

**PARSONAGE FARMHOUSE
CHRISHALL ESSEX**

REORDERING OF SECOND FLOOR



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

5 – XII - 22

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1. Introduction

Parsonage farmhouse is a moated building which is said to have evolved from a C15 manor house. The current house has early C17 features and is known to have been rebuilt in 1796; it looks to have been rebuilt once more in the C19 and reworked in the mid C20. It is timber-framed with a partial encapsulation in brickwork of various dates. The single pile plain-tiled house of three storeys including an inhabited attic is approached by a brick arched bridge on its north, to which it presents a continuous rendered lean-to with a modern gabled porch. The east and west gabled ends and the south front are in brick and the centre of the south front breaks forward and is gabled. It has modern storm casements throughout and modern doors. The drawing room has exposed timber-framing, reset late C16 ceiling beams and joists and a contemporary inglenook. The moat is said to have been the site of an iron age fort but may also be a so-called homestead moat.

The house was listed Grade II on 22 Feb, 1980. The moat was scheduled in March 1993.

There is little planning history for the house itself but the cartshed and adjacent outbuildings were converted in 2003 and permission was granted for an agricultural dwelling in the grounds in 1982, soon after the house was listed. In October 2022, listed building consent was given to enlarge the French doors in the south front (UTT/22/2264/LB).

This statement accompanies an application for listed building consent to reorder the second floor, inserting bathrooms and dormer windows and reinstating full habitable use of the floor. This is the second part of the April 2022 Conservation Plan to be implemented and the revised Heritage Assessment and Conservation Plan are appended to this report.

A **design and access statement** is a short report accompanying and supporting a planning or listed building application to illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal, and to explain and justify the proposal in a structured way [see Para 029 NPPG].

Design and access statements provide a framework to explain how a proposed development is a suitable response to a site and its setting and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users.

What is included?

a) an explanation of the design principles and concepts applied to the proposals;
b) demonstration of the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account. 'Context' is the particular characteristics of the application site and its wider setting which will be specific to the circumstances of an individual application. Attention is paid to:

- the special architectural or historic importance of the listed building and particular physical features of the building that justify its designation;
- the building's setting.

- c) Explanation of the approach to access and how relevant Local Plan policies have been taken into account.
- d) Detail of any consultation undertaken in relation to access issues, and how the outcome of this consultation has informed the proposed development.
- e) Detail of how any specific issues which might affect access have been addressed.

2. Assessment

2.1 Physical context



Fig. 1: Site Plan



Fig. 2a: South front of house with projecting wing



Fig. 2b: Second floor central bedroom in projecting rear wing.

The High Street buildings of the village have considerable Architectural, Historic (and thus communal) value as a group. They are a significant historic feature of the settlement, little altered in their visual relationship since the 17th century, although their impact has been sufficiently diluted by ordinary C20 building that they are not grouped as a Conservation Area. Parsonage Farm is the most southerly of the group and different from it, set well back from the building line on a moated island tucked into a farmyard and most visible from the valley below. A holloway falls away from the end of High Street to reach the Royston road.

There are good views across the valley from the island and consequently there are views back albeit screened by mature vegetation. Views to the north are truncated by the immediate proximity of the farmyard group and a similar situation obtains to the east with the cart shed complex. The western outlook is curtailed by a high hedgerow and copse.



Fig. 3: West elevation and moat



Fig. 4: Southern view

2.2 Social context

The house is historically a part of a large farm in a predominantly agricultural area and once at the centre of an industry connected to ploughing.

2.3 Planning Policy context

2.3.1 National Policy

The NPPF applies and Chapter 16 regarding the historic environment is most relevant to this application. Para 189 recognises that “Heritage assets ... are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”

Para 194 notes 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.” Para 195 notes that “**Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance** of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise.

Para 199 says 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).

Setting of a heritage asset is defined on P 71 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.”

2.3.2 Local Policy

The Uttlesford Local Plan was adopted in 2005. Astonishingly, it still forms the basis for making planning decisions within the district alongside the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance. A new plan is not expected to be adopted until December 2023.

ENV2 Development Affecting Listed Buildings

Careful attention will be paid to any proposal affecting the character of a Listed Development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings. Demolition of a listed building, or development proposals that adversely affect the setting, and alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted. In cases where planning permission might not normally be granted for the conversion of listed buildings to alternative uses, favourable

consideration may be accorded to schemes which incorporate works that represent the most practical way of preserving the building and its architectural and historic characteristics and its setting

Policy ENV4 Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development there will be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in situ. The preservation in situ of locally important archaeological remains will be sought unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the archaeology. In situations where there are grounds for believing that sites, monuments or their settings would be affected developers will be required to arrange for an archaeological field assessment to be carried out before the planning application can be determined thus enabling an informed and reasonable planning decision to be made. In circumstances where preservation is not possible or feasible, then development will not be permitted until satisfactory provision has been made for a programme of archaeological investigation and recording prior to commencement of the development.

Policy GEN2 – Design

Development will not be permitted unless its design meets all the following criteria and has regard to adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

- a) It is compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings;
- b) It safeguards important environmental features in its setting, enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impact of new buildings or structures where appropriate;
- c) It provides an environment, which meets the reasonable needs of all potential users.
- d) It helps to reduce the potential for crime;
- e) It helps to minimise water and energy consumption;
- f) It has regard to guidance on layout and design adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the development plan.
- g) It helps to reduce waste production and encourages recycling and reuse.
- h) It minimises the environmental impact on neighbouring properties by appropriate mitigating measures.
- i) It would not have a materially adverse effect on the reasonable occupation and enjoyment of a residential or other sensitive property, as a result of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, overbearing impact or overshadowing.

2.4 Involvement

Historic England were consulted in August 2022 ; they referred the second floor conversion to the Council and their conservation advisers.

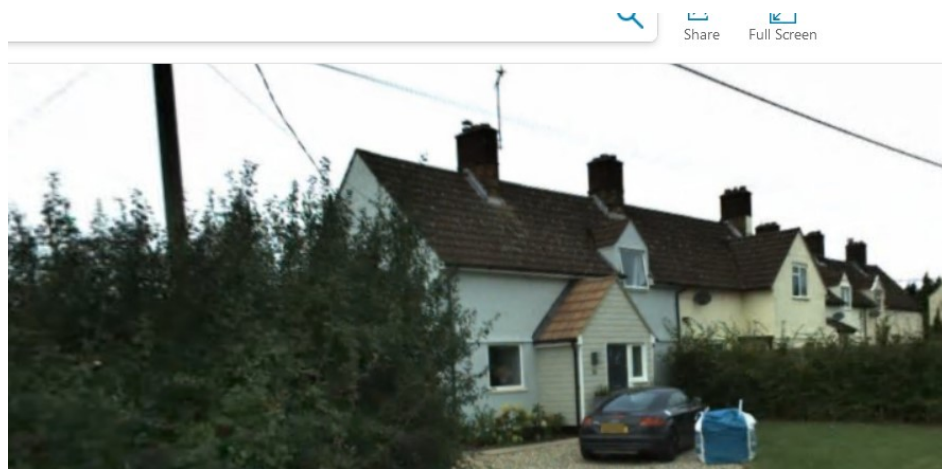
2.5 Heritage context

The current second floor is now only partially inhabited but there is evidence of former habitation in the other areas. The central two rooms are plastered and have early C20 floorboards. The eastern roofspace has only a few boards and has had additional structure to hold the water tank which serves the bathroom below. The western room is mostly boarded

with C18 wide oak boards and the remains of 'ashlar' walls show that plaster has been removed from them; a small section adjacent to the west elevation was formerly partitioned off; the line of structure is evident.

There is a window in each of the gables, an ample one in the south and a small one in each of the other two. The smaller central room is unlit and the main bulk of the east and west rooms are similarly unlit. Windows are of the storm casement type and must post date the 1950s. In a traditional farmhouse, traditional flush windows would be appropriate and the windows, doors and concrete plain tiles and bituminous felt typify the expedience of the 1950s and 1960s and detract from the heritage significance of the house.

In terms of external appearance, Chrishall is a village of dormered dwellings. High Street itself has several buildings ranging from the C15 to the C20 in which habitable space is fitted into the roofs.



High Street 1 – 1920s houses adjacent to and based on Parsonage Farm, but with dormers



High Street 2 – C17; modern dormers. Grade II listed



High Street 3 – early C19 rebuild around earlier core as PF – listed Grade II



High Street 4 – C17/C18 Grade II listed



Building End. C17 with C19 dormers. Grade II

2.5.1 Heritage Assessment

a) The list description is as follows:

Parsonage Farmhouse: Grade II: listed 22-Feb-1980

Originally a C15 moated manor house and still surrounded by the moat. Approached by a brick arched bridge on the north. Altered in the C16-C17 and later. On the east side the ground storey has been built out with a tiled lean-to roof and a modern gabled porch. The north and south gabled ends and the west front are faced in red brick and the centre part of the west front breaks forward and is gabled. Casement windows. Roof tiled. The interior has exposed timber- framing, ceiling beams and joists. The moat is said to have been the site of an iron age fort.

b) heritage significance

The heritage significance of the house has been assessed in a separate document.

Using the categories set out by James Semple Kerr and the values ascribed to heritage significance by the government in the NPPF, the house, outbuildings and moat may be valued as a group as:

Architectural: considerable
Historic: considerable
Artistic: little
Archaeological: considerable

Architectural and artistic value

This refers to the sensory and perceptual experience of a place, and the appreciation of beauty especially via formal aesthetic ideals and thus architectural ideas.

Raised above the Walden-Royston road at the southern entrance to the village, the house, despite its jumble of brick cladding is something of a landmark, even though it is partially screened by mature trees. Set back behind a C19 cart shed it is not visible from High Street. The chaotic brickwork detracts from the architectural value as do the crudely inserted storm-casement type, 'Georgian' windows and doors.

On entering the farmyard it is clear that it is a venerable farmhouse whose inscrutable exterior as a whole owes much to the palimpsest of the domestic architecture of farming folk which illustrates their architectural journey.

The interior has several features that are of interest in themselves -- the stair and inglenook and drawing room ceiling for instance, in which is comprised its special architectural interest.

There is considerable **group** value with the scheduled moat and the unlisted farm buildings to the north.

There is **some** architectural value and **no** artistic value in the house itself. The uppermost storey makes little contribution given its late date and considerable rebuilding.

Historic value

A place may have historic value because it has influenced, or has been influenced by, an historic event, phase, movement or activity, person or group of people. The associative value of the building is as the residence of movers and shaker in the agricultural sphere via the Downhams, the Drages and the Kents and their mighty steam engines, some of which were housed in the adjacent farmyard.

The illustrative value comes via the physical evidence of a timber framed and plastered C16 farmhouse which has been continually remodelled over 400 years in an area dominated by such houses. Its full-length entry side lean-to may be unique for this area and is reminiscent of an urban solution.

There is **considerable** group historical value with the ancient moat and modern farmstead.

There is only **some** historical value in the house itself including communal value.

Archaeological Value

Archaeological, or research, value describes the ability of a place to reveal more about an aspect of the past through examination or investigation, including the use of archaeological techniques. Whilst there is some value in the survival of historic fabric, including historic room layouts, interior features, and the external appearance of the components of a building, the house has little archaeological value itself. The island and moat have considerable potential to reveal past ways of life

There is **considerable group** archaeological value but little in the house owing to its long history of reordering.

c) Contribution of setting to heritage significance:

Using GPA3 (2017), **the 'immediate' setting** of the house is its island garden and moat. The moat is of great archaeological and historic significance and thus contribution to setting is high. The wider setting is the farmyard to the north, consisting of C19 buildings, the outbuildings to the east, dense vegetation to the west and the partially screened view over the valley to the south. The ability to understand the historic group value of a farmstead on the village edge is an important part of the heritage significance.

3. The design

3.1 Description of the proposal

The design comprises a complete reordering of the second floor. The tanks and later structure are removed from the east room and the space divided for a bedroom and en suite with a new dormer window and all new insulation and finishes. The west room is reinstated and a dormer inserted, the space divided similarly into a bedroom and en suite. The old boards are relaid and augmented with matching ones as required. The central rooms will be used as a sitting/ family room and a plant room and store.

New windows will take thin double glazing for reasons of sustainability and the comfort of the occupants. Glazing bars will be genuine, puttied and slender. The dormers will have oak boarding and barges. The existing casements will be remade similarly to give the elevations the appropriate appearance for an historic building i.e. flush windows.

Drainage will connect to existing soil pipes. That at the more sensitive west end will be concealed with the fabric. A short section will be visible on the modern, much altered and more workaday east elevation which is already the 'service' end of the house.

Structurally, the second floor has coped with residential loadings before. The reinstatement of what I call the 'ashlar walls' in the west and their introduction in the east will have the effect of giant beams breaking the span of the floor joints and stiffening the entire structure thereby improving its loadbearing capacity.

Use – residential

Amount – one house as before but with improved facilities

Layout – as described above

Scale – There is no change to the building volume but the dormers will articulate the south elevation in a tradition which is clearly endemic to the village as a whole. the balance of solid and void between ground and first floors and between these and the roof is undamaged as the dormers are relatively high up the slope. The casement design is traditional for historic windows in a C19/ C20 roof, simply divided by one glazing bar rather than the current 1960s multi-pane 'Georgian' design.

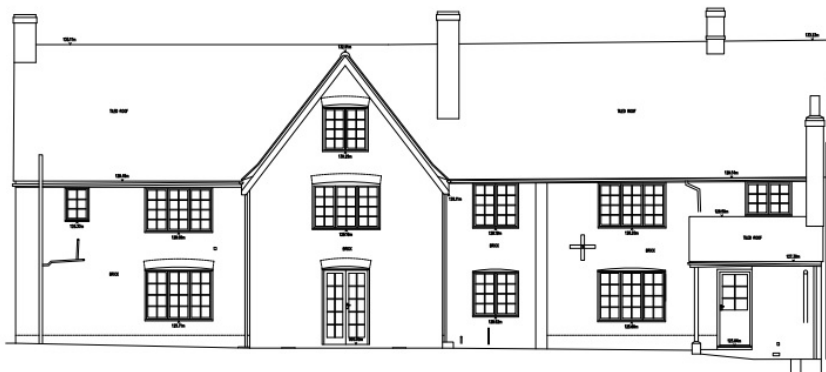


Fig. 5: Existing South elevation

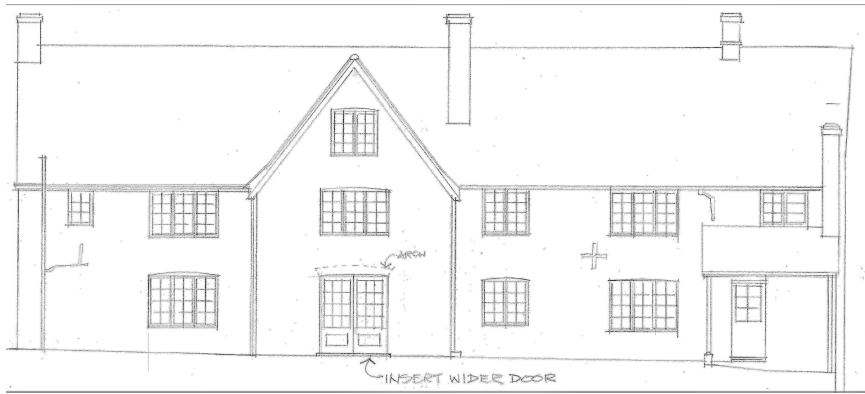


Fig. 6: Consented South elevation



Fig. 7 Proposed south elevation with dormers

Appearance - painted softwood windows and frames; oak boarding and bargeboards with plain clay peg tiles.

Replacement flush windows to east and west elevations in lieu of 1960s storm casements.

Regarding the new dormers, the English Heritage advice 'Dormer Windows' (1991) was consulted as it remains a coherent, well put together conservation document. They advise, "... investigate local buildings of a similar type, character, and date. It may be that these have dormers which are part of the original design or were added soon after completion." Further, "In number, form, and scale they should be related to the facade below. They should be regularly spaced, not necessarily immediately above the windows below... Often the number of dormers in a roof is less than the number of windows on the floors below. Thus a three-bay house may have two dormers and a two-bay house may have one. In size they should be clearly subordinate to the windows in the top main storey.

A survey of local dormers shows that tiled pitched dormers are the most common form but catslide and box dormers are also used. For the normal single pile volume like this, the simple pitched roofs with slender bargeboards and cheeks and tiles to match are the order of the day. In number, this house has a two-bay west wing which is given one dormer, and a three-bay east wing which is allotted two dormers. Width is well within that of the windows of the façade below and height is restricted so as not to crowd the roof, even using the steep pitch of the existing.

3.2 Heritage impact

The replacement of the existing windows will enhance the architectural value of the house as they will be traditional flush units with recessed frames.

There will be a small addition of waste pipe to the east side in a utilitarian, modern and much rebuilt elevation. Overall visual and thus architectural impact will not be harmed.

Internally the west side will be reused for its original purpose albeit with modern facilities. The east roof will be converted so that the occupants will have full access to all of the house on a regular basis, leaving no hidden corners to decay. The central bedroom will be refurbished as a family room and put back into use after being unused for some time. Making use of *all* of the house is a very commonplace occurrence in Chrishall, perhaps because of its farming heritage and this reordering takes its place in a long tradition in respect of Parsonage Farmhouse itself.

The insertion of dormers is within the local vernacular tradition for this house and is an acceptable change in terms of heritage impact. The windows pick up the volumes and rhythms of the existing roofs and do not dominate the house. The second floor was largely abandoned by the previous occupants and the refurbishment will put the space back into use to ensure its continued existence for future generations.

In short, there will be no change to the historic, artistic or archaeological values of the house and its setting. Regarding the architectural values, the areas that contribute most to the heritage significance will be preserved – the north elevation, the drawing room, the arrangement of the house on the moated island and that with the farmyard. The chief alterations will be to windows; two are enhanced and three are added in the form of dormers. Whilst this constitutes change, historic fabric is not altered – the roof is of concrete tiles, the western rafters are reused and the eastern ones are modern. The elevation is altered but this is an elevation that has been ravaged by the generations and now an odd collection of brick bonds and brick types. The simple volume with pitched roof is also a recent introduction as the east side has been raised in the C20 to create that consistent look. The addition of the dormers will consolidate the shape handed down to us and will not harm the architectural value of this side of the house. Similarly, the insertion of bathrooms in hidden places does no harm to architectural value.

3.3 Visual impact

As described above, the works are not visible from public view on the north, east or west sides. From the south, filtered glimpses are available from the Royston to Saffron Walden road but these would only be partially and momentary as it is an effort to negotiate the many bends on this route, which in any event is mostly hedged. The primary effect of the tall, tiled roof with central gable, however, would not be challenged by the proposals.

4. ACCESS

Access will be unaffected.

CONCLUSION

The proposed reordering will bring back to use a neglected part of the house, enhance poorly made windows and introduced new facilities and dormer windows in a considered manner. Replacement windows will be purpose-made and finished with traditional mouldings and details whilst incorporating slim double glazing for sustainability and comfort; they are not traditional but it is important to sustain the life of the listed building and providing modern standards is one way to contribute to this. New dormers will be similarly made and bring life to the roofscape without dominating its form or detracting from it. And this is entirely within the local tradition in Chrishall, especially in High Street.

Overall, the design will comply with the principles of good conservation and instill new life into a tired heritage asset. The owner has commissioned a conservation plan and is working through it in a considered way that will preserve this piece of our heritage for future generations. In terms of policy ENV2, being in keeping with the scale, character and surroundings of the house should protect its architectural value for the present generation and into the future.

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