old farmhouse alone.
- 4.7 The few historic elements of the farmstead that survive in anything like recognisable form are of moderate/local significance (coloured yellow at fig. 35). They include one elevation of Building C (the cottage), Building D (which has a rebuilt brick plinth and has been externally reclad, but retains some of its internal timber framing) and a low brick wall incorporated into one elevation of Building E.
- 4.8 The remaining elements (B, most of C, E, F, G and H) are of low significance, and coloured green at fig. 35. These are either buildings which have been entirely or almost entirely rebuilt, or modern additions of no architectural or historical significance.

5. POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Old Applecroft Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building, and other buildings on the site that predate 1948 are listed as curtilage structures. There are no other heritage designations in place.

5.2 The overarching legislative context for development in the historic environment is the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990**. Section 66 (1) of the Act states that:

In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting [...]

5.3 The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF, glossary) as:

The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

5.4 NPPF paragraphs 193-4 state that:

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. [...] Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

5.4 NPPF paragraphs 195-6 state that:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss [...] Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

5.5 NPPF para 11 states that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

- 5.6 National legislation and guidance is reflected in relevant local planning policies.
- 5.7 **Policy SP1** in the strategic plan for North Essex (Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Councils, adopted by Braintree in February 2021) restates the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Braintree Council commits to taking ‘a positive approach’ and always to ‘work pro-actively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible’. Development that complies with the Plan will be approved ‘without delay’.
- 5.8 **Policy SP7** states that ‘all new development must meet high standards of urban and architectural design’, responding positively to local character and context and protecting and enhancing assets of historical value.
- 5.9 Local Plan **Policy RLP18** states:
- Planning permission will be granted for the extension of a habitable, permanent dwelling in the countryside, subject to the siting, design, and materials of the extension being in harmony with the countryside setting and compatible with the scale and character of the existing dwelling and the plot upon which it stands. Extensions will be required to be subordinate to the existing dwelling in terms of bulk, height, width, and position.
- 5.10 Local Plan Policy **RLP90** states that the Council seeks a high standard of layout and design in all developments and that planning permission will only be granted where certain criteria are met. These criteria include:
- (i) The scale, density, height and massing of buildings should reflect or enhance local distinctiveness;
- (iii) There shall be no undue or unacceptable impact on the amenity of any nearby residential properties;
- (iv) Designs shall recognise and reflect local distinctiveness, and be sensitive to the need to conserve local features of architectural, historic and landscape importance, particularly within Conservation Areas and in proximity to parks and gardens of historic interest, ancient monuments and sites of archaeological importance;
- (v) The layout, height, mass and overall elevational design of buildings and developments shall be in harmony with the character and appearance of the surrounding area; including their form, scale and impact on the skyline in the locality.
- 5.11 Policy **RLP100** states that development involving internal or external alterations, extensions and partial demolitions to a listed building or curtilage structure, and changes of use will only be permitted if the proposals:
- (i) do not harm the setting, character, structural stability and fabric of the building (or structure); and

(ii) do not result in the loss of, or significant damage to the building or structure's historic and architectural elements of special importance, and include the use of appropriate materials and finishes. The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the settings of listed buildings by appropriate control over the development, design and use of adjoining land.

5.12 **Policy LPP38** states that residential alterations, extensions and outbuildings will be permitted, provided they meet all the following criteria

a. There should be no over-development of the plot when taking into account the footprint of the existing dwelling and the relationship to plot boundaries. The Council will have regard to the cumulative impact of extensions and outbuildings on the original character of the property and its surroundings

b. The property design, siting, bulk, form and materials of the alteration, extension or outbuilding should be compatible with the original dwelling and character of the area

c. Extensions and outbuildings will be required to be subordinate to the original dwelling in terms of bulk, height and position

d. There should be no unacceptable adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining residential properties, including on privacy, overshadowing of light or an overbearing impact

e. There should be no adverse material impact on the identity of the street scene and/or the appearance of the countryside

f. There should be no unacceptable adverse impact on any heritage asset or their setting

g. In the countryside, new outbuildings should be well related to the existing development on the site and within the curtilage of the dwelling.

5.13 **Policy LPP50** states that the Council will promote and secure the highest standards of design and layout and the protection and enhancement of the historic environment in order to:

a. Respect and respond to the local context, especially in the District's historic areas, where development may affect the setting of listed buildings and other buildings of historic or architectural significance, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens and areas of high archaeological and landscape sensitivity including designated heritage assets

b. Promote and encourage the contribution that heritage assets can make towards driving regeneration, economic development, tourism and leisure provision in the District

c. Actively encourage local groups to formulate Local Lists of buildings and structures of historic or architectural significance

d. Create built environments which are safe and accessible to everyone and which will contribute towards the quality of life in all towns and villages

e. Create good quality built environments in commercial and business districts and in the public realm as well as in residential areas

f. Be capable of meeting the changing future needs of occupiers

g. Promote the sympathetic re-use of buildings, particularly where they make a positive contribution to the delivery of sustainable development and regeneration.

5.14 **Policy LPP55** states that the Council will seek a high standard of layout and design in all developments and encourage innovative design where appropriate. Planning permission will be granted where certain criteria are met, including:

1. The scale, layout, height and massing of buildings and overall elevation design should reflect or enhance the area's local distinctiveness and shall be in harmony with the character and appearance of the surrounding area; including their form, scale and impact on the skyline and the building line

2. Buildings and structures should be of the highest architectural quality, be of a proportion, composition, scale and orientation that enhances, activates and appropriately defines the public realm, comprise details and materials that complement, but not necessarily replicate, the local architectural character

3. There shall be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of any nearby properties including on privacy, overshadowing, loss of light and overbearing impact

5. Designs shall be sensitive to the need to conserve local features of architectural, historic and landscape importance, particularly within Conservation Areas and in proximity to heritage assets

6. Development proposals will incorporate measures for environmental sustainability throughout the construction, occupation and demolition of the development; in relation to energy conservation, water efficiency, waste separation (internal and external), climate change, flood resilience and resistant construction and the use of materials with low overall energy requirements.

5.15 **Policy LPP60** states that development of internal, or external alterations, or extensions, to a listed building or curtilage listed structure and changes of use will be permitted when all the following criteria are met:

a. The works or uses do not harm the significance of the setting, character, structural stability, and fabric of the building or structure

b. The works or uses do not result in substantial harm, or damage to the building or structures historic and architectural elements which are considered to be of significance or special importance

c. The works or uses include the use of appropriate materials and finishes

d. The application submitted contains details of the significance of the heritage asset, within a Heritage Statement which should include any contribution made by their setting

e. There may be a requirement for appropriate specialist recording to be carried out prior to the change of use, demolition or conversion of a listed building or associated historic building.

The Council will seek to preserve and enhance the immediate settings of heritage assets by appropriate control over the development, design and use of adjoining land.

6. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT



Fig. 37: Proposed view from southwest (Project Orange)



Fig. 38: Proposed view from courtyard (Project Orange)

- 6.1 The proposals will result in changes to the listed building and its setting. Please refer to the drawings and other application documentation prepared by Project Orange (two views are shown at figs. 37 and 38).
- 6.2 In terms of alterations to the listed building, the proposals are minor and uncontentious. No alterations will be made to the timber framing (the primary reason for listing). However, the framing will be shown to better advantage on the first floor, where a modern partition will be removed to create a large bedroom in the cross wing. On the ground floor, the overscaled and unsympathetic conservatory addition will be removed and the south elevation be made appropriately good following the damage done to the building done with listed building consent in 1987. On the north side a twentieth century lean-to addition of low significance will be removed and the flintwork of the north elevation made good as a feature of the proposed kitchen/dining area. The appearance of the east elevation will be enhanced by the removal of a modern off-the-peg window to the ground floor WC and the making good of the wall in flint. Other windows will be renewed on a like-for-like basis using slim double glazing, as detailed in the Design and Access Statement and as approved in 2016.
- 6.3 The remaining proposals will have an impact on the setting of the listed building. Historic England recommends a five-stage approach for assessing impact:
- Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected
 - Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated
 - Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it
 - Step 4: Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm
 - Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.³

³ *The Setting of Heritage Assets*, p. 8

Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected

6.4 The proposals involve the setting of one heritage asset, the Grade II-listed former farmhouse.

Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset or allow significance to be appreciated

6.5 The listed building is primarily of significance for its surviving internal timber framing, which can only be appreciated internally. Less important, but still contributing positively to the character of the building, is its mid-nineteenth century re-cladding in brick and flint. This character has been harmed by some unsympathetic changes, particularly the large conservatory addition to the south.

6.6 Because the primary interest of the building lies in its timber framing, the setting of the heritage asset makes a secondary contribution to its significance and our ability to appreciate it. While the general form of a farmstead remains, most of the buildings are largely if not totally rebuilt, and as such are not inherently of high significance. While some of them make a positive contribution in terms of general layout and consistency of materials, this secondary aspect of the significance of the setting can be retained even within the context of a high level of rebuilding, provided the broad layout and traditional palette of materials are retained.

Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it.

6.7 The proposals for the listed building itself are described above. Their impact will be beneficial, and will increase our ability to appreciate the significance of the heritage asset:

- Internally, by better revealing the timber framing (the primary aspect of the building's significance); and
- Externally, by removing modern, unsympathetic structures and features on the north, south and east sides and making good these areas with appropriate detailing and materials.

6.8 The proposals for the listed building therefore satisfy the relevant Local Plan policies, particularly LPP38 and LPP60.

- 6.9 The proposals will also involve:
- A conservatory addition on the west elevation of the listed building
 - Demolition of the c.1990 entrance and link
 - Construction of a new single-storey entrance and kitchen/dining area, over the footprint of the link and courtyard behind
 - Remodelling and extension of the north range.
- 6.10 Unlike the existing conservatory, approved by Braintree Council in 1987, the proposed conservatory is a respectful addition, contextual in its use of flintwork in the walls, while at the same time a clearly modern addition. It will be set back to allow the projecting quoins at the southwest corner to be fully expressed, and the roof will be separated from the gable end so as not to obscure that element of the building. Within the conservatory, the original flintwork and brick quoins of the gable end will remain exposed. A loggia will afford south-facing views, and will be connected to the listed building via a new doorway (in place of a modern off-the-peg window).
- 6.11 The c.1990 entrance and link structure is of low significance, and there can be no objection in heritage terms to its removal.
- 6.12 The new entrance and kitchen/dining room will be single storey, and will not challenge the visual dominance of the two larger buildings to which it would attach. Structurally the link will be light touch, and set back and faced in materials of complementary but recessive character. The courtyard behind is a space of low significance, its outer walls having been rebuilt in the twentieth century and its present hard and soft landscaping dating from c.1990 (replacing a raised circular swimming pool and sauna). The new entrance hall and kitchen/dining area will form the hub of the house, better connecting the accommodation currently dispersed around the original dwelling and the already converted north range. The desire for a large-sized family kitchen and dining area is a widespread and reasonable twenty-first century aspiration, and can be accommodated here without the need for opening up the more intimate and cellular accommodation in the listed building. The need to accommodate such reasonable change is acknowledged in Policy LPP50(f), which states that schemes should be capable of meeting the changing future needs of occupiers.
- 6.13 Historically the north range had a considerably larger footprint than today. Attached buildings to the west and south have been demolished, and the building was considerably altered and added to in c.1990. The structure is virtually rebuilt, and of low significance. The proposal to extend it will still result in a smaller footprint than

that which existed historically, and the remodelling will give the building a bolder, simpler architectural character more befitting its agricultural origins.

- 6.14 The proposals will therefore preserve and in some respects enhance the listed building and its setting, and will better reveal the significance of the heritage asset. The additions will be subordinate to the original dwelling in bulk, height and position, and will harmonise with the setting of the listed building. Unlike some of the existing buildings, they will be of the highest architectural quality. Relevant local plan policies (in particular LPP38 and LPP55) are therefore satisfied.

Step 4: Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

- 6.15 Following pre-application consultation with Braintree District Council and its heritage advisers at Essex County Council, some elements of the proposals were deemed harmful. Where it is considered that these criticisms have merit, the scheme has been amended to avoid or minimise the identified harm. See below for a more detailed response to the pre-application advice.

Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes

- 6.16 The last of Historic England's steps relates to post-decision monitoring, for example the discharging of conditions, and is for a later stage.

7. **RESPONSE TO PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE**

7.1 There have been two pre-application submissions. This response relates to advice received following the most recent submission, as set out in Braintree District Council's pre-application report of 25 May 2021.

7.2 The executive summary of the report states:

- 'The design and external appearance of the proposed extensions are considered to be unacceptable in terms of height, bulk, scale and design and is not in keeping with the existing building in this rural locality'.
- Buildings identified as curtilage listed buildings would be demolished which is unacceptable
- Based on the information provided the impact upon the listed building is considered to be unacceptable'.

7.3 It should be noted that these comments were made on the basis of a desk-based assessment, without benefit of a site inspection. It is hoped that with the relaxation of Covid restrictions, the Council and its heritage adviser may be able to visit the site and thereby obtain a more complete and rounded view.

7.4 It is also regrettable that the positives of the scheme are at no point acknowledged in the pre-application report. Furthermore, where negative aspects have been identified, no attempt has been made to suggest ways of mitigating or removing those effects. This is despite the Council's overriding commitment to taking 'a positive approach' and always to 'work pro-actively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible' (Policy SP1).

7.5 The report states that Old Applecroft farmhouse is 'located at the heart of a historic farmstead', and that 'the historic plan form of the farmstead over time is legible ... when viewing archive OS maps (published in 1897), while some changes have occurred, the plan form of the farmstead, evident in 1897, is still clearly legible today'.

7.6 Please refer to fig. 36. This demonstrates the extent of demolition and rebuilding since the earlier OS maps. What survives today is essentially a modern layout, bearing some resemblance, in parts, to the former layout, and incorporating some elements from older buildings. Be that as it may, current proposals retain the existing layout.

7.7 The report states that the Cottage is considered to be part of the listed building (although almost completely rebuilt after 1945), and advises that its demolition could not be supported. It is considered that the significance of the Cottage has been given

undue weight in the pre-application report. Be that as it may, demolition of this building no longer forms part of the proposals.

- 7.8 In response to a point made in the pre-application report, the remodelling of the north range has been revised to omit the proposed large brick stack on the north elevation. Instead a steel flue is proposed; this is usually a preferred detail in the conversion of former agricultural buildings.
- 7.9 The pre-application report states that the ‘loss’ of the former rear yard is ‘problematic’, and that the courtyard wall ‘is likely to be at least nineteenth century in date and their loss cannot be justified’. Had the writer visited the site, he would have been able to confirm that the courtyard wall is late twentieth century in date, and of no architectural or historical significance. The landscaping of the courtyard dates from the 1990s, replacing a raised circular swimming pool and sauna. There is nothing ‘problematic’ in heritage terms about the proposal to build on this area.
- 7.10 The report raises concerns that the listed building would be ‘obscured and subsumed’ in views from the west. The submitted scheme acknowledges this point, and the new entrance hall and kitchen/diner has been accordingly reduced to one storey. The farmhouse will therefore continue to predominate in views from the west, as the application visuals demonstrate.
- 7.11 The report states that that the scheme ‘is fundamentally detrimental to the significance and long-term conservation of the listed building’, with the listed building absorbed into ‘a homogeneous extensive dwelling’. Relocation of the kitchen/diner away from the listed building ‘would be to its detriment, altering its historic use and contrary to its long-term conservation’.
- 7.12 The first point to make here is that the listed building is already ‘absorbed’ or merged with the north range. The original farmhouse was a modest building, providing no more than two or three bedrooms, and was found to be inadequate as early as 1938, when it was abandoned in favour of a new farmhouse. This inadequacy was partially addressed in c.1990 by the merging of the accommodation with the converted north range, albeit in a manner that does not work well on a practical level and as such is not conducive to the long-term conservation of the heritage asset.
- 7.13 Secondly, it is disputed that relocation of the kitchen/diner would be detrimental to the character of the listed building and contrary to its long-term conservation. It is not clear why kitchen units and their associated services would be more in keeping with the character of the ground floor of the cross wing than the proposed snug in that area; clearly the latter use would show the historic space, with its exposed timber framing, to better advantage. Also disputed is the unsubstantiated assertion that relocation of the

kitchen/diner would be contrary to the long-term conservation of the building. On the contrary, provision of a space that is expected today in a property of this size and character, and which is not easily accommodated within the historic spaces, is *more* conducive to the desirability and thereby long-term conservation of the heritage asset. The scope for such carefully-considered change is recognised in Council Policy LPP50(d).

7.14 Thirdly, if the ancillary buildings are of heritage value, as the County Council states, then the current proposals should be supported. Changes to these structures since the Second World War have been piecemeal, *ad hoc* and unsympathetic. By contrast, the current proposals are carefully considered and sympathetic, creating a house of sufficient scale and quality to allow the listed building to remain the focus of the site, while retaining and reinforcing its visual primacy. The other buildings would retain their ancillary function in relation to the house. An alternative – if Council Policy RLP101 were to be followed - would be conversion of the ancillary buildings to employment, community or residential use. Given the remote location, of these three broad options only residential use is likely to be feasible or viable. The listed building would be surrounded by new residential units in a mini-hamlet, in an unsustainable location. If this were unacceptable in planning terms, the only other alternative would be demolition of the ancillary buildings. Given the pre-application advice, this too would be contentious. The Council might therefore agree that the proposed scheme, which retains the heritage asset in single residential use at the centre of a traditional farmstead layout, restored and sympathetically revived for the twenty-first century, is the best outcome in heritage terms, and one for which the applicant should be commended and supported.

7.15 The report identifies ‘a high level of less than substantial harm’ and states that ‘given the building is a dwelling, there would be no public benefit’. The point about harm (whether substantial or less than substantial) no longer applies; the scheme has been revised to remove the identified harm (that is, where harm is acknowledged; some aspects identified in the advice as harmful are not considered to be so, for reasons set out above). Since there is no harm, there is no need to demonstrate public benefit. However, the implication that changes to a private dwelling cannot by definition represent public benefit is itself revealing. There is no acknowledgement that owners of historic buildings are temporary custodians, looking after heritage assets on behalf of society and posterity; insofar as owners maintain, repair and improve these assets, they are providing a public benefit. The purpose of conservation legislation is not to prevent change, but to manage it; most historic sites, including this one, have evolved significantly over time, as needs and circumstances change. The present proposals

represent a considerable investment in the historic building and its setting, reversing past unsympathetic alterations, creating new additions of high architectural quality, all informed by an understanding of the site's heritage significance. This represents an undoubted, tangible public benefit.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Old Applecroft Farmhouse is primarily of heritage significance as a timber framed building of probable late sixteenth century date. It was refaced in brick and flint in the mid-nineteenth century. The building is listed Grade II and is of high architectural and historical significance.
- 8.2 Unfortunately the immediate setting of the listed building has been marred by unsympathetic additions, particularly a large conservatory approved by Braintree Council in 1987, which is prominent in the approach from the south.
- 8.3 The farmhouse was replaced by a new and larger farmhouse in 1938. The old farmhouse survives within a setting which has witnessed considerable changes since the Second World War. Several substantial traditional farm buildings have been demolished and those which remain have been largely or completely rebuilt; they are of generally of low heritage value. However, they incorporate some historic features, and the use of weatherboarding and pantiles helps to unify the disparate elements and confer something of the character of a historic farmstead.
- 8.4 In c.1990 the listed farmhouse was connected to the north range by a single storey hall-link, and the north range was incorporated in the residential accommodation. However, the accommodation provided is disjointed and unsatisfactory.
- 8.5 The current proposals seek to rectify the mistakes of recent decades. They respond in an imaginative and sensitive manner to the identified heritage constraints, and the reasonable criticisms raised at pre-application stage have all been addressed. The proposals will retain and enhance the fabric, plan form and appearance of the listed building and emphasise its visual primacy. They will enhance the setting of the heritage asset by providing new or remodelled additions of high architectural quality, appropriately subservient to the listed building and with appropriate and improved hard and soft landscaping.
- 8.6 The proposals comply with relevant national and local heritage and planning policies and the provisions of NPPF paragraph 11 and local Policy SP1 therefore apply.

APPENDIX 1: LIST DESCRIPTION

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1337898

Date first listed: 22-Aug-1986

Statutory Address: APPLECROFT FARMHOUSE

District: Braintree (District Authority)

Parish: Great Henny

National Grid Reference: TL 86931 38220

GREAT HENNY TL 83 NE 5/77 Applecroft Farmhouse

II

Farmhouse. C16 or earlier and mid C19. Timber framed but clad in mid C19 flintwork with quoins and dressings of gault brick. Roofs are gabled of clay peg tiles. Of 'T' plan form and all of 2 storeys with crosswing at east end. C19 casements with a variety of glazing bar patterns under segmental brick arched heads. C20 single storey extension on north side of red brick with lean- to roof. Ridge line stack over west gable and off-centre ridgeline stack on crosswing. Crosswing is a 3-bay structure of heavy timber framing with double ogee chamfer mouldings on bridging joist. Jowled posts and straight bracing and remnants of late C16 roof with Jacobean carved timbers reused as collars.

Listing NGR: TL8693138220

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