

# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Fir Grove Farmhouse, Wreningham**

**Listed Building and Planning Application**

**For**

- **Re-roofing,**
- **New rainwater goods,**
- **Timber frame repairs to roof only,**
- **Partial Demolitions of lean-to's**



**Front (north) Elevation**

**October 2022**

**Agent:**  
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IP22 2AE

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## PLANNING STATEMENT

### 1. Amount of development

The current proposal is for alterations to the Listed Farmhouse as itemised below. There will be a future Application for alterations and extensions to the building, but in order to programme the roof works for Spring 2023, this application is being submitted as a matter of urgency.

1. Removal of thatch
2. Repairs to timber roof framing
3. Removal of eastern lean-to
4. Removal of western lean-to.

### 2. Landscaping

The area where the two lean-to extension are removed will be brought back into either lawned garden use or shingle driveway, all as surrounding finishes.

### 3. Appearance

Phase I includes reroofing of the main thatched area. New high quality plain clay tiles will create high quality finish and appearance, even though the thatch is proposed to be changed. Typical eaves and verge details will be used, with heritage style metal rainwater goods from the new tiled roof.

Removal of the lean-to's will greatly improve the appearance of the whole property, as the original gable end will be reinstated on the western end and the eastern lean-to's removal will at least take the overall format back to the two-storey brick extension beyond the main chimney stack to the east.

### 4. Access component (external & site access only)

Phase I proposals have no impact on accessibility to the house.

### 5. Ecology

A bat survey is submitted with the application for Phase I roof works and demolitions.

## LISTED BUILDING STATEMENT

6. **The building and its setting:** The house is Listed as C17th and later. It is a larger timber-framed farmhouse in a rural location, some distance from the road up a long farm track. It is accompanied by a grand timber framed threshing barn and later clay lump stables and sheds which create a barrier to the threshing barn and which come quite close to the western side of the farmhouse. The house is approached past these single-storey clay lump sheds but the whole frontage is currently blocked by overgrown shrubbery which would benefit from being cut back in order to create a better view taking in the whole frontage.

The house has been extended over the centuries – see attached Historical Assessment Plan WHF / 105. The main core has a large double-sided brick fire bay at the eastern end of the original core, where there is now a two-storey brick extension joined onto the side of the stack. This could indicate that an older bay has been lost from this end of the building, as it is unlikely the brick chimney formed the end of the C17th building.

It also appears that the western bay of the timber framing is a newer addition. The framing is different from the main core, there is a step in the first floor level and there is no proper access into the west end Bedroom 4. There is only access through the timber frame from Bedroom 3 or up dangerous truncated stairs via the Victorian scullery room. There is also an infill stair with a curved section leading up to the Attic. This stair lays over an earlier shallower stair which probably led up to Bedroom 3 without the Attic bottom landing.

Then there is the two-storey brick extension on the eastern end, which has a bay attached to the front (northern) face and a more modern brick bay on the rear (garden) face. This brick extension has an uncomfortable connection with the thatch at roof level, it has a low-pitched tiled roof and a wide opening on its eastern side where the C20th lean-to is attached.

The western end has another lean-to against the timber framed end bay. This lean-to may be Victorian but is of very low quality brickwork with modern infill windows, damaged parapet brickwork and no historical internal features.

To the rear of the house there is a Victorian brick scullery/service extension. Although this has some low-quality cement render and sub-standard external doors, it has some historic value, including a brick range and interesting exposed roof truss.

**The Listing:** Farmhouse. C17 and later. Rendered timber frame and gault brick with thatched and plain tiled roofs. Gault brick side extension and service extension to rear. 2 storeys with attic. 2 ground floor 3-light C18 mullion and transom windows, a C19 porch with crow-stepped gable and 2 renewed 4-light diamond mullion windows. 3 C18 3-light casements above. One C19 gabled dormer with very elaborate coloured margin glazing and a decorative barge board. One gable-end stack with 2 angled shafts and one later axial stack. Mid C19 gault brick side extension to stack side. 2 storeys and one bay with opposing canted bays with single sash windows above. C20 lean-to side extensions.

**Historical & architectural importance of the building:** the importance of the building is predominantly in its age. There are no unique or unusual features internally which would raise it above the typical Norfolk farmhouse status. Points of interest include the Victorian porch (now heavily cement rendered) and some internal Victorian tiling and carved coving in the porch area. The Attic dormer window has a thatched roof and plain tiled skirt down to the eaves at the front.

## 7. Approach in order to preserve or enhance

This application Phase 1 is only for urgent re-roofing of the main timber-framed bays of the house, plus demolition of two single-storey lean-to's. Preservation of the whole house is dependent upon re-roofing. It is strongly requested that permission is granted for replacing the thatch with clay tiles. The illustration below of an east Anglian farmhouse tiled in plain clay tiles shows how attractive and impressive such a house can be. Re-roofing in tiles will result in a longer lifespan than thatch, as can be seen from the damage which has occurred since re-thatching in the 1960's. Fir Grove house may have had a long straw roof originally but was re-roofed in water reed, along with large numbers of houses in East Anglia (*Stephen Letch, Master Thatcher*).



Removal of the two modern lean-to's strongly enhances the overall appearance of the house by going some way to return it to a more historic layout.

## 8. Access

There are no access considerations related to the Listing addressed in this application.

## JUSTIFICATION



**MODERN ROPE TIES AROUND PREVIOUSLY LIMEWASHED RAFTERS**

**1. Justification for non-replacement of Thatch (not currently proposed, in favour of tiling)**

The thatch is in need of replacement. It is causing water ingress which has led to extensive decay and breaking of the original roof framing (mostly oak, possibly with some ash or other smaller timbers). There are some older rope ties around the rafters, indicating installation before the rafter and daub ceiling were limewashed. But there is also evidence of a modern fixing of the thatch with rope which is not limewashed. This indicates original thatch was removed when the roof was recovered in the late C20th by the previous owners.

Extract from Regional Thatch – East Anglia, Thatch advice Centre guidance, Stephen Letch supports the theory that the thatch, was re-laid with water reed in the 1960's –



## Thatching in East Anglia

For centuries the regions traditional thatch types have been using predominately Long Straw or Water Reed in the Broads and wetland areas, with Combed Wheat Reed being used sporadically since the late 1950's.

Large numbers of the regions Long Straw roofs were lost to tiles in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps as many as 300,000 when comparing data from Sun Life & Royal Exchange insurance policies from 1862-3 and a Rural Industries Bureau questionnaire in 1960. Thousands more were lost to replacement with water reed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Repairs to the extensively damaged and missing rafters will need to be carried out following complete removal of the decayed and soaked thatch. Although there may have been a 'permanent' foundation layer when the thatch was laid, the long-term damage and soaking which has occurred means even a dense layer must now be removed in order to carry out traditional repairs and replacement of the most damaged rafters.

All timber repairs and replacement will be finalised once there is scaffolding access and the old thatch is cleared. It is a shame the roof has reached this level of damage through decay but the rectification must be specified in steps to react to what is uncovered during the works.

The presence of a separate layer of wattles/laths to support the daub ceiling panels suggests that retention of the daub may be possible as it is on a separate structure to the thatch. There are indications of the horizontal battens under the thatch.





Vertical laths/wattle for daub



Thatch immediately above the ceiling level is badly decayed and wet





**EXPOSED UNDERSIDE OF REPLACEMENT THATCH & EXTENSIVE RAFTER DECAY**

**However** - the proposal is to remove the thatch in order to carry out the timber repairs as justified above, then to tile the main roof with plain clay tiles (or pantiles if preferred). Justification for this is the high cost of insurance for houses with thatch and the extreme difficulty in finding insurance for a house of thatch combined with timber framed and wattle and daub walls.

Over recent years obtaining new insurance on this basis has become almost impossible. The applicant has approached numerous insurers, he states:

“I don’t have any insurance quotes from normal insurance companies as I couldn’t get cover.

In the end I needed to add contents cover to the C.A.R. policy as the only way we could get cover.

The old insurance company was Adrian Flux. ■■■ (previous owner) sent me the cover and it never mentioned Daub & Oak Frame as the building materials.

Brick & Thatch or Clay lump and Thatch at a premium, but daub and Oak + Thatch different story.”

C.A.R. referred to in the above note is the Contractor’s All Risk policy he has taken out to cover his building works as the house is renovated. As noted, he could not obtain a single quote for straightforward household insurance for the building once occupied at this time. If insurance will not be possible with a thatched roof, then the house will be worthless and long-term maintenance and custodianship of it will be impossible. This means there is a risk that insurance will be unobtainable or prohibitively expensive going forward.

We therefore propose a new clay tiled roof (plain tiles or pantiles) instead of a new thatch roof which would overall be detrimental to the long-term care of the house owing to the risk noted above.

**PLAIN CLAY TILES PROPOSED**



KEYMER  
EST. 1586

MENU ≡



KEYMER  
EST. 1586

**KEYMER TRADITIONAL TILE**

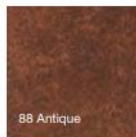


**KEYMER  
HANDMADE CLAY**

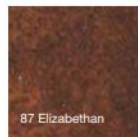
**COLOURS**



89 Wealden Red



88 Antique



87 Elizabethan

Keymer Traditional Tiles are traditional to look at, but innovative in design. They are created for renovation use. These tiles are the ideal choice for the refurbishment of older peg tiled roofs and elevations or for use on oast houses.

**FITTINGS AND ACCESSORIES**

- Ridge tiles:
- Half round
  - Hogback
  - Third round

- Hip tiles:
- Standard bonnet\*
  - Traditional bonnet\*
  - Kent bonnet\*

- Ventilation:
- Three piece vent set
  - Invisivent
  - Loured vent half round\*



## INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THATCHED & TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE

Hi Sarah,

As discussed last week I have listed below the issues we faced due to the Thatched roof / Oak & Cob walls.

Contractor's all Risk Insurance:

The Contract all Risk policy was £3933.83 (Excluding the farmhouse). However once we finally found someone who would cover it, I was able to get cover at £21,669.35 – 500% uplift

Below was the requirements for the C.A.R. Insurance:

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 01 September 2022 16:31  
**To:** [REDACTED] >  
**Subject:** [REDACTED] - Contract Works

“Hi [REDACTED],

Just to confirm I am in the process of sorting out your Direct Debit with [REDACTED], as there was a mix up with the address used for the loan, and I applied using your home address and not the business address. However, please can you provide the following to satisfy the subjectivities of your policy please:

- **015 Provision of Written Fire Risk Management Plan Requirement**

It is a Condition of this policy that a full written Fire Risk Management Plan (FRMP) must be approved by us.

The FRMP must provide documentary evidence the fire risk is being adequately identified, assessed and mitigated on site and should as a minimum address the following:

- Smoke detection arrangements
- Type, number and siting of fire extinguishers
- Waste management procedures
- Location and accessibility of water sources including hydrants
- Hot work procedures
- Flammable liquids and gasses
- Details of the nearest full time fire station
- Induction procedures for persons coming onto site

In the event that it is not possible to submit a FRMP for approval prior to the commencement of this insurance then, subject to our written confirmation, cover can be granted subject to a FRMP being made available to us for consideration and approval within 10 days of inception of your insurance cover.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing, if we have not received the FRMP within 10 days of inception, or the FRMP does not adequately evidence appropriate risk management we will increase the excess applicable to the Peril of Fire to £25,000, or to double the Policy excess applicable to the Peril of Fire, whichever is higher.

Unless otherwise agreed in writing, if we have not received the FRMP within 21 days of inception, or the FRMP does not adequately evidence appropriate risk management we will exclude the Peril of Fire in its entirety.

Subject otherwise to the Terms, Conditions and Exclusions of the policy.

- **014 Provision of Documentation Requirement**

It is a Condition of this policy that a full scope of works document and Gantt chart must be submitted prior to the inception of the policy.

In the event that it is not possible to submit a the above-mentioned documentation for approval prior to the commencement of this insurance then, subject to our confirmation that this is acceptable, cover may be granted subject to the above-mentioned documentation being made available to us for consideration and approval within 21 days of inception of your insurance cover.

If cover is incepted prior to review and approval of the abovementioned documentation by us, and said documentation is not produced within the timescales indicated, or said documentation describes a project which is materially different to that presented to us, we reserve the right to:

- a) amend the terms of your insurance; or
- b) cancel your policy.

Subject otherwise to the Terms, Conditions and Exclusions of the policy.

- **003 Dorset Model Requirement**

In the event that thatch replacement will be undertaken as part of the contract works, then cover under this policy is subject to compliance with the Dorset Model as appended.

Failure to comply with the methodology detailed in the Dorset Model will entitle us to repudiate any claim for damage caused by or arising from the peril of Fire and to void the policy.

Subject otherwise to the Terms, Conditions and Exclusions of the policy.

- **019 UK TFA 16 Steps Report Requirement**

Subject to written confirmation prior to inception that the project will be undertaken in compliance with the best practice detailed in the UK TFA 16 Steps Report. If, on investigation of a claim, it is established that the project has not been undertaken in compliance with the best practice detailed in the UK TFA16 Steps Report then the insurer will be entitled to repudiate the claim and void the policy.

If it is not the intention of the policyholder to abide by the UK TFA 16 Steps Report, then cover is subject to the submission of a full written Fire Risk

Management Plan (FRMP) for approval by us prior to inception of your insurance cover.

The FRMP must deal with the following:

- Smoke detection arrangements
- Type, number and siting of fire extinguishers
- Waste management procedures
- Location and accessibility of water sources including hydrants
- Details of the nearest full time fire station
- Induction procedures for persons coming onto site

In the event that it will not be possible to submit a FRMP for approval prior to the commencement of this insurance then, subject to confirmation from us that this is acceptable, cover may be granted subject to a FRMP being made available to us for consideration and approval within 10 days of inception.

If the fire risk management steps laid down in the FRMP are deemed to be unacceptable by us, we may:

- a) require that you include additional or amend existing risk management steps within specific time frames
- b) amend the terms of your insurance; or
- c) cancel your policy.

Subject otherwise to the Terms, Conditions and Exclusions of the policy.”

In terms of normal house insurance we have still been unable to secure a quote from any main stream insurance Brokers. The issue is the combination of Thatch & Daub/Oak Frame – One or the other is ok but both is deemed to be too risky for fire purposes.

Regards, [REDACTED]



**2. Removal of east and west lean-to's.**

Both ends of the house have a lean-to extension.



The eastern lean-to is of late C20th construction although there is no record of an application although it is mentioned in the Listing dated 1983. It could be said that the extension is unauthorised and must be removed. The proposal within this application (Phase 1) is to remove the modern extension and temporarily cover the opening into the house, awaiting a further application for Phase 2 to determine the permanent infill at this end of the house.

**EASTERN LEAN-TO TO BE REMOVED**

The western lean-to is of a low-quality brick construction which is also in a state of decay. It's removal will expose the historic end of the gabled house and also set the house back from the neighbouring clay lump agricultural shed. The existing internal doorway will be addressed in the future Phase 2 works, along with lime rendering of the gable wall.



**WESTERN LEAN-TO TO BE REMOVED**

## SCHEDULE OF WORKS (PHASE I)

	Structural engineer to inform major roof repairs
	<b>REMOVE THATCH</b>
1.	Erect scaffolding all round thatched roof section of the house; prop attic roof internally to retain timbers and daub infill ceiling panels as much as possible.
2.	Remove thatch, retain remnants of original rope ties if possible, as historic feature
3.	Survey exposed roof timbers and carry out traditional repairs following agreement with structural engineer and Heritage Officer on extent and type of repairs for each area.
4.	New roof build-up: filleted or scribed counterbattens along existing rafters to straighten roof lines; vapour barrier; efficient PIR insulation board; counterbattens; breather membrane; tiling battens & new clay tiles. Half-round ridge tiles, all bedded in lime mortar; Traditional timber bargeboards & fascias and soffits.
5.	New metal rainwater goods throughout.
6.	Make repairs to daub panels within Attic between rafters as necessary
7.	Retain decorative glass window & frame; reinstate dormer window with lead soakers and flashings.
	<b>REMOVE WESTERN LEAN-TO</b>
8.	Carefully take down lean-to roof tiles and set aside for repairs elsewhere. Remove roof structure, redundant modern windows & doors & brick walls all round
9.	Break up foundations and flooring, make good shingle driveway.
10.	Temporarily protect existing western entrance doorway ready for Phase 2 alterations and improvements programme (including exposed external wall finishes)
11.	<b>REMOVE EASTERN LEAN-TO</b>
12.	Remove modern brick lean-to complete, including foundations and floor; make good garden area where structure removed.
13.	Temporarily ply sheeting over internal door opening until Phase 2 Proposals are designed and approved

## LISTING

<p>Official list entry  Heritage Category: Listed Building  Grade: II  List Entry Number: 1373110  Date first listed: 02-Dec-1983  Statutory Address: FIR GROVE, HETHEL ROAD  The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.  County: Norfolk  District: South Norfolk (District Authority)  Parish: Wreningham  National Grid Reference: TM 15255 99644  Details TM 19 NE WRENINGHAM HETHEL ROAD (west side) 5/121 Fir Grove - II</p> <p>Farmhouse. C17 and later. Rendered timber frame and gault brick with thatched and plaintiled roofs. Gault brick side extension and service extension to rear. 2 storeys with attic. 2 ground floor 3-light C18 mullion and transom windows, a C19 porch with crow-stepped gable and 2 renewed 4-light diamond mullion windows. 3 C18 3-light casements above. One C19 gabled dormer with very elaborate coloured margin glazing and a decorative barge board. One gable-end stack with 2 angled shafts and one later axial stack. Mid C19 gault brick side extension to stack side. 2 storeys and one bay with opposing canted bays with single sash windows above. C20 lean-to side extensions.</p>
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