

## **Design Access Statement / Planning Statement / Heritage Impact Assessment**

**Project:** Construction of single storey side / rear extension.  
Demolition of porch, conservatory and rear  
canopy. Replacement windows and render.  
Internal alterations



**Site:** Bridge Farmhouse, Valley Lane, Gt Finborough, Suffolk IP14 3BA

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This Statement accompanies an application for listed building consent and planning permission for works to a dwelling. As this is a proposal for alterations in the curtilage of a single dwelling, some aspects such as the social and economic context are of limited applicability.

### **1. Site analysis and Evaluation and description of proposals**

The site comprises the farmhouse and a collection of outbuildings and barns along with former farmland to the rear.

#### **The listing description is as follows:**

Former farmhouse. C15 with alterations of late C16 and C17. 3-cell plan. One storey and attics. Timber-framed and plastered. Thatched roof, half-hipped at both ends. An axial chimney of red brick with C20 rebuilt shaft, and an end chimney to left of C18/C19 red brick. Two C20 eyebrow casement dormers. C20 lean-to thatched entrance porch with oak plank door. A 2-bay open hall: the open truss has part of its cambered tie-beam with thick unchamfered arch braces. Close studding; the lower half of the original hall window has its diamond mullions exposed and glazed. Smoke-blackening at upper level; roof probably of coupled-rafter type. In late C16 the service cell was demolished and 2-bay parlour block was built; 2 good diamond-mullioned windows. Back-to-back open fireplaces and 1st floor of on-edge floor joists inserted into hall in C17.

### **2. Pre application advice**

Pre application advice was sought, reference DC/23/04441; Katherine Pannifer is the heritage officer that was allocated to the case. Options were discussed on site and following a scheme being prepared, follow up advice was sought. Katherine and Michael Collins negotiated the submitted scheme.

### **3. Heritage Asset Assessment**

This application is accompanied by a heritage impact assessment which was prepared by Michael Collins. For that reason, this document is brief and you should refer to the report.

### **4. Building analysis**

Refer to the heritage impact assessment.

## 5. Proposals

The porch to the main entrance door, together with the conservatory to the south and the canopy above the back door, are modern additions and all are proposed to be demolished.

The timber-frame is the primary structural component of the building and is made weather-tight with infill panels and external cladding. Buildings of traditional construction used permeable materials which were capable of absorbing and releasing moisture. Damp in the building fabric was therefore kept below the level at which decay would occur. With the repair and replacement of infill panels and external cladding, it is important that materials are used that are compatible with the traditional *breathing* performance of the building.

The condition of the timber-frame is often determined by the condition of the external cladding and infill panels and whether they have been repaired or replaced with inappropriate materials. Timber-framed buildings are vulnerable to decay when impermeable materials, such as cement-based renders, have been used in past programmes of repair. Cement-based render should not be used on timber-framed buildings as it impairs the traditional *breathing* performance and traps moisture within the fabric, causing damp and leading to the decay of the timber-frame and, ultimately, the loss of structural integrity.

Twentieth century works to *Bridge Farmhouse* included the replacement of the external cladding of the timber-framed building with a cement-based render. It is proposed to replace this cladding with lime render on a backing of timber laths. The removal of the modern render will present an opportunity to assess the condition of the concealed structure of the timber-framed building and to undertake any necessary repairs.

The removal of the modern render will also reveal whether any historic infill panels survive. The absence of historic infill, either in the form of voids between the studs or areas of modern infill, will present an opportunity to insert appropriate forms of insulation between the frame components before the external cladding is reinstated. Permeable insulation, such as sheep's wool, would be compatible with the traditional *breathing* performance of the building. The new external cladding of lime render will then be finished with lime-wash.

Conditions should be imposed on any consent for the agreement of precise details of the above work which can only be determined upon the removal of the modern cement render and an assessment having been made of what survives and its condition.

The base of the chimney-stack on the north end of the building has been clad with a cement-based render. It is proposed to remove the modern render to expose the brick chimney and a condition should be imposed on any consent for the agreement of precise details of any work to be undertaken following the removal of the render.

Surviving historic windows are an irreplaceable resource and Historic England encourages the retention of windows that contribute to the significance of listed buildings. The north elevation of the former farmhouse has a two-light casement window on the upper floor. The diamond mullions of the fifteenth century hall window have been exposed and glazed, as have those in the end wall of the sixteenth century chamber. The other openings house casement windows of a *storm-proof* design which date from the late twentieth century.

The late twentieth century casement windows of *storm-proof* design do not follow historic patterns. It can be concluded that these windows do not make a positive contribution to the significance of the building. An opportunity exists for considered change and for the enhancement of the heritage value of *Bridge Farmhouse* which is desirable in policy terms.

It is therefore proposed to replace these windows with new windows of a sympathetic historic pattern which is based on the character of the building. The windows will also incorporate slim-profile double-glazing. A condition should be imposed on any consent for the agreement of precise details of all new windows.

The exposing and glazing of the diamond mullions is inappropriate to the external character of the evolved building. It is proposed to remove the late twentieth century glazing and to conceal the openings in the hall and parlour chamber as part of the works to replace the external cladding. The diamond mullions will remain in situ and will continue to be expressed internally alongside other components of the timber-frame, whilst also being protected from the weather. The loss of light in the hall will be compensated by the replacement of the existing single-light window with a two-light casement window in an area of external wall that is devoid of historic fabric. Similarly, it is proposed to reinstate an opening in the chamber which can be seen in the photograph of 1966. The new opening will

be smaller than previously existed and will house a single-light casement.

It is also proposed to remove three-quarters of the length of a partition which appears to be of late eighteenth or early nineteenth century date. The partition was formed in a position that was previously occupied by the late seventeenth century screen. This partition appears to have been inserted at the time that the service end of the building was modified which included the removal of a section of the original high-end wall. The rail and the one remaining stud of the inserted screen will be retained. It is proposed to retain one stud and one infill panel of the later partition and a condition should be imposed on any consent for the recording of the section that is to be lost.

Other proposed alterations which will reverse the late twentieth century works include the reinstatement of an external door opening in the mid-nineteenth century lean-to, the removal of the inserted brickwork in the parlour fireplace, and the formation of an internal opening in the heavily altered lower section of the chimney at the north end of the building. Conditions should be imposed on any consent for the agreement of precise details of the new door and for all works to both fireplaces (which should be informed by a structural engineer).

The application also proposes the construction of a single-storey extension to provide the former farmhouse with a new kitchen and breakfast area. Historic England advises that new work should not dominate the existing building or its setting in either scale, material, or as a result of its siting. An assessment of a building's significance and its relationship to its setting will usually suggest the forms of extension that might be appropriate.

The principle of constructing an extension in the form of a visually separate traditional outbuilding that is physically attached to the host building should be acceptable in this instance. Such an approach involves the placing of a traditional outbuilding of appropriate scale in an appropriate position and at an appropriate distance from the host building. The *linked* block will be rotated ninety degrees and will have walls clad with weather-boarding on a red brick plinth beneath a roof covering of clay pantiles complete with capped bargeboards.

The form and proportions of the *link* are equally important. A *minimal glazed link* can often be regarded as an incongruous addition to a building of traditional form and appearance. A building such as *Bridge*

*Farmhouse* can normally be extended on its end elevation with a single-storey lean-to or an inline addition with a pitched roof. It is proposed to replace the modern conservatory with an inline extension that would read as an acceptable addition in its own right. The existing door opening in the end wall of the farmhouse would be utilised and the form of the new range would have regard for the thatched hip. The inline extension would be attached to the gable end wall of the kitchen block by a *link* of a form and appearance that matches the inline range.

The composition would be seen in views from *Valley Lane* from the west and from the south. The kitchen block would appear as a visually separate traditional outbuilding set behind the side extension in views across the entrance yard and above the boundary hedge in views across the adjacent field. Conditions should be imposed on any consent for the agreement of precise details of windows and doors, brickwork, roof tiles, weather-boarding, and external finishes.

The local planning authority has confirmed its support in principle for the proposals and, in particular, the *linked outbuilding* approach, subject to the scheme including the proposed lowering of the ground level beneath the kitchen block (ref. DC/23/00795 and DC/23/04441).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The proposals have been carefully considered and seek to make essential repairs as well as offering aesthetic improvements.