

# IAN WIGHTMAN

HISTORIC BUILDING CONSULTANTS



## DESIGN, ACCESS AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

Charmans  
Back Lane  
Bignor  
West Sussex  
RH20 1PQ

Client: Mr & Mrs Duncan McNicol

Project: Removal of brick pillar and installation of structural reinforcement within kitchen.

Date: June 2022

Heritage Consultant: Ian Wightman BA Hons MSc PhD IHBC

ian@wightman.ltd

© IAN WIGHTMAN LTD

## Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Description of the building and its setting	3
3.	Historic context	5
4.	Landscape context	8
5.	Conservation Area	10
6.	Significance	11
7.	Proposed scheme and impacts	12
8.	Landscaping	13
9.	Access	13
10.	Conclusion	13

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Design Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared to support a listed building consent application to the South Downs National Park Authority by Mr & Mrs Duncan McNicol.
- 1.2. The application proposes to remove a brick pillar within the kitchen which is supporting a first-floor wall above. This support will be replaced with a metal beam for which structural qualifications are provided.
- 1.3. Charmans is located in the village of Bignor and was listed grade II in 1985. The Listed building number is: LEN 1274735. Charmans is also located within Bignor Conservation Area and the South Downs National Park.
- 1.4. The building has been subject of a recent application (SDNP/21/02163/LIS) for the replacement of modern windows which has recently been approved.



*Charmans, situated on a lane to the west of the village*

©Google

## 2. Description of the building and its setting

- 2.1. Charmans is a timber-frame cottage situated on Back Lane, on the west side of Bignor village. The cottage is located on the western edge of the lane as it rises from the south and is oriented north-south. The largely two-storey building is constructed partly on built up ground to the rear which overlooks the valley and woodland to the west. Immediately to the south of the cottage a public footpath branches off to the west and follows a water channel into woodland. The public pathway allows for views of the rear of the building.
- 2.2. Back Lane is wooded with dense woodland further to the west creating a strong sense of enclosure. There are fields to the east. The village centre lies to the north-east with its church and neighbouring farm, prominent features. The village is surrounded by larger field systems.





*The west elevation of the earlier cottage, now much modified and later additions*

- 2.3. The cottage consists of a number of built elements. A main two storey building to the east of timber-frame construction with brick infill; a half-hipped roof with three dormer windows and a brick porch in timber-frame. The first floor of the northern elevation has been rendered.
- 2.4. To the west is a large two-storey addition of modern brick construction which is also oriented north-south. This extends beyond the main building to the north where it has been added with a lean-to addition. To the west, is a conservatory extension with a brick base. To the north, an attached garage building of modern brick construction with a crown roof has been converted into residential accommodation.
- 2.5. To the south there is an historic lean-to which has been altered to encompass a modern addition with three gables: the central one housing a side door. This has been extended to the south west with a further extension under a crown roof.



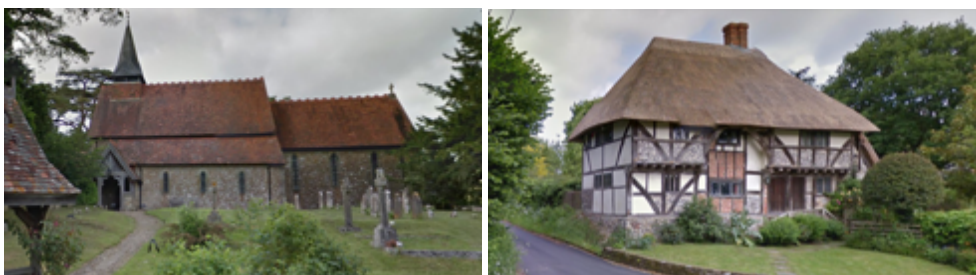
*Charmans on Back Lane with a footpath leading off to the left*

©Google

- 2.6. The windows are all multi-paned, including those in the modern extensions, though of differing designs and proportions. These have recently replaced a mixture of modern and faux designs with leaded light including some poor double-glazing.
- 2.7. The cottage is accessed directly from the lane with parking along the side of the house and is clearly visible when approaching from the north and south.

### 3. **Historic context**

- 3.1. Bignor was a settlement in the Domesday Book and in the hundred of Bury. At this time the households of Bignor consisted of nine villagers, five cottagers and two slaves. The village had three ploughlands, two lord's plough teams and two men's plough teams, as well as meadow, swine and two mills.
- 3.2. Bignor is loosely laid out with the medieval core of the village located on higher ground. The church of the Holy Cross at Bignor dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, though most of the building is now 13<sup>th</sup> century whilst many of the fittings date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



*Holy Cross Church, Bignor and the Yeoman's House*

©Google

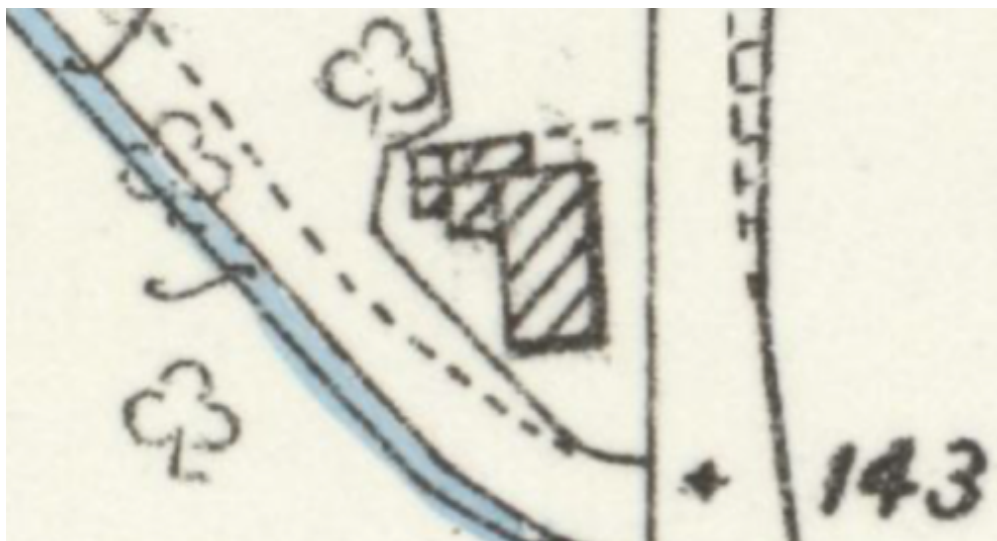


- 3.3. Bignor retains an exemplary Wealden house dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This was originally of wattle and daub construction, though a mixture of materials now replaces some of the panels. These include brick and flint, most likely added from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



*Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland*

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS map of Bignor published in 1897*



*Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland*

*Detail of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS map of 1897 showing buildings on the north-west corner*

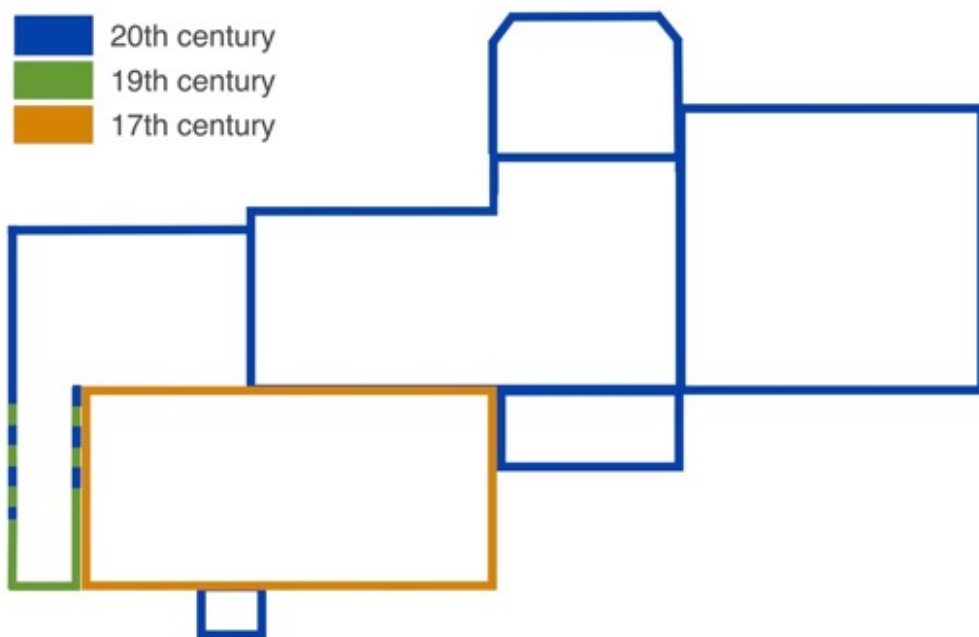
- 3.4. Despite development in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the village of Bignor has retained its largely loose form, with dwellings spread evenly around the village. This is evident on 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition OS mapping of 1897 (see above), and which also shows Bignor mill still in use just north west of the village. One of the streams which feeds into its mill pond is situated on lower ground to the south and rear of Charmans.
- 3.5. Charmans dates from the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and is typically box framed. The building is not two storey in the conventional way, with a second floor in the roof void. This was

illuminated by a window in the north gable which is still visible today and a dormer which is evident in the 1920s. The dormer was no doubt added later, with the roof originally being completely thatch.



*Photograph of Charmans c1926.*

- 3.6. The early building was small and had a brick lean-to extension added, probably from the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is also just evident in the photograph below as is the northern window.
- 3.7. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Charmans had a number of small additions, probably outbuildings on its north western corner. These can be seen on the map detail above from the 1897, though have since been lost with the redevelopment of the building in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



*Phasing plan of Charmans showing the extent of 20<sup>th</sup> century development.*

- 3.8. Charmans was extended greatly in the mid 1980s with a large two storey addition which doubled the footprint of the dwelling. A further lean-to addition to the east, and a conservatory was added following permission in 1999. In 2003 a flat roof addition located in the south west corner, possibly dating from the 1970s was replaced with a single storey addition with a crown roof and in 2007 the garage was converted into accommodation.
- 3.9. Within the historic building further dormer windows were added on the eastern roof slope and probably resulted in the replacement of the roof from thatch to clay tile, if it had not already occurred. The proximity of the two most northern dormers to each other would not have been easily achievable in thatch.
- 3.10. The impact of 20<sup>th</sup> century development on the cottage has been significant with the scope of the ground floor footprint being trebled in size. This is illustrated on the phasing plan above. This has not concealed the legibility of the historic building, however. The majority of additions are single-storey with the two-storey extension reading as a separate range to the rear.

#### 4. **Landscape context**

- 4.1. Charmans is situated within the South Downs National Park which is formed of many different landscape types and characters. These are described within the South Down's 'Integrated Landscape Character Assessment' undertaken in 2005 and updated in 2011 and again in 2020.



*Charmans located within character area K2: East Meon to Bury Greensand Terrace*

- 4.2. Charmans is located within landscape character type K: 'Greensand Terrace' and landscape character area K2: 'East Meon to Bury Greensand Terrace'. The landscape character is visible only in the west and defined by outcrops of Upper Greensand at the foot of chalk scarps. Its key characteristics include:

- A distinct terrace formed from Upper Greensand with a locally prominent escarpment defining its outer edge.



- Cut by a series of small streams that rise from springs near the foot of the chalk escarpment, and have eroded narrow, deep valleys as they cross the Upper Greensand shelf.
- Deeply sunken lanes have eroded to reveal exposures of the Greensand geology and gnarled tree roots.
- Fertile soils supporting large fields of arable, interspersed with pasture, woodland and orchards. Road verges with botanical interest.
- Distinctive hanger woodlands, remnants of ancient woodland, cling to the steepest slopes.
- Areas of former hop gardens are marked by poplar shelter belts.
- Villages are located at regular intervals along the springline, often associated with artificially dammed mill ponds and mills. The chalk scarp often forms a dramatic backdrop.
- Buildings constructed from local 'Malmstone', with red and yellow brick detailing, and clay tile roofs.
- A strong sense of rural tranquillity resulting from the absence of overt human impact and a low density of settlement. Higher secluded areas in the north are particularly remote and provide an experience of dark skies.
- Dominated by the adjacent steep chalk escarpment, from which there are panoramic views over the Greensand Terrace. There are also views over the adjacent lowlands from the edge of the type.<sup>1</sup>

- 4.3. The settlement character of this landscape area originates from Roman estates whose boundaries were adopted by Saxon and medieval manorial estates. Medieval settlements consisted of nucleated with farmsteads centred around a church and surrounded by open fields, as exemplified at Bignor.
- 4.4. The clearance of woodland in the medieval period resulted in small irregular field systems in the form of assarts. In the late medieval and early modern period piecemeal enclosure created both regular and irregular field systems, with the topography of the valleys contributing to their shape and form.<sup>2</sup>
- 4.5. The scale of early enclosure and medieval field systems has resulted in an 'intimate scale' which remains evident despite late post-medieval enclosure which consolidated strip fields and resulted in characteristically straighter boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Along the steeper slope of the valleys, linear strips of woodland (hangers) remain as surviving fragments of the original woodland cover.
- 4.6. Medieval villages were located on the best soils, with isolated farmsteads scattered in the landscape reflecting medieval enclosure. Many of these buildings tend to be Malmstone with brick dressings, though flint and timber are also evident. Agricultural buildings are generally timber-framed and weatherboarded.
- 4.7. The landscape sensitivities of the character type include many which help to express great time depth and antiquity. These include the ancient hanger woodlands, sunken lanes, small medieval villages and the pattern of enclosure which as mentioned is at a very human and therefore 'intimate' scale.<sup>4</sup> This is evident in fields to the west of Charmans.
- 4.8. The low level of development and scattered settlement within largely remote areas also results in a tranquil landscape experience. This tranquillity also has great time depth and contributes to the

---

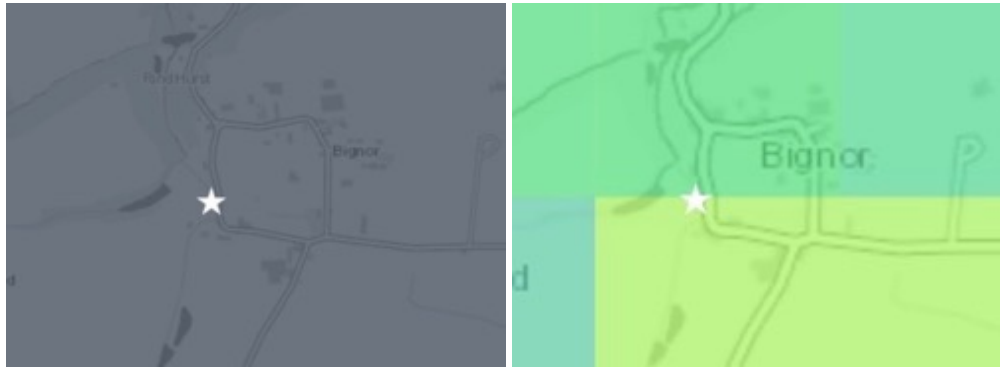
<sup>1</sup> South Downs National Park Landscape Assessment, Landscape Character Type K: Greensand Terrace', <<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/b6120985f1184c3bb3d1c5df317478b2?item=12>> [Accessed: 17 March 2021].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,

experience of the area. In modern terms, it also provides a place of quietness and solitude which has health benefits for both residents and visitors.



**SDNPA**

***Charmans is within zone E0-Dark Sky Core (dark grey) and a tranquil area of the National Park denoted by blues and greens.***

- 4.9. Charmans is also naturally within the South Downs National Park International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) and located within Dark Night Sky Zone E0 – the dark sky core. This is the highest level of darkness and from where the quality of the night sky is at its greatest.
- 4.10. As part of its policies, the South Downs National Park Authority requires that development should ‘conserve and enhance the intrinsic quality of dark night skies and the integrity of the Dark Sky Core.’<sup>5</sup>
- 4.11. The location of Charmans is thus highly sensitive; both as a heritage asset that contributes to our understanding and appreciation of the landscape, but also to the experience of quietness and tranquility that informs its landscape setting.

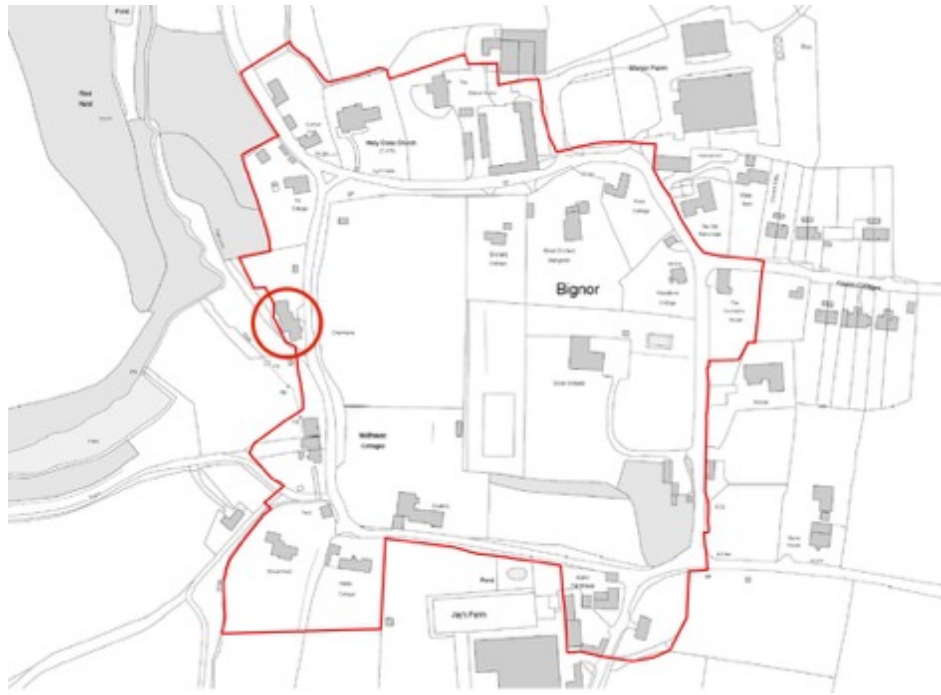
## **5. Conservation Area**

- 5.1. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 stipulates that local planning authorities have a duty to ‘determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’<sup>6</sup>
- 5.2. Bignor Conservation Area was designated on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1984, but does not have a character appraisal.
- 5.3. The Conservation Area encompasses the remnants of the medieval village as well as early modern development which has been constructed on the village’s two primary roads - Bignor Road and Back Lane. Charmans is located within the Conservation Area on Back Lane and contributes to its architectural and historic interest.

---

<sup>5</sup> ‘South Downs Local Plan’ adopted 2 July 2019 (2014-33), p.55. Accessed 26 November 2020 <[https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD\\_LocalPlan\\_2019\\_17Wb.pdf#page=65](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/SD_LocalPlan_2019_17Wb.pdf#page=65)>

<sup>6</sup> Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; <<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/section/69>> (accessed 14 January 2021).



*Charmans located within Bignor Conservation Area*

## 6. Significance

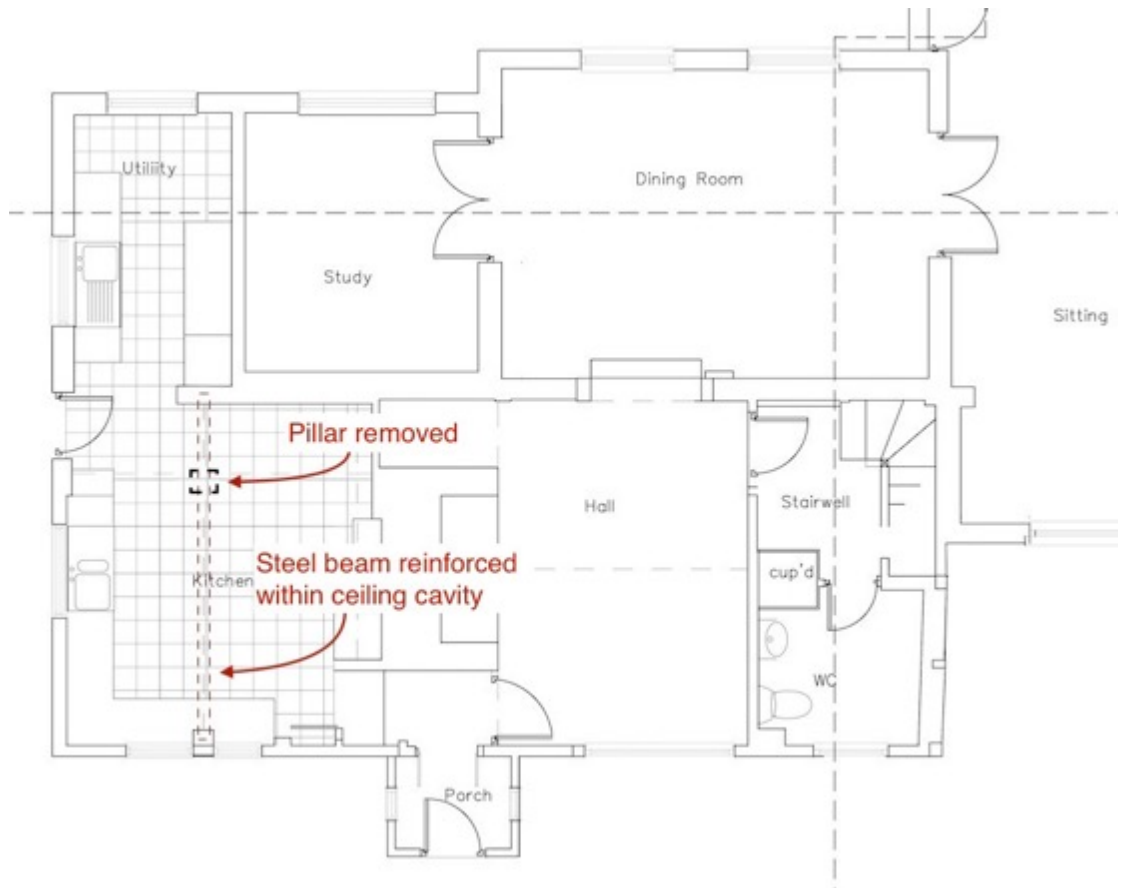
- 6.1. Within Heritage protection, 'significance' is a term that describes a structure or feature's special interest. It is an interest that is understood in terms of values – evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal.
- 6.2. **Evidential value:** As a 17<sup>th</sup> century building, Charmans has potential to reveal special interest. This might be low however, given the level of alteration and development that has occurred.
- 6.3. **Historic value:** The cottage retains strong historic value as an example of a late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century dwelling. This, despite the number of additions and alterations.
- 6.4. **Aesthetic value:** Notwithstanding the harm to the building caused by later development and its modern windows, the cottage retains aesthetic value within the landscape. Its appreciation and correspondence with the lane is no doubt enjoyed by many passing along Back Lane.
- 6.5. **Communal value:** The cottage is considered to have low communal value due to it largely being a private house.
- 6.6. Charmans' significance is recognised in its designation as a grade II listed building. Its construction in box-framing is typical of vernacular building techniques of the area and contributes to local distinctiveness and our understanding of historic development in the area.
- 6.7. Due to the relatively low level of early vernacular buildings 'there is a presumption to list all pre-1700 examples which retain significant fabric'.<sup>7</sup> On this basis, Charmans is considered of national significance and designated accordingly.

<sup>7</sup> Historic England 'Listing Selection Guide, Domestic 1: Vernacular Houses' (2017), p.16.



**7. Proposed scheme and impacts**

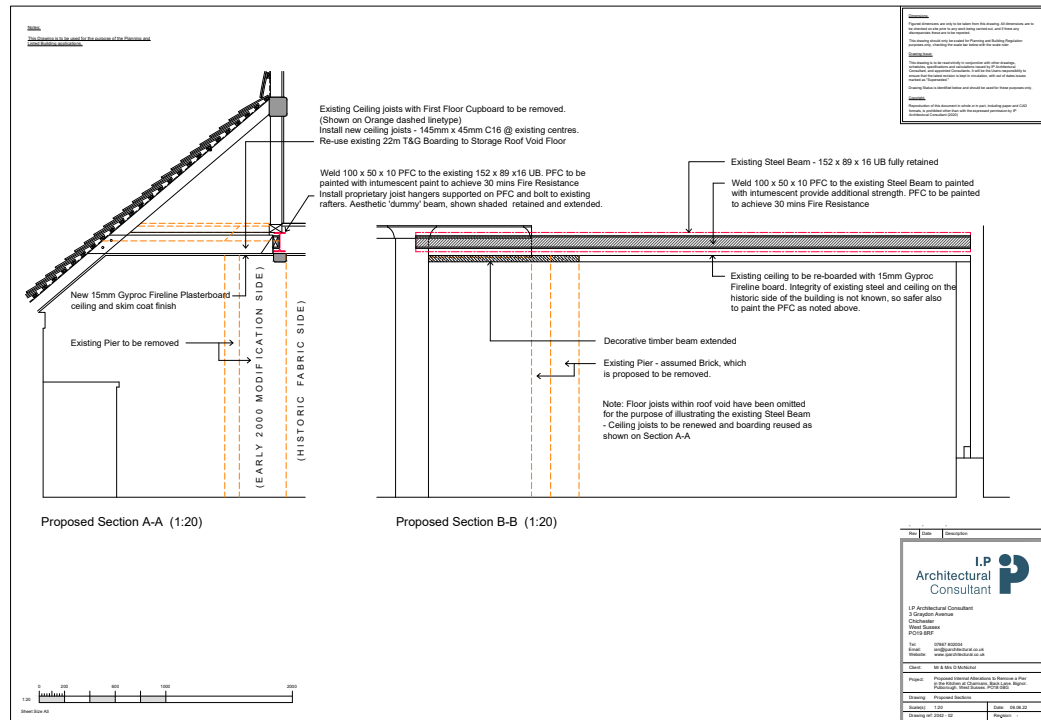
- 7.1. The proposed scheme seeks to remove a pillar within the kitchen which is presumed to be brick. The pillar sits on the line of the former external historic wall which has otherwise been completely removed.
- 7.2. It is likely that the brick pillar was constructed when the remainder of the wall was removed and a steel beam inserted to support the wall above. The walls would have originally been timber frame with wattle and daub panels and at some time replaced with brick.
- 7.3. The pillar will be removed and the existing steel beam reinforced to fully take the wall above. This will bear on the former front and rear walls which are now brick. The reinforcement will be concealed within the existing floor cavity and will not be visible from within the room.
- 7.4. The 'dummy beam' which connects from the pillar back to the main walls, but has no structural function and will also be removed.



Drawing kindly provided by Febo Designs

***Ground floor plan showing the pillar to be removed and the location of the proposed steel beam.***

- 7.5. The loadings of the beam have been calculated by a structural engineer and provided here as part of the application.
- 7.6. More detailed drawings of how the beam will sit within the ceiling cavity are shown below.



**8. Landscaping**

8.1. The proposals have no impact on landscaping.

**9. Access**

9.1. The proposals have no impact on access.

**10. Conclusion**

- 10.1. Charmans has been subjected to much development and change resulting in a number of extensions and alterations. This has been mitigated recently with poor modern windows being replaced with more sympathetic timber designs, some of which have involved the removal of double-glazing.
- 10.2. The extension of the kitchen in modern times has also resulted in the removal of the former exterior wall and its replacement with a pillar. This is rendered and does not have any outstanding features.
- 10.3. Any legibility of the former historic space has also been lost and the remaining pillar is now an obstacle within the room.
- 10.4. The proposed removal of the pillar will improve the amenity of the room without major loss to the building's significance. Whilst the pillar is on the line of the former wall, its integrity as an historic structure is doubtful given that the building was formerly timber-frame and so much of the subsequent brick wall has been lost.
- 10.5. On this basis the proposed alteration is not considered to be harmful to the special interest of the listed building and in turn is not considered detrimental to the conservation area or the cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park. The proposal should therefore be capable of support from the SDNPA.