

**PARSONAGE FARMHOUSE, CHRISHALL,  
ESSEX**



**Heritage Assessment &  
Conservation Plan**

6 • XII • 22

**Working Draft**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope

In anticipation of a complete long-term refurbishment, this report is written in accordance with the NPPF for England which requires an applicant to "describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting." [Para 194] A Heritage Assessment will provide an understanding of the history and significance of Parsonage Farmhouse and its setting which in turn will inform a Conservation Plan to guide its conservation as an ongoing process over 10 years.

The site contains the Grade II listed house and its Scheduled moat, located on Chrishall High Street at the southern approach to the village.



*Fig 1: Location plan*

### 1.2 Existing information

This study has drawn on primary sources, current legislation and planning guidance. Historical information has been taken from books, websites and archival material held at the Essex Records Office. Reference has been made to the HER. Surveys and maps from the 19th and early 20th century provide some insight into the historic development of

the site and further detail was gleaned from Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 and the Verron survey of 1799.

The assessment of the building was made in March 2020.

### **1.3 Gaps in knowledge**

The principal knowledge gaps relate to the detailed phasing of the building between the C15 and 1777. No detailed maps exist of the area between those dates. The Chapman and Andre map shows only block development in the area; it is reliable for checking the existence of the house and outbuildings although not necessarily their precise form. The house appears as part of a farmstead of four buildings on lower High Street, confirmed by the 1808 inclosure map and the physical evidence of the current form, detailing and materials of the remaining house, although the outbuildings are largely replaced and now in separate ownership. It is considered that enough historic fabric remains to allow an historic buildings appraisal to be undertaken, although successive rebuildings have obscured the earlier fabric. General dates have been given for the construction based on a limited examination of the built fabric and on archival evidence; where neither is to hand conjectural dates are given.

## **2. STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS & LEGISLATION**

### **2.1 National Policy: National Planning Policy Framework + Planning Policy Guidance**

The *NPPF* provides the government's requirements for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. A core principle of the *NPPF* is to "conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations," [Para 189] and this concept is expanded in the rest of Chapter 16.

A heritage asset is defined as, "a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest." This includes both designated (e.g. listed buildings and conservation areas) and non-designated (e.g. locally listed) assets. A key aim of *NPPF* is to encourage the identification of the significance of heritage assets in advance of proposed development works. Para 194 specifies that the applicant for developments which affect the historic environment should "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." This heritage assessment is intended to meet this requirement.

The Government's PPG [Planning Practice Guidance] accompanies the NPPF and has been referred to in the writing of this document.

## **2.2 Local Planning Policies**

**2.2.0** 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.

### **2.2.1 Listed Buildings**

#### **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

### **2.2.2 Archaeology**

#### **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.

### 2.2.3 Design and Sustainable 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.

### 2.3 Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

Parsonage Farmhouse is not located within a Conservation Area and Chrishall has no CAs. There are 48 listed buildings in the village, all Grade II, most on High Street and many of C17 or C18 form with origins in the C15.

**Holy Trinity Church**, a 12th-century Grade I Listed Building, is situated on the south eastern edge of the village.



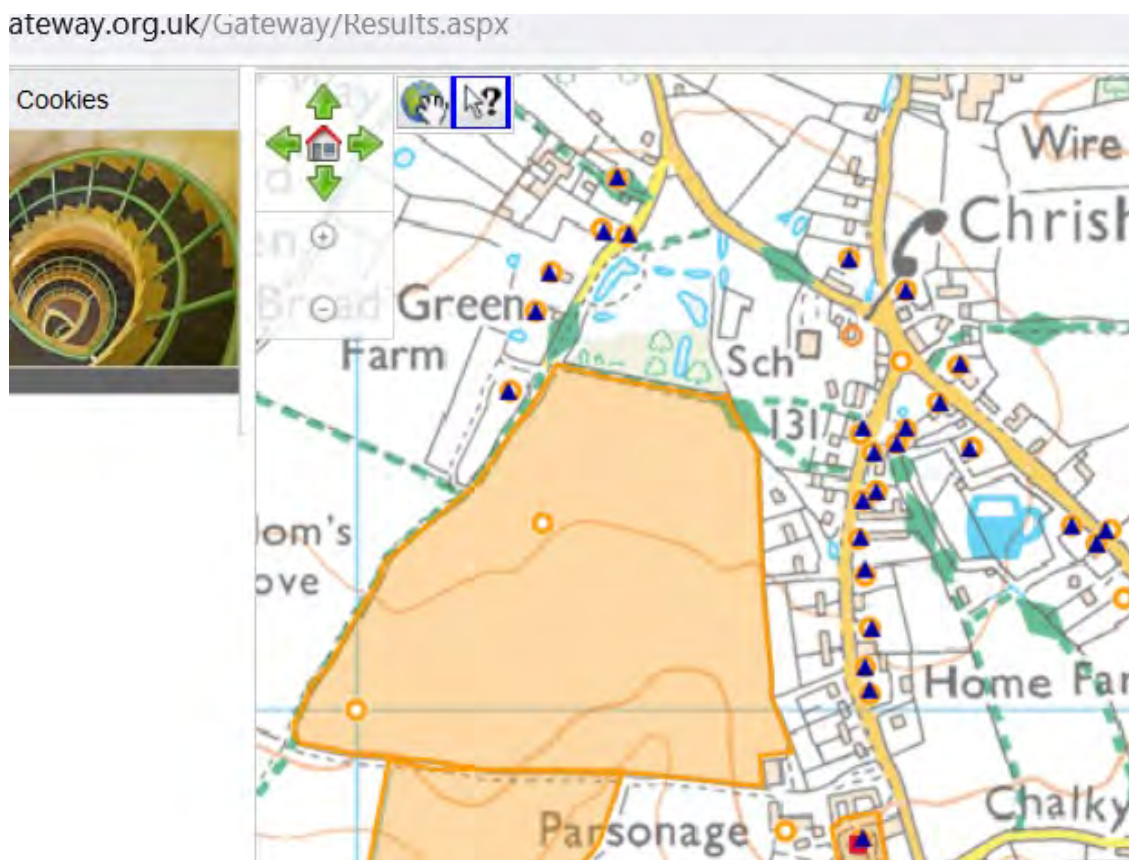


Fig 2. The High Street LBs

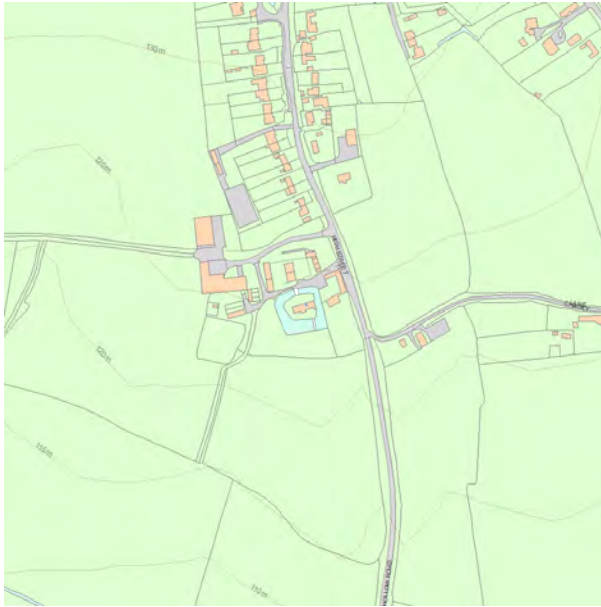
The house is at the southern end of High Street at its junction with Chalky Lane.

## 2.4 List descriptions

**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.

Listing NGR: TL4454238862



**Moated site at Parsonage Farm:** Date first scheduled: 02-Mar-1993

### **Reasons for Designation**

Around 6,000 moated sites are known in England. They consist of wide ditches, often or seasonally water-filled, partly or completely enclosing one or more islands of dry ground on which stood domestic or religious buildings. In some cases the islands were used for horticulture. The majority of moated sites served as prestigious aristocratic and seigneurial residences with the provision of a moat intended as a status symbol rather than a practical military defence. The peak period during which moated sites were built was between about 1250 and 1350 and by far the greatest concentration lies in central and eastern parts of England. However, moated sites were built throughout the medieval period, are widely scattered throughout England and exhibit a high level of diversity in their forms and sizes. They form a significant class of medieval monument and are important for the understanding of the distribution of wealth and status in the countryside. Many examples provide conditions favourable to the survival of organic remains.

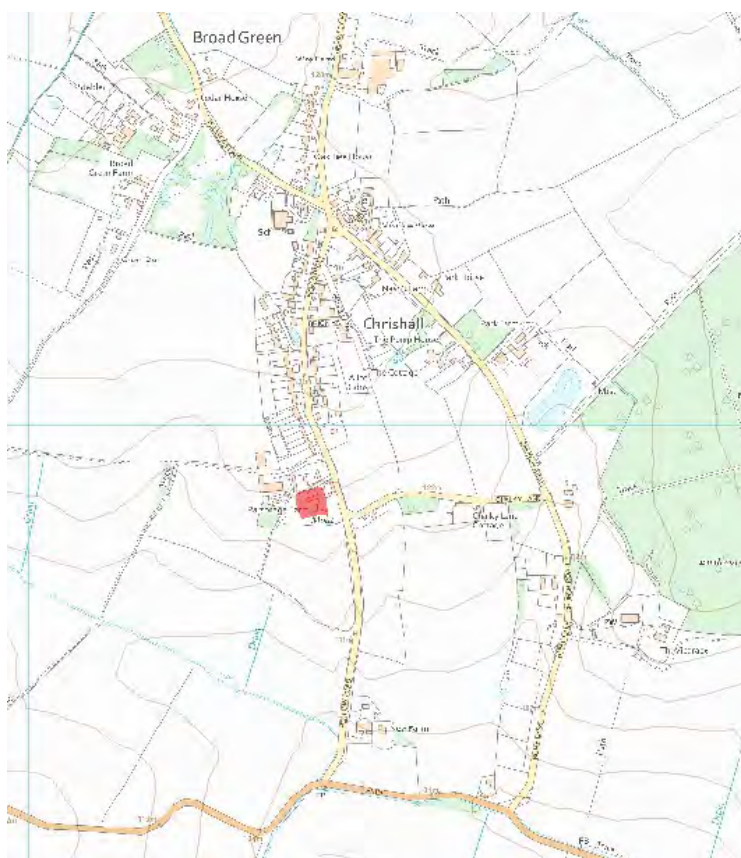
The moated site at Parsonage Farm remains largely undisturbed and will retain archaeological information pertaining to the occupation and development of the site. The waterfilled ditches will contain environmental evidence relating to the economy of its inhabitants and the landscape in which they lived.

## Details

The monument includes a moated site situated 650m north-west of Holy Trinity Church, Chrishall. The monument includes a quadrangular moat measuring 42.5m north-south by 45m east-west. The moat arms are waterfilled and are between 6m and 13m in width. The west, south and east arms are revetted with brick, whereas the northern arm has been revetted in concrete. Outer banks 1m wide and approximately 0.3m high surround the moat on all but the northern side. A brick-built bridge gives access to the island on the northern side and a small iron and wooden bridge is built across the southern arm. An outlet pipe at the south-west corner drains excess water from the moat. On the island is the farmhouse which is listed Grade II. A waterpipe which crosses the eastern arm of the moat supplies water to the house. The house, bridges and waterpipe are all excluded from the scheduling though the ground beneath them is included.

MAP EXTRACT The site of the monument is shown on the attached map extract. It includes a 2 metre boundary around the archaeological features, considered to be essential for the monument's support and preservation.

### National Grid Reference: TL 44537 38855



### 3. THE SITE, ITS DEVELOPMENT AND CONTEXT

#### 3.1 Historical Development

Chrishall is a place of some antiquity. It is listed in the Domesday Book and the Icknield Way, a Neolithic track, passes through the parish. It sits at the highest point in Essex, at 147m above sea level, in relative seclusion and retains a relatively stable population; in the mid C19 it was 518 and today some 450 people live here.

From the green at the village crossroads, the Elmdon road leads northeast and its heritage buildings include the Methodist Chapel. To the northwest runs Palmer's Lane, leading to the village school, community centre and playing fields and to the southwest is the High Street which leads to Parsonage Farm. The C15 Red Cow pub is at its junction with Hogs Lane and further along on the west side is Brick Row, a long C18 terrace. Many of the houses on High Street are listed and several have their origins in the C15. Parsonage Farm is the last property before High Street becomes Hollow Lane which terminates on the Walden – Royston road (B1039). Chalky Lane runs east from the farm to Church Lane and the C12 Holy Trinity Church.

Until the enclosure act of 1806, a wide green stretched northwest from Parsonage Farm to the present hamlet of Broad Green.

The village has always been agricultural. It was known for its steam ploughs and threshing machines and Philip Downham its pioneer lived at Parsonage Farm. Thomas Drage bought the farm from the Downhams and continued the business, teaming up with the Kents in WWI to form Drage & Kent. The Kent family lived at Parsonage Farm from 1959 to 2021. Joseph Downham is one of 10 voters listed in 1841. His house is described as “freehold cottage and land near the church”<sup>1</sup>. Joseph is listed at Parsonage Farm in White’s 1848 directory, as a farmer in the 1855 Kelly’s and is recorded at Parsonage Farm in the 1861 census. On the 1851 census, High Street was called Parsonage Road hence the name of the farm and house. The Downhams lived at the farm until at least 1902 (Kelly’s) and Thos. Drage was the owner from at least 1914. I understand that his machines were kept in the surviving sheds to the north of the house.

The house was ignored by the Royal Commission but a visual inspection reveals many early features that would discount it from being an C18 creation. It is of wood and plaster, initially probably 2 rooms with side entry to the north, the roof rising to two full storeys on the south side, the north having a full length pent roof addition. A C16(?) inglenook is sited on the east side and an outbuilding of the C19 attached to the west has been raised to the same height of the house and made integral with it. A brick cellar underlies the original house and contains a live spring.

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<sup>1</sup> Essex Poll Book 1842. Copy of the Register of the Electors, of the Northern Division of the County of Essex, for the year commencing Nov. 1st., 1841, and ending Oct. 31st., 1842



The west and south elevations have been 'improved' in white brick and a projecting bay added to the middle of the south elevation. The north wall may have been raised to a full two storey height in the C18 at the natural line for dormers, which perhaps it replaced; and the original roof retained as a lean-to. Or alternatively, the outshot was simply bolted on at that date. The assessment considers these alternatives later but it is obvious from inside that the wall at first floor sits on the N-S first floor joists, a curious arrangement to say the least.

The roofs are plain tiled with concrete tiles of the 1950s or 60s and the fenestration is all replaced with 'storm casements', of late C20 date.

The house appears on Chapman and Andre's 1777 map as part of a farmstead of 4 buildings, none of which remain. The remaining 3 outbuildings to the north, now in separate ownership were extensions to a barn parallel to the house and now demolished.

A small boiler room has been added to the west side of the south elevation. The brickwork of this elevation has been raised in three phases, two white and one red fletton, and in a mixture of bonds, stretcher, Flemish and English.

### 3.2 Neighbouring structures

The house forms part of a group of historic buildings on High Street, all interesting in different ways, and many of them listed Grade II.

### 3.3 Map Regression

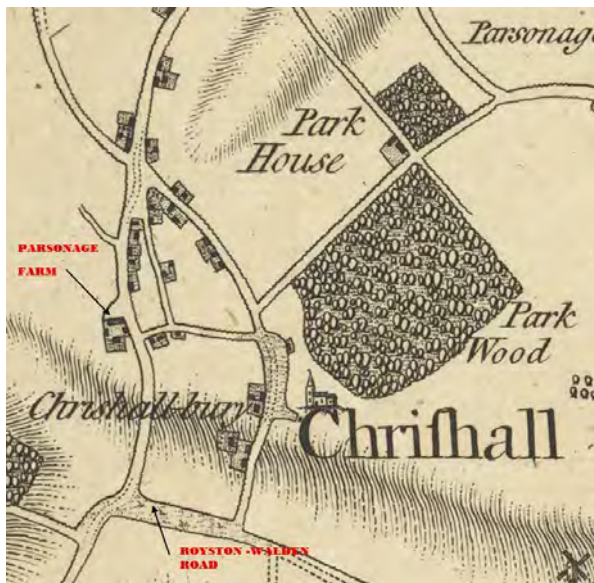


Fig. 3\; 1777 Chapman and Andre Map

The house is shown on Chapman and Andre's map with three outbuildings around a yard entered from the north. On the Verron survey for the OS, the northern barn appears as two structures but essentially confirms the 1777 layout. The extent of Broad Green to the north is evident on Verron and omitted on the Chapman and Andre map.



*Fig. 4 a;b - 1799 Verron survey for the OS*



*Fig 5 - 1808 Inclosure map*



*Fig. 6 - 1856 one inch OS*





Fig. 7 -1876 six inch OS

The 1808 map confirms the data on the C18 maps while the 1856 has almost no detail. The former shows the house with projecting bay and no eastern extension, and buildings to the north, west and east. A little square building is shown just north of the house too. The map is a photo so cannot be trusted for scale. The house appears much closer to the south side of the island than it is today but the moat and island are clearly drawn too large for the farmyard plot whose shape presumably has remained the same over the following 200 years.

The 1876 first edition 6" OS map shows the farm has been redeveloped. The eastern outbuilding is gone and the northern barn appears to have been rebuilt with three southern limbs which survive today without their parent structure. The NW building looks to have been rebuilt and extended too. The triangular entrance on the 1777 map is confirmed on the north side and Broad Green is absent. The farm is entered from the north *and* the east. A pond is shown to the west of the moat and another to the roadside to the east.

Every map subsequent to the 1808 one shows the east extension spanning right to the revetment of the moat.





Fig. 8 - 1896 25inch OS



Fig. 9 - 1919 25 inch OS

The house is about the same in 1896 with an orchard to the east of the moat and a couple of outbuildings to the west, one of which was demolished by 1919. The later map shows the orchard extended to the south of the moat. A small enclosure sits on the site of the current boiler house on the SE of the house. The narrow, south bridge has been built by 1919.

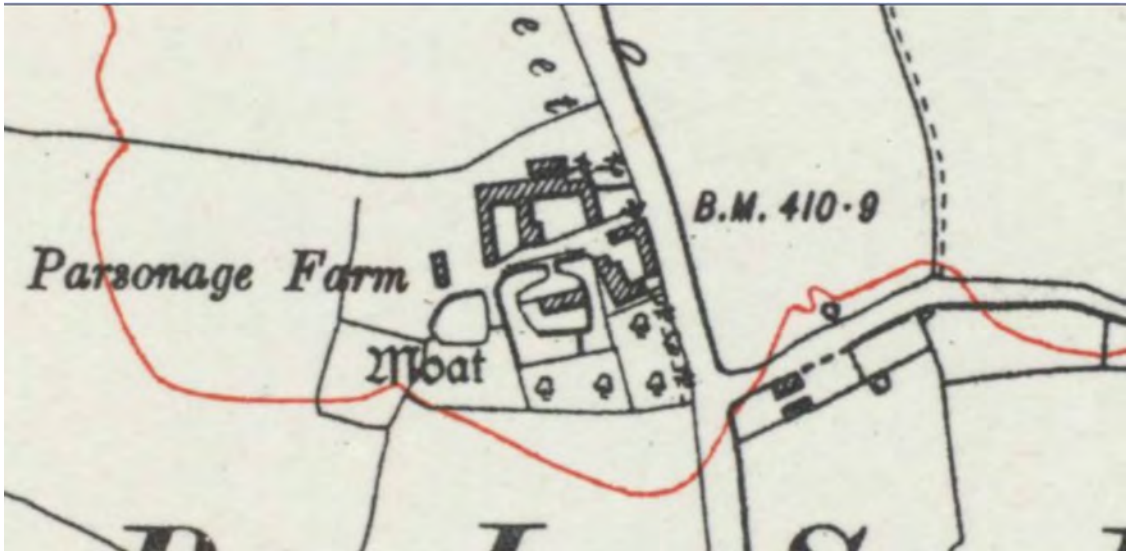


Fig. 10 - 1938 6 inch map

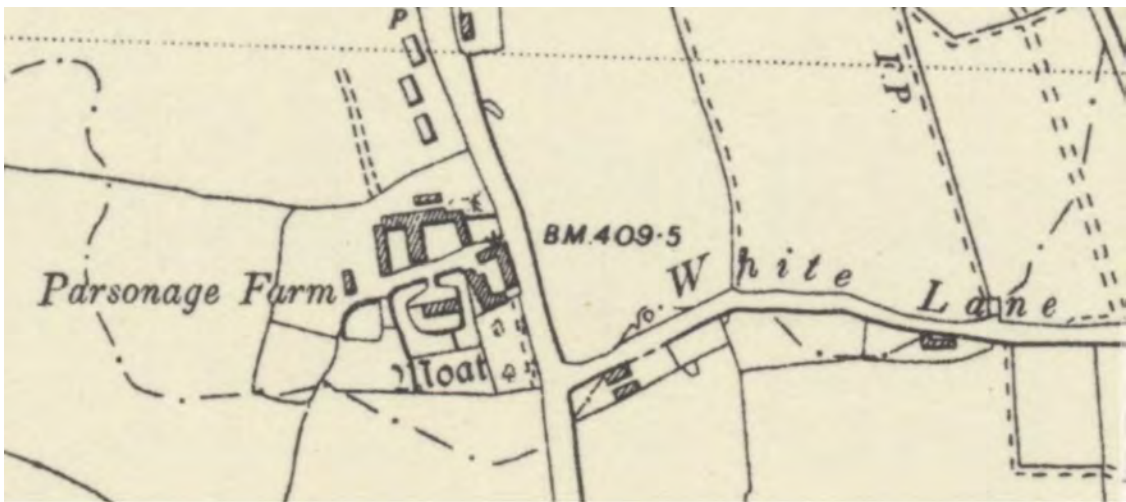


Fig. 11 - 1946 6 inch map



Fig. 12 - 2000 aerial photo

The projecting bay is not shown on the 1938 or 1946 maps but that does not necessarily mean that it was not there. No map records the fact that the east extension projects past the line of the north elevation. The bulk of the NW farm building was demolished by 1938 and the southern orchard was gone by 1946.

The house's west pond has become a hedge and copse by the time of the 2000 aerial photo.

### **3.4 The House**

#### **Outside**

The building is an unusual two-storey, three room, single pile, wood, plaster and tiled house with a full-length side lean-to on the long north (entry) front, brick gables and a motley collection of brick elevations on the south side which also has a full-height projecting brick bay. It sits on a once square island surrounded by a C15 moat, approached by a modest brick bridge to the north.

Eighteenth century in appearance, the house was extended to the west in the C19 as far as the revetment of the moat, single-storey at first and later raised to the full height of the C18 house to give the third room to the plan form. The list entry says that the building was originally a C15 manor house which may have been a two-room arrangement to which an eastern axial chimney was added in the C16. A large C16 inglenook certainly remains in the east gable even though it has been overclad in an C18 mottled Cambridge white brick.

The timber west end of the south elevation is clad in a stretcher bond white brick on a fletton footing. The projecting bay to the south is entirely of brick in English bond in a buttery "white" above a 4ft lift of grey brick which extends into the eastern extension. The upper storey of the eastern extension is in red flettons.

The windows are all of the storm casement type, off the shelf 1980s cottage style, painted timber. The doors are of similar ilk, modern and part glazed, apart from the front door which is ledged, braced and oak boarded and the north kitchen door which is also boarded but in painted softwood.





*Fig. 13 - Front (north) Elevation and moat*



*Fig. 14 - West Elevation*

## Interior of house

Generally, the house has a 1950s air, overlaid onto an historic interior. A late C17/ early C18 newel stair remains next to the chimney and the C16 drawing room ceiling timbers add to the history despite alterations. Most walls sport exposed stud work, not all of which looks authentic.



Fig 15: Floor Plans

The interior retains some panelled doors of the early C19 and the Drawing Room beams and joists and part of its C16 inglenook.

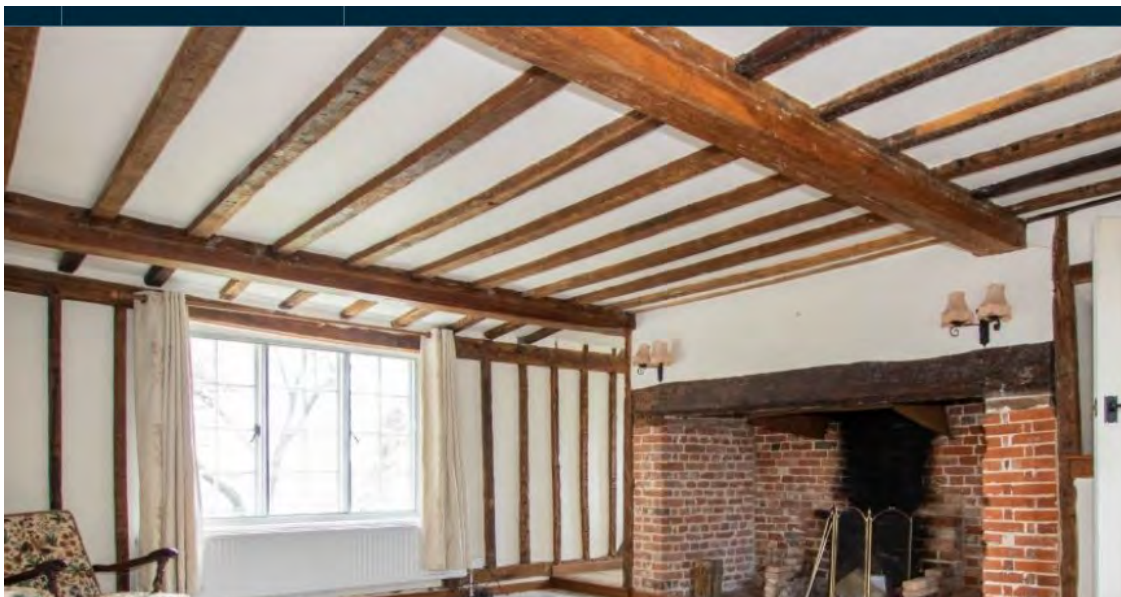


Fig 16: Drawing Room ceiling and fireplace



*Fig 17: Principal Stair*



*Fig 18: ceiling beam detail on Ground Floor*



*Fig 19: brick basement with later pier*



The original part of the house has a cellar which is brick lined and appears to be built on a live spring controlled by a sump pump. Its ceiling is modern comprising machine cut s/w joists on steel beams and brick piers.

### 3.5 Phasing

#### C15

This house is on the island of a C15 moat and may have some origins in that period but nothing has been found to confirm that hypothesis.

#### C16

The principal form of the original house appears to be an oak box frame with a 'lid' of rafters, single pile and of two rooms (the current western 2/3 of the house). The brick plinth and wall plate of the west wall of the dining room supports the theory that this was the outside (east) wall of the house and the kitchen and dining room were added later. The mapping of 1808 confirms this. The two storey frame is visible in the two principal posts in this old east wall (the south one intact, the north one cut for later lean-to) and in the west wall adjacent to the newel stair.



*Fig 20 – Junction of principal corner post and FF beam in Dining Room*

The evidence of the structure suggests that the earliest parts of the building date to the late C16 and this is consistent with the general period of national rebuilding identified by Hoskins and others. The Drawing Room ceiling has a late C16 beam with ogee stop chamfer, and floor joists tenoned into its side. The inglenook fireplace also has C16 brickwork. Both are altered. The ceiling appears to have been relocated northward when the building was widened to the north and a further (reused) beam added on the south side. The fireplace has a later brick pier and a reused C17(?) beam as its bressummer. The joists are reused and were plastered; some are moulded. There is no indication of where the stair may have risen as the other floors are all C18 or later.



*Fig 21 -South ceiling beam supported on stud bolted to S. side of inglenook- no hands tech!*

### C18

The structure was widened by about 4 feet to the north in 1796<sup>2</sup> and a newel stair inserted (or more likely relocated) at the north side of the inglenook. The stair with its scratch mouldings still exists but its splats have been replaced. The west gable must have been clad in brick around this time too – using a mottled Cambridge white 2 3/8”

<sup>2</sup> A complete 1796 rebuild is recorded in an 1814 survey held at the ERO.



high. The curious northern lean-to and the northern first floor external wall that sits on the floor joists appears all to be part of this phase. The current north wall has a whiff of expedience about it. It has a massive eaves beam when compared to the rest of the structure and has a pair of C16/17 jowl posts, one each side of the entrance. None of the studs tenon into the eaves beam. This all points to reused structure.

The roof at this end of the house has rafter feet used in East Anglia from the C16. The construction is not C16 though comprising reused oak sections fastened together with handmade nails. Bedroom 4 has foot wide boards overlaid with Victorian 6" ones.

### C19

The east side of the house is of solid 9" brick construction raised on the moat revetment to a single storey and subsequently elevated to two storeys, possibly after WWII as much of the exposed structure is of flettons.



*Fig. 22 East Elevation – C20 whites on Victorian reds on C18(?) revetment*

The central projecting south bay is in two lifts, a base of grey brick and an upper level of buttery whites, all in English bond. Construction is solid; there is no timber frame enclosed. Given that there was a bay in this position in the C18 (see 1808 map), the bay must be a rebuild. Perhaps it was widened in this period from a staircase tower?

### C20

The western section of the south elevation is clad in stretcher bond Cambridge whites, probably a C20 rebuild owing to structural movement at the SW corner which exists to

this day. The eastern section as mentioned above, is in 9" flettons and probably of this vintage too.

The rebuilt C18 roof at the west end is clad in concrete plain tiles of the 1950s/60s. The roof of the east end is in machine cut rafters consistent with a late C19/ early C20 date but it might be post-War. No record of its construction has been found.

All the windows are 1980s style storm casements from John Carr or similar. Notably, all the window openings appear to be C20. Evidence of infilled windows even exists in the front FF timber wall. But the south bay is typical with the new fenestration crashed into older fabric, farmyard style.



*Fig 23 a;b - South Elevation details showing new window openings*

## 4. ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

### 4.1 Introduction

The articles of the ICOMOS Burra Charter defines heritage (or, cultural) significance of a place as the sum of its qualities or ‘values.’ The five values usually examined are aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual. The NPPF for England uses “archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic”, the first of which is captured under “scientific”, the second and third under “aesthetic”; the last is equivalent.

<b>This Document</b>	<b>Burra Charter</b>	<b>NPPF</b>	<b>Historic England Conservation Principles (2008)</b>
architectural/artistic	aesthetic	artistic architectural	aesthetic
historic	historic	historic	historical
archaeological	scientific	archaeological	evidential
Included in historic	social		communal
n/a	spiritual		

### Architectural and artistic value

This refers to the sensory and perceptual experience of a place. Aesthetics is concerned with the appreciation of beauty and includes formal aesthetic ideals and thus architectural ideas. The government’s planning practice guidance (PPG) refers to “interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.” Useful questions posed by ICOMOS<sup>3</sup> to assess aesthetic (hence architectural and artistic) value include:

- Does the place have special compositional or uncommonly attractive qualities involving combinations of colour, textures, spaces, massing, detail, movement, unity, sounds, scents?
- Is the place distinctive within the setting or a prominent visual landmark?
- Does the place have qualities which are inspirational or which evoke strong feelings or special meanings?

<sup>3</sup> Practice Note Version 1: November 2013 Understanding and assessing cultural significance

- Is the place symbolic for its aesthetic qualities: for example, does it inspire artistic or cultural response, is it represented in art, photography, literature, folk art, folk lore, mythology or other imagery or cultural arts?
- Does the place display particular aesthetic characteristics of an identified style or fashion?
- Does the place show a high degree of creative or technical achievement?

### **Historic value**

Historic value often underlies other values. Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. 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. It may be the site of an important event. For any place the significance will be greater where the evidence of the association or event survives at the place, or where the setting is substantially intact, than where it has been changed or evidence does not survive. However, some events or associations may be so important that the place retains significance regardless of such change or absence of evidence.

Icomos always considers social and spiritual values of a place. Social value embraces the associations that a place has for a particular community or cultural group and the social or cultural meanings that it holds for them. Spiritual value refers to the intangible values and meanings embodied in or evoked by a place which give it importance in the spiritual identity, or the traditional knowledge, art and practices of a cultural group. Spiritual value may also be reflected in the intensity of aesthetic and emotional responses or community associations, and be expressed through cultural practices and related places. The PPG since mid-2019 includes these values under 'historic' interest. It says that heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

### **Archaeological (Scientific) value**

This refers to the information content of a place and its ability to reveal more about an aspect of human activity in the past through examination or investigation of the place, including the use of archaeological techniques. The PPG says there will be archaeological interest if the evidence or potential evidence is worthy of expert investigation at some point.

## **4.2 Levels of significance**

James Semple Kerr's in *The Conservation Plan* imagines significance as a continuum i.e. there is a *scale* of significance. In order to be able to describe where on this scale an

element is deemed to lie, and to compare the relative significance of elements, notional points on the scale are usually grouped together and a hierarchy of levels of significance set out. Kerr always advocated keeping this hierarchy simple.

Assessing the level of significance of an element is not a precise calculation – a building may be significant in a number of ways and each of these may be at a different level (e.g. it may demonstrate an aspect of a site’s history very well, whilst being of low architectural interest, and at the same time very harmful to the setting of another building, resulting in it being assessed as being of little significance overall. Hence deciding on an overall level of significance involves weighing up all the variables and reaching a subjective conclusion. For this reason, consulting over the appropriateness of levels of significance of particular buildings and their elements can be extremely useful to ensure consensus.

The levels of significance used in this report are as follows:

- Exceptional significance
- Considerable significance
- Some significance
- Neutral significance (i.e. neither positive nor negative)
- Intrusive (i.e. has a negative impact on visual amenity, character or views).

For the purposes of this report, the threshold for inclusion on the national list or schedule is ‘Some’ or above. Elements with ‘some’ significance include those on the Local Authority’s ‘local list.’ It is important to note that these levels of significance do not correspond exactly to particular grades of listing and the assessment may point to the inappropriateness of a listing grade already assigned. A site will not necessarily have elements covering the entire hierarchy. The resulting ‘statement of significance’ for a site and its parts should comprise an indication of the way or ways in which it is significant, and of how significant it is (i.e. its level of significance). For practical reasons, at complex sites, an explanation of the nature of significance is sometimes not included for the last two levels. An assessment of significance may need to be revised in the light of new information.

<b>Table 2: Hierarchical Definition of Significance</b>	
<b>Exceptional:</b>	important at national/international level, reflected in the designations of World Heritage Site, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grade I and some II* Listed Buildings and registered gardens, plus equivalent sites including those of ecological/nature conservation value;

<b>Considerable:</b>	important at regional level or sometimes higher, including Grade II and some Grade II* listed Buildings and registered gardens;
<b>Some:</b>	of local to regional significance, often for group value; including lesser Grade II listed buildings and registered gardens
<b>Little:</b>	of limited heritage or other value;
<b>Negative or intrusive:</b>	those features which detract from the value of a site;
<b>Neutral:</b>	neither positive nor negative

### 4.3 The heritage significance of Parsonage Farmhouse

#### 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 architectural value as do the late C20 '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 group value too 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.

### **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 farm yard.

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 **some** historical value including communal value in the house.

### **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 island and moat have considerable potential to reveal past ways of life

There is **considerable** archaeological value in the house, island and moat as a group.

#### **4.4 Intactness and Condition**

**Externally**, the form is inscrutable but the C18 seems to be uppermost in the assembly. The elevations are in need of repair and stabilisation to counter the seasonal movement occasioned by the spring in the cellar.

**Internally**, very little of the C16 remains. The feel is of the C18/ early C19 with a 1950s overlay. Fabric is well kept but the basement shows brickwork deterioration from dampness.

**Boundaries.** The moat banks are eroding.

#### **4.5 Contribution of setting to significance**

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

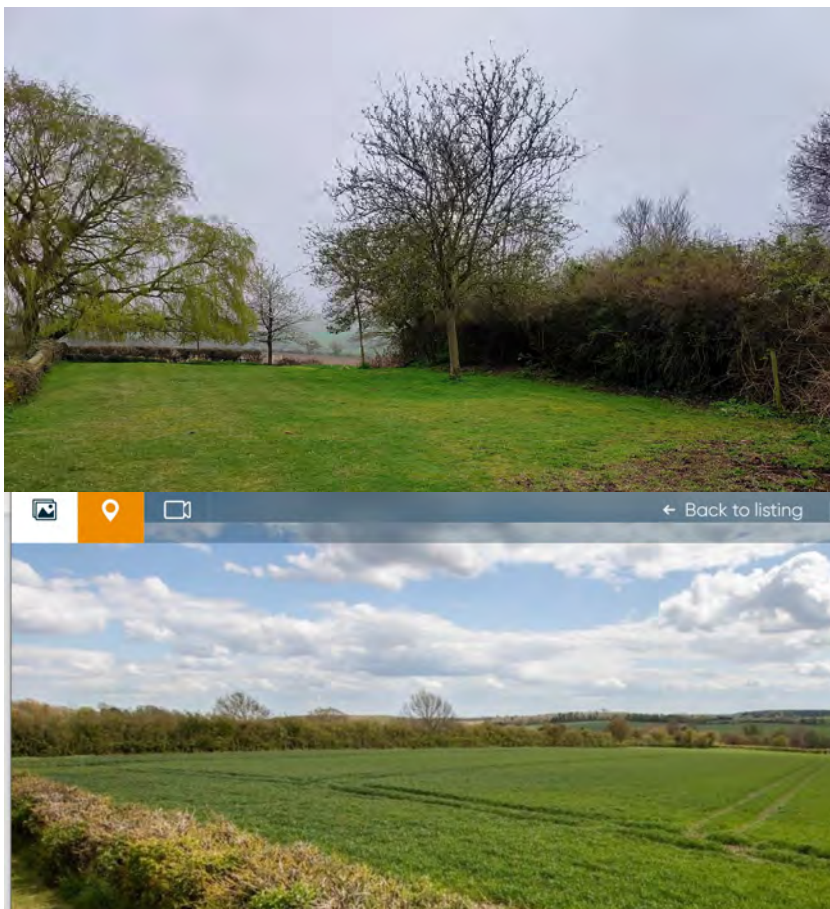


settlement, little altered in their visual relationship since the 17th century, although their impact has been sufficiently diluted by ordinary C20 building that they are not grouped as a Conservation Area. Parsonage Farm is different from the group, set well back from the building line on a moated island tucked into a farmyard and most visible from the valley below. Thus the contribution of the immediate setting is high but the wider setting to the north less so.

The buildings that form the group on top of the holloway leading to High Street are very much part of a landscape which in turn contributed to its significance. It is probable that the moat and its situation is more for show than security, thus the wider southern setting contributes to the significance of the architecture.

### Views

There are good views across the valley from the island and consequently there are views back albeit screened by 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. 24 South views*



## 5. CONSERVATION PLAN

### Purpose

The new owner of the house wishes to take an holistic approach to the conservation of the house, island, moat and their setting, first by understanding what makes the place culturally significant and then using this to inform necessary change. The house is no longer a farmhouse; its outbuildings have been sold separately so conservation needs to be viewed in a different light from the tradition of the last four hundred years. It is hoped that the CP will identify ways of conserving the most important features of these heritage assets for the enjoyment of future generations.

It is envisaged that the CP would form the basis for an approach to conservation as an ongoing process over the next 10 years following which it could be renewed and updated.

### Scope

The Conservation Plan will cover the house, island, moat, drive and garden, not in every detail but targeted at the site's most vulnerable aspects of significance, suggesting how they should be approached and conserved in the future.

### Constraints

Scheduled Monument status

Grade II LB status

Immediate built heritage to north and east

### VULNERABILITIES

The ability of the site to fulfil its new role as an unattached house is little different from its original role but restricting access to just the eastern drive risks compacting the residential use and cluttering the historic setting with cars and the like.

Without the benefit of the outbuildings, some means of housing cars, garden machinery, fuel etc should be developed to avoid cluttering the historic setting. This might take the form of a garage in the form and of the materials of the existing farm.

By remaining in use though, the upkeep and conservation of the heritage asset is secured and its continued existence and significance ensured. Under the current usage, significance is not threatened, and its listed status ensures that any further alterations should be suitably controlled.

The internal spaces retain little historic material in most of the building but extant pre-WWI elements should be retained. The inauthentic studwork is not particularly sensitive to change, nor are the windows but the inglenook, the newel stair, parts of the drawing room ceiling and several internal doors are integral to the house as it has been handed down to us in the C19.

## Maintenance

### Exterior Elevations and Setting

The exterior is much altered and has not weathered well. The brickwork is in poor condition and needs stitching and repointing to cope with seasonal movement.

The north elevation is a curio and an attractive entrance setting.

The west is peppered by windows and is an oddity but is not unattractive.

The east is raised in several different brick types and bears the scars of changing requirements for fenestration. It could be improved.

The south elevation is also raised in several different brick types and partially contains a timber frame. It is structurally weak and needs stitching. Rendering might unify its appearance subject to the approval of the LPA.

The house was built as part of a farmstead which has been broken up. Landscape setting should be considered if any alterations are proposed.

The moat's form has been fixed since the early C19 and should not be altered without good reason. The erosion of the banks should be tackled with input and approval of HE.

### Internal Spaces

The interior of the building contains only limited material of historical value. Such items include the primary staircase, some doors, ceilings and fireplaces.

The layout is not consistent with its original form. Alterations should be mindful of the basic intention of a three room plan as modified in the C18 and C19.

As a Grade-II-listed building, any alterations, or repairs made with non-original materials, will require listed building consent.

## CONSERVATION POLICIES

Having established the significance of Parsonage Farmhouse and its moat as heritage assets, and having identified ways in which the significance is vulnerable to harm, the next step is to recommend policies to reduce the probability of harm and conserve significance. Policies set parameters for managing fabric.

The Conservation Plan is intended to be an active tool for the regular maintenance and long-term management of the site which needs to be reviewed at intervals, and revised as appropriate to take account of additional knowledge and changing priorities.

### 1. Use

Optimum viable use is usually the original use thus retaining the building in this use is important to its continued significance. Alterations intended to facilitate this use should be permitted although modernisation must be weighed against significance.

### 2. Changes

Any alterations that cause 'less than substantial harm to the significance' should deliver 'substantial public benefits.' And proposals that involve 'substantial harm or loss' should be 'wholly exceptional.' Changes should: 'preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset'.

### 3. Consents

Listed Building consent is required for works to the interior and exterior of the building that affect its 'special interest.' This may extend to some routine repairs but HE advice note 16 should be followed, or the LPA conservation officer consulted. Unless there is good reason to do otherwise, where original or significant material is extant, repairs should be carried out using the same materials and techniques.

Proposed works to the monument must receive scheduled monument consent from Historic England. All works to a monument need permission; there is no discretion.

### 4. Consultation

It is important to garner the best advice at an early stage of any proposal to

alter any part of the building or monument. Refer to the HA for a reminder of which aspects of the building are significant or vulnerable.

#### 5. Character and materials

Any alteration or redevelopment must respect the character of the old farm and its position in the village and ancient landscape. While the farm buildings remain, the house forms an important historic group with them and this should be respected.

All materials have a natural lifespan and change is required to keep the building and moat safe and intact and fit for use. Some materials will have a very long life expectancy if given routine maintenance; others need more regular replacement.

#### 6. Exteriors

- a. The entrance front should remain substantially unaltered.
- b. The southern elevation is a jumble. The shape is historic but the fenestration and facing material is obscure and incoherent. Unification in some form may be considered, perhaps rendering. The finish will have an impact on the wider historic landscape, viewed from the valley below to the South and a full understanding of this impact must be calculated before proceeding.
- c. To maintain the drive uncluttered and to preserve the setting of the LB and monument, a garage or other similar building in the local vernacular should be erected and maintained in an appropriate position. Permission will be required from the LPA and HE advice will be required.
- d. In keeping with the historic nature of the place, the storm casements should be replaced with traditional flush casements. Consider slim double glazing.

#### 7. Interiors

Any alterations to be made to the interior spaces will respect the significance of both the individual elements and the building as a whole. The interiors contain elements which contribute positively to significance, such as the newel stair, Drawing Room ceiling and inglenook but all windows and external doors are late C20 and of little significance.

Consider reordering the largely disused second floor. Any internal alterations should only be undertaken with a full understanding and respect for the significance of the place.

## 8. Environmental issues

With climate change a pressing issue, any proposals for alterations should assess the feasibility of incorporating low and zero carbon technologies without adversely affecting significance. Ensuring that the building is sustainable will be crucial to its long-term survival and significance.

## 9. Archaeology

If during any subsequent renovations or alterations any excavation work is carried out around or beneath the house, an archaeological assessment will be made of the potential for significant finds, and if appropriate an archaeologist will be given a watching brief as excavation takes place. It is likely that there is significant archaeological material preserved within the monument.

Should any excavation work be carried out in this area, an assessment of the archaeological potential should be made. This should include at least a desk-based assessment, but possibly geophysics and trial trenching. A watching brief will almost certainly be required for any excavation.

## 10. Record keeping

The practice of routine recording, investigation, and maintenance is associated with estate buildings and is rarely enacted or sustained in a private residence. Such an approach would though minimise the need for larger repairs or other interventions and would be the most economical way of maintaining an asset.

A proper record of the repair and maintenance work is a useful management tool and a simple record book will be set up and maintained. All workmen should be made aware of the contents of the CP.

The Conservation Plan will be reviewed and updated from time to time as work is carried out on the building or as circumstances change. The recommendations should be reviewed at ten-yearly intervals

## 11. Review of CP

Policy changes, building alterations, or other changes of circumstance, will affect the conservation duties and requirements of the building. The policy recommendations in the Conservation Plan will inform the future of the building and should be a useful tool for people carrying out maintenance work or where more significant alterations are being considered. The recommendations need to be kept up to date if they are to remain relevant.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Heritage. *Conservation Principles*.  
Chrishall village website <https://chrishallessex.co.uk/>  
Essex Record Office T/M 144

### **Inhabitants**

1850

Joseph Downham lived at Parsonage Farm, farming 700 acres with 25 labourers.

1861 Census

Joseph Downham Hd m 60 Farmer 500a. 19men, 4 boys.

Eliza Downham Wife m 47

Robert Dean Foreman Widower 62 Bailiff

Ann Clark Servant Un 19 House Servant

1871 census

Eliza Downham Head Wid 56 employ 16 men & 4 boys

Philip Downham Son Unm 18 Farmer's son

Sarah A Downham Dau in Law Wid 37

HerbertJ Downham Grandson 9 Scholar

Robert Dean Baliff Wdr 65 Farm Baliff

Susannah Litchfield Unm 15 Servant Domest

1874 (Kelly's)

Mrs Eliza Downham farmer

1882

Mrs Sarah Ann Downham farmer

1890

Mrs Sarah Ann Downham farmer

1894

Herbert Joseph Downham,

1902

Herbert Joseph Downham, farmer (Philip Downham, farmer is at Park House)

1914

Henry Thomas Drage, farmer

The author, Ian Dieffenthaler, is a local architect accredited by the RIBA as a Specialist Conservation Architect.