

**Oak Farm House, Rougham,
Bury St Edmunds, IP30 9JU**

Application for Listed Building Consent
to alter the internal layout, install new external waste soil pipe and reopen inglenook
fireplace of the above property.

Design & Access Statement including Heritage

May 2022

Produced By Rougham Estate

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I.0 Introduction

- I.1 The Rougham Estate consists of over 3,000 acres of Suffolk countryside with ancient meadows, green lanes, oak-lined hedgerows, bluebells and orchids, parklands and arable fields.
- I.2 It traces its history back to Roman times and has seen both Saxons and Vikings. It was owned by the local abbey in Bury St Edmunds for six hundred years. During World War II an airfield was built on the Estate and Rougham Hall was heavily bombed.
- I.3 The Estate has been owned by the Agnew family since 1904 and now part of it is in the process of becoming a Charitable Trust to preserve its legacy for the future.
- I.4 There are a number of dwellings on the Estate, one of which is Oak Farm, currently occupied by the Estate Manager, Simon Eddell, his wife and two young children.
- I.5 Oak Farm ceased to operate as a tenanted working farm in the late 1940s. It was one of 16 farms on the Estate at that time.
- I.6 Permission has been previously sort and granted for the replacement of Crittall windows installed in the 1950's and replaced with timber ones in 2018.
- I.7 Whilst carrying out a kitchen and bathroom refit to the property, deterioration to the external sole plate and timbers has been discovered, which will need repair and has prompted consultation with the local conservation officer to expand the original program of works.

2.0 History and Heritage

- 2.1 Oak Farm is a Grade II listed building first listed in 1985. The original part of the building is of Elizabethan origin (late 15th century) and there were alterations and extensions in the early 17th century and later,
- 2.2 Originally the building was a single storey Hall House, the upper floor being added later. The dairy was located in the kitchen with the family living accommodation on the first floor. The house was divided into two units until the 1970s.
- 2.3 The structure is timber-framed and rendered; the roof is clay pantiles. There is an internal chimney-stack at the junction of the two ranges, with tall saw-tooth shafts on a square base, and another stack, of Tudor brick with stepped sides, added to one side wall.
- 2.4 The interior of the main range has good timbering, and shows signs of alterations from an Open Hall: an inserted main beam to one ceiling, blocked original windows, and empty mortices for long arched braces in the main posts. The tie-beam of the open truss has been removed, and the roof timbers are apparently renewed. The 17th century extension, which includes the internal stack, has a ground floor room with joists set on edge.

3.0 The Proposal

- 3.1 Drawings I,2,3, and 5 show the existing and proposed layouts to part of the property as indicated by the plan of the property below.



Plan I showing the section of the property used in the drawings.

- 3.2 The proposal is to remove two internal walls as shown on Drawing 2 submitted, labelled A and B. These walls currently subdivide what was originally an open hall house into a kitchen, hallway and downstairs bathroom. By removing these two walls it would create a large kitchen (as shown in Drawing 3), which would be much more proportionate to the size of the house, modern family living and will restore the house closer to its original open hall house layout as described in its listing.
- 3.3 With the removal of the two internal walls the current downstairs bathroom would be moved upstairs into what is currently bedroom 5. There would be no internal first floor alterations to the layout, but a new waste soil pipe would be required to be mounted on the eastern facing external wall where it would run to the north-eastern corner of the building, where it would meet the existing external waste soil stack.
- 3.4 In addition to the above the former inglenook fireplace in the kitchen which is part of the internal chimney stack noted in the listing, will also be opened up to its original state before it was bricked up using modern red bricks in the early 1980's.
- 3.5 Works will also be undertaken to repair the timber sole plate in the external walls, external render and timber laths using traditional materials in keeping with the building, which are permitted as repairs under the listed building legislation and as such are not part of this application for consent.

4.0 Current Layout and Walls

- 4.1 A section of the existing ground floor layout to Oak Farm is shown in Drawing I. The two internal walls that are being proposed to be removed are labelled A and B on Drawing 2.
- 4.2 Both walls A and B are later additions to the property, which was once an open hall house.
- 4.3 Wall A is a timber framed stud wall, which has had a middle section replaced with modern softwood timber. The majority of Wall A was covered in plasterboard and a skim of plaster with the exception of a small area which was lathe and plaster shown on the right-hand side of picture I.



Picture 1. Wall A with the middle section removed which was softwood timber frame studding

- 4.4 Wall A is a later addition to the property as it does not have any form of sole plate, brick plinth and the above beam does not have any mortice holes to locate the studwork (as shown in picture 2), indicating that it was not part of the property's original construction.



Picture 2. Beam above Wall A with no signs of mortice joints indicating that this wall was not original.



Picture 3. Studwork on Wall A is located and secured with nailed pegs onto the beam also indicating that this wall was not original.

- 4.5 Wall A also has some significant deterioration at ground level and is non supporting to the floor above.



Picture 4. Timbers of Wall A showing significant deterioration.

- 4.6 Wall B is redbrick in construction, built as a single line of bricks from floor to ceiling. It is covered in modern expanded metal mesh and modern cement render. It was probably added to the property during the Victorian era to provide sanitation facilities in the property using bricks found elsewhere on the Estate. It can also be dated to this period as the timber first floor joists run through the top of the wall and whilst the floor joists look dated they are regular in size suggesting that they were mechanically sawn.



Picture 5. Wall B



Picture 6. Cross section of Wall B where it meets Wall A.

- 4.7 Wall B was never part of the original building layout due to its construction, materials and its proximity to the ceiling beam, which runs parallel approximately 1.2 meters to the left of it as shown in the photo below. Wall B also does not correspond to any other structural layout in the property and the above first floor ceiling joists run straight through the top of this wall further, confirming that it is not part of the property's original layout.



Picture 7. Location of Wall B in relation to the adjoining parallel running beam.

- 4.8 The location of the north facing gable end window is also telling that Wall B was a later addition as the window is located in the corner of the room. The photo below is from approximately 1940 and shows that the current location for the North gable end window, that has always been located in the middle of the gable consistent with its current position.



Picture 8. Historic Photo of Oak Farm from approx. 1940 showing the north facing gable end window on the ground floor in the middle of the room.

- 4.9 Any materials which can be salvaged with the removal of these two walls will be salvaged and where appropriate be used on other Estate properties, much like many of the materials used for the construction of Oak Farm.

5.0 Proposed Layout, Alterations and Construction

- 5.1 The proposed new layout can be seen on Drawing 3. The proposal shows the removal of Walls A and B but also the addition of a new small section of wall, which will provide some structural strength for the external timber frame and will be a visual reminder that there used to be a dividing wall in this location.

- 5.2 The construction of this new wall is detailed in Drawing 4 and includes a brick plinth, exposed oak sole plate and oak end post. All new pieces of oak will be milled on the Rougham Estate using oak grown on the Estate, much like the original oak used in the original construction of the property.
- 5.3 The existing pegs used to secure the studwork of Wall A on the beam as shown in picture 3. will be retained as a reminder that there used to be a dividing wall in this location.
- 5.4 The inglenook fireplace in the kitchen, which was blocked off in the early 1980's, will be reopened and will allow for a range cooker to be installed. The opening up of this enclosed inglenook back to its original state will further enhance the character of the property and will hopefully reduce issues with damp, as the inglenook is currently full of damp material from decades of not being used.
- 5.5 The enlarged room with the removal of Walls A and B will open up the ground floor layout of the property closer to its original intention as an open hall house. This space will then provide a large kitchen/dining area, which will be much more proportionate given the size of the property and be better suited for modern family living whilst maintaining/restoring many of the property's historic features and character.
- 5.6 The installation of the bathroom upstairs will be situated in the current smallest bedroom of the property and will provide a good-sized family bathroom on the first floor as shown in Drawing 5. The addition of this bathroom upstairs will not require any alterations to the existing first floor layout.
- 5.7 A waste soil pipe will need to be installed as proposed in Drawing 5. Extreme care will be taken to install the waste pipe as so not to damage any timbers of the external frame of the property.
- 5.8 An extraction fan will be routed from the bathroom to the soffit so not to create any more openings into the historic fabric of the building.
- 5.9 If required further consultation with the local conservation officer will be taken to maintain the historic character of the property.

6.0 Access

- 5.1 Access to and within the building will be unaffected by the proposed plans.

7.0 Pre-application discussions

- 7.1 Pre-application advice was sought from the Principal Conservation Officer, Christine Leveson of West Suffolk Council, which included a site visit on the 28th of April 2022.
- 7.2 The officer advised on the details required relating to the drawings showing the proposed layout and what would be required in terms of Design, Access and Heritage Statement. The advice has been followed in this statement and the supporting materials submitted with the application.
- 7.3 The officer also advised on repairs to the external timber frame structure.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposed changes to the layout of the property will restore the property back closer to its original open hall house layout as described in its original listing.
- 8.2 Both Walls A and B are not original to the property as indicated by either their construction, material or position and have been added to the property at a later date to provide subdivision within the property.
- 8.3 Where possible all historic materials will be retained or preserved.
- 8.4 With the exception of the new waste soil pipe, there will be no alterations to the external appearance of the property.
- 8.5 The works proposed will enhance both the character of the property, make it better suited for modern living and along with the repairs, will maintain the property into the future.

End.

Simon Eddell
Estate Manager 2nd May 2022