

Heritage Impact Assessment - Tower Farmhouse, Middleton, Norfolk

General Description and Site Context

Tower Farmhouse is situated in the hamlet of Tower End and is located to the south of Middleton Tower. It is situated within a complex of farm buildings, most of which are Grade II listed.

The Farmhouse itself is Grade II listed and originally constructed in the late 18th century with a 19th century two storey addition to the North, which makes the roof asymmetric. There are also single storey extensions to the East and West and a detached outbuilding used in conjunction with the Farmhouse at right angles to the South East. It has gone through several stages of renovation throughout the years which will be discussed later.

The English Heritage listing description is as follows.

Farmhouse, C18, dated 178-. Coursed galletted carstone with brick dressings, pantiles, brick dentil cornice. Range of 5 bays 2 storeys and attic to south; continuous 2-storeyed C19 extension to north with raised gables. Entrance facade to north of C19 addition: galletted carstone blocks; 5 bays 2 storeys, ground floor with 3-light casement with segmental arch between bays 1 and 2, bay 3 with wide canted bay window with flat roof, bay 4 with C19 part glazed door having coped canopy with barge boards and finial, 2-light casement between bays 4 and 5. First floor with 5 horizontal hung flush sashes with glazing bars. Facade to south: ground floor with sash with glazing bars to bay 1; 3-light casements to bays 3 and 5; doorway to bay 3 having late C19 part glazed door with rectangular light above. First floor with 3-light casements to bays 1, 3 and 5, blank openings to bays 2 and 4. Roof dormer to bay 2, axial stack to bay 4. To front of bays 2-4 of ground floor a curved canopy of glass tiles supported by wrought iron posts, early C19. East return with MC 17 in iron, casement with glazing bars to attic. West return with MC 8- in iron to gable, remains of rectangular opening to first floor, inserted window to attic right.



Photo of South elevation prior to renovation in 2010

This listing refers to the building before its renovation under 15/00095/LB. Prior to this, the building stood empty for 5 years and was subject to vandalism and theft. The renovation included significant modifications to the structure and internal fittings including the removal of two staircases, internal partitions, new openings and replacement joinery throughout, new limecrete ground floor incorporating underfloor heating, removal of fireplaces and a pitched dormer to the South Elevation.



Photo of South elevation following renovation under 15/00095/LB (taken in 2023)

A new painted brick entrance porch with lead rolled roof was added to the North elevation to create a large entrance hall and accommodate a large feature staircase but this orientation does not lend itself to be the point of access. The attic was also converted and rooflights incorporated to provide further bedrooms.



Photo of North elevation following renovation under 15/00095/LB (taken in 2023)

Although the works included the removal of significant historic fabric it was deemed justified in order to bring the building back to life and make it fit for purpose as a family home.

Exterior

Generally, the exterior walls of the Farmhouse are faced with Carstone and galletted mortar with red brick quoins to frame the openings and building corners, the roof has red clay pantiles with recently re-constructed parapet verges with slate capping's. The red brick chimneys remain and have been restored. The renovation works generally have been carried out sensitively. The external joinery is in good order and is a mix of single glazed hardwood sliding sashes and flush casements. The rain water goods are all black metal.

The outbuilding, which was partly converted within the scope of the renovation works for use as an office, is of the same construction but has a hipped pantile roof and simple Carstone walls without any galletting. This building has simple timber flush casement windows and ledged and braced timber doors to some openings but also a couple of inappropriate uPVC doors.

Interior

The Farmhouse has undergone complete renovation internally and most of the original features have been lost. All walls and ceilings have been over boarded and re-plastered, all coving, skirtings and architraves have been replaced with modern alternatives, the ground floor has been entirely replaced and the historic staircases removed. The original fireplaces were altered in the 1950's and effort was made to replace them with more appropriate versions. It appears that some of the original internal doors have been salvaged and made good.



Photo of Sitting Room indicating typical internal finishes throughout



Photo of Office In outbuilding indicating typical internal finishes throughout



The outbuilding does have some historic features in the un converted portion to the North. A Fireplace and sink with hand pump remain although the condition of the fireplace is poor. We propose to remove these to facilitate the rest of the conversion which is a shame, but on balance, the historic integrity of the buildings have already been lost.



Photo North End of Outbuilding indicating brand new roof timbers and breathable membrane with Sink and hand pump in the corner

Proposed Development

The proposals involve demolishing the single storey 19th century extension to the East to provide a single storey Kitchen extension and Entrance point from the designated parking area. This extension will link to the existing outbuilding via a glazed link. The remaining un converted part of the outbuilding will become Utility room and Playroom.

To remain subservient to the farmhouse the new extension will be constructed with a part-pitched, part-flat roof to keep the mass to a minimum and the heights the same. The roof will form a hipped end to match the outbuilding to appear as if it was another outbuilding at some point in time. The glazed link highlights this from the East elevation. From the North the new extension will look similar to the extension that is to be demolished but slightly longer in form.

The South elevation will also be constructed in the same style but will incorporate glazed doors to provide better access to the garden.



Externally the materials will match the existing utilising matching Carstone, red bricks in Flemish bond and reclaimed pantiles. To provide character and distinctiveness from the farmhouse the new openings will use Crittal metal windows and doors.



This extension will provide a larger Kitchen and entertaining space as well as an Entrance Lobby in the correct location. The flat section of roof will include a traditional orangery style lantern to provide lots of natural light. This will be constructed in the same style as the Crittal windows for continuity in black aluminium. This majority of the lantern will be obscured from view by the hip tiles of the pitched roof section.

Converting the rest of the outbuilding will provide a Utility area and Playroom using the office area and adding an opening in the existing solid internal wall. The joinery will be replaced with the Crittal windows as above to tie the 'subservient' buildings together.

Internally, to open up the space from old to new we propose to remove a section of the ground floor gable wall and abutting internal wall. The gable wall has a renovated fireplace attached to it but this has been decommissioned with no surround present. The adjacent cupboard will also be removed. A steel beam will be required to support the walls above as well as the remaining chimney stack and fireplace at first floor level. As a proportion of the internal wall has already been removed under application 15/00095/LB along with many other historic walls we assume that this principle would be acceptable.



Photo of fireplace and wall to be removed
Central wall nib to be removed (left of picture)



Photo of wall and cupboard to be removed

After installation of the steelwork and this has been boxed around and plastered, a downstand will still provide an indicator of where the old walls were so the original layout will be obvious.

Conclusion

It is acknowledged that Tower Farmhouse is Grade II listed and that listed buildings need to be preserved for their historic value but it should be considered that most of the features of this property have been lost over the years following renovation. This is not down to unauthorised works but necessary works to bring the building back to life and into use. It is in no doubt that without these modifications the building would be lost forever.

Although the proposals involve demolition of the C19 Eastern extension (which was re-roofed with traditional pantiles instead of the original double pantiles under 15/00095/LB) this can be acknowledged as a less valuable part. The new extension will remain subservient to the original Farmhouse and use matching materials in a traditional manner to blend seamlessly with the Farmhouse and the outbuilding. The Glass link will provide distinction between old and new so the original can be distinguished.

All works will be completed using appropriate materials of a high quality, and to the highest standards of workmanship, taking special care to preserve the aesthetic of the building, It can be seen that the works being proposed are to maintain the longevity of the building as well as provide a more practical and usable dwelling for modern living habits and thermal efficiency. The exterior aesthetic of the building will remain unaltered and will be preserved. We recognise that some of the proposed work will remove historical fabric but we believe that this is balanced out by efforts to preserve the 'story' of the building.