

The Old Forge
Mendlesham Road
Brockford
Stowmarket
IP14 5NU

Design Access and Heritage Statement

Soleplate Repairs and Replacement

Removal of concrete render from, and repairs to, brickwork in plinth

Replacement of concrete screed flooring with breathable substrate

V.03

Contents

Introduction.....	3
About The Property	3
Design and Access.....	4
Repairs and Replacement of a small section of soleplate.....	4
Removal of concrete render from, & repairs to, the brickwork in the plinth at base of soleplate.	5
Replacement of concrete screed flooring with breathable substrate in ground floor reception rooms.....	6
APENDIX A.....	7
Appendix B	8

Introduction

The Old Forge is situated in the parish of Wetheringsett-cum-Brockford on Mendlesham Road. (TM 16 NW road 6/105 The Old Forge listed Grade II on 1.11.77) Refer to Appendix B.

This Design, Heritage and Access statement has been prepared to support of an application to:

1. replace a small section of soleplate on the Northeast section of the property which is showing signs of degradation due to penetrating damp (and reinstatement of flood damaged wooden threshold).
2. remove render from internal brickwork which supports sections of the soleplate to allow damp to escape and prevent long last damage to the soleplates above and to carefully remove and replace bricks which have delaminated due to water damage.
3. Overhaul of flooring in ground floor reception rooms and install a more flood resilient flooring system which is sympathetic to a building of this age, to allow the building to breath and which is designed to allow water to soak down through the substrate to prevent the water penetrating through the base of the walls.

About The Property

The property is a Grade II listed House that lies to the north end of Mendlesham Road, and it was latterly 3 cottages of early 16th Century. The property is timber framed and rendered with a thatched roof. 2 cells which are of high quality with the service end to north lost. The property consists of 2 storeys and attic which has been converted into 3 attic bedrooms which is accessed by 3 stairways, one on the East side of the house which leads up from the ground floor dining room and two which lead up to two attic bedrooms from the first-floor landing. There is an underbuilt jetty to east, facing the Ipswich-Norwich Road. 3 windows of mid C20 with 3-light casements with horizontal glazing bars. There are 2 old plank doors, with mid C20 French windows to right. One eyebrow dormer. Main stack has rebuilt axial shaft. A further stack of narrow red brick against north gable end. Small mid C20 porch on south gable end. To rear (west), a 2-storey lean-to of rendered clay lump under a slated roof. The interior consists of a Hall and parlour which have fine ceilings and fully moulded floor beams with a complex series of rolls and hollows, joists with 2 hollow mouldings and cut-back stops. The hall is now divided into 2 rooms. Evidence for service doorways can be seen at the north gable end. Intact heavy studding with no visible bracing; close studding to east on upper floor; evidence for many original windows: these probably had square mullions. Ground floor studs to east pushed forward to under build jetty, perhaps in C17. Truss over hall chamber has shallow braces and carries a plain crown-post with 2-way bracing to the collar purlin and cranked down braces to the tie beam. Remainder of crown-post roof intact. Stack is a later addition, probably preceded by a timber flue or smoke bay as the timbers in the narrow bay which the stack occupies are smoke stained. C17 upper ceilings

The Old Forge is a heritage asset, the extent of the fabric that contributes to its heritage significance are the features that form the main part of the 16th Century dwelling at the front of the property including the thatched roof. The external look of the building may be altered in a minor way (depending on the type of flood barrier chosen), but in the most part the heritage of the property will remain unaltered.

The rear of the property fronts onto the Mendlesham road and faces west overlooking farmland. The property forms part of a line of 4 properties located both to the south or the north aspects, all of which have different architecture and design and few shares common features of design in terms of external rendering, roof type or design, or window type or design. The properties to the South have at one time been built on land that belonged to the Old. The front of the property looks across laid lawns and then established trees and shrubs which camouflage a small stream and then the main A140 Norwich to Ipswich Road.

Design and Access

Repairs and Replacement of a small section of soleplate

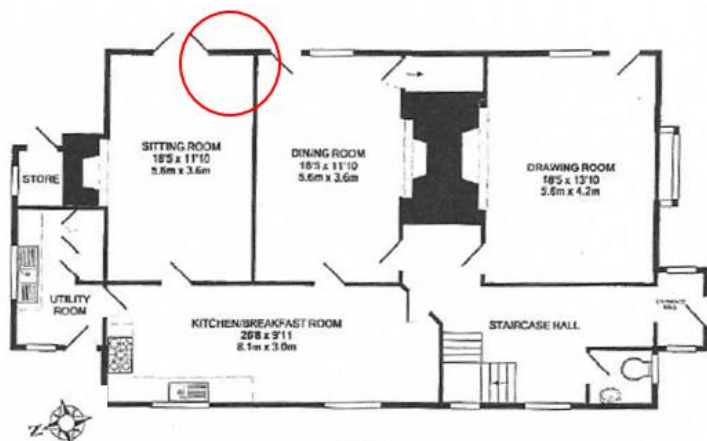
When the wooden suspended oak flooring was removed following flooding caused by storm Babet on October 20th, 2023, there was a need to remove the damaged flooring and to allow the substrate to dry. This revealed a small section of the soleplate beneath the east wall which showed signs of significant rotting and degradation.

Pictures of the House from 1910 show that this used to be a doorway, so the original soleplate will have been cut away to create the threshold for the door. It is this section that is showing signs of needing urgent repair. The French doors are now where the window was and thus there are large parts of the soleplate that have been cut away over the course of the property's history. It is therefore important that repairs are undertaken to ensure that the structure of this part of the property remains structurally sound. It has been recommended that we aim to retain as much as possible from the former entranceway (including the uneven worn top layer, which shows years of feet stepping over the threshold over the Centuries) and therefore the intent to replace only part of the soleplate is considered appropriate and is sufficient to mitigate or avoid harm to the significance of the building.

The modern hardwood threshold to the French doors will need repair as it has lifted because of flooding.

There are no visible signs that the studs are putting pressure on the soleplate or causing the walls to roll outwards. However, whilst the floors have been lifted to allow the substrate to fully dry, this area needs urgent repair before the flooring can be re-laid.

Once the repairs are made and the external walls and render made good, the external look of the building and therefore the heritage of the property will be maintained and the existing access to the property will remain unaltered.



Removal of concrete render from, and repairs to, the brickwork in the plinth at base of soleplate.

When the wooden flooring in the reception rooms was installed, concrete render plinths were applied to the brickwork beneath the soleplate down onto the flooring. Where the damp readings indicated the presence of damp the concrete render plinths were removed immediately to aid the drying process (*see amber / red lines on floor plan below*). The concern was that this was preventing any dampness to evaporate and allowing the damp to penetrate the soleplate above (this was pointed out in the RICS survey of 2014). Permission by the Heritage officer was given to remove the concrete from the internal elevations of the plinth (email Kathleen.Fisher@babberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk 01 December 2023 11:52). It appears however that the plinth has been damaged by the concrete render, and many of the bricks are delaminated due to water damage - (*see red lines on floor plan below*). Many of these will likely need to be carefully removed and replaced. The plinth is a mix of modern brickwork in places with some historic brickwork, although now severely damaged and it seems likely that much of the brick plinth will need to be repaired.

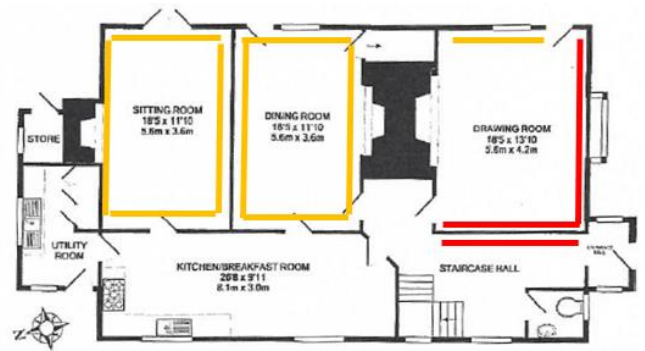
There are also some unusual air bricks on one elevation, which will need further consideration.

It is proposed that that the render is not reapplied but left so that the bricks beneath the soleplate are left exposed. Where the brickwork is aesthetically unpleasing the render plinth will be replaced by lime-render plinths.

The existing access to the property will remain unaltered and there will be no change to the external look of the property so the look of the building will remain as it is currently and therefore the heritage of the property will remain unaltered.



In a building of this type and age the wall plate does tend to act as a damp proof course (DPC), not that this was how it was originally intended. Provided the timbers are left exposed and allowed to breathe, the oak frame is pretty resilient. It is when the frame is covered that this causes a problem. For this reason it is possible for the front of the wall to be perfectly sound and the back of the wall plate which is concealed in the wall to suffer. You then tend to get a rolling effect with the wall plate twisting outwards, forcing the timber studs above the walls to move outwards.



Removal of render exposed the delaminated bricks as marked by the red line below.

Replacement of concrete screed flooring with breathable substrate in ground floor reception rooms

The three (east side) reception rooms (outlined in red below) had forms of wooden oak flooring which 'cupped' and disintegrated and was damaged beyond repair following the flood. The substrate consists of a concrete screed (which is believed to be approximately 35 mm thick) which, to some degree, has suffered some damage and is now cracked due to water damage and needs to be removed. Some of the screed has flaked away and shows a likely historic brick floor below the surface. This flooring should be retained where possible throughout the works. Two of these raised floors sat on battens on a plastic damp proof membrane with fibre glass insulation, the other was glued directly onto the concrete screed. Where it was unimpeded, the flood water disipated through the floors and the plinths at the base of the walls within hours of the flood water receding, but this left the concrete substrates and base of walls with varying degress of damp.

It has been recommended that the concrete screed is not replaced 'like-for-like' and instead a new flooring system which is flood resilient and sympathetic to a building of this age is installed. As a timber-framed building, much of its historic fabric is breathable. This means that it deals with moisture passively, allowing it to freely move and escape the building. The concrete screed has significantly reduced this ability, meaning that flood water has become trapped in the fabric of the building, and may do again should any future flooding occur. To create a more stable substrate, it is recommended that a geotextile membrane is laid and a floor substrate such as limecrete is utilised.

It is proposed that limecrete is used as it is designed to allow water to soak down through the substrate to prevent the water penetrating through the base of the walls and to allow the building to breathe, especially as the external walls have a concrete screed. The aim is to minimise the impacts of future flooding to allow the building to be habitable within a few days of a flood and to allow the building to dry with minimal impact on its residents.

Any new flooring system will need to allow for the height of the existing door thresholds. Due to its age however, all floors are at set at different levels and entry and exit to all rooms requires a step up and over the threshold and down onto the floor landing pad and none can be judged to offer an accessible and level transition from one room to the next. The new flooring system is unlikely to make any material improvement to the ease of access to each room throughout the ground floor.

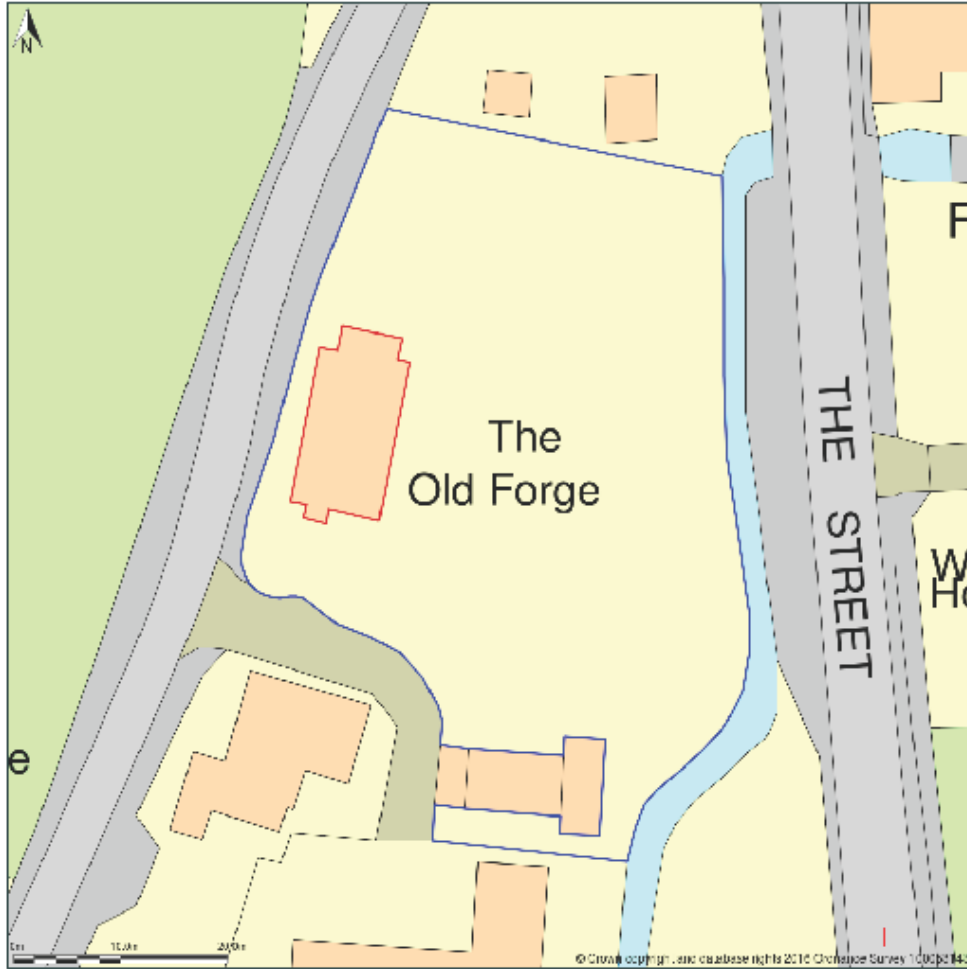
The existing access to the property will remain unaltered and there will be no change to the external fabric of the property therefore the external heritage of the property will remain unaltered, although these works will clearly protect the internal fabric.



APENDIX A



The Old Forge, Mendlesham Road, Stowmarket, IP14 5NU



Block Plan shows area bounded by: 611716.81, 266819.92 611506.81, 266909.92 (at a scale of 1:500) The representation of a road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way. The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.

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Appendix B

