



Planning, Heritage & Design Statement

The Old Farmhouse, West High House Farm, Morpeth, NE61 2YT

April 2023



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ANNEX A Enlarged plans dated 1988

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared by CLB Heritage to accompany an application for Listed Building Consent for a single storey rear extension to The Old Farmhouse, Morpeth. CLB Heritage have been commissioned by Dr Edward Jankowski to consider the significance of the Listed Building and the impact of the proposal upon its special interest. We have worked closely with Crawford Higgins Associates to present a design which we feel is appropriate and which seeks to minimise harm to significance.

1.2 The objective of this assessment is to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the heritage assets affected and to explain how the works impact upon their significance and setting.

1.3 The aims of this assessment are:

- to identify the assets which could be affected by the proposed development;
- to consider the significance and setting of the identified heritage assets;
- to demonstrate how the proposal has explored ways to maximise enhancement and minimise harm;
- to assess the effects of the proposed development on the significance of the identified heritage assets; and
- to consider the appropriateness and acceptability of the scheme in light of the current legislation and policy relevant for decision making.

1.4 The assessment identifies the heritage assets surrounding the application site, including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, non-designated heritage assets, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and special landscape areas. The zone of interest has been established based on information gained during the site visit and professional judgement.



Figure 1 Site location Plan

2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Old Farm House dates in part from the early 18th century and formed part of the estate owned by the Ord family, notably William Ord who was MP for Newcastle and landowner in Northumberland during the latter part of the 18th and early 19th centuries. Originally known as West High House.
- 2.2 The property appears on the 1842 Tithe map (Figure 2) and has agricultural buildings attached to its west. The house itself is linear in form with a projection on the north elevation. Detached to the south-east is another agricultural building which was later removed from the site.
- 2.3 Located one mile to the south-west of Morpeth town centre in what was formerly open countryside, the former farmstead now adjoins the 1970s south-west suburban extension of the town, altering its former setting from 'remote rural' to 'edge of settlement'.
- 2.4 The Farm House is a grade II listed building, designated in 1987 at the same time of extensive renovations to bring the farm house into habitable use and for the conversion of the farm buildings to form three separate dwellings. The attached farm buildings are unlisted.
- 2.5 The 1841 Census records John Athey living at West High House with his wife and three children. The 1851 Census records John as a farmer of 110 acres and at this time he was aged 61 living with his wife (aged 48), four children and one servant and appears again in the 1861 Census.
- 2.6 The 1866 Ordnance Survey plan (Figure 3) shows the form of West High House and its outbuildings and surrounding landscape in greater detail. Whilst the house itself remains of the same form; the barns/outbuildings have altered somewhat. The L-shaped section has been elongated to the south and a further building (The Hemel) has been added to form a u-shaped plan with a central courtyard. Note how The Hemel is slightly detached from the farm house and its adjoining barn.

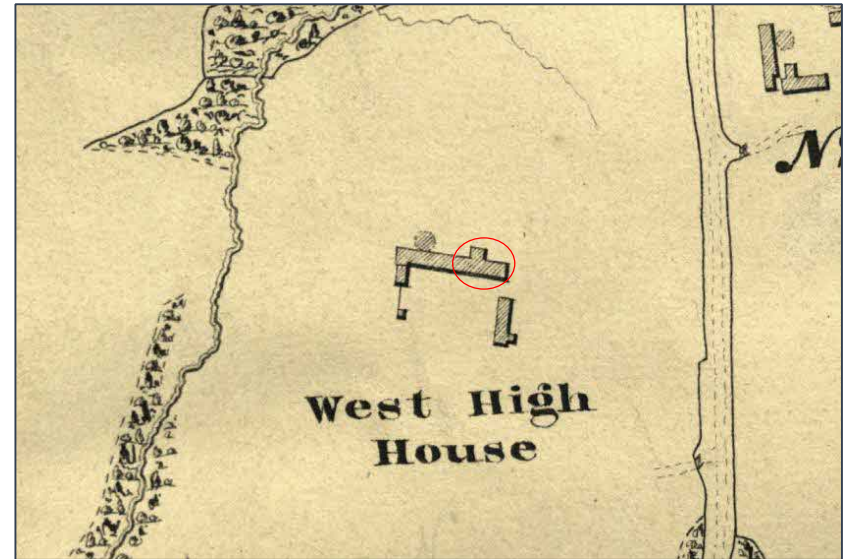


Figure 2 1842 Tithe map



Figure 3 1866 Ordnance Survey plan

2.7 The detached south-east building seen on the Tithe map (**Figure 2**) has been removed to make way for a formally defined garden to the farmhouse, which is off-set a little to the east. Notably, the form of the buildings at East High House across the main road have also changed from the earlier Tithe map, which suggests there was a high degree of change occurring between 1842 and 1866.

2.8 The 1897 Ordnance Survey plan (**Figure 4**) shows further change again and now has three southwards projecting buildings from the principal farmhouse and attached barn. This time the westernmost building has a gin-gang attached to its west elevation and a third leg has been inserted within the courtyard of the u-shaped plan. The Hemel remains detached from the main barn on its north side. Again, further additions can be seen at East High House which again demonstrates demand for further buildings from increasing productivity locally.

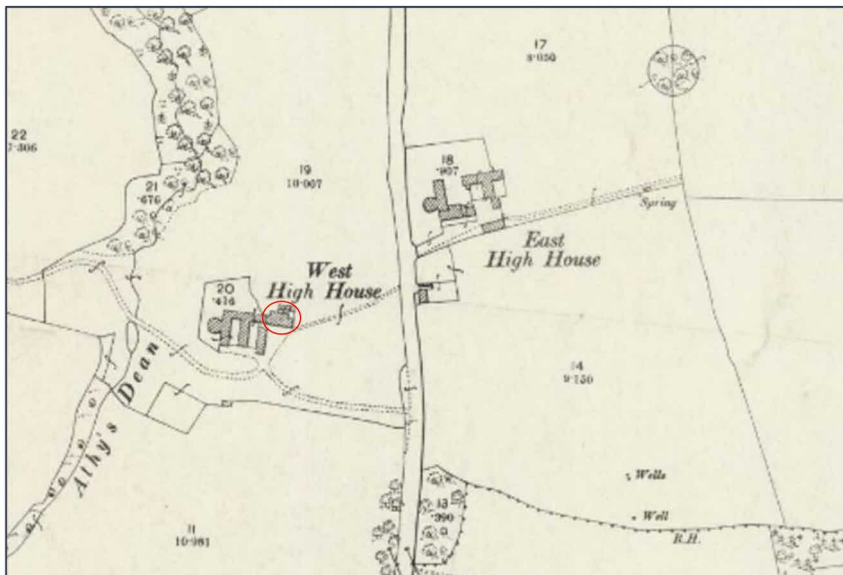


Figure 4 1897 Ordnance Survey plan

2.9 **Photo 1** below shows the Site prior to conversion. The red brick farmhouse is seen to the right and the three stone gables of the southern projecting farm buildings are seen to its left.



Photo 1 West High House Farm prior to conversion of agricultural buildings



Photo 2 Historic photograph of West High House – formerly two cottages

3. THE OLD FARM HOUSE (West High House)

- 3.1 West High House was designated on 29 April 1987 as 'The Old Farmhouse'. The agricultural buildings are not referred to in the listing, which clearly identifies the house itself as the one being designated. Subsequent applications and correspondence with the Council on other applications to the converted buildings confirm that the farm buildings are not curtilage listed.
- 3.2 The farm house dates to the early 18th century and was extended and raised in height during the mid-18th century. The building is of two-storey height with the front south elevation constructed from red brick in English garden wall bond with the end and rear walls being of rubblestone construction. The three bays to the west comprise the original house and the two bays to the right have been added, along with the single storey carport in the early 1990s consent.

Designation description

- 3.3 'House, early C18 extended and heightened mid-C18. Original house brick front in English Garden Wall bond 1 & 4, with end and rear walls rubble; east extension rubble, 1st floor brick; continuous pantile roof. 2 storeys, 3 + 2 bays. Left part is original house, as far as stone quoins; central flush-panelled door; window openings (that above door blocked) with timber lintels, most carpentry gone but one 16-pane sash 1st floor right. Right part has boarded ground and upper doors and 8-pane Yorkshire sash with soldier lintel on 1st floor. Left gable has stepped brick coping and old stack. Interior: old ceiling beams, roof with collar-beam trusses, 2 levels of purlins and light ridge'.

Appearance prior to the conversion works in 1990

- 3.4 The existing plan from the 1988 application to convert the buildings shows how the farm house (building 3) was used as pigsties, divided internally into six separate pens (Figure 5). To the front south elevation was a set of external steps leading to a first floor loft (Figure 6). To the rear north

elevation were several attached structures with a concrete wall against the rear elevation holding five tall pots. A bulge to the base of the wall on the north-west corner of the house is noted on the floor plan (Figure 6). Please refer to Annex A for larger scale extracts of these plans.

- 3.5 The existing north elevation shown in Figure 7 shows a largely blank elevation with only two doorways and two window apertures to the first floor. The position of brick pots upon a concrete plinth are shown extending across two-thirds of the wall (Figure 5). The roof is noted to be of pantile and in poor condition with the ridge tiles mainly missing (Figures 6 and 7). The existing plans and the resultant appearance of the building suggests a considerable amount of rebuilding, particularly to the rear north-west corner where a bulge was present. Steps are shown on the front south elevation giving access to the blocked window aperture; however, these steps do not appear on the historic photograph (Photo 2).

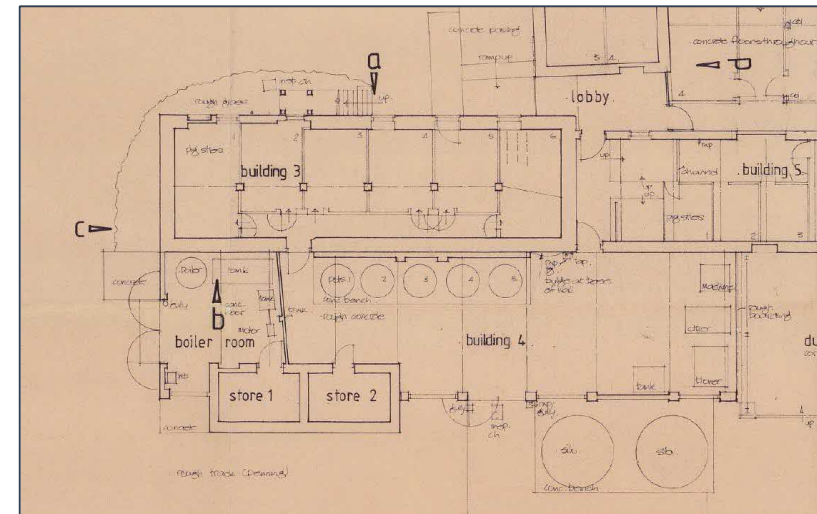


Figure 5 Existing ground floor plan 1988

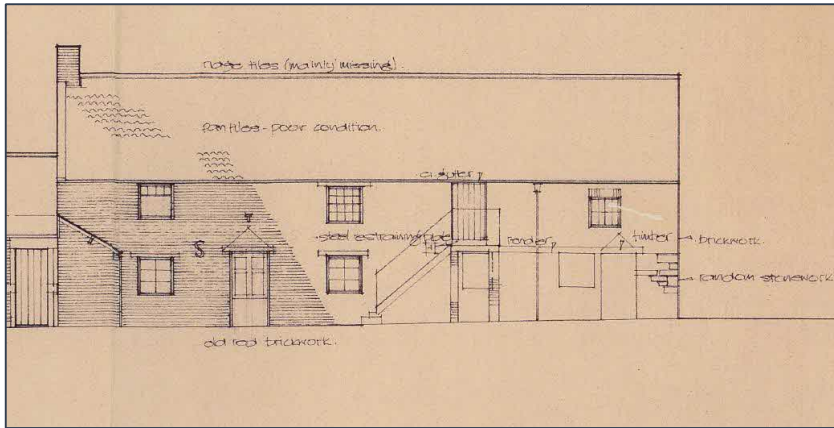


Figure 6 Existing front south elevation (1988)



Photo 3 Front south elevation today

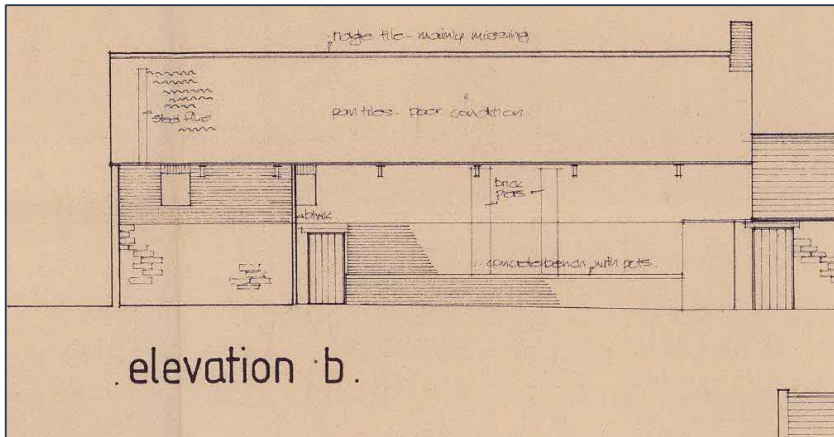


Figure 7 Existing rear elevation (1988)



Photo 4 Front south elevation prior to conversion from pigsty to dwelling



Photo 5 Conversion works in progress



Photo 7 Rear north elevation – all modern apertures – compare with Figure 8



Photo 6 The completed conversion today



Photo 8 Rear north elevation

3.6 The character of both elevations has changed considerably during the early 1990s conversion. The south front elevation has lost its external steps and blocked window/hayloft door (which were non-original) as well as the addition of windows and removal of a ground floor door to the right hand side. The rear elevation has changed from being one of few openings, to one of domestic character with nine new sash windows and a pair of French doors.

3.7 Given the extent of works in the early 1990s it is likely that there was a considerable amount of rebuilding. The existing plan (Figure 6) does not identify a door in this location (Photo 7), but does identify a bulge in the stonework. The door as well as the window are both recent insertions.

Significance and setting

3.8 Significance is the concept that underpins current conservation philosophy and the significance of heritage assets is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) as “The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting”.

3.9 Archaeological interest derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. The Site is of low archaeological interest and the former farmstead has seen considerable alterations during the 20th century. Whilst there is some evidential interest in the survival of built fabric, this has been much altered and largely rebuilt. The current application offers no opportunity to better reveal archaeological significance as this area was previously concrete hardstanding and occupied by a farm building/structure.

3.10 Historic interest derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It can be illustrative or associative. The farm house is of historical interest as an early 18th century farmhouse and for its evolution during that later 18th century to a much larger property. Through map regression it is clear that the

farmstead grew periodically throughout the 19th century as productivity increased and farming practices altered to require additional buildings and structures. There is some associative interest with the Ord family, however they did not occupy the property and it appears to have been a tenanted farm.

3.11 Architectural and artistic interest derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place through architectural design. The Old Farm House is of some architectural interest for its simple vernacular detailing, use of handmade brick to its principal elevation and humbler rubblestone to the sides and rear. The original dwelling consisted of the first three bays (the western section) up to the quoin stones, elongated and raised in height in the mid-18th century.

4. PROPOSAL & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 The proposal seeks Listed Building Consent for a single storey extension to the kitchen on the north elevation of the farm house. The extension has been designed as a modern addition which seeks to contrast with the historic appearance of the dwelling, whilst utilising floor to ceiling glazing which allows views through the structure to the fabric of the farmhouse behind. The roof is flat with an overhanging eaves detail and incorporates a lantern roof. These design details seek to minimise harm and maximise enhancement.

4.2 The extension is entirely hidden to the rear of the building and not visible in any viewpoint of the farmhouse. No openings within the wall to the house are required as the access is gained from the existing doorway which was inserted in 1990. The window will be retained within the extension, although this is non-historic. The design of the addition retains the linear appearance of the farmhouse and results in no harm to significance as there is no loss of fabric, the fabric remains visible and the linear form of the farmhouse remains legible, minimising harm and maximising enhancement. In addition, this is a very discreet corner of the garden location where significant alterations have been undertaken to the house

previously and where an agricultural building was attached to the rear of the house in the past. This is not a sensitive location.

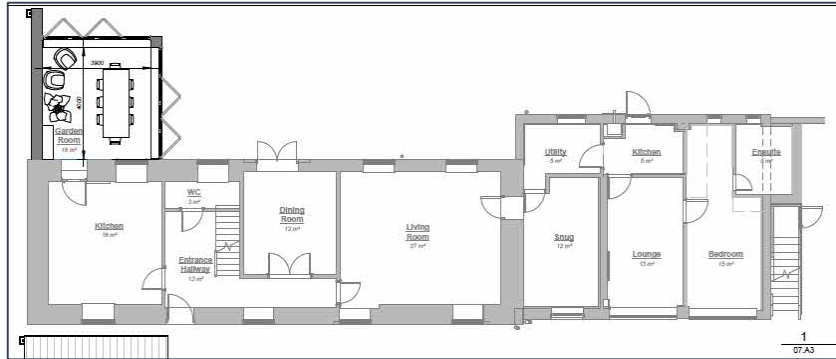


Figure 8 Proposed ground floor plan



Figure 9 Proposed rear north elevation

4.3 The Historic England Advice Note 12 ‘Statements of Heritage Significance’ (2019) recommends a staged approach to decision making which includes an assessment of impact on significance. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stresses that impacts on heritage assets should be avoided. Therefore, this assessment considers how adverse impacts have been avoided and / or minimised through their design and mitigation measures proposed where appropriate. The Conservation Principles Consultation Draft (2018) states that “as well as being potentially harmful,

change can be neutral or beneficial in its effect on heritage assets; it is only harmful if (and to the extent that) the asset’s significance is reduced”.

4.4 It goes on to state that “if changes to an asset respect its significance, then in most cases they are likely to serve both the public interest of its conservation and the private interests of those who use it. Owners and managers of heritage assets ought not to be discouraged from adding further layers that are judged to be of a quality that could add future interest, provided that the current significance is not materially reduced in the process”. It is also the case that alterations to heritage assets can better reveal or enhance the significance of heritage assets.

4.5 Historic England define harm as “change for the worse, here primarily referring to the effect of inappropriate interventions on the heritage values of place” (Conservation Principles, p17). Development does not necessarily mean harm. As stated above, it is only development which reduces the significance (special interest / value) of the asset in a material way which is harmful. If harm is identified then this should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal.

4.6 The NPPF requires proposals to avoid or minimise conflict between conservation of the asset and the proposal. The Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 ‘Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment’ advises that:

- the significance of the asset is understood;
- the impact of development on significance is understood;
- ways to avoid, minimise and mitigate impact are explored;
- harmful impacts be justified through and balanced; and
- that negative impacts on aspects of significance are offset by enhancing other aspects of significance

4.7 The following methodology (Table 1) has been used as a guide to quantify the magnitude of impact, combined with professional assessment (Table 2).

Table 1 Factors in the Assessment of the Magnitude of Impact (Source: Design Manual for Roads and Bridges - Volume 11, Part 2 Cultural Heritage)

Level of Impact	Factors in the Assessment of the Magnitude of Impact
Substantial	Change to key historic building elements, such that the resource is totally altered. Comprehensive changes to the setting.
Moderate	Change to many key historic building elements / setting, such that the resource is significantly modified.
Minor	Change to key historic building elements, such that the asset is slightly different. Change to setting of an historic building, such that it is noticeably changed.
Negligible	Slight changes to historic buildings elements or setting that hardly affect it / not readily evident.
Neutral	No change to fabric or setting

5. POLICY & DECISION MAKING

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) requires 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 194). This assessment aims to provide sufficient information for the significance of the heritage asset and the impact of development to be properly considered.
- 5.2 The NPPF states that “when considering impact upon significance, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance” (para 199).

- 5.3 “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification” (para 200). “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use” (para 202). Neutral effects have been identified as a result of these works which do not result in harm to significance.
- 5.4 Historic England Conservation Principles draft (2017) recognises that each generation should shape and sustain the historic environment in ways that allow people to use, enjoy and benefit from it, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. To understand the significance of place, Conservation Principles requires an understanding of the archaeological, historical, architectural and aesthetic interests of the heritage assets affected by such a proposal. This assessment has considered the significance of the heritage assets which lie primarily within their historical and architectural interests.
- 5.5 Northumberland Local Plan (2022) requires development proposals to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of that asset and the impact of any proposal upon that significance. Where development proposals would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage asset, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the optimum use that is viable and justifiable. Decisions affecting historic places and sites should take account of the individual and cumulative effect on the wider historic environment including from small scale changes which may gradually erode the historic character and/or the settings of key assets, the visitor economy, the vitality of the area and the quality of place.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This statement has identified the heritage assets which have the potential to be affected by the proposal and considered the impact of such on their

special interest. The historical development of the site has been explored and its character and appearance considered.

- 6.2 The heritage value of the site relates primarily to its historical interest as an early 18th century house. The house has been altered over time to extend it to the east to form an elongated farmhouse. The farmhouse has been used as two cottages, probably when the house was initially extended. The historic photograph at Photo 2 clearly depicts two cottages.
- 6.3 The house subsequently fell into decline during the 20th century and became subsumed within a farming enterprise operated from the adjacent 20th century dwelling used as the farmhouse, the historic house being used for housing pigs and with various additions to the rear. The entire site suffered considerably during this time. In 1988 an application for redevelopment was submitted with works completed in the early 1990s.
- 6.4 The conversion works saw extensive alterations to the farmhouse and outbuildings. The rear elevation was particularly altered with the addition of nine additional windows on an otherwise very blank wall. The form of the dwelling is linear and this is part of its character. The addition of a small extension to the rear will not harm this linear form as it will remain legible. There have been additions on this elevation previously, as seen in the historic maps (Figures 2, 3 and 4).
- 6.5 No harm has been identified to the significance or setting of the Listed Building from the addition of the single storey extension. The works, on balance will preserve the historic and architectural interests of the Site, designed to be a suitable addition in this location, tucked away to the rear of the property within the far corner of the garden against the boundary.
- 6.6 The design and mitigation measures outlined in this assessment have sought to limit the impact of works ensuring that the design quality addresses the heritage interests of the Site and that adverse effects are minimised and enhancement maximised.

- 6.7 It is considered that this proposal complies with both national and local policy on this basis.

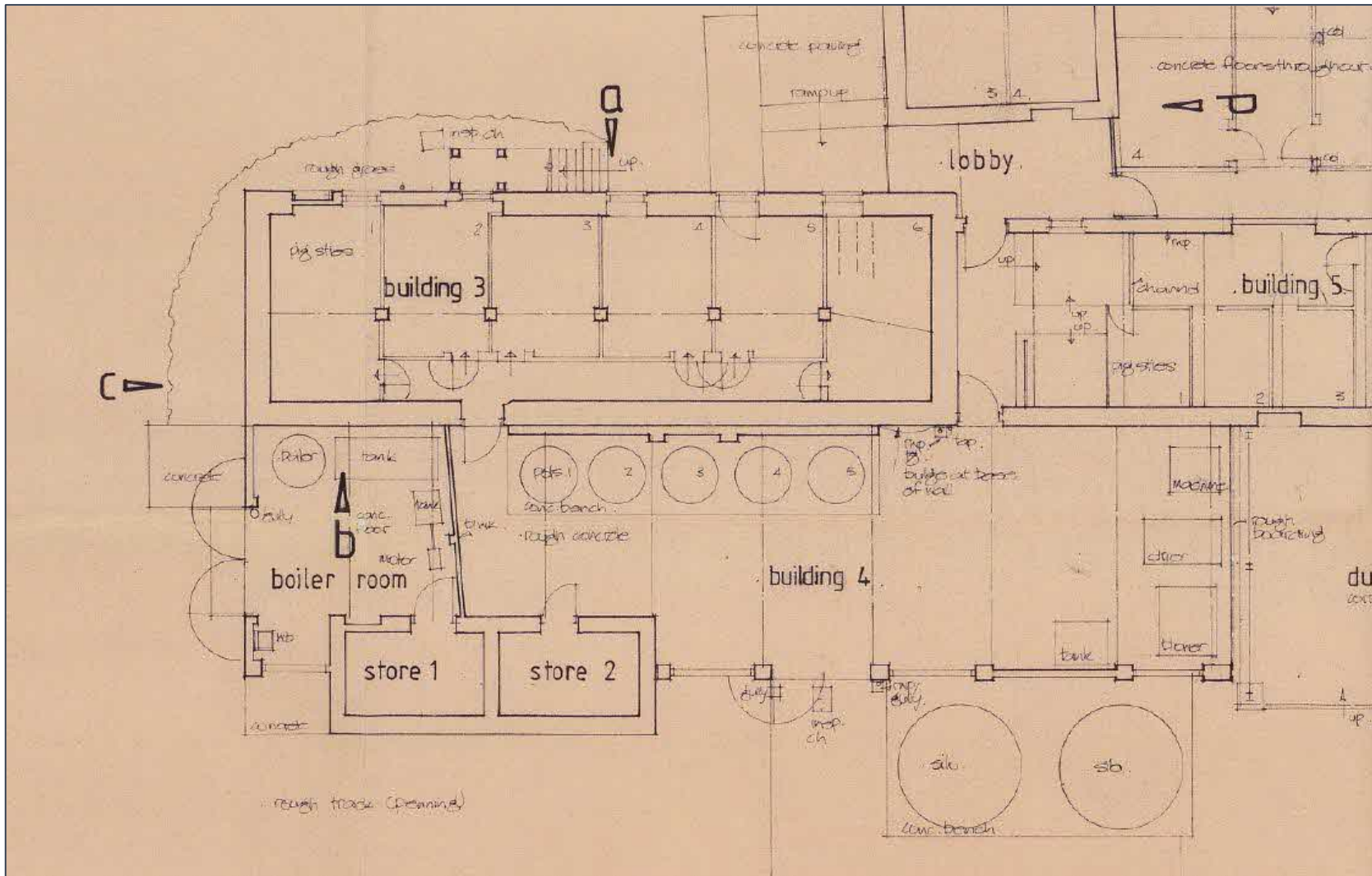


Figure 5 Enlarged image of existing ground floor plan 1988 application – note no rear door into kitchen and no windows on ground floor. Several tall pots against north wall with building 4 attached.

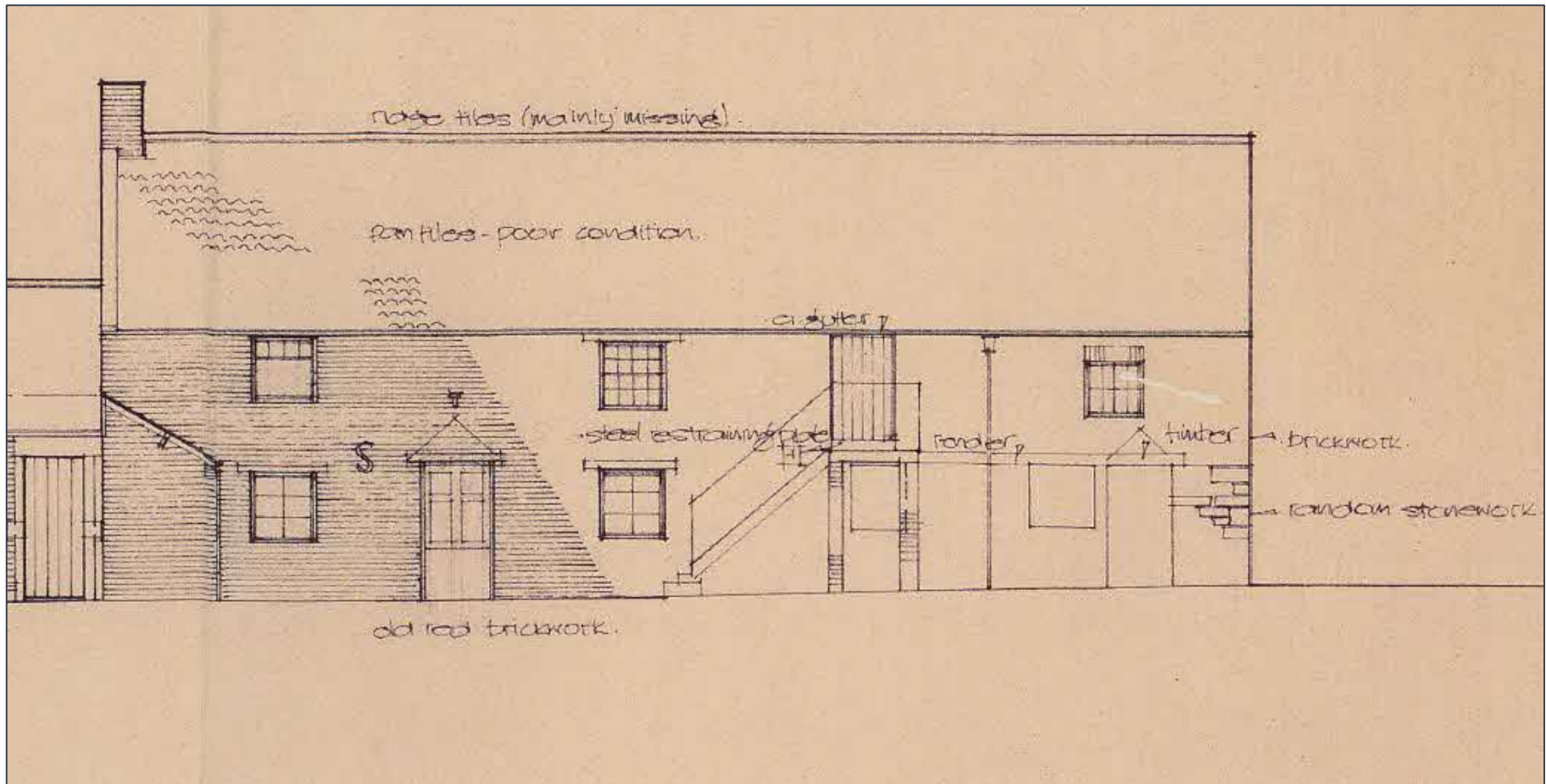


Figure 10 Existing front south elevation (1988)

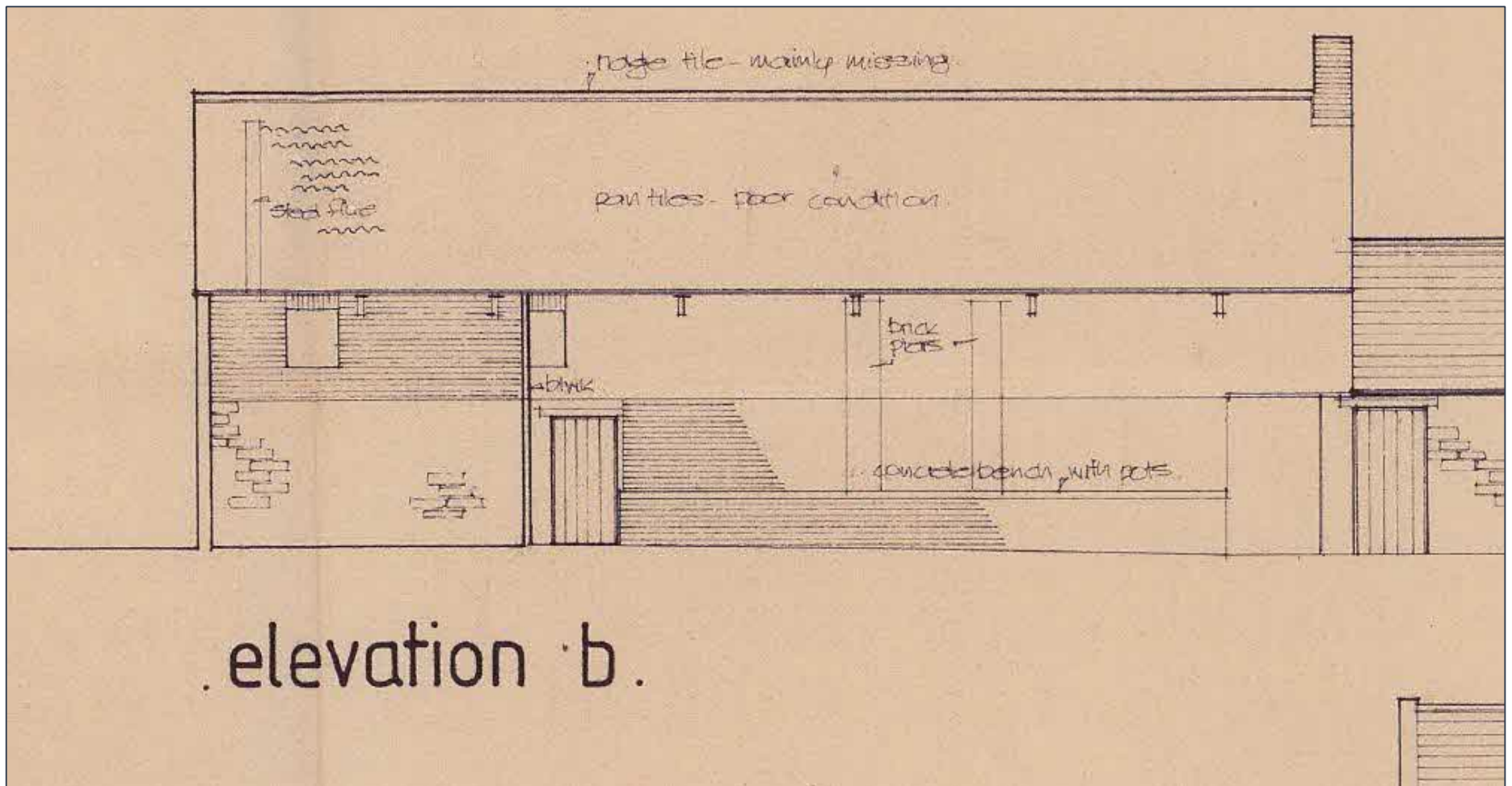


Figure 11 Existing rear elevation (1988) Only two windows and one door.