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Pratt's Green Farmhouse

Pratts Green Farmhouse, Kirtling, Newmarket, Suffolk
Design & Access Statement

August 2023



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Site Location

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared by Snell David Architects (SDA) on behalf of the applicant, Richard Lawton, and has been written to support Planning and Listed Building Applications for the proposed refurbishment and extension of the existing farmhouse as well as the demolition of the existing (non-historic) western 1970's modern utility extension. The farmhouse is located along Malting End in the settlement of Kirtling, where it is mostly isolated with the exception of nearby farms. The farmhouse is a Grade II Listed building believed to date back to the 16th century, with an extension towards the east in the 17th century (see Brighter Planning Consultancy Heritage Statement for more details and listing description). An earlier planning and listed building application (22/00683/LBC) for a larger scheme was withdrawn following comments from the conservation officer. The current scheme was submitted for a pre-application enquiry (PREAPP/00147/22) and was discussed at meeting with the planning case officer and conservation officer at ECDC offices on 05.12.2022 (a written response has not yet been received to this enquiry) - see section 4.4 for further details.



Fig. 1.1.1 Location plan showing Pratts Green Farmhouse and existing barn

1.2 Client Brief

SDA were approached by the applicants, who recently purchased the property with the hopes of turning it into a family home. We were asked to look at options for the development of the site and sensible and sensitive refurbishment of the existing farmhouse which is currently in a poor state of repair. As such, they expressed a desire to provide accommodation which would accommodate the needs of a typical modern family. The existing farmhouse has a poor layout with small rooms, is poorly insulated, is generally in an extremely poor state of repair and is in need of significant refurbishment. In particular the existing building is not fully watertight and is showing signs of dampness and water penetration which is resulting in harm to the historic fabric. We have included below and in appendix C to this Design & Access Statement and the Schedule of Works (which also accompanies this application) some photographs which show some examples of the dilapidated state of the property. Moreover, the existing outbuilding is in a poor, neglected state. For this reason, they have asked SDA to extend the existing farmhouse which would utilise more of the potential of the site while positively contributing to the architectural character and integrity.

Before developing the proposals, SDA spent time assessing the qualities of the site i.e. orientation, trees, levels and surrounding vernacular. The principal issues of the brief can be summarised as follows:

- Provide guest room and bathroom facilities
- Provide accessible accommodation to suit elderly relatives (including a parent who uses a wheelchair)
- Provide a garden room
- Provide utility and boot room
- Provide cooking and eating areas
- Provide living room
- Provide visual and physical relationship with landscape
- Remove the existing 1970s fl at roof utility room extension to improve the west elevation



Photographs of existing property:

Fig. 1.2.1 (left) showing first floor bathroom leaking window with water penetration causing rot in the beam below window cill (photo also shows dated sanitary ware)

Fig 1.2.2 (right) showing water staining and dampness to wall and floor of ground floor drawing room



Fig. 1.2.3 showing first floor bathroom gable window with disintegrating bottom rails and inadequate decoration/maintenance - also note Upvc S&VP which is to be removed



Fig. 1.2.4 showing large gap and rot in the horizontal timber above kitchen door, also note poor state of window and dormer joinery decorations

2.0 Design

2.1 Use

The farmhouse would retain its residential purpose, with the main proposals including an extension on the southern end of the site where a garden room would provide a visual and physical link to the landscape. In the current proposals the outbuilding/garage would remain as existing.

2.2 Amount

The existing farmhouse floor area = 226 sq. meters

The existing garage and lean-to outbuilding floor area = 43.5 sq. metres

The area of the existing (modern) utility room to be demolished = 10 sq. meters

The proposed ground floor living accommodation extension area = 36 sq. metres

Total existing floor area (excluding garage/outbuilding) = 226 sq. metres

The proposed total floor area would increase to 252 sq. metres



Fig. 2.2.1 Existing modern, felt floor at roofed 1970s utility room extension of no architectural interest and poor quality construction to be demolished to improve the west elevation

2.3 Layout

Various options have been drawn up to satisfy the client's brief, all of which pursued a route which aims to accommodate the needs of a typical modern family home whilst reflecting the architectural character of existing dwelling.

The main proposals would retain the original internal footprint of farmhouse (except for the modern 1970s conservatory which is to be demolished) whilst creating a glazed link which leads to a garden room extension at the rear. Modern partitions would be erected to enable better flow between the rooms, all the while retaining the historic fabric of the building. Spaces would be re-ordered in the existing farmhouse to adhere to a layout compatible with the modern age while respecting the original footprint of the house. The changes are also intended to turn a house which is current inaccessible for the applicant's wheelchair bound elderly parent into a house which is accessible. So, for example, the dining room will be moved into the new extension thereby freeing up a downstairs room which can be used as an accessible bedroom (and which can double up as a snug when not in use). Downstairs shower facilities have also been added in the design. Again this addition will make the house accessible to the applicant's disabled relative. The glazed link is proposed at the location of an existing opening, so there is no loss of historic fabric (for typical detail of the glazing linking to the existing building see drawing 912/340).

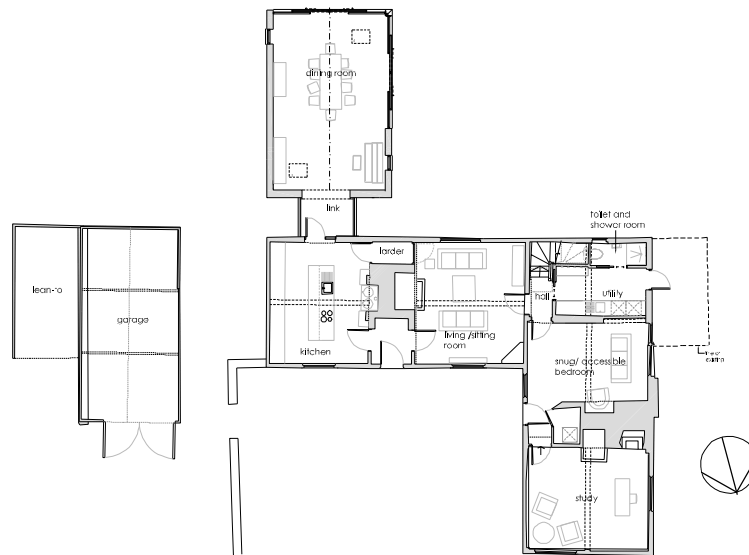
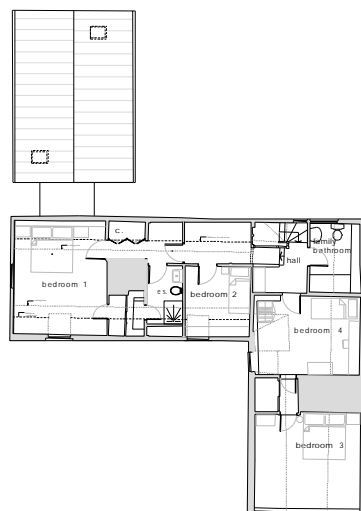


Fig. 2.3.1 Proposed Ground Floor Plan

At first floor level with the existing house, the main proposal is to create a master suite within the existing eastern wing - a new ensuite would be added in an area which has an existing modern partition (so that historic partitions are not affected by these alterations).

Fig. 2.3.2 (left) Proposed First Floor Plan and Fig 2.3.3 (right) photo of existing modern first floor partition which would be adapted to allow for new openings to the ensuite and bedroom 2 areas (the modern high level glazing would be removed and the partition re-clad with wood-fibre boarding finished with lime plaster). Existing doors would be reused.



2.4 Scale

The roof pitch of the proposed extension and new outbuilding would match that of the existing farmhouse to retain the architectural character. The width of the extension is less than the width of the existing farmhouse wings, therefore the extension remains subservient to the existing farmhouse. In addition, the ridge of the extension roof is approx 2m lower than the adjoining ridge of the farmhouse thatched roof and the eaves of the extension are approx 1m lower than the farmhouse thatch eaves line. Thus meaning, the garden room extension is not visible from the road and is subservient in scale to the existing farmhouse.



Fig. 2.4.1 Proposed South elevation showing the extensions subservient scale and stepping down in relation to the existing farmhouse

2.5 Landscaping

The landscaping proposals include the creation of a paved terrace towards the southern end of the site, resulting in an outside sitting area which overlooks the garden. A new path has also been designed to weave seamlessly through the farmhouse, the extension and the outbuilding.

The trees on site are generally a considerable distance from the proposed work, and there would be no adverse impact on these trees (also see Hayden's arboricultural report). However, the report identifies some existing trees on the site that are unsafe (eg the Ash trees on the Southern boundary ditch) and these are shown as being removed on the site plan.

Any new planting would incorporate wildlife friendly species. Please also see MKA ecological report for further information.

A new flint-work wall would be erected on the western end to match existing garden walls on site to help create an enclosed front garden space (completing the already semi-enclosed front garden).

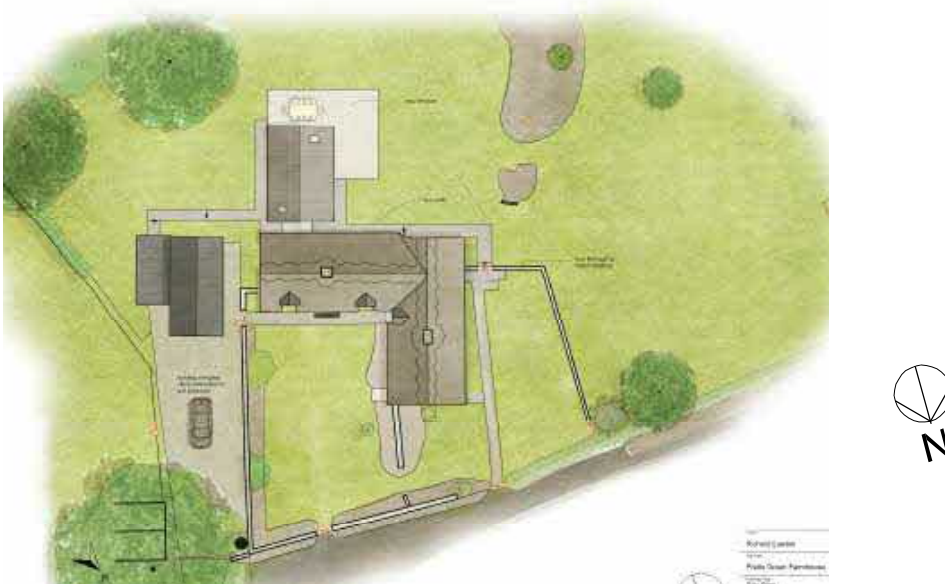


Fig. 2.5.1 Proposed site plan



Fig. 2.5.2 photos showing existing flint wall in foreground and existing partially enclosed front garden - it is proposed to complete the enclosure of the front garden by erecting a matching wall to the west

2.6 Appearance

The garden room extension to the rear (south) would be of a contemporary appearance with large sliding doors meeting at a glazed corner overlooking the garden and fields and a glazed gable with horizontal timber slats over (see south elevation figure 2.4.1) which provides solar shading and filtering of the light to the vaulted internal space.

The garden room would have a more contemporary zinc roof (colour matched to natural slate) and would also incorporate powder coated aluminium glazed screens and doors which provide uninterrupted views to the landscape.

The garden room extension is connected to the existing farmhouse with a structural glass link as a clearly defined contemporary element which allows the form of the existing building to be legible through the glazing. The glazed link size has been reduced (compared to the withdrawn application proposals) so that the link is less visible - the glass units would be recessed with minimal appearance (eg see <https://www.iqglassuk.com/products/frameless-glass-links/s15016/>), also see detail drawing 912/340 showing how the proposed glazing would meet the existing building without the loss of any historic fabric.



Fig 2.6.1 (above) photograph of the existing rear elevation - the glazed link proposed at the location of the existing french doors, note that the render around the french casement doors has a smooth appearance of modern/altered render, the proposed glazed link would be carefully detailed to be chased into these areas to avoid the loss of historic plaster (see detail drawing 912/340).

Fig 2.6.2 (right) image from IQ glass link showing typical glazed link with minimal appearance



Figs. 2.6.3 & 2.6.4 (above) photographs (taken from estate agents web-site images) of a neighbouring thatched property with a similar glazed link (highlighted with arrow)

Fig2.6.5(right) photograph of the existing garage at Pratts Green with a mixture of horizontal and vertical natural/grey finish timber boarding - the proposed extension would be clad in similar timber boarding



The garden room extension is proposed to the rear (south) elevation with the design connecting to the existing building at the location of an existing opening with a minimal glazed link and allowing a flow of the spaces from the proposed kitchen to the new extension. The figures below show the existing and proposed rear elevations:

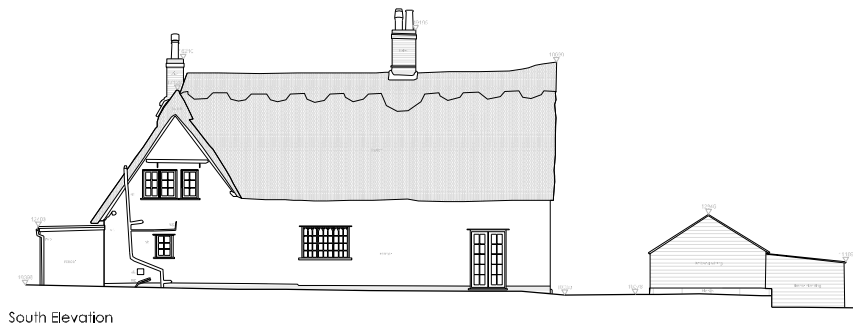


Fig 2.6.6 (top) existing rear/south elevation

Fig 2.6.7 (bottom) proposed rear/south elevation

The proposed removal of the existing fl at roof extension from the west end of the south elevation is considered a major gain. The gable of the 16th original wing would be enhanced by the removal of the unsightly modern S&VP and plumbing and this historic gable (which has been degraded by inappropriate modern repairs and interventions) and would also be carefully restored with new lime render (see SDA Schedule of Works document figure 11.1 and section 13 for details). The existing french casement doors (which would be covered by the glazed link of the proposed extension) are modern and of inappropriate materials and design, so their proposed removal is also a positive change.

The introduction of a new extension to this elevation has been carefully designed to integrate with the existing building (with no loss of historic fabric) as a clear contemporary element with a subserviant form stepping down in scale (with the pitch of the new roof matching the existing roof and the width of the extension less than the original farmhouse to further emphasise the reduction in scale), so that the scheme enhances the existing situation.

3.0 Access

3.1 Vehicle and Transport Links

*The existing drive and garage would remain.
There are no changes to parking, or transport links.*

3.2 Inclusive Access

*The sliding doors placed in the garden room extension would have level access thresholds to the new terrace.
The proposals allow for flexible use of the main ground floor spaces to provide level access facilities including an accessible shower room (suitable for elderly visitors including a wheelchair bound relative).*

4.0 Other Issues

4.1 Flood Risk

The property is located in Flood zone 1 - an area reported to have low probability of flooding according to Environmental Agency Flood maps.

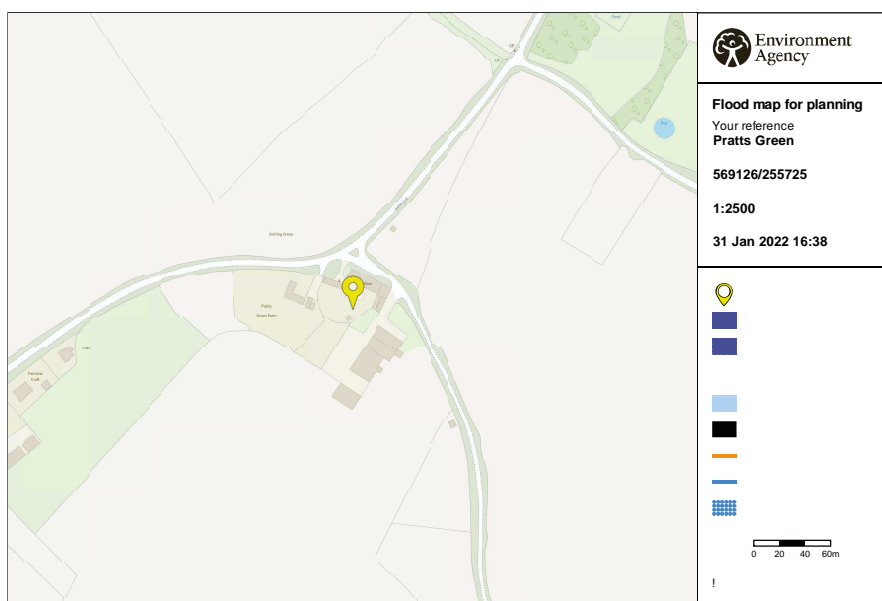


Fig. 4.1.1 Extract of Environmental Agency website flood risk map

4.2 Structural Report

Andrew Firebrace Partnership have made an initial structural assessment of the property and a copy of their report accompanies the applications. The reports show no significant structural cracking or distortions to any of the walls. The reports also show no evidence of ongoing foundation movement which would merit any foundation work. While the reports indicate that the building demonstrates some deteriorating qualities, it is identified to be a result of the age and type of construction. This highlights the fact that it is in dire need of refurbishment to elevate it to modern standards while retaining its historic fabric and character. For further details of proposed repair works to the farmhouse, see the Preliminary Schedule of Works by Snell-David Architects which accompanies the applications.

4.3 Ecology

The farmhouse and surrounding site has been assessed by MKA Ecology and a copy of their preliminary assessment accompanies this application. Further survey work (advised in the MKA assessment) has been carried out by Greenwillows Associates and their Great Crested Newt and Bat survey information also accompanies this application.

4.4 Pre-Application Enquiry (PREA PP/00147/22)

During the pre-app meeting discussions it was agreed that the scheme:

- showed good practice in that there was no loss of historic fabric*
- it was not directly visible from the front / public domain*
- it was a subservient extension (only single storey)*
- removed an unsightly (though small) 20th Century single storey extension*

However the conservation officer noted that despite the merits of the design, he did not consider that any extension would be acceptable.

As noted in section 1, a written response has not yet been received to the pre-app enquiry meeting of 05.12.2022 however, for notes of the meeting and email correspondence relating to the meeting, please see appendix A and B of this Design & Access Statement.

Snell-David consider that the benefits of their scheme which is sensitively designed, involves a clear modern addition that does not detract from the existing listed building, involves the careful renovation and repair of the building and does not impact on any historic fabric would have a positive impact (please also refer to Brighter Planning Consultancy Heritage Statement which accompanies this application), and have therefore decided to submit the scheme for a formal application.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Summary

We believe that the proposal has taken due consideration of the site and its environment, showing a new, a carefully designed extension and a proposal that retains and respects the integrity and form of the existing building.

The proposal is carefully related to the existing property and it incorporates a combination of matching and natural materials. The poor quality western and dilapidated 1970s utility extension that detracts from the existing listed building would be removed - this structure is not of any architectural merit.

The proposal includes an extension with clear contemporary elements that model a simple, more modern appearance to retain and enhance the existing architectural character.

We believe the proposal to be appropriate and sound in its intent to enhance the property and allow participants to fully enjoy the asset as a family home for many years to come.

Our client noted that during the purchasing process the estate agents that were marketing the property had indicated that a large number of other potential buyers had been put off the sale due to the very poor condition of the existing building and the scale of renovation work that is needed. The estate agent also noted that the lack of modern "family space" (i.e. a joined up kitchen/dining/living area opening out into the garden) was another reason why potential buyers were put off from purchasing the property. Notwithstanding the difficulties (and the very significant costs) of the renovation project our client decided to take on this challenge in circumstances where others were not prepared to do so. Our client is passionate about restoring the building, making it weatherproof and maintaining its historic fabric. However, we feel that the building also needs to be updated to suit modern family living needs, and in particular this involves the requirement for new family garden living space, i.e. as our proposed family dining/garden room extension demonstrates, in particular to better connect the house with the beautiful garden and to help facilitate the creation of a downstairs area in the house which is accessible to the applicant's wheelchair bound parent.

Our clients aims are twofold - to restore and protect the beauty of the original building whilst at the same time creating a home which is fit for modern family life which they can live in and enjoy for many years to come.

APPENDIX A -
SDA NOTES OF PRE-APPLICATION MEETING



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APPENDIX B - SDA EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE FORWARDING NOTES TO EHDC




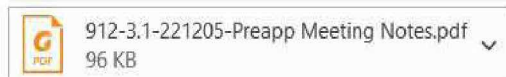
Thu 23/02/2023 15:10

Alan Smith

FW: PREAPP/00147/22 Pratts Green Fm, Kirtling - meeting availability

To Holly Chapman

 You forwarded this message on 23/02/2023 15:23.



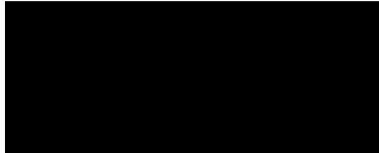
Dear Holly

Further to our email of 4th January 2022, we have not yet received any written response to our pre-app meeting of 5th December 2022 – please could you forward this as soon as possible.

We attach for your information a copy of our notes from the pre-app meeting – if you have any comments or queries regarding these notes please could you let us know in the next 14 days (if we don't hear from you we will assume that you are happy with the notes as a record of our meeting).

Kind regards

Alan



Alan Smith MCIAT

snell david ltd - architects

APPENDIX C -
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROPERTY
- showing the existing dilapidated
condition of the building









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