



FERN HOUSE

DEREHAM ROAD, REEPHAM

Design and access statement
October 2023

This Design and Access submission is for the renovation, extension and alterations to "Fern House" (formerly "Eynesford House"), a grade II listed mid-19th century house in central Reepham.

Our clients acquired the property in 2023 with the wish to sensitively restore the house and gardens to make a family home fit for modern life.

A dedicated heritage statement has been included with this submission to provide historic context and impact/mitigation assessments. A structural report has also been provided along with a detailed landscape plan and arboricultural impact assessment.

Revision issue (A) 26.10.23

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Site and character

The 1.9 acre site is located in the historic market town of Reepham, within the Conservation Area. The "L" shaped site is accessed from the south, via the B1145 (Dereham Road) which runs east-west. Immediately to the east of the site entrance lies a converted chapel (not listed), which backs onto our clients' site. Approximately 35m to the east of the site entrance sits "The Laurels", a grade II listed brick house dating back to c. 1837.

The site is contained to the east by the B1145 (Station Road) running north-south which used to provide secondary access to the site, now closed off. The site is relatively sizeable considering its location within the historic settlement pattern of smaller plots, and enjoys extensive grounds to the north and east with several mature trees all set within a walled garden.

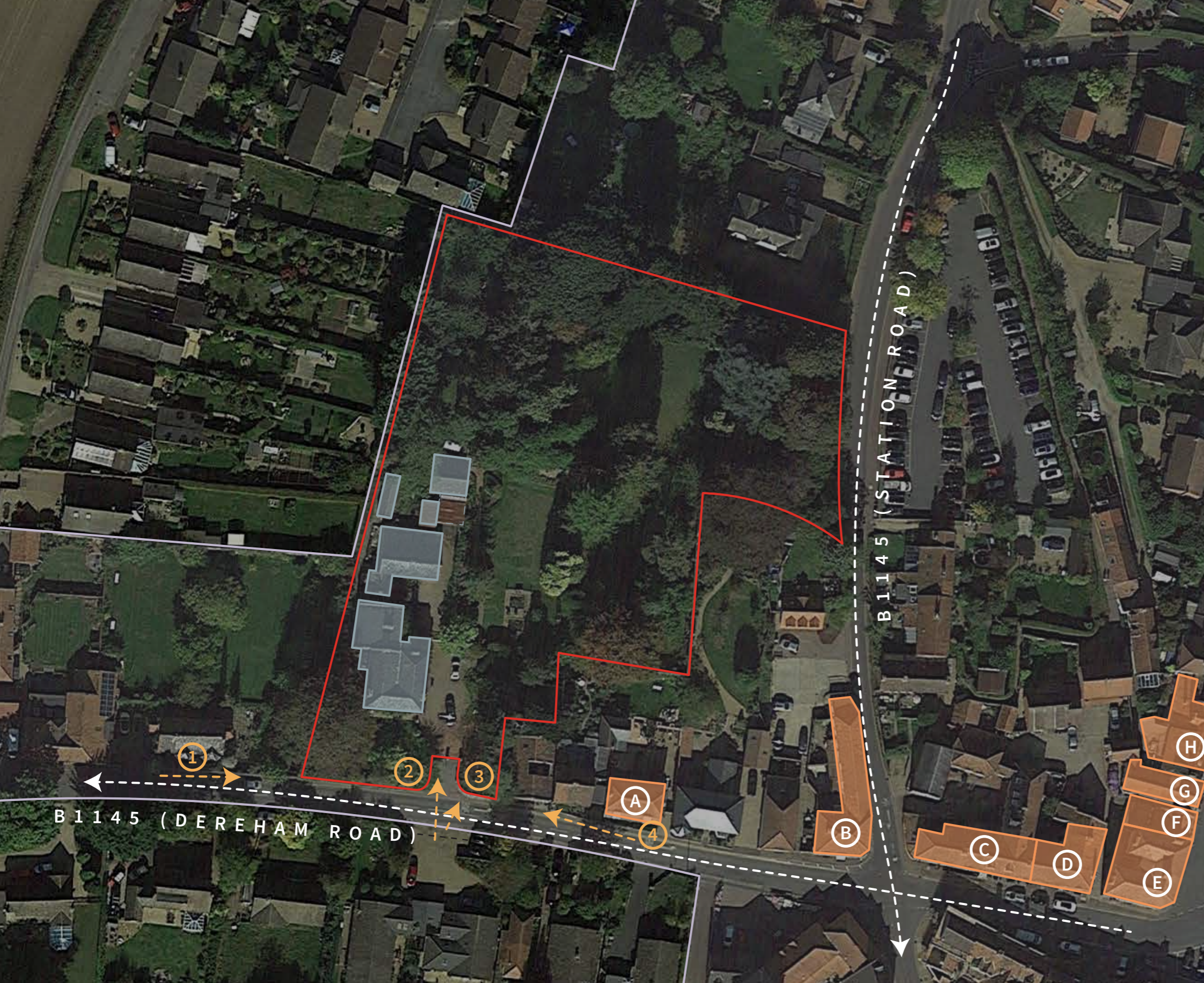
The site is largely contained by a brick wall in various states of dis-repair. The proposal is to sensitively repair this walling where necessary, and complete where missing parts to reinstate the walled garden and restore to its former glory.






Current site use

The house has been recently occupied by the former owners. The complex of outbuildings (including coach house) have been vacant and not used for several years. Our proposal seeks to convert these vacant buildings for their long term conservation.





-  Reepham Conservation Area boundary
-  Existing House and Outbuildings
-  Nearby Listed Buildings

- A The Lourels, Grade II listed
- B 1-5 Station Rd, Grade II Listed
- C The Stores, Grade II Listed
- D Ewings, Grade II Listed
- E Barclays Bank, Grade II Listed
- F Hawk Lifting Services, Grade II Listed
- G Attfields Butchers, Grade II Listed
- H The Chimes Antiques, Grade II Listed

Gardens and trees

The house has a large garden is predominantly walled, containing several mature plant and tree species including wisteria and sequoia and copper beech. A detailed landscaping scheme and tree management plan has been produced to remove dead or decaying trees or non-sympathetic trees that are compromising more valued species.

An arboricultural assessment has been included with this submission.

Ecology

A preliminary bat roost survey has been undertaken which noted the potential for bat roosts in the buildings. Following this, a set of bat emergence surveys were completed over summer 2023. The full report is included with this application.





EXISTING SITE PLAN (NTS)

EXISTING SITE

Site arrangement

The built form on site consists of a "string" of buildings running broadly north-south. The main house (including attached "service wing") faces onto Dereham Road to the south and a small driveway to the east to which the main entrance door and portico fronts. Immediately behind this, to the north, is the vacant coach house and tack room which contains original stable partitions. Behind this again there is a small complex of brick outbuildings including a garage, potting shed and log store. There is evidence on historic maps of buildings that once existed to the north of this again, but these appear to have been demolished.

To the east of this complex lies the footprint of an orangery which our client is intending to sensitively re-instate as part of this work.

Access

There are currently two entrances to the main house; the primary formal entrance which faces east onto the drive, and a secondary rear entrance tucked around the north side.

A gravel driveway runs from the parking area off the road, up to the existing garage at the top of the site. This, combined with the existing brick wall running north-south, somewhat bisects the house from the gardens.

Historic context

The house is grade II listed. It was originally built for a doctor, and dates from circa. 1848. It is a 2 storey house (ground, first) with a small cellar, and the primary portion of the house exhibits a formal 3 bay typology evident to the south and east elevations. There is a 2 storey lean-to element to the north-east corner of the house which breaks the symmetry, which was built as a waiting room and once formed the entrance to the surgery.

The west and north elevations exhibit an asymmetric fenestration arrangement and are somewhat uncomposed/adhoc as various alterations have been made over the historic of the building. The west elevation is dominated by 2 buttresses, presumably built at a later date to ensure the structural stability of the west wall.

For more information on heritage, please refer to accompanying heritage statement.

Key

1. House.
2. Service wing.
3. Coach house.
4. Coal store.
5. Potting shed.
6. Log store.
7. Garage.
8. Location of previous orangery.
9. Brick wall to boundary.
10. Gravel driveway.
11. Walled garden.
12. Pond.
13. Grass/softlandscaping.

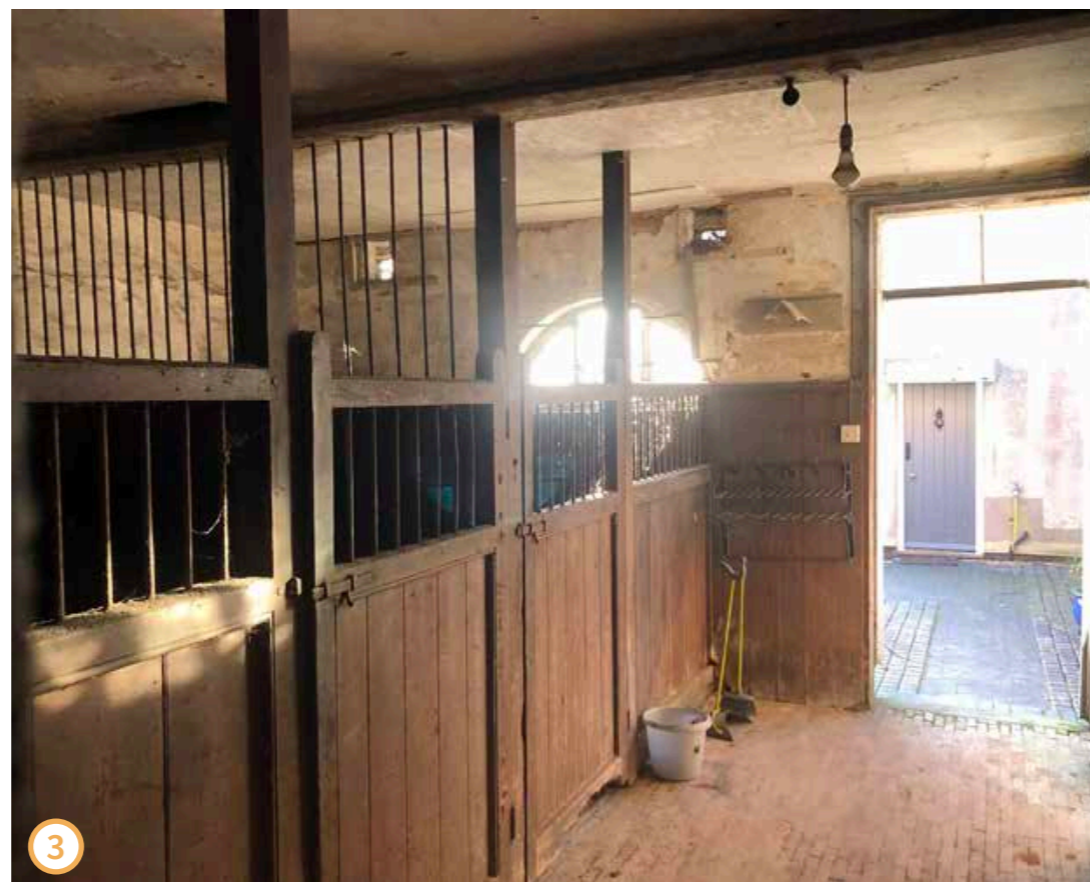
House

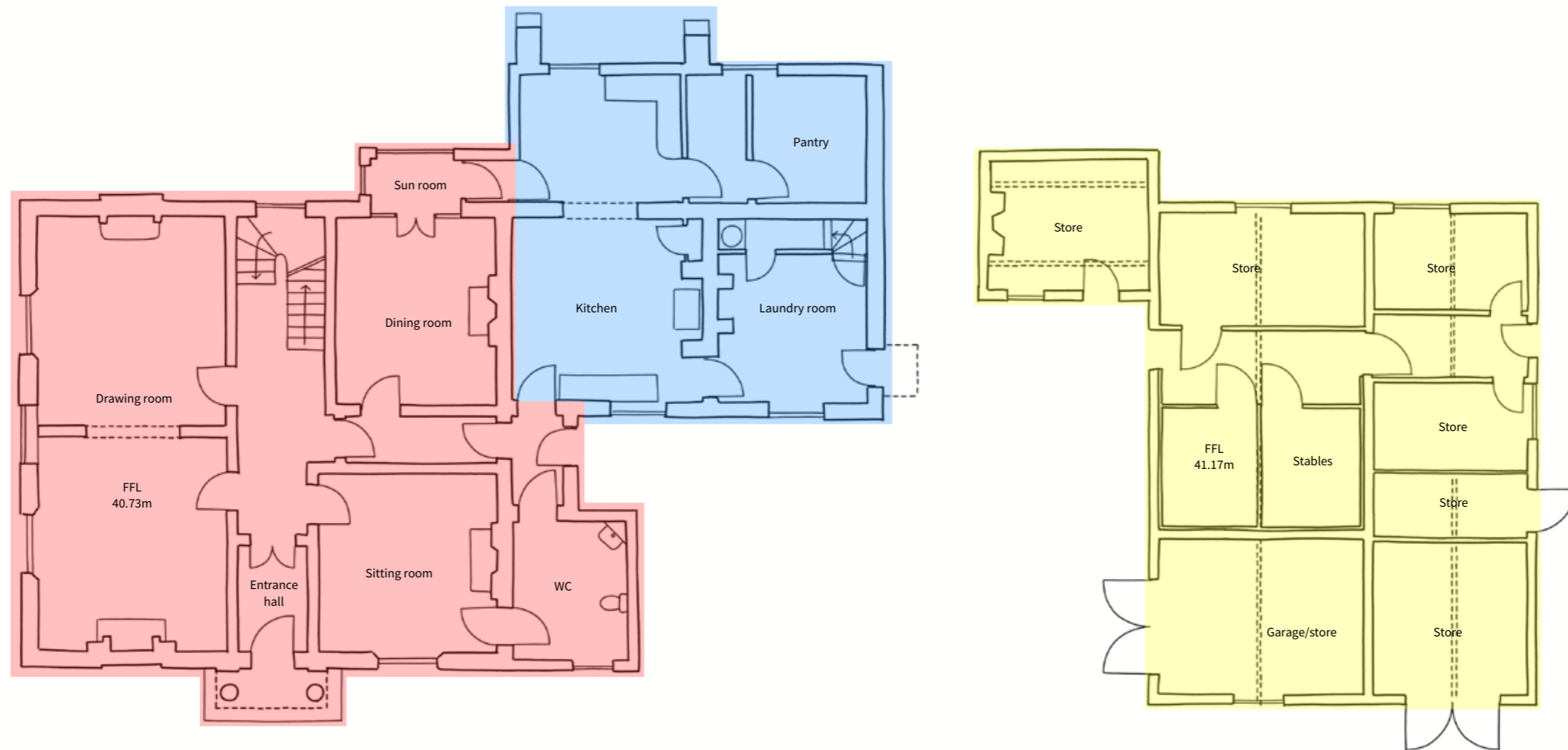
The house dates to c. 1848 and is 2 storey with a cellar and a double pile hipped roof. The plan comprises a formal layout of 3 bays square, with rooms either side of a central stair and circulation zone. The "main" portion of the house is adjoined by a gabled "service wing" containing kitchen, utility and ancillary functions linked by a small lobby.

Whilst generally in good order, all rooms in the main portion of the house are in need of redecoration, replacement carpet finishes. In the Service Wing, the kitchen and dining areas are gloomy and suffer from their lack of connection to the garden, addressed by the proposal.

Coach house and stables

To the north of the house lies a disused tack room and 2 storey coach house (curtilage listed), believed to be contemporary with the house. The building fabric is in poor condition having decayed due to lack of maintenance and viable use by previous owners, but exhibits notable features including timber and metal stable partitions/fittings, stable doors and Diocletian windows. The building is in desperate need of a new purpose and a sensitive restoration to ensure its long term conservation.





Annotated existing plan showing the "main " house in red, service wing in blue and the stable block and coach house in yellow

Previous planning applications

The site has been subject to several planning and listed building consent applications previously, the most significant of which are summarised below in reverse-chronological order:

REF: 20221229 (2022). Reordering of service wing, demolition of link corridor and replacement with garden room. Removal of cementitious render and re-rendering with breathable lime based render. Removal of modern brick gate posts to allow widening of the driveway entrance. Removal and replacement of internal garden wall. APPROVED.

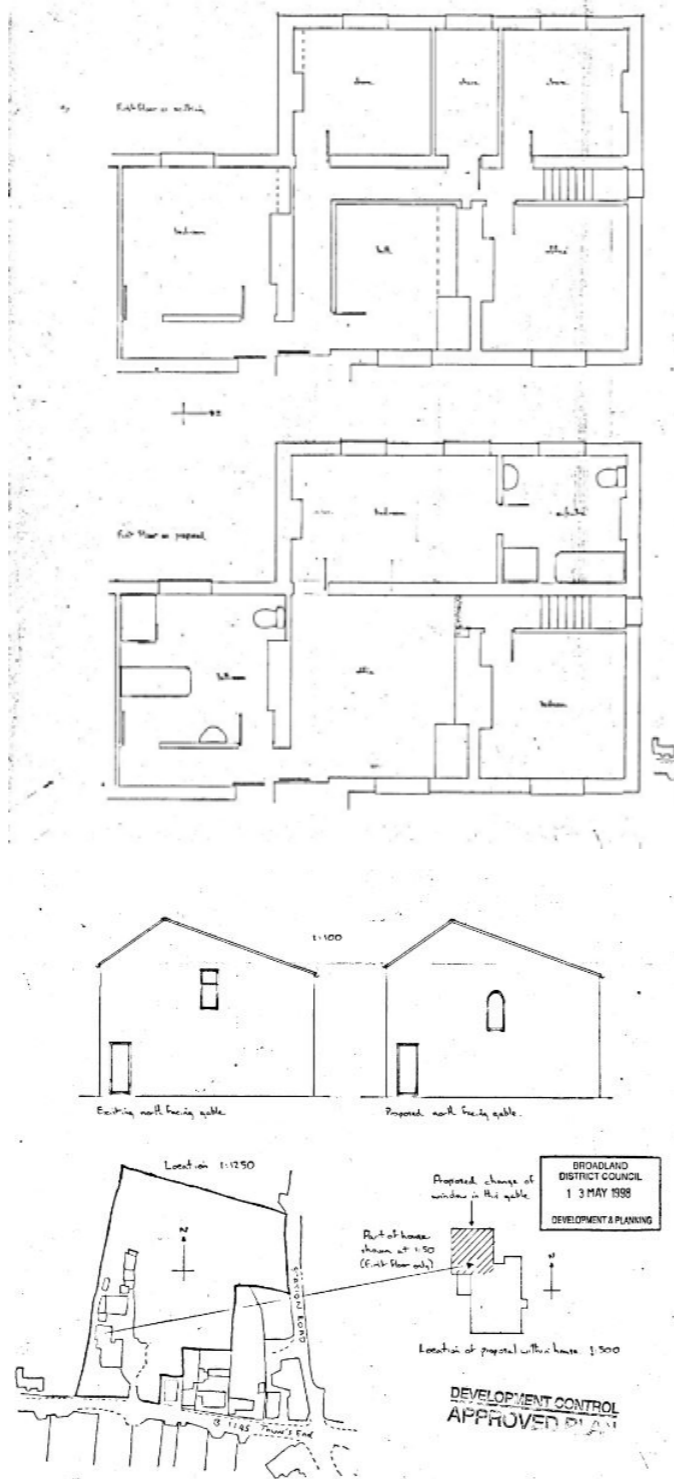
REF: 20080062 (2008). Conversion of Coach House to form ancillary residential accommodation. WITHDRAWN.

REF: 20020180 (2002). Part demolition of repair of Coal Shed/Garden Store. Proposed internal alterations to main house including dry lining and studwork partitions. APPROVED.

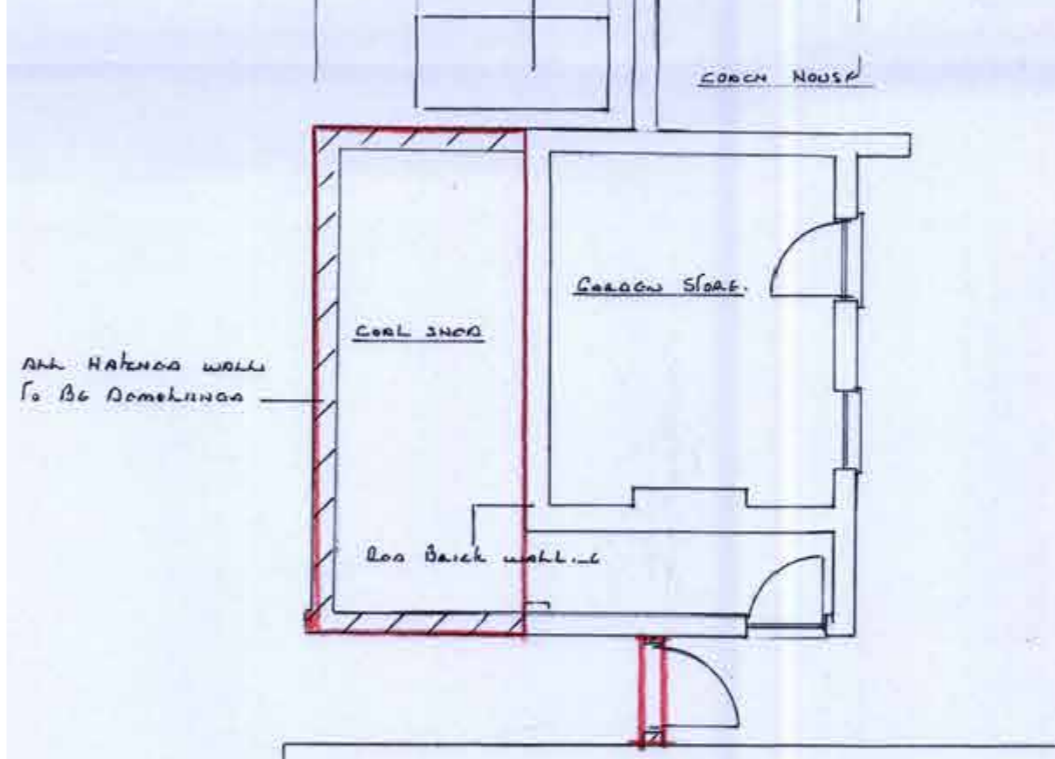
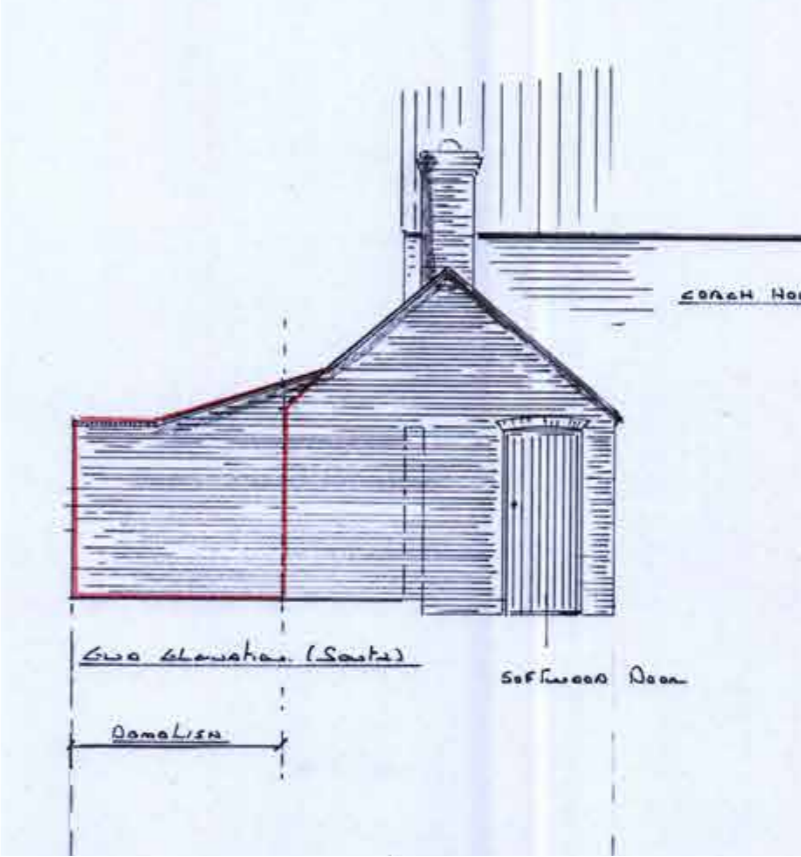
REF: 19980532 (1998). Proposed minor alterations to original servants wing at Eynsford House, Reepham. APPROVED.

Regarding the application for conversion of the Coach House (withdrawn), it is worth noting that the main reasons for objection at the time related to the creation of a "separate sort of annexe" to the main house (i.e. totally ancillary), and the complete loss of all original internal features, fixtures and fittings negatively affecting the character of the listed asset. The current proposal involves linking the Coach House with the main house making it non-ancillary (i.e. not independent from) the main house. The intention is also to retain as much of the existing flooring, panelling and stable dividers as possible by reinstating in situ once thermal upgrade works have been completed. The considered preservation of the history and character of the building is of paramount importance to the client.

Proposed minor alterations to original servants wing at Eynsford House, Reepham.

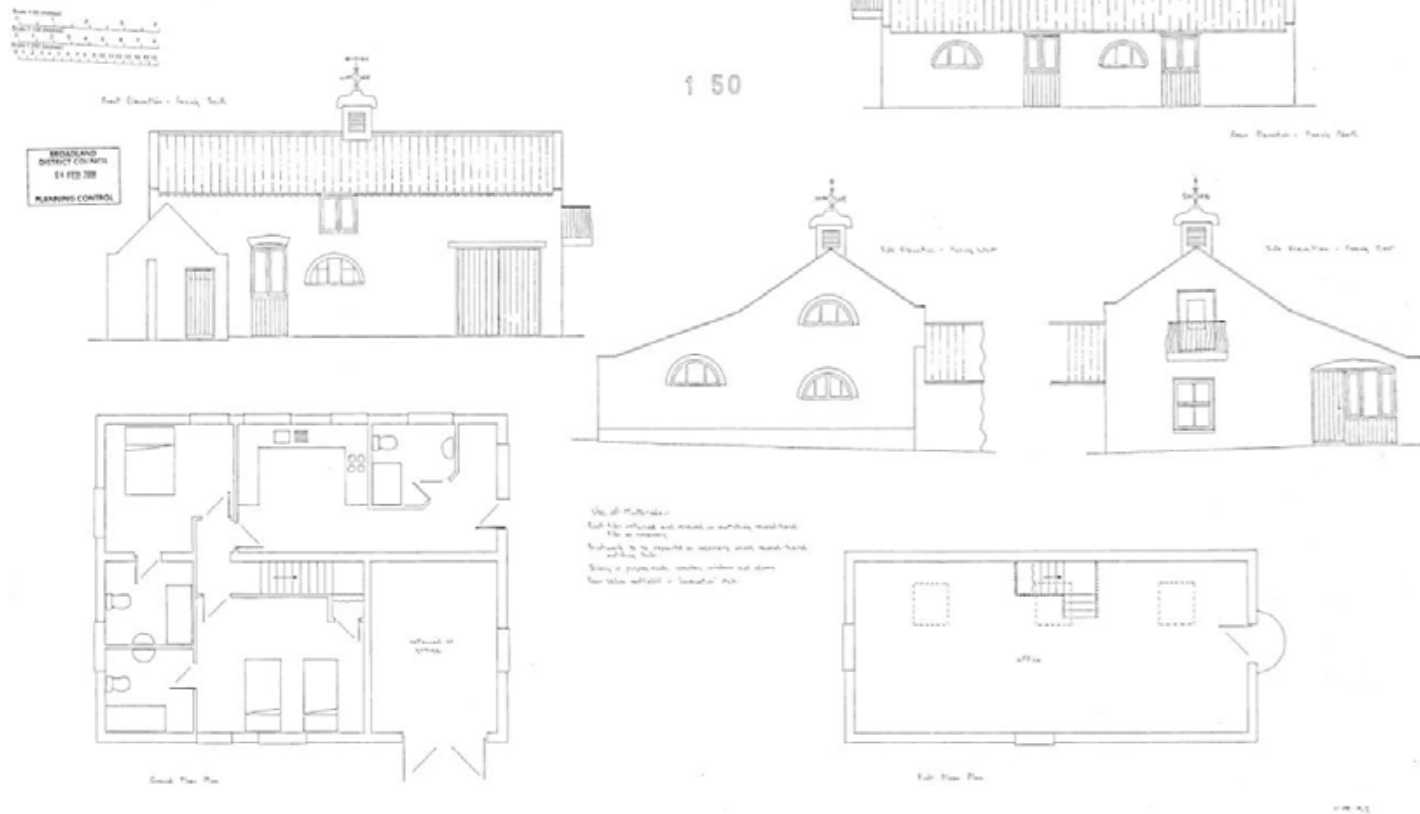


REF 19980532: Existing and proposed amends to servants wing (completed) showing amendments to fenestration and internal partition walls.



REF 20020180 Existing and proposed amends to garden store and potting shed, with approved demolition of lean to area as shown

20220062
**Eynsford House
 Coach-house Conversion
 2 Proposals**



REF 20080062 Withdrawn application for conversion of the Coach House. The objections related to making a completely ancillary/independent annexe style accommodation, and complete loss of original internal features such as the stable dividers.



Sketch of demolition of internal garden wall and proposed fencing (approved) Ref: 20221229



Sketch of demolition of pillar and proposed entrance gate (approved) Ref: 20221229

Previous pre-application advice

An earlier iteration of the current proposals have been tested through the pre-application process (ref: ENQHOU/2023/0660 dated 20th July 2023).

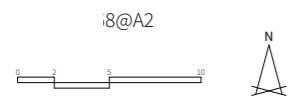
The officer's informal opinion was largely positive subject to some minor changes which are highlighted in the adjacent table.

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE	ARCHITECT'S COMMENT AND SUBSEQUENT MITIGATION
1. Link extension acceptable in principle. "Lightweight, see through construction will allow original arrangements of structures to remain clearly visible in external views whilst at the same time adding much to the architectural interest of the site."	1. N/A
2. Insufficient justification for removal of the chimney stack and first floor bedrooms in the original service wing.	2. Chimney stack now retained. Loss of first floor area much reduced to retain bedroom in north east corner of service wing. Loss of small area of first floor necessary to bring natural light/amenity into ground floor of stair hall as this area of the plan is "landlocked".
3. "No issues with original floor finishes being removed to install insulation and the re-laid."	3. Generally, original floor finishes retained and restored where possible. New floor finishes introduced to central hall area to unify space (refer to floor finishes plan).
4. "Original internal features of the stable building to be retained."	4. Majority of stable partitions retained to work with new layout and preserve history and character of asset.
5. "Existing external wall finishes inside the servant's wing of the house are quite plain so I would not object to some internal insulation being installed... providing this can be installed so that it is not noticeable and shows correctly the existing internal features such as sills and door surrounds."	5. Breathable woodfibre internal wall insulation system proposed to service wing and stable block (refer to drawing PL-401). Careful detailing of sills and surrounds to be resolved during detailed design stage.
6. Proposed garage too large so close to house. "Certainly a smaller three-bay garage without a large extended section to the rear I think would sit comfortably here subject to agreeing full design details."	6. Garage size significantly reduced in footprint to be 3 bays on plan with a small bike storage and workbench area to rear. Front elevation pushed back and away from house by approx 3m.
7. Windows. "I have no objection to double glazing being installed into the existing sashes on the later, two storey lean to section of the house at the north-west side. I also would not object to the same approach for the two first-floor casement windows above the new extension on the service wing at the east side.... Double glazing on the larger sash windows elsewhere is not likely to be supported...."	7. Secondary glazing only proposed to the original sash windows in the main house (refer to annotated plans).
8. Greenhouse. "I have no objection to the proposed scale and design for the new greenhouse subject to full details being submitted in a formal application for planning permission."	8. Details from supplier submitted with application.



- Key**
- 1. House and service wing; thermally upgraded
 - 2. Coach House; thermally upgraded
 - 3. Link extension.
 - 4. Potting shed.
 - 5. Log store.
 - 6. Gym/pool house; existing building thermally upgraded.
 - 7. Orangery; glazed orangery reinstated with sympathetic equivalent.
 - 8. Brick wall to boundary; missing areas rebuilt.
 - 9. Driveway; widened.
 - 10. Proposed garage and bike store.
 - 11. Bin store.
 - 12. Proposed Alltex glasshouse
 - 13. New garden wall to form north wall of garage.
 - 14. Proposed gate; access to garden
 - 15. Kitchen garden

PROPOSED SITE PLAN



Proposed site plan extracted from the pre-application submission. Since this submission, the garage has since been made considerably narrower, pulling the front and rear elevations away from the house and east boundary respectively.

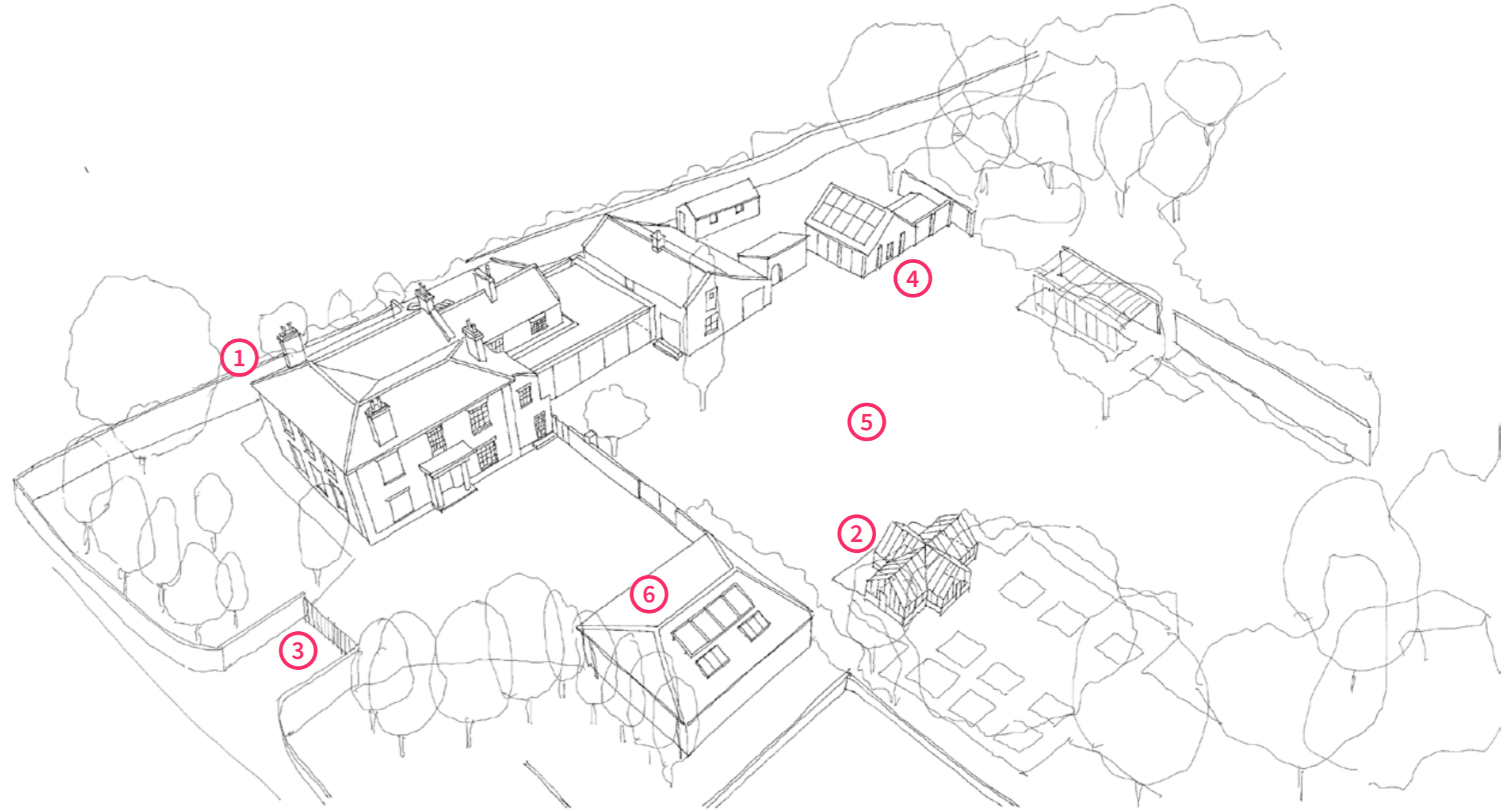
Proposal

The objectives for the wider site proposals are as follows:

1. To carefully repair and reinstate perimeter garden wall using sympathetic materials (bricks and mortars).
2. Propose a new sympathetic 'Alitex' glasshouse with kitchen garden behind, suitable for historical context (see precedent image below).
3. Provide a widened driveway and garage at the front of the site for sufficient car, bin and bike storage.
4. Convert and extend the existing garage building to the north of the site to ensure its long term sustainability.
5. Propose a sympathetic landscaping scheme and tree management plan to tie the site together and ensure long term sustainability.
6. Proposed garage and bike store located on the entrance court to mitigate visual impact of cars parked on driveway and to avoid cars driving north through the site to the existing garage.



Above: example of Alitex "Victorian" aluminium glasshouse, previously used in historic contexts and endorsed by the National Trust



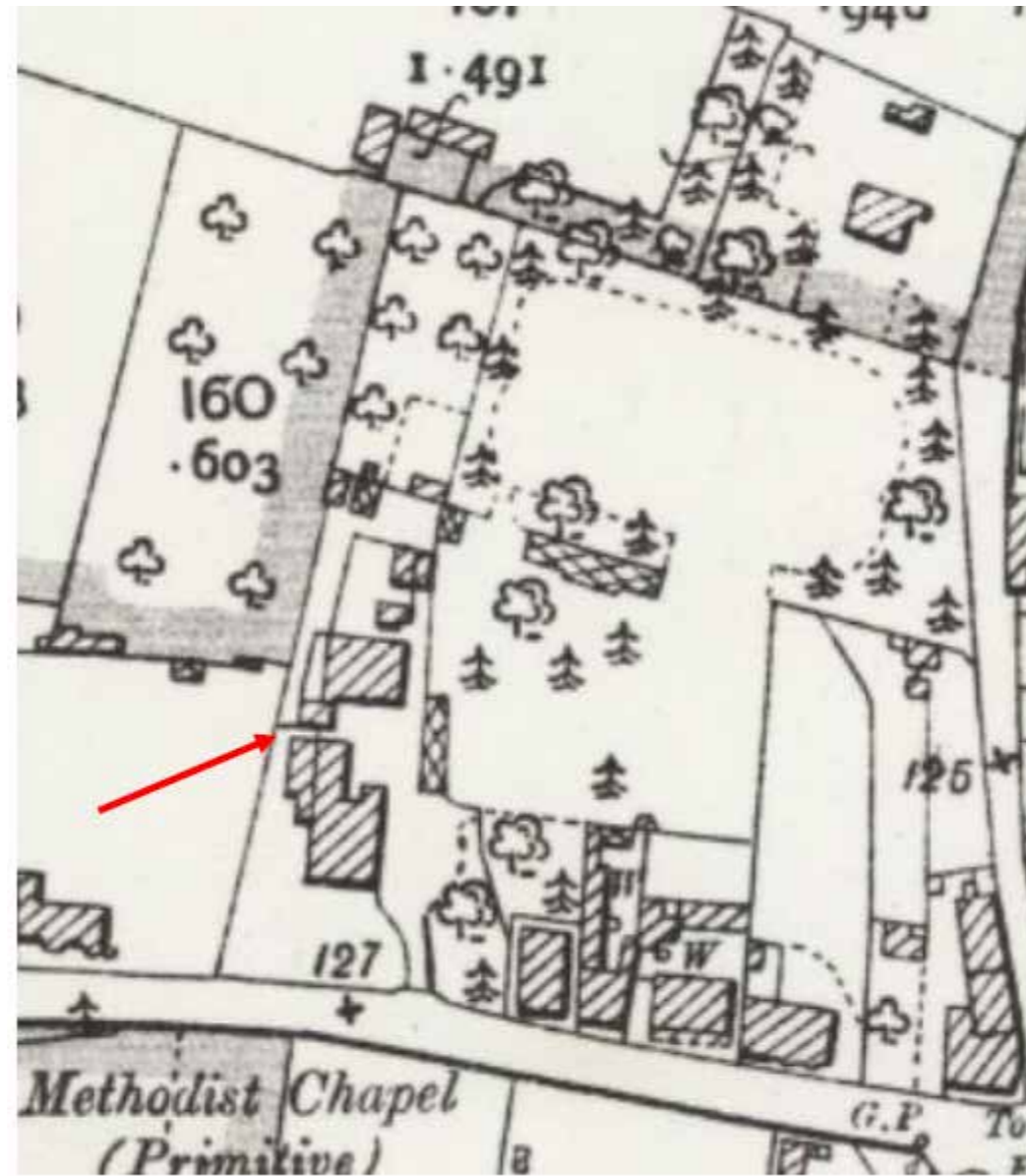
Proposed aerial overview of site

Curtilage

At pre-application stage a query was raised around the extent of the domestic curtilage of the house and use of the north garden as domestic garden.

OS maps contained within the accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment show that, since at least 1905, the northern piece of the plot has been used as a garden, with a continuous lawn and small orchard in the north-west corner. To the applicant's knowledge, this piece of land has been used as a garden associated with the house for decades.

However, to formalise this and avoid any ambiguity around the situation, the current application also concerns a "change of use" of this piece of land to domestic garden.



Extract from 1905 OS map showing the northern portion of the land incorporated as part of the garden of the main house.



Photograph of north lawn



Photograph of north lawn



Photograph of existing orchard to north-west of site

Landscape proposals

The scheme is subject to a carefully considered landscaping design by Timothy Garden Design.

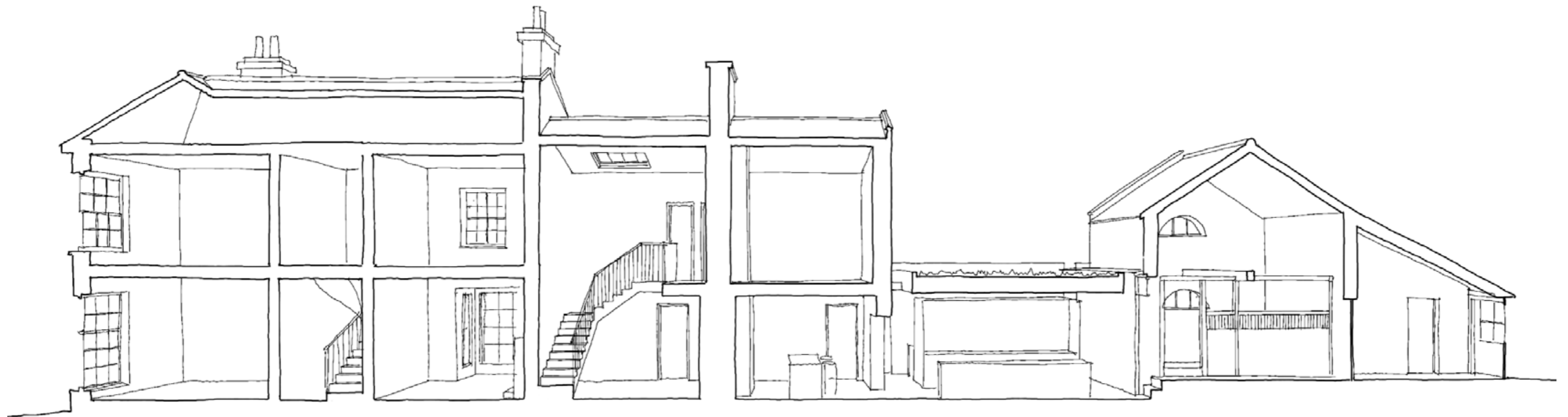
A primary consideration in the proposals is the health and condition of the trees and shrubs at Fern House, noting in particular the trees that have the greatest possibility of travelling through the next chapter in the story of this landscape setting.

At the threshold with the house and outbuildings, a series of flat planes has been proposed, stepping from south to north to work with the natural falls of the site. This levelling of the ground plane adjacent to the buildings helps to root and anchor the built form in the landscape.

The plans consider the trees in a future landscape setting at Fern House, developing garden plans that include the proposal for new tree planting, a large wildlife pond, water harvesting, a kitchen garden to produce for the family, an orchard, a bee and butterfly meadow, a nuts and berries scheme and generally to enrich and enhance the biodiversity of this fabulous green location.

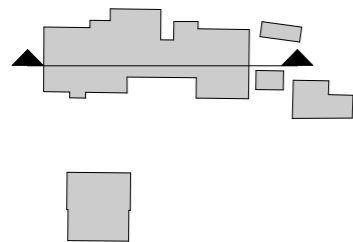
The scheme has been discussed directly with Mark Symonds, Conservation and Tree officer at Broadland and South Norfolk DC.





← MAIN HOUSE - Internal layout alterations, energy efficiency measures and redecoration works. Structural replacement of service wing roof to allow vaulting and rooflight install at roof level × PROPOSED LINK - New build × COACH HOUSE CONVERSION - Structural replacement to roof and first floor, internal layout alterations, energy efficiency measures and redecoration works →

Proposed section



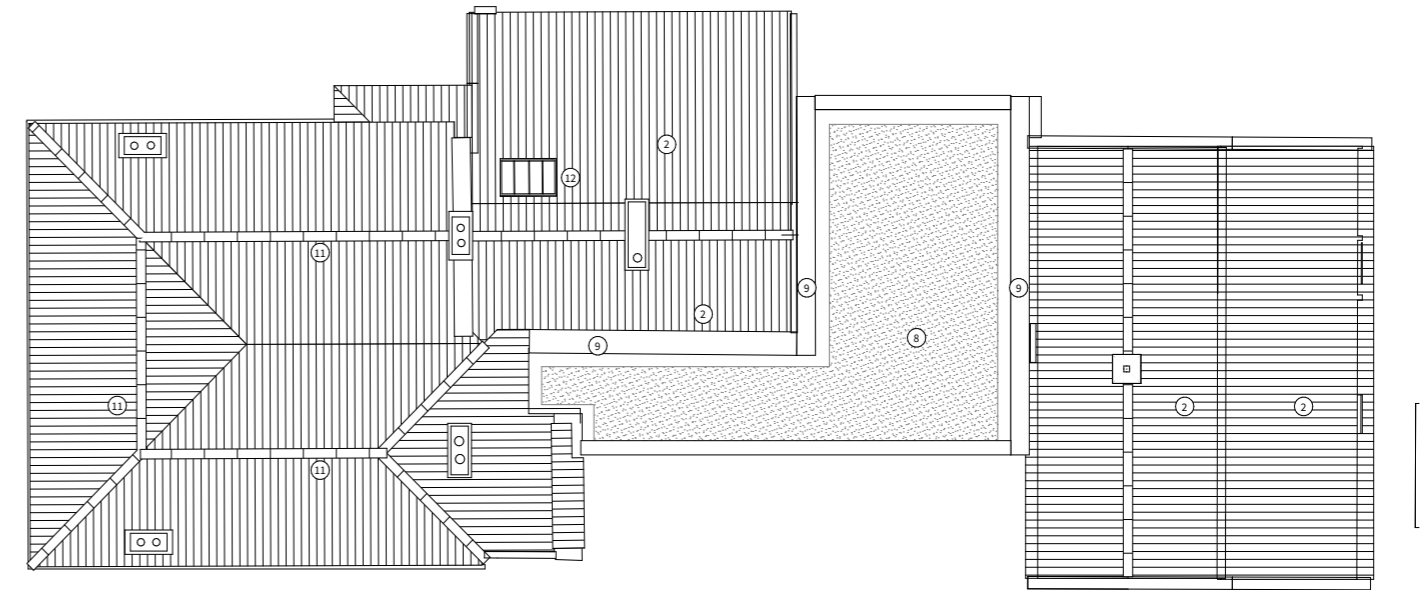
Proposed perspective section showing relationship between new link and existing building fabric

Proposal

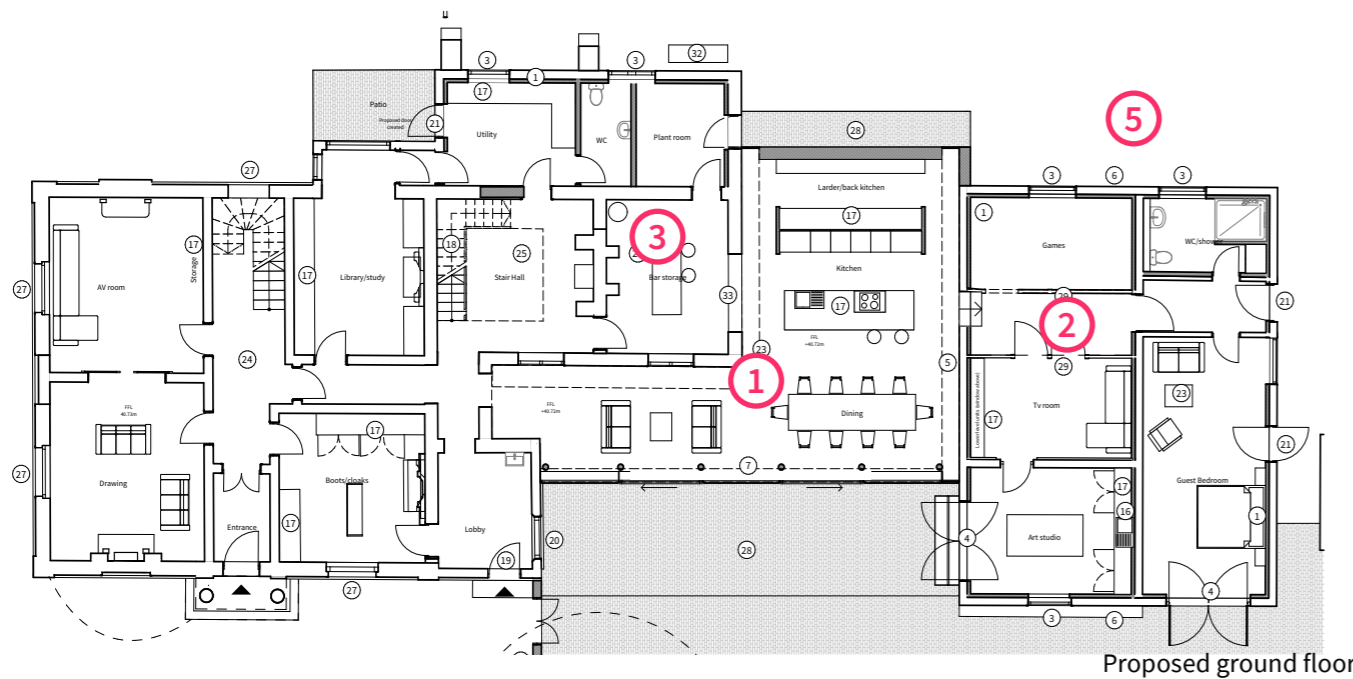
Our client's primary aim is to undertake a sympathetic and thorough conversion of the property to ensure its long term sustainability, whilst bringing it up to contemporary standards of living commensurate with 21st century family life.

The objectives for the house are as follows:

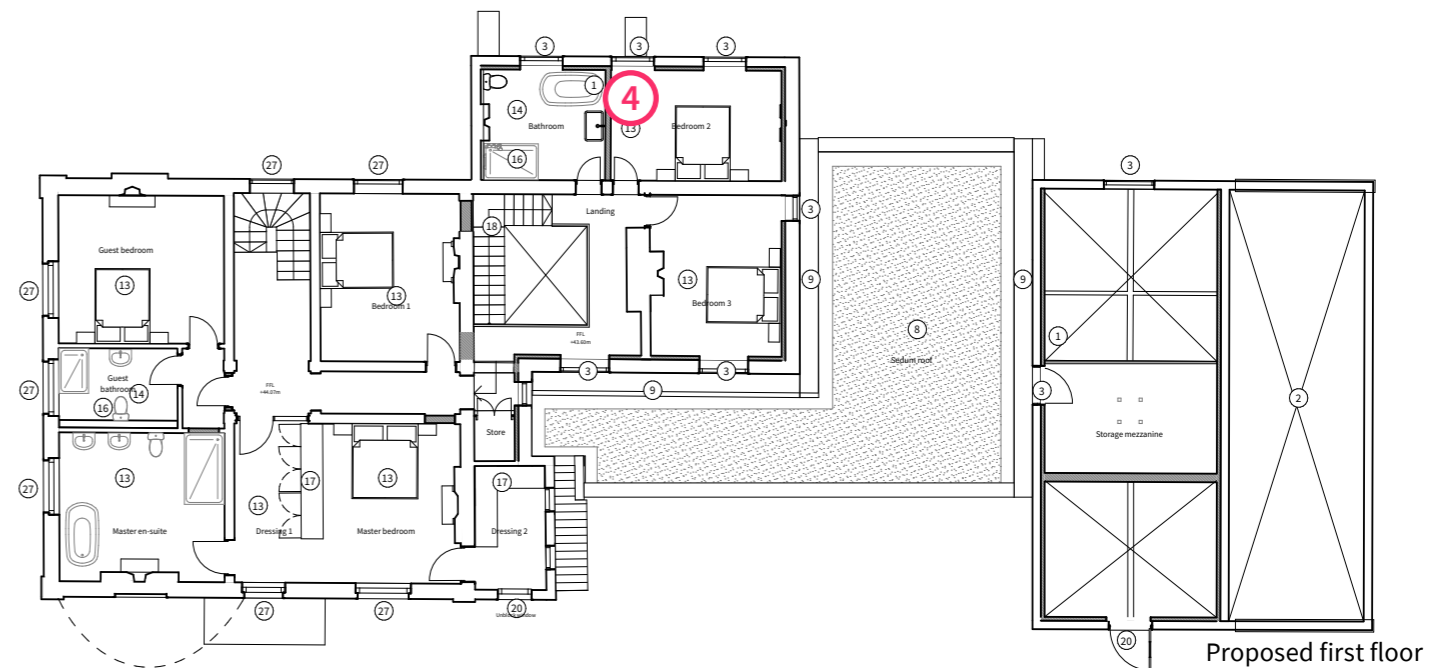
1. To re-instate the physical link between the main house to the Coach House with a sensitive extension/link building. This will allow the Coach House to be renovated and "brought into" the main house, ensuring its longer term viability and sustainability.
2. To convert and renovate the Coach house to provide secondary living areas and a guest suite. This will involve careful removal of historic finishes and fittings, thermally upgrading the building fabric, and reinstating original finishes and fittings where possible.
3. Opening up of the service wing to create an open plan living arrangement with good natural light.
4. Amendment of internal layouts to accommodate proposed plan, including services associated with bathroom relocation etc.
5. Thermal upgrading of existing fabric to achieve Building Regulation compliance and a dwelling fit for contemporary living (see next chapter).



Proposed roof plan



Proposed ground floor



Proposed first floor

Proposal

Elevationally, the proposal is primarily be limited to the "link" extension. This will be heavily glazed and simply detailed to express itself as a contemporary element in the composition. Abutments with historic fabric shall be expressed with a glazed "slot" (see 1) to reinforce this distinction.

A secondary entrance is proposed to the east elevation (see 4), re-instating the previous door into the surgery waiting area/lobby (refer to Heritage Statement).

Elsewhere, a new window will be added to the entrance lobby (see 2), whilst the existing blank window to the east elevation shall have glazing installed to introduce light into the dressing room (see 3). A new external door is also proposed to the south elevation to allow access from the back kitchen/utility out to the west garden area and bin store (see 5).



Precedent image; Hudson Architects utilised glazed abutments at grade II listed Quaker's Hall in Broadland to express the separation between new and old.



East Elevation



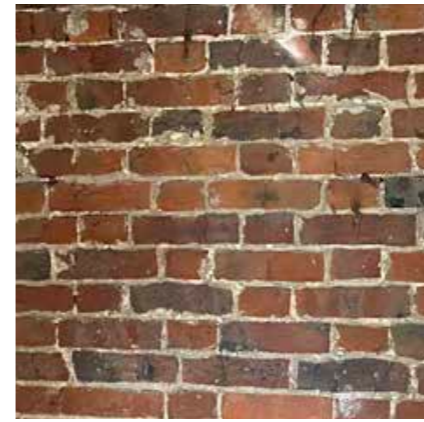
West Elevation



North Elevation



South Elevation



Existing materials, textures and finishes to the existing house, outbuildings and garden. Generally, existing materials shall be restored and made good with sympathetic equivalents where possible and practical.

Coach House and outbuildings

As aforementioned, our clients aim is to link the Coach House to the main house and make it a habitable part of the dwelling to ensure its long term viability. The intent would to retain as many of the original fittings, features and finishes as possible including;

1. Careful removal and relaying of floor bricks once floor has been insulated.
2. Careful removal and reinstatement of timber wall panelling to external walls in main portion of Stable block.
3. Careful removal and reinstatement of timber and metal stable partitions where possible.

The retention of historic features is important to tell the story of the history of the building

Following a structural survey (report included with this application), the existing roof and first floor structure of the stables/coach house are deemed insufficient structurally to accept the weight of new insulations and meet modern standards. We therefore propose that the roof structure is entirely replaced and a new first floor structure installed above the old to meet structural requirements.

To the north of the Coach House is a complex of 3 buildings including a potting shed, open log store and existing garage. Our client is proposing to convert the garage into a small gym and pool house. This will involve building a small extension north of the existing garage to house the gym. This will be concealed by an existing garden wall so will have minimal visual impact when viewed from the garden to the east.

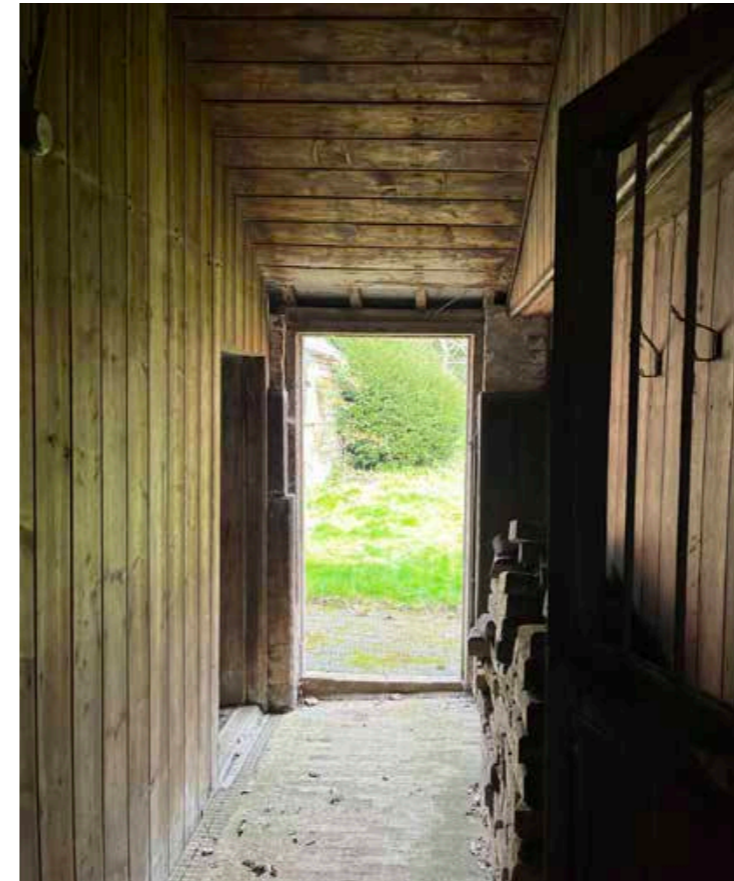
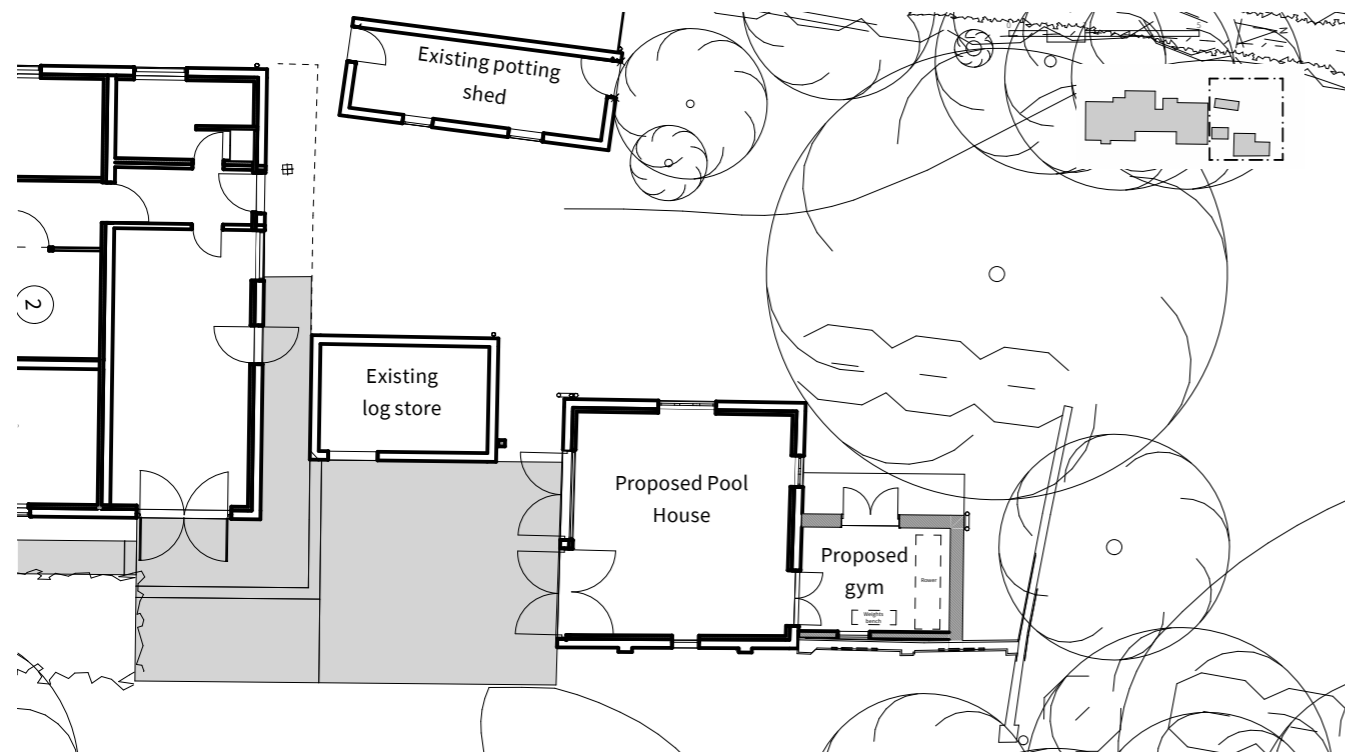


Photo from inside stables/coach house looking north



Photo from garden looking west into log store



Plan extract showing proposed arrangement of buildings to the north of the stable block/Coach House. The existing garage is to be converted and extended to form a Pool House and gym.

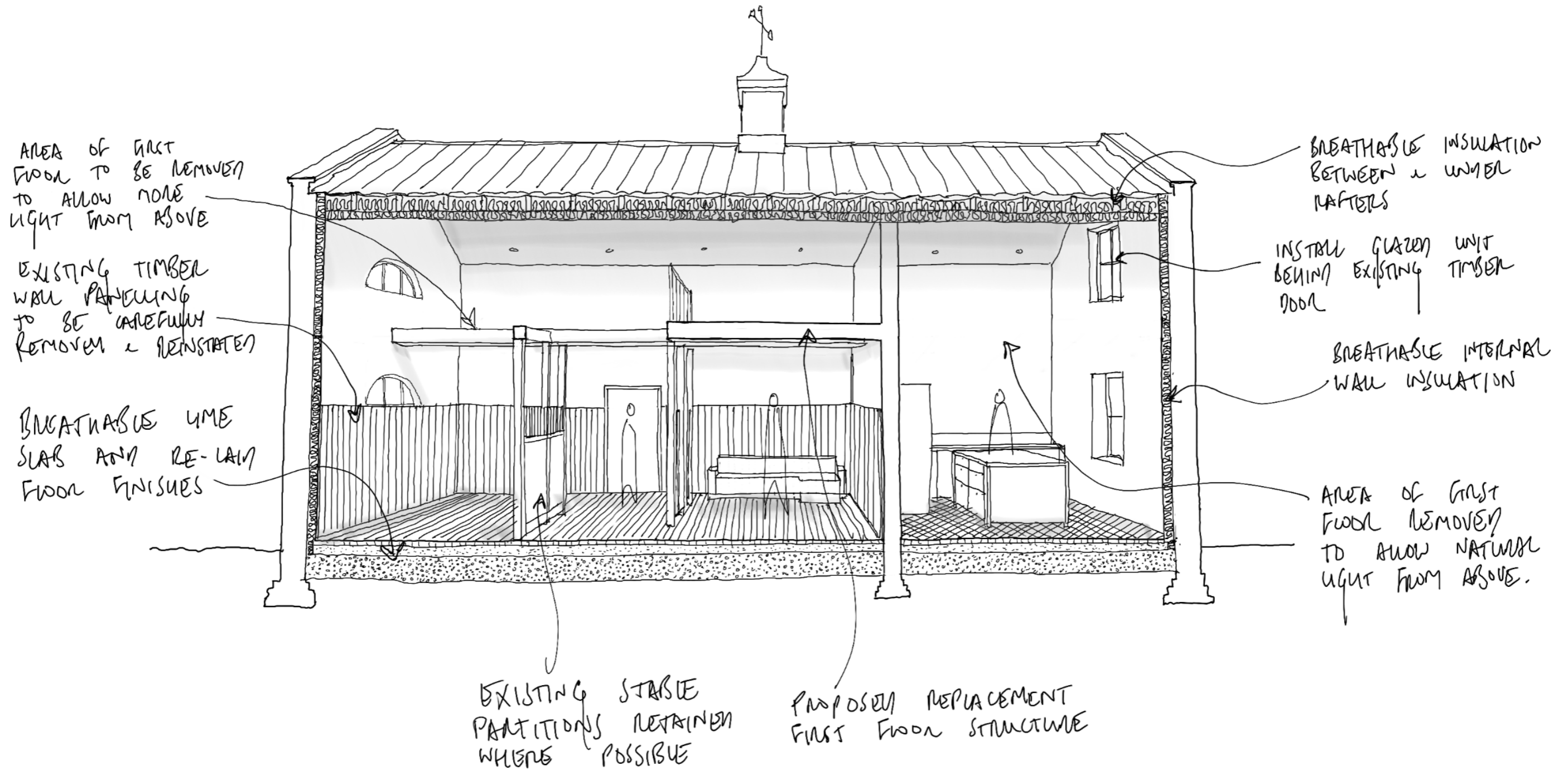


Photo from inside stable/coach house roof space



Photo from garden looking south-west showing relationship between stables/coach house and garage

PROPOSAL - COACH HOUSE



Proposed section through coach house showing insulation strategy and existing finishes to be retained/reinstated . Stable partitions to be retained and installed where feasible.



Sketch view looking north from driveway entrance showing relationship between house and new garage (right). Gates omitted for clarity.



Sketch view looking north from house showing new build link (left) and small courtyard area created by the house, link and converted Coach House



Sketch view from garden looking south towards the main house showing roof of garage/store and new wall separating driveway from garden

Relationship with existing building

The proposed link extension will employ a glazed strip where it meets the existing buildings, creating a visual separation between new and old. This is a commonly used technique to distinguish new from old.



Sketch view inside proposed glazed link, looking west towards kitchen. The glazed roof link continues to form a vertical glazed piece.



Precedent image; Hudson Architects utilised glazed abutments at grade II listed Quaker's Hall in Broadland to express the separation between new and old.



Precedent image; Hopkins Architects utilised glazed abutments at grade I Norwich Cathedral to express the separation between new Hostry and old building fabric.



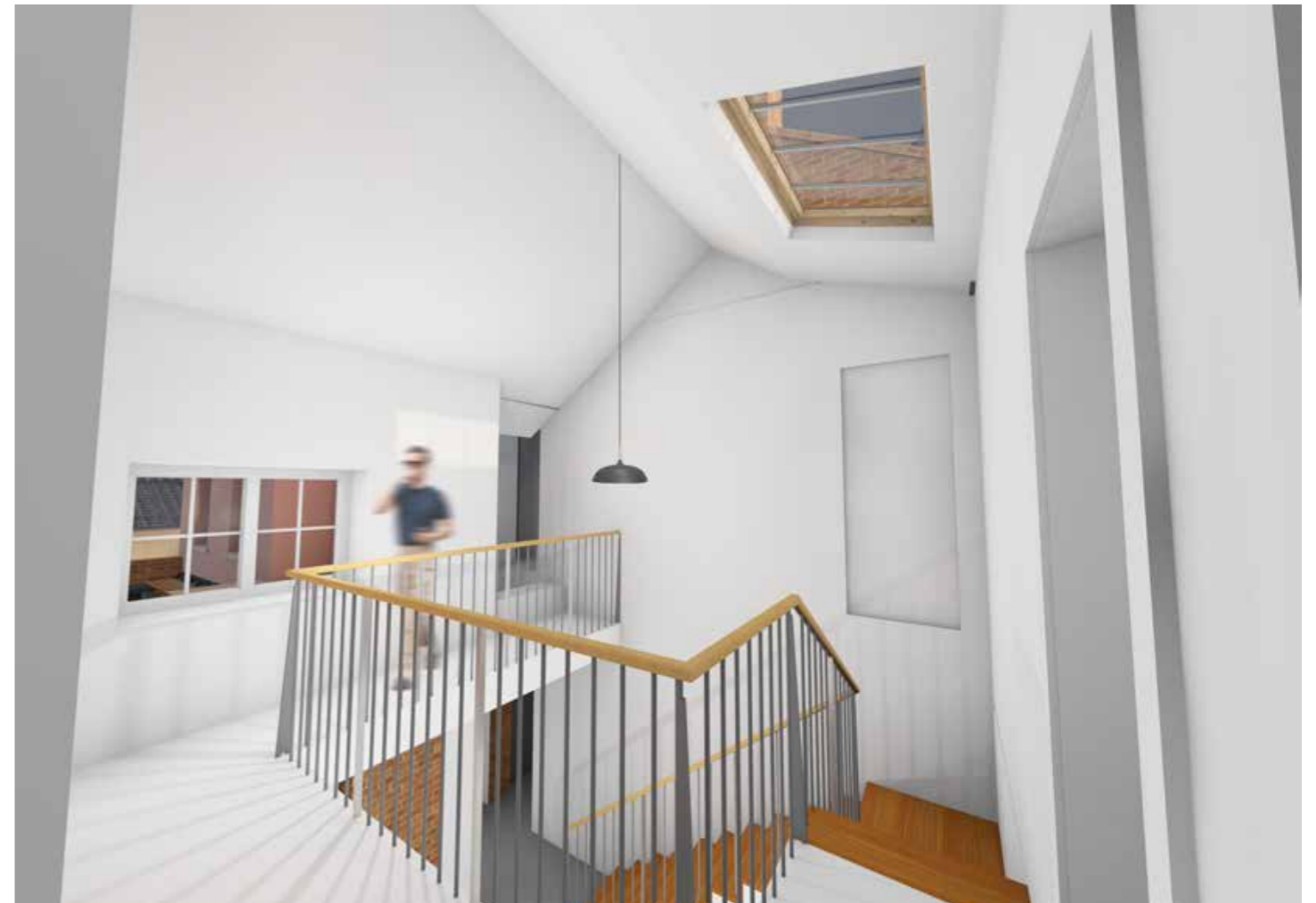
Sketch view from entrance lobby looking north-west. Existing windows and Flemish brickwork will be retained in situ to preserve character of the listed asset.

Relationship with existing building

Where existing openings are blocked up, these shall be carefully detailed to show the profile of the original opening, such as that visible from the first floor landing.



Sketch view inside proposed glazed link, looking south. The existing north gable shall be re-rendered in sympathetic lime render. The existing door opening shall be widened to improve access between the old and new spaces.



Sketch view at first floor, looking east. The Service Wing roof/ceiling shall be vaulted to enhance the sense of space, with a new rooflight added to bring light into the double height space. Existing openings, where filled, shall be expressed as shown to preserve legibility of original building.

Refuse

A small bin store shall be located away from view to the west of the house, with bins presented at the front of the drive on collection day.

Bike storage

There is ample room for bike storage in the garage to the east of the house.

Parking

The current driveway is small and not suited for cars due to lack of turning area which currently have to reverse out onto a busy road. Parked cars also detract visually from the listed asset when viewed from the road.

Our proposal is to site a "Coach House" (garage and bike store) to the east of the house, tucked into the corner of the site. This will be largely screened by an existing line of yew trees. The roof will be a traditionally hipped roof with with 2 conservation rooflights and a PV array on the eastern slope, facing away from the house and not visible from the driveway.

From the north, the garden wall will form the north wall of the building, anchoring it in the composition.



Sketch section showing relationship between house and new garage/store

Thermal upgrading of existing fabric

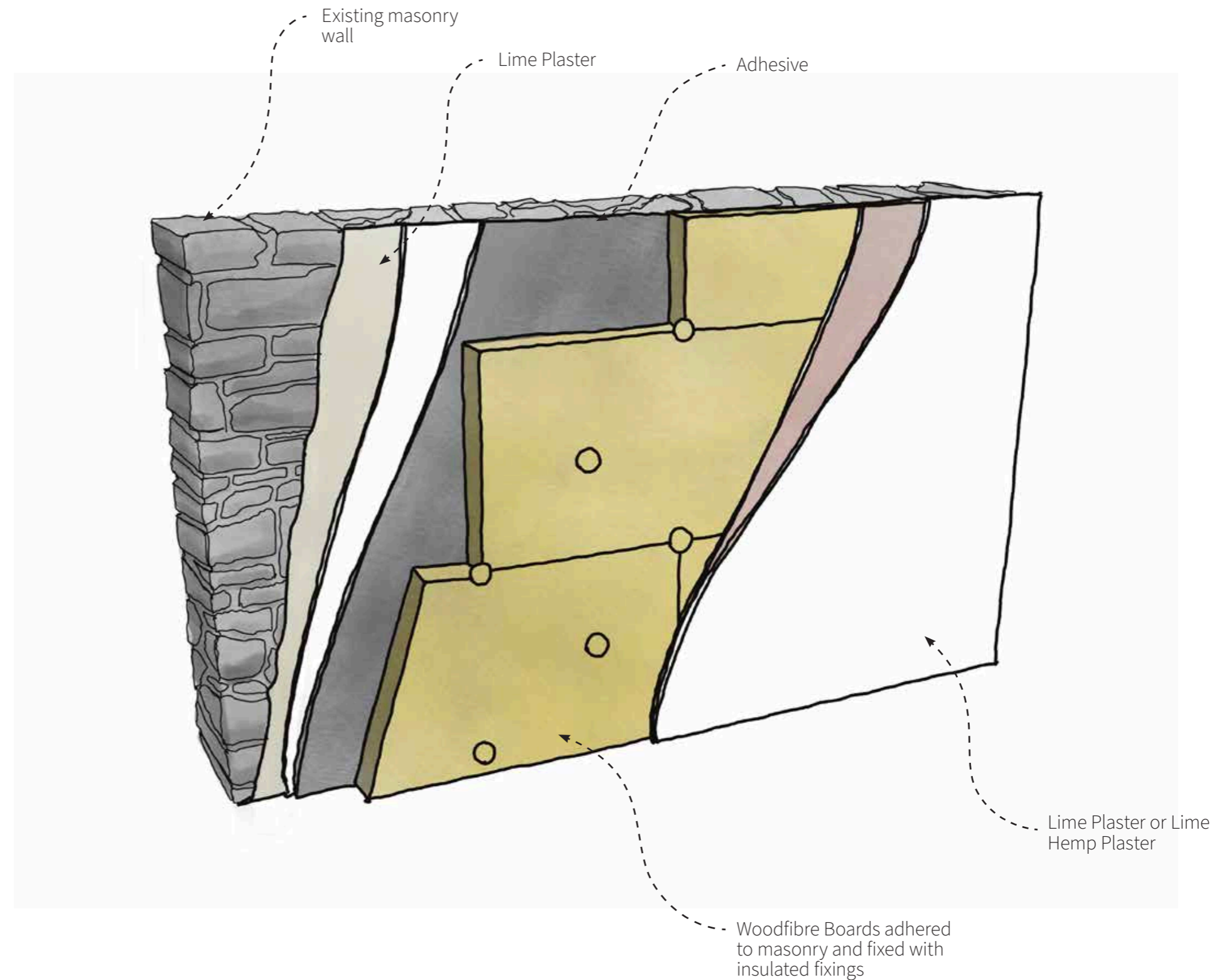
We are proposing various thermal upgrade works to bring the property up to modern standards of living. Although some exemptions exist regarding Building Regulations for listed buildings, we believe it is vitally important to address operational energy if we are to meet our legally binding net zero targets going forward.

The extent of the works are as follows:

1. Install secondary glazing to the original sash windows in the main house, as indicated on proposed plans.
2. Retrofit slimline double glazed units and draught-proofing to all other single glazed windows where feasible.
3. Thermal upgrade of "service wing" area walls and roof through use of sympathetic and breathable insulations such as woodfibre insulations and breathable lime plasters (see right and Hudson Architects detailed drawing).
4. Insulating ground floors throughout by careful removal and reinstatement of floor finishes to preserve the character of listed asset.
5. Floor, wall and roof insulation to the Coach House and garage to make habitable, all in a manner sympathetic to the listed asset.

Energy source; heating and hot water

The house is currently served by oil fired boilers/aga which is not commensurate with 21st century living in a climate emergency. We propose replacing the fossil fuel system with a cleaner air source heat pump to provide the house with heating and hot water. This will be located adjacent the plant room on the west side of the house and not visible from key viewpoints (i.e. road, driveway and garden).



Sketch drawing showing breathable woodfibre internal wall insulation system, suitable for older solid walled buildings



Sketch drawing showing LABC approved breathable limecrete floor system suitable for older, solid walled buildings. The Foamglass acts as structural insulation, preventing moisture from being drawn up into the slab via capillary action. This system has been used in very old listed buildings such as churches.

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