



The Old Rectory
Felsham
Bury St Edmunds
IP30 0PW

Landscape Design Statement
June 2023

Tom Stuart-Smith Ltd

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The Old Rectory is a Grade II listed private residence located on the south eastern edge of the conservation village of Felsham, Mid Suffolk. The general layout and extent of the 4.35 acre garden at the Old Rectory was well established by the time of the first edition of the Ordnance Survey in the late 1780s.

The former Old Rectory and its grounds are situated within the Conservation Area of the Mid Suffolk District Council designated in 1996. The property lies 8 miles away from the historic market town of Bury St Edmunds and 1.5 miles away from the Bradfield Woods National Nature Reserve.

The property is accessed along a private drive from the north, off the junction between Church Road and Felsham Road. To the south and east runs the River Rattlesden. To the south-west, south and east of the grounds are open agricultural fields of High Suffolk fertile boulder clay which lies on top of layers of chalk at greater depths.

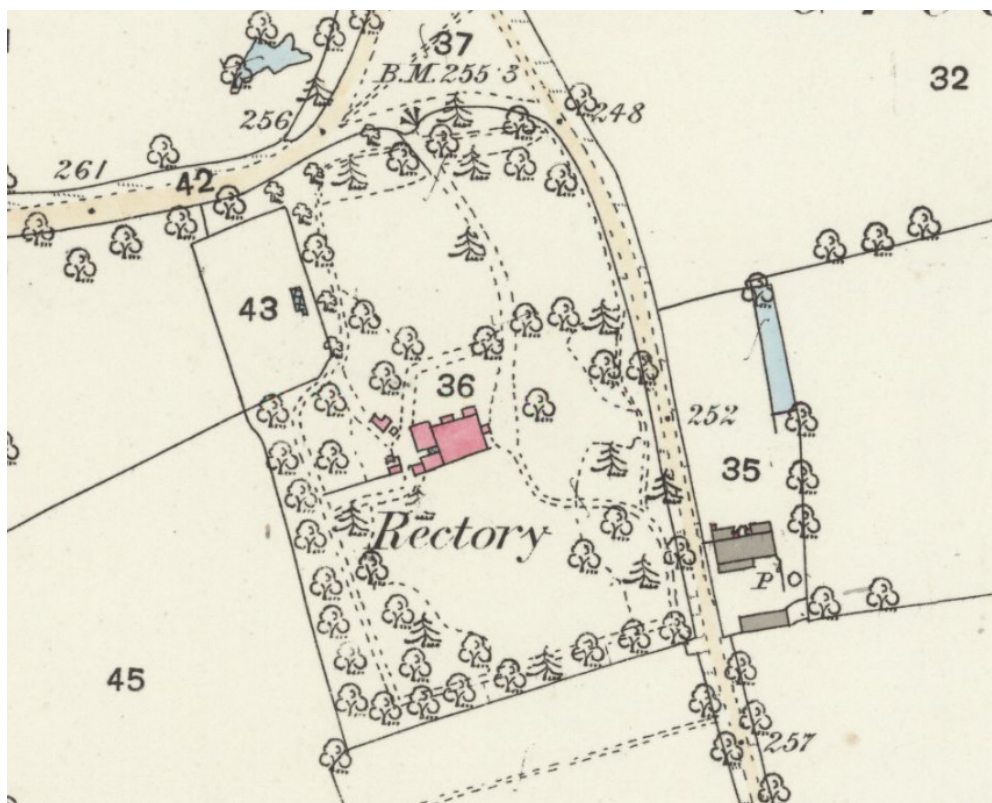
Three significant building and landscape interventions have happened in the garden since its conception in the late 18th century. The introduction of the utility and service yard, the swimming pool and the tennis court. Parts of the gardens also underwent substantial redesign and replanting in areas under the previous two ownerships between 1998-2019.

Proposal statement

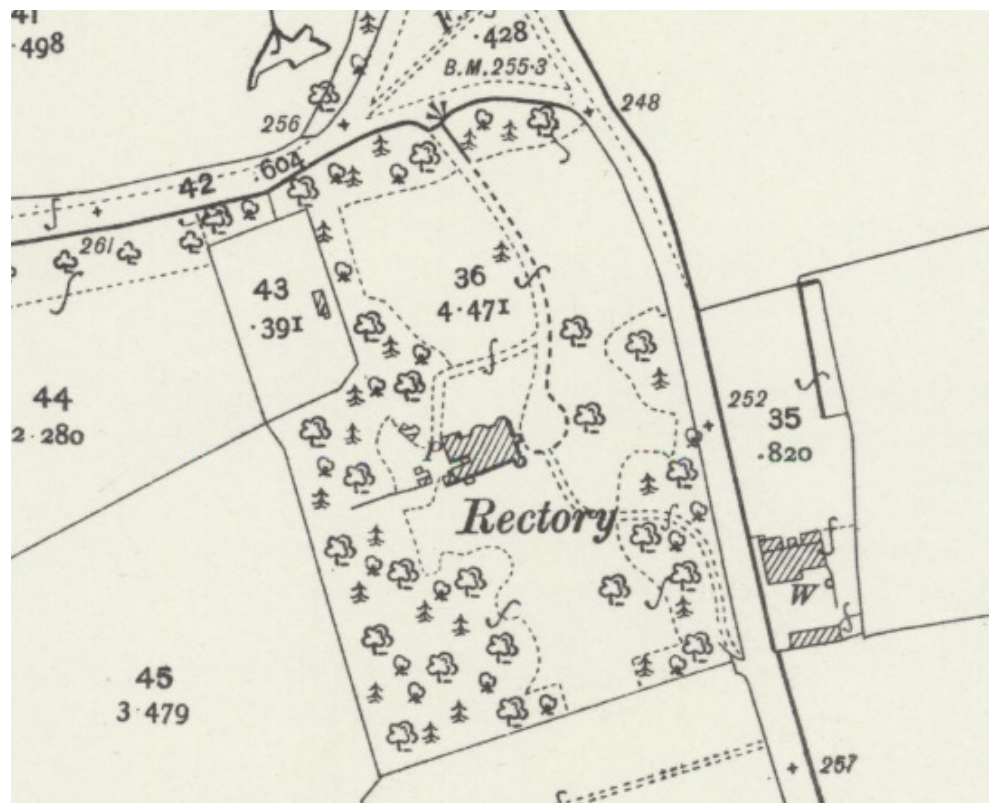
Our proposal for the landscape at the Old Rectory is twofold.

Firstly, our proposal shall improve on the current layout to accommodate, and in one instance relocate, the most recent building additions in a way more sympathetic to the grandeur and history of the house and its surroundings.

Second, to create a more intimate and softer framework around the house suitable for 21st century living, restoring vistas to and from the house and re-establishing a series of historic 'Pleasure Ground' walks around the garden's wooded periphery.



1883



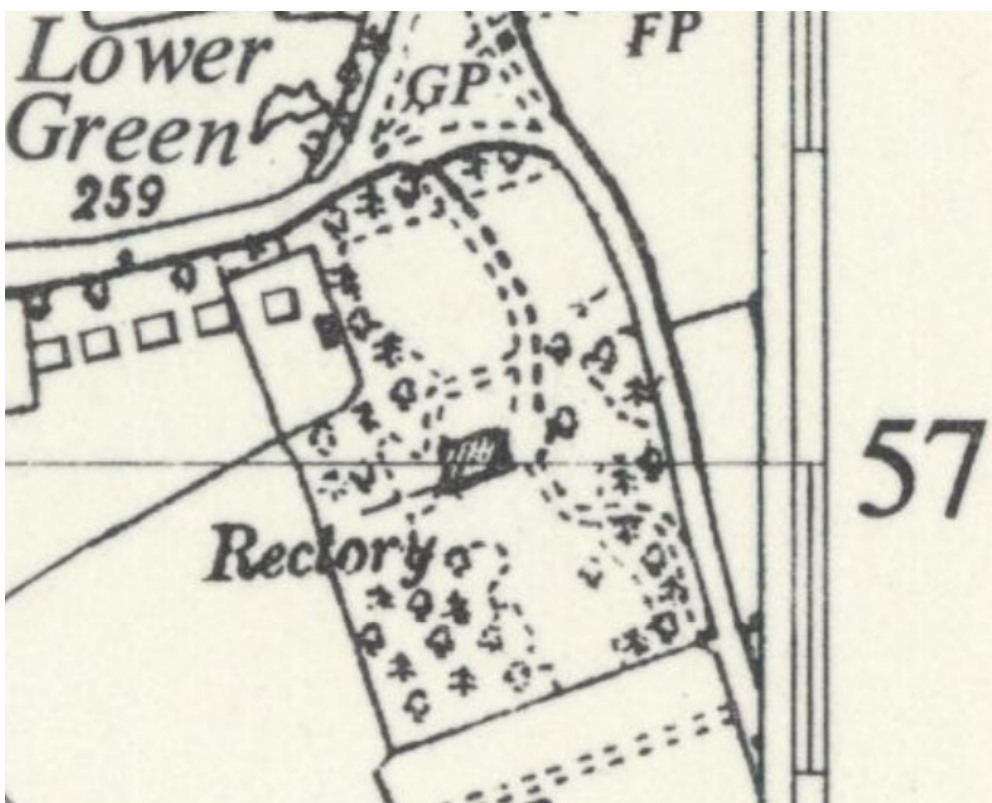
1905

There is written evidence of the oldest part of the house, the central western facade made from lath and plaster, being present from the early 17th century. The bay windows on either side of this section were added under the improvements by Rev. Thomas Anderson who lived and worked at the Old Rectory between 1822 and 1872.

The layout and character of the four acres that surround the Old Rectory have remained, for the most part, unchanged since the beginning of the 19th century. The OS plans show almost no changes between the seventy five years between 1883 and 1958.

Whilst there has been the disappearance of the southern drive approach from the south east since 1958, the garden layout remains the same. To the west, north and east of the house the boundaries are wooded. An entrance drive from the north ends at a gravel sweep in front of the building's eastern facade and there is an open vista over a lawn to the south. There is evidence of a promenade circuit around the property's wooded edge in the 1883 plan.

Whilst there is missing photographic evidence, there are historical accounts from multiple previous owners of a grass tennis court across Brettenham Road in the 'Tennis Court Meadow' dating back to pre 1940. This tennis court disappeared after the selling out of 'plot 35' by the family to a local farmer in 1940.



1958



Historical photograph of The Old Rectory, viewed from the north approach. c. Early 20th century. Source unknown.



Historical photograph of the southern facade of the Old Rectory. Note the presence of a glasshouse to the left of the image. c. Early 20th century. Source unknown.

Existing site plan



Key	
Existing Level	+12.350
Tree Existing	
Existing paving	
Existing gravel	
Existing plant bed	
Existing shrub planting	
Existing hedge	
Planning boundary	
Ownership boundary	

Existing condition
Scale 1:1000 @ A3



Eastern facade



Southern facade

Eastern Facade

The large Georgian style windows of the principal frontage of the house look onto a large gravel sweep parking area extending to the east. This area is surrounded by lawn and a mixed hedge to the south. There are no climbing plants on the facade walls currently, but photographic records show they were present previous on both this and the southern facades.

Southern facade

Unlike the Eastern facade, which has a regular and symmetrical arrangement of windows and a centralised porch, the Southern facade is more irregular in its furniture. The facade is rendered with an off white render. The main living rooms of the house and one of the property’s two large Bay windows look out south across a stone terrace and onto the lawn. There are no climbing plants on the facade walls currently.

Entrance Gates

The existing gates set back from the edge of Church Road and are automated; fixed to pale coloured brick piers. The gates are in a traditional estate style and are painted white. The gates and their piers are to be retained within our proposal.



Automated metal gates



Entrance from Church Road



Gravel drive house approach and gravel sweep



Close proximity of the drive to the tennis court



Width of current drive up to 4m



View of tennis court from drive

Drive

The property is approached along a private drive from the entrance gates moving towards the gravel sweep area to the east of the house before splitting towards a large parking area to the west around the garage buildings.

The drive is tarmac with a buff coloured gravel dressing. The width of the drive is inappropriately sized for a private residential property, exceeding 4m in places.

The existing drive runs alongside the hard tennis court; as close as 2.5m at its narrowest point and has substantial visual impact on the approach to the historic property.



Existing terrace and planting beds on southern facade



Existing terrace

South Terrace

A 100 m² stone terrace extends across the whole of the southern facade of the house. It is recommended that the footprint of this terrace is too large for the scale of the building and deemed unnecessary. It is proposed that this terrace is reduced in its size and large planting beds are introduced along the walls to soften the facade. Historic photographs of this part of the garden show there to be much less hard standing originally in line with our proposal.

South lawn vista

The vista across the lawn from the southern facade is recorded in the OS maps of the Rectory grounds from as early as 1883. The view is towards open agricultural fields to the south. This view is to be retained and embellished in the application.



Historic southern vista across lawn



Vista across agricultural fields



Partition wall



Existing glasshouse



Low brick wall



Pool house and deck

Outer partition wall

An L-shaped wall juts off the south western corner of the kitchen ground floor. The wall varies in its height between 1.5 - c.3.0m and is comprised of blockwork with a painted render and a combination of a stone and an on-edge brick coping. Any previous purpose or function of the partition wall is now superseded. The wall blocks views from the kitchen into the garden and interrupts the circulation around the property. It is proposed that this section of wall is removed under this application in order to create more of a visual and circulatory connection between the house and garden in this area. The condition of this wall is very poor and the property would also aesthetically benefit from its removal.

Glasshouse

A small 3.5x4.0m glasshouse is located in the north west of the site between large lime and yew trees and a short run of beech hedge. The glasshouse has a red brick base and is painted metal. The glasshouse in this location does not receive much light, shaded from the south and west. It is proposed to be removed.

Low brick walls

A low brick wall, c. 0.6m high, encloses the western garden. The wall is primarily a retaining wall for the garage parking area but also to retain the earth of planting beds. Many of the bricks are crumbling and inconsistent in their colouration. These low walls are proposed to be removed under the application.

Pool House

A large 9.2 x 6.3m timber pool house built in 2006 is located to the south west of the swimming pool and is surrounded by a raised timber deck. The pool house is a modern addition and is not inkeeping with the architecture of the house. It is also extraordinarily large for the size of the garden and pool, and receives little sunlight with a north facing aspect under the shade of the large Liriodendron trees and limes. It is proposed that both the pool house and deck are removed.



Existing west garden bed layout from 2010 redesign



Extensive existing paving around house



Historic game larder



Swimming pool

West Garden

The existing West Garden is comprised of an extensive area of stone paving and an arrangement of raised rectangular metal edged planting beds. The works to this area were carried out as part of the recent redesign and replanting undertaken in 2010 by the previous owner.

Game Larder

A 2.0 x 3.3m brick game larder is located within the West Garden and falls within the Grade II listing of the house. The larder windows, which are a recent addition, are proposed to be replaced with timbered louvres..

Pool terrace

275m² of stone paving surrounds the swimming pool and is throughout the West Garden. It is proposed that this paving is lifted and removed as part of this application. The terrace would be replaced with permeable gravel, planting and lawn.

Swimming Pool

The existing swimming pool is to be retained as part of this application. The removal of the partition wall, pool deck, pool house and retaining walls that surround the pool shall open up this area of the garden and allow views to and from the pool. These removals shall also contribute to returning the layout more towards the historic garden layout before these additions. The application strives to incorporate the recent addition of the pool into the wider garden in a more aesthetically sympathetic and practical way that shall benefit the day-to-day use of the pool but also the circulation and views from the house.