

# The Hawthorns

---

High Street, Thorpe-le-Soken, CO16 OEA

## Proposed Alterations



## Heritage Impact Assessment and Heritage Statement

Revision A,  
21<sup>st</sup> August 2023

Libby Kirkby-Taylor,  
MSc. PgDip (Historic Building Conservation), BA Hons. (History of Art & Architecture)  
Nursery Cottage, Priory Street, Colchester, CO1 2QA  
M: [REDACTED] E: [REDACTED]

## Introduction

This document has been undertaken following a desktop study and site visit to assess the building and its setting. It has been written in accordance with the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and enshrined in law by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

In line with accepted conservation philosophy the basic principles to which the scheme aspires are those of minimal intervention and reversibility, of maintenance and repair in preference to replacement; and with the awareness that it is the responsibility of current generations to conserve heritage assets for the benefit of generations to follow.

## 1. Designation

The Hawthorns is a grade II listed building in the Thorpe-le-Soken Conservation Area. It was first designated on 30 January 1987. It is identified in the listing description as follows:

### Official List Entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1112109  
Date first listed: 30-Jan-1987  
List Entry Name: HAWTHORNS  
Statutory Address 1: HAWTHORNS, HIGH STREET

### Location

Statutory Address: HAWTHORNS, HIGH STREET  
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.  
County: Essex  
District: Tendring (District Authority)  
Parish: Thorpe-le-Soken  
National Grid Reference: TM 17727 22519

### Details

THORPE-LE-SOKEN HIGH STREET TM 1622-1722 (north-east side) 8/82 Hawthorns  
GV II

House. C18, altered in C19. Timber framed, facade of red brick in Flemish bond, remainder roughcast rendered and weatherboarded, roofed with handmade red clay tiles. 3 bays facing SW with central stack, forming a lobby-entrance.

Rear wing at right end, with external stack at end. Lean-to extension in left rear angle, forming a catslide with the main range, of machine-made red clay tiles. C19 single-storey lean-to extension at left end. 2 storeys with attics.

The early C19 brick facade has a 4-window range of late C19 sashes in original apertures with flat brick arches. One similar sash in left extension. Central 6-panel door, the top 2 panels glazed, in simple fluted doorcase. Corner pilster strips. Primary straight bracing. Roof ceiled, apparently with collars and side purlins.

Some original floorboards. 2 wood-burning hearths reduced for C20 grates.

## 2. History of the site

### 2.1 Map Evidence – Ordnance survey

Hawthorns is located at the north-west end of the historic core of the village. The third edition Ordnance survey map of 1921 (figure 2) shows this most clearly. To the south east of the house the grain of the built environment becomes noticeably tighter. To the north west it is one of the last houses before development becomes distinctly more scattered. The postwar and more recent development that has taken place since this time has obscured this to some degree, but fortunately Hawthorns still enjoys a position surrounded by attractive gardens but close to the road behind a mellow red brick wall, which together enable its former edge of village position still to be sensed quite clearly.

The map suggests that Hawthorns enjoyed considerably larger grounds at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a generous orchard shown directly behind the house that appears to belong to it. It is unfortunate that this has disappeared but hardly surprising considering the postwar development that occurred in subsequent decades. The surviving pear tree in the back garden is, however, a welcome reminder of this lost feature.

Unfortunately for the purposes of comparison, Hawthorns appears at the very edge of the map in the second edition map of 1896-7 (figure 1), so that the overall grain of surrounding development cannot clearly be discerned, but it is interesting to see a glasshouse in the back garden along with other structures and a much smaller orchard area.

The rear extension already exists, and the plot appears to be divided in some way, although it is unclear exactly how. No evidence survives within the building of the house ever being divided into two, which might be the obvious explanation of the delineation as seen on the map.

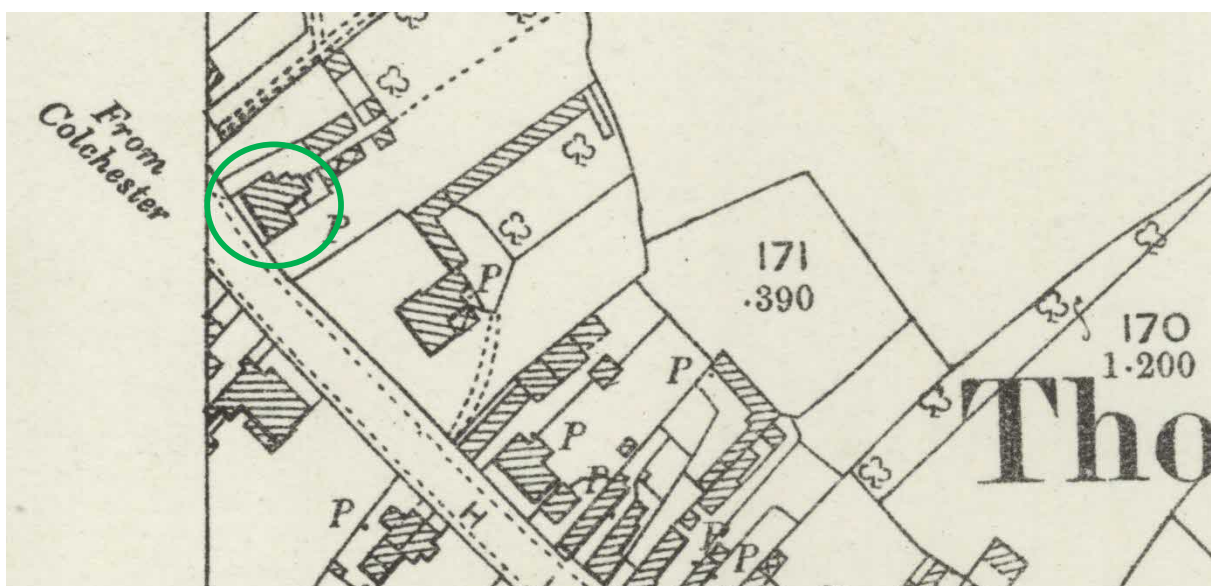


Figure 1: Second Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1896-7  
Hawthorns is circled in green.



Figure 2: Third edition map of Thorpe-le-Soken, 1921-3 Hawthorns is at the centre of the map (circled in green). Note the orchards immediately to the east and north

## 2.2 Chapman and Andre

It is unclear whether or not Hawthorns might have been one of the few houses shown in the village on the Chapman and Andre map of 1777. About a dozen buildings are shown on the north side of the high street between Golden Lane and Landermere road but the pattern of development has altered this part of the village so much that it seems impossible to identify individual buildings.

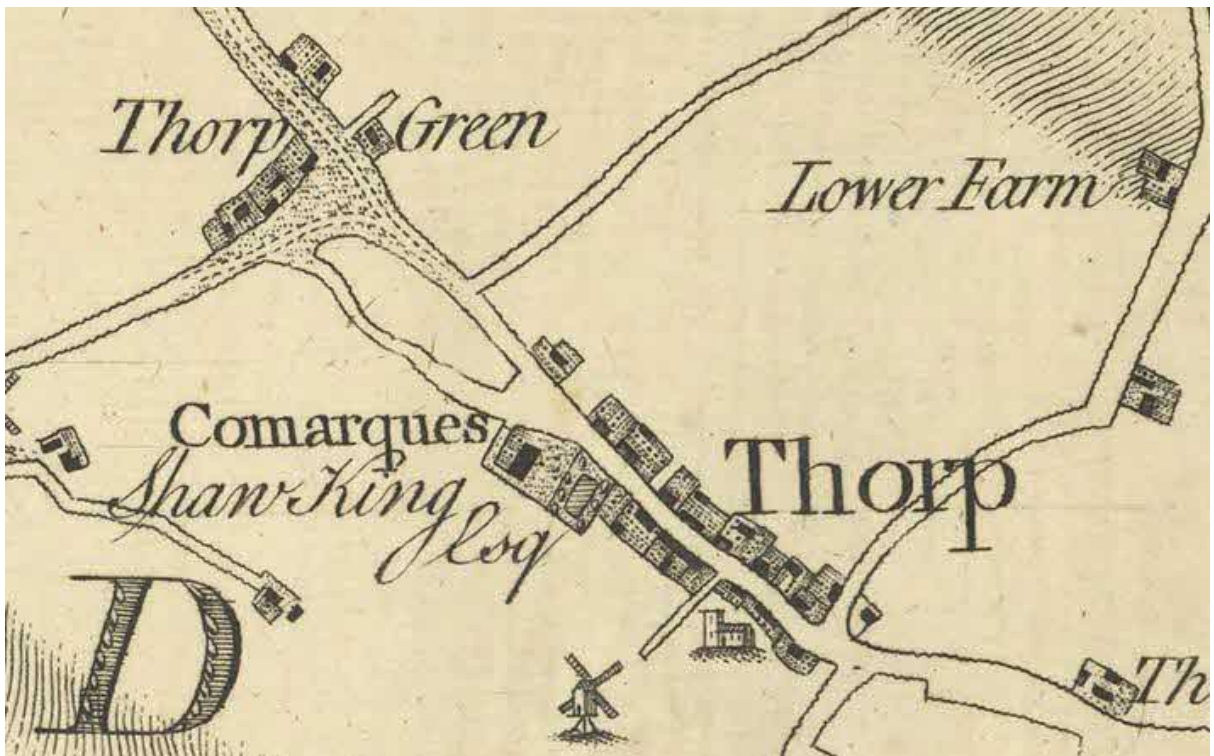


Figure 3: Extract from the Chapman and Andre map of Essex, 1777. Golden Lane and Landermere road are visible but it is impossible to identify specific houses without more information.

### 2.3 Archive Evidence

During preparation of this document the publicly available archives of Tendring District Council and of the Essex Records Office have been searched but unfortunately no historic plans of the building, or any plans pre-dating 2008 were found. The drawings from the 2008 application, which was for window replacement and associated minor works show no alteration in the plan form of the building when compared with the existing layout of the building.

The only document relating to the building that was found in the Essex Records Office is a tenancy agreement dating to 1932 for the house, contained within Baptist Church records.

The owner of the property has a book in his possession which has a few old photographs of the house in a book on the history of the village, showing the old butchers' shop in situ. Clearly the parapet wall, with (apparently) some sort of flue arrangement has been rebuilt since the picture was taken, and a side door into the shop no longer exists, suggesting that this structure has been considerably remodelled.



Figure 4: Hawthorns showing the butchers' shop. Note the side access door & parapet before reconstruction

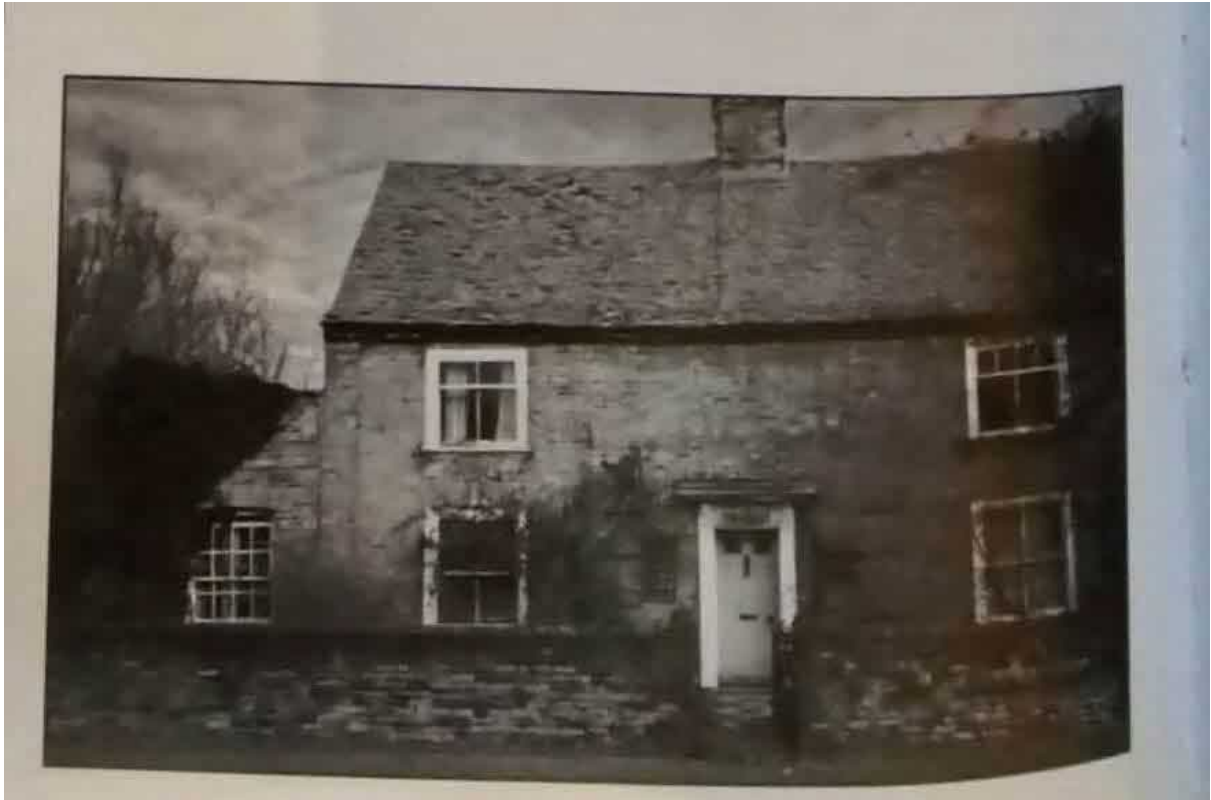


Figure 5: Hawthorns in 1989

### 3. The House Today

#### 3.1 Overview

This is a rather curious property, in that while it has generously proportioned reception rooms downstairs, it only has two useable bedrooms, rendering it unsuitable for accommodating a family, but over-sized for a couple or individual to occupy. Clearly the attic space has at some point been used as accommodation, evidenced by the clearly old staircase and evidence of lath and plaster on walls and tie beams. Before a bathroom was installed, presumably the first floor room in the rear extension was also a bedroom. The size and form of the downstairs accommodation is clearly more suited to a four bedroom than a two bedroom house.

There are numerous heavy and pegged timbers present in the house that seem to pre-date the assumed 18<sup>th</sup> century construction date of the house. They are clearly reused timbers, presumably reassembled and repegged in situ.



Figure 6, left: Heavy pegged timbers in the kitchen, with heavily scored carpenters marks. Clearly reused from a much older building.



Figure 7, right: Built in corner cupboard in the hall with nice scallop shaped detail at the top

### 3.2 Fixtures and fittings

The house retains some nice examples of early 19<sup>th</sup> century two-panelled doors, ledged and boarded doors and an unusually large number of built-in corner cupboards. It also has some nice traditional windows and many of the historic doors have characterful handmade hinges, latches and other door furniture. Where historic wall finishes are visible in the loft and inside some cupboards they appear to be constructed of laths with a rather coarse daub used as plaster and a thin skim of lime plaster to create a smooth finish.



Figure 8, left: In the roof space are panels of riven hardwood laths, coated with daub and finished with a thin lime plaster skim can be seen. This would remain in situ, safely preserved behind new wall finishes.



Figure 9, right: A lovely example of the hand made iron hinges that can be found in the house.

## 4. The Proposed Development

### 4.1 Overview

The proposed alterations are intended to enable the house to be effectively used as a family home, with bedroom accommodation commensurate with the generous scale and number of reception rooms and the status of the house. It is clear from the evidence that the loft rooms were once used as habitable rooms, with its staircase, gable windows and marks on the timbers derived from (now removed) lath and plaster wall and ceiling finishes. Before the bathroom was installed in the rear projection this indicates that the house used to have four or five bedrooms including the sleeping space in the roof, presumably for servants or farm labourers. It seems reasonable therefore for relatively minor alterations to be carried out to return the house to this level of accommodation.

The work required to do this has been conceived with the objective of doing so with the minimum of disturbance to historic features in the house and avoiding causing harm to the significance of the building. Each of the proposals is discussed in turn below, for clarity and avoidance of doubt.

### 4.2 Ground Floor

At ground floor level the applicant seeks to install a downstairs WC and to erect a lightweight garden room to improve the connection between the house and its beautiful garden.

#### 4.2.1 WC

The proposed new WC would be located within the single storey side projection which is thought once to have been a butchers' shop. It would be accessed by the existing door. A new partition wall would be inserted to divide the space into two to create a study at the front of the room. Access to the study would be through what appears to be a former opening from reception 1 that has previously been infilled.

A small amount of investigative work has been carried out in this wall to assess the impact that the opening would have on the significance of the building. Examination of the fabric in this area, has shown squared-off sawn timbers that appear later than those found elsewhere in the building, in a doorway shaped niche in the wall.

The wall in this location used to be an external wall before the 'butchers' shop' was built. However it seems likely that this wall was considerably disturbed at the time of that extension because the laths inside the opening are sawn softwood, whereas elsewhere in the building, riven hardwood laths can be seen. Sawn softwood laths tend to be a relatively modern feature. The sum of this evidence strongly suggests that an opening once existed in this location.

Given these considerations this proposal would have no impact on significance in view of the likelihood that no historic fabric would be disturbed by the work. In comparison the benefit of providing downstairs WC accommodation in an existing room, enabling the building to be used effectively even by people that lack the mobility to access the bathroom upstairs, would be considerable.

This extension is currently in poor condition and there are large cracks indicating that it is falling away from the building. If allowed to deteriorate it seems likely that it will detach altogether and in



time collapse. Repairs are required to the structure to stabilise it and these works would be carried out at the same time.

#### 4.2.2 Garden Room

The house is surrounded by a beautiful mature garden that was once clearly much loved and cared for. Unfortunately there is little opportunity to enjoy it from within the house. It is proposed that an earlier external doorway should be reopened to create access to a new garden room nestled in the niche between Reception 2 and the kitchen. It would be inset from both projections to create the appropriate articulation and ensure it remains discreet. It would be a very simple frameless box with a low brick plinth, deliberately designed to be as translucent as possible, leaving the walls of the house clearly visible. This small extension would have the benefit of a much improved relationship between the inside and outside of the house. No historic fabric would be removed and given its scale and modesty it is anticipated that no harm would be caused by this minor addition.



Figure 10, left: The area of weatherboarding to the left of the kitchen window covers the location of a former doorway that appears to have been closed sometime during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 11, right: Internal view of the infill in the location of the former external door in the kitchen.

### 4.3 First Floor

Here it is proposed that a new partition be inserted in the existing bathroom to create a bedroom and a smaller bathroom. In Bedroom 1 a new ensuite shower room would be created inside an existing built-in cupboard.

#### 4.3.1 Bathroom

The existing bathroom is unnecessarily large, with an enormous modern airing cupboard taking up much of one wall. This airing cupboard would be removed and the room divided into two to form the family bathroom and a modest third bedroom. The airing cupboard has no historic significance and is poorly built, apparently as a DIY job in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It makes no contribution to the house. The location of the bathroom is in a later rear projection and the division of this space into two would not impede legibility of the historic plan form of the building. The existing bathroom door is a ledged and boarded door of some age. It could be retained in situ or relocated to form the door either to the new family bathroom or the bedroom. However it is very

low and has a large gap at the bottom, so if it is to be relocated it would need to be adapted by adding a plank at the bottom or the top to make it large enough.



Figure 12, left: Ledged and boarded bathroom door.  
Figure 13, right: The large airing cupboard in the bathroom.

#### 4.3.2 Ensuite bathroom to Bedroom 1

Bedrooms 1 and 2 currently each have a built-in cupboard, back to back beside the central chimney stack. It is proposed that the cupboard door in bedroom 2 should be fixed shut and the partition wall that divides the two cupboards be removed. This would enable a small shower room to be formed, accessed through the existing door to the built-in cupboard in bedroom 1.

The dividing wall between the two cupboards is of some age. One side of the wall is finished with the lath and daub found elsewhere in the building, the other with modern plasterboard, suggesting that this fabric has been disturbed in the past. The lath and daub wall finish survives extensively at second floor level and in other locations around the building. Its loss in this location therefore would constitute minor harm as it would remain in situ elsewhere in the building. It is of some interest, as lath and lime plaster is more commonly found.

In order to avoid losing this small area of historic fabric it could be cut out as a panel, labelled with a note stating its original location and preserved behind the new wall finish elsewhere in the house, for example at second floor level where new wall finishes will be required anyway. This ensures that the historic fabric would remain within the building and could be returned to its original position if required in the future, as its original location would be documented on the panel in perpetuity.

This elegant solution would allow the building to benefit from the convenience of an ensuite bathroom without causing any disturbance to the proportions of the rooms as well as mitigating the potential harm of the work by relocating the panel of historic fabric safely elsewhere within the building.

The technique suggested above is more commonly found in below-ground archaeology but paragraph 205 of the national Planning Policy Framework allows for recording of parts of a heritage asset that would be lost as a part of development. In this case the fabric would not be lost but

would simply be relocated elsewhere within the same building. It is considered that the combination of recording and retention would successfully mitigate the small amount of harm that would be caused by this work.



Figure 14: The opened up wall between bedrooms 1 and 2. Sawn softwood laths can be seen here, suggesting a later date than other wall finishes elsewhere in the building. Note the plasterboard finish on the far side of this partition, at the top right of the picture.

#### 4.4 Second Floor

An historic staircase leads up to the second floor level although no adjustment has been made in the roof to accommodate head-height while climbing the stairs. This necessitates going upstairs in an almost crouching position and the safest way to descend is feet first, sitting on the steps and working slowly downwards. Clearly the current arrangement is unsafe and inappropriate for modern living.

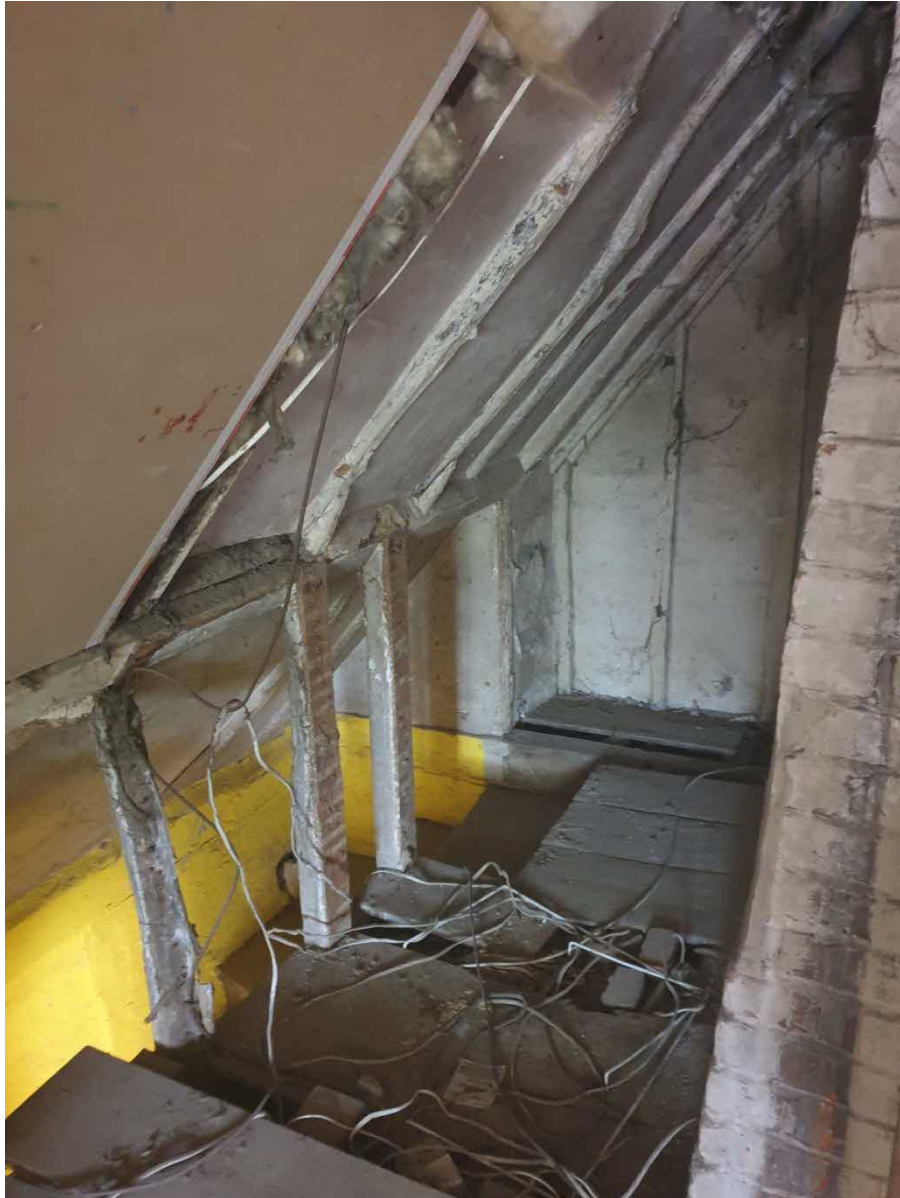


Figure 15: The stairwell is painted yellow. This photo clearly shows the inadequate head height above the stairs, making them unsafe to use. The vertical timbers show evidence of lath and plaster wall finishes, removed at some point in the past.

The roof space has obviously been used as habitable rooms in the past. The gables have windows in and there is clear evidence on walls and ceiling of lath, daub and plaster walls as found elsewhere in the building. Here the wall finishes are clearly old, because the laths are mostly riven hardwood instead of sawn softwood as found in other locations downstairs (see figure 5 above). It seems likely that the lath and plaster would have been added around the same time as the staircase, explaining lath and plaster here instead of the lath and daub found elsewhere in the building. Perhaps it was removed again around the time that the particleboard infill between the roof timbers was added.

#### 4.4.1 Safe Access

It is proposed that the roof should be adapted at the point directly above the staircase to allow the stairs to be used normally and safely without crawling. This would take the form of a lead-topped bulkhead that would read as the top of a small stair tower. The position of the staircase is fortunate as the alteration would need to be on the rear slope on the far side of the two storey rear extension.

This is a very discreet location, invisible from the front of the building and affording only glimpsed views from New Town Road behind.

This part of the main roof has a mix of different aged timbers and the two rafters that would be affected are rather thin and flimsy, suggesting that they are probably later infill; the timbers nearer the gable ends are comparatively large and sturdy. If necessary the two rafters could be relocated elsewhere in the building or concealed behind wall finishes, but given their later date and rather poor quality their loss is not considered to be harmful to the significance of the building. They would be recorded before removal.



Figure 16 Two of these undersized rafters would need to be removed to create head height; allowing the stairs to be used safely. The tiny knee braces suggest that they have been retro-fitted. They would be recorded before removal

The proposed bulkhead/stair-tower would also need to cut through part of the roof of the rear extension. Examination of that extension roof clearly shows much later construction, with comparatively regular, rectangular section timbers that are much less substantial than those in the older range.

There are clear advantages to bringing the second floor back into regular use. Historic buildings need considerable maintenance and it is far more likely that any leaks or items requiring repair will be quickly spotted and addressed in habitable rooms than in a partially converted attic space suitable only for storage. The benefit to the building therefore outweighs the slight harm caused by the removal of two narrow roof timbers and creation of the proposed bulkhead in the discreet location proposed.

#### 4.4.2 Roof Windows

The two gable windows afford some natural light to the second floor space but it is proposed that two small conservation rooflights be installed on the rear slope of the roof, one at each end of the roof. These would be sized to fit between the rafters, fitted flush to the roofslope and would be of the traditional metal, top-hung type with a single vertical glazing bar. Because of the configuration of the rear of the building with its historic two storey rear extension, the two rooflights would not be visible in the same view, and only one could be seen at a time from any reasonably near vantage point on New Town Road. This would therefore comply with the Essex Design Guide advice that states that rooflights should represent only a minor interruption on a roof slope. The roof tiles on the rear roof slope are flat machine made tiles and so no historic fabric would be lost by the installation of the proposed roof lights.

#### 4.5 External

The owner would like to rebuild a small brickwork structure in the back garden that was used by his uncle as a pottery studio until the roof collapsed. The concrete pad on which it stood still remains in the garden so the footprint of the building could be accurately replicated. The structure can perhaps be seen on the Ordnance Survey maps above, as several outbuildings are shown. Some have glass roofs and therefore were presumably greenhouses or glass houses, but others with solid roofs can also be identified in the garden. The dilapidated condition of the outbuilding can be seen in the following photographs taken in 2014.



Figure 17: photograph of the old shed in 2014 with its roof partly collapsed



Figure 18, left: The leaning wall of the shed following the collapse of the roof  
 Figure 19, right: the outer skin of brickwork partially collapsed after the roof fell in, exposing the inner skin of brickwork.

A building of this nature would inevitably have had several outbuildings in its grounds and for this reason the reconstruction of the workshop would reinstate a feature that would assist with understanding how the building would historically have been used, thereby enhancing its significance. This would be in accordance with NPPF paragraph 197 section (a):

197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- (a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

Paragraph 206 reinforces this principle:

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within ... the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

## 5. Summary

The proposed alterations to this very attractive grade II listed house have been carefully considered to accommodate modern family living while avoiding any unnecessary harm to the significance of the building. The proposed openings and alterations have been located in positions where the fabric has been previously disturbed or is the site of later alterations. Where potential harm has been identified, suggestions for mitigating that minor harm have been made.

This strategy accords with paragraph 202 of the NPPF, which states that:

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.

The optimum viable use of this building is clearly that of a well loved family home. The proposed alterations are designed specifically to best ensure its suitability for that use and therefore the public benefit of this outweighs the minimal harm that would be caused. For this reason it is respectfully

suggested that listed building consent should be granted for the work to the house and planning permission granted for the reconstruction of the outbuilding.

Note: All photographs, apart from those noted otherwise, taken 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023

LKT 21 August 2023