

Design and Access Statement

Fobdown Farm, Abbotstone Road, Alresford, SO24 9TD

Statement Prepared for:

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1. Introduction

The property is a large detached Victorian farmhouse set on a significant active farm estate with a number of ancillary outbuildings and other dwellings sited within a cluster of structures around the house. The house is set over two floors and roughly u-shaped in plan. It was most likely divided into two dwellings at some point in its recent history and was, prior to the current ownership, used partly as an office. As a result the dwelling lacks a coherent and rational layout and external legibility, particularly in regards to the main entrance to the building.

Alongside and connected to the main house, which is entirely rendered in white render with a black painted plinth, there is a linear structure containing a number of garages and workshops. This is single storey and constructed from a combination of brick and flint, with the house side of this structure being painted brick.

This structure forms one side of a large walled garden which extends to the northeast of the house towards a cluster of barns and other dwellings. Through previous planning applications, one of these barns and its adjacent structures have been converted into a multi-purpose leisure space and gym, with an external pool. All of these functions are incidental to the function of the house. A large yard sits on one side of this group of buildings with two existing Dutch barns of metal construction, a brick two storey dwelling, owned and rented by the owner of the main house (the applicant) and another old brick barn structure. The below aerial photo clarifies the above summary.



Fig. 1. Aerial photo of main buildings at Fobdown Farm. 1. Main House, 2. Workshop wing, 3. Walled garden, 4. Dutch barns, 5. Converted barn, 6. Rented dwelling, 7. Brick barn, 8. Other farm buildings (note certain changes have been made to the site since the above photo was taken, these are shown in the submitted drawings).

This application focuses on the renovation, extension and full refurbishment of the house and adjacent workshop wing, as well as associated alterations for the parking forecourt area and front wall.

The proposals, as outlined below, have been undertaken with local policy in mind to deliver a scheme which it is felt offers both functional and aesthetic improvements to the main house as well as wider improvements to the site.

2 The Site as Existing

2.1 Existing Condition

As outlined above, the main house has suffered by its adaptation to various uses throughout its recent history. As a result it effectively has three different front doors and a very convoluted internal layout which still has remnants of the previous office use visible. Despite being a Victorian period property, the external look of the house is lacking a character distinctive to that age, and although many internal character details remain, the haphazard usage of the house has led to many of these being removed or covered over with newer construction.



Fig. 2. Lane side notional 'front' of main house.

The form of the house, as a u-shaped core with a side portion extending to the southwest, also restricts functionality and makes it difficult to establish a clear external legibility in terms of a main entrance and focal point for the house. What would architecturally be considered the front of the house is a porched door accessed via a path from the public road to the southwest of the house. However this does not function as a front door in terms of its relationship to the internal layout of the house and is not accessible directly from

either key rooms in the house or any areas of car parking. For the purposes of this application, therefore, the 'front' of the house is considered to be the northwest facade facing onto the lane over the parking forecourt.



Fig. 3. Original front door to the southern half of the house.



Fig. 4. Garden side notional 'rear' of main house.

The rear, diametrically opposite the parking forecourt, faces onto the main garden. The window arrangements of this facade, again due to the former functions and ad hoc alterations, has resulted in an unattractive appearance with windows randomly arranged. The result is large areas of expansive white render with no fenestration which do not well serve the internal spaces in terms of natural daylighting.

The roof of the house has been recently refurbished to a modern standard in slate, with two pairs of distinctive chimneys set on its ridge.

The workshop wing, attached to the northeast of the house, is underused in its current form as out-buildings, housing farm machinery, bin store and general workshop spaces. These are accessed initially from the parking forecourt in front of the house and further along the structure via a covered corridor between, and linking, the two buildings. It is an uninsulated structure in relatively poor condition with remedial work needed to its roof and windows, among other elements. It is not currently considered part of the internal function of the main house despite bordering the carefully planned walled-garden and enjoying views into that space from within.



Fig. 5. Corridor between the main house and the workshop wing.



Fig. 6. The workshop wing facing onto the walled garden.



Fig. 7. The workshop wing facing onto the parking courtyard in front of the house.



Fig. 8. The existing vehicular entrance to the parking forecourt (right).

2.2 Recent Works

The site has seen some significant improvements over recent years, with the house one of the last areas to be addressed. Externally, the walled garden has been beautifully landscaped to a very high level in the form of formal gardens with a large croquet lawn and espaliered fruit trees.

To the northeast of this, the large brick barn and its adjacent single storey structures have been refurbished and extended to a very high level of quality. These now offer a gym and leisure function incidental to the main house, as well as changing and sanitary facilities and, externally, a swimming pool. Again landscaping around these structures has been undertaken to an excellent standard.

2.2 Planning Application History and Policy Limitations

The site has an extensive planning application history, but many of these relate to the conversion or adaptation of agricultural buildings. In relation to the house there have been no specific applications dealing with this in recent times. Very few planning constraints apply to the site which would limit the proposals in any meaningful way. The policy points which are of relevance, generally seek to control development in the following ways:

1. Quality of design
2. Respond to local context and character
3. Sustainable design

4. Not cause harm to the character of the landscape/rural character of the area
5. Not cause harm to neighbouring properties

Those deemed relevant to the application's proposals include:

Policy CP13 – High Quality Design sets out that new development will be expected to meet the highest standards of design. It states that the fundamental objective is to ensure that new development should be of the highest quality which respects its context and enhances local character. It states that it is essential that all new development meets the highest standards of sustainable design which clearly demonstrates how the development responds to its local context.

The proposals are considered to meet the requirements of this policy by way of delivering a general uplift in the visual appearance of the house, whilst enhancing the character of the property and its presentation as a single, well-composed detached dwelling suited to the wider context of the site.

Policy MTRA 4 – Development in the Countryside states that extension to the existing building in the countryside will be approved if: “Development proposed in accordance with this policy should not cause harm to the character and landscape of the area or neighbouring uses, or create inappropriate noise/light and traffic generation....”

Policy DM15 states that development should respect the qualities and characteristics that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the local area and that design should comply with the criteria as set out in policy CP13.

Policy DM23 assesses the impact of the development on the rural character of the area and that there is no increase in noise and that the rural tranquillity will remain as existing and that there is no traffic intrusion.

Policy DM23 – Rural Character: states that ‘Outside defined settlement boundaries, development proposals which accord with the Development Plan will be permitted where they do not have an unacceptable effect on the rural character of the area, by means of visual intrusion, the introduction of incongruous features, the destruction of locally characteristic rural assets, or by impacts on the tranquillity of the environment.’

The isolation of the dwelling, the sensitive approach taken to its refurbishment and the respect given to both the character of the house and to adjacent buildings, combined with no material increase in noise or light (more on this in ecology below), and with a more coherent approach to parking without any associated increase in traffic or parking levels are all factors which mean the proposals meet the needs of these policies.

Policy DM16 states that design should be appropriate to the development and use and not result in an adverse impact on neighbouring land and property.

Policy DM17 states that new development should not have an adverse impact on adjoining land, uses or property by reason of overlooking, overshadowing or by being overbearing.

With these policies relating mostly to neighbour amenity, these are not deemed to have a major influence on this application given the isolation of the dwelling and the ownership of the wider context by the applicant.

Regardless of its isolation, there is no material change in terms of volumetric overbearing of the building that could, in a less isolated location, be considered valid causes for concern from an overshadowing or overlooking perspective.

All proposals seek to improve the character and appearance of the existing house, without extending it in any overbearing, incongruous or visually intrusive way. The intention is to improve the general aesthetic, proportions and period character of the dwelling and to improve its relationship to the context. Given the property's isolation, impact on neighbours is also largely irrelevant.

There are, therefore, not considered to be any obvious obstacles in achieving the proposals within the remit of local and national relevant policies or other restrictive planning mechanisms.

3. Proposed Works to the Dwelling

3.1 Main Proposals

The focus of the design is to provide a reorganisation to the house, taking a visually illegible exterior and a convoluted and illogical interior layout and to reimagine this as a coherent family dwelling with a character befitting its context and age.

The main design move is to redefine the entry sequence, from the parking forecourt, the legibility of the main entrance to the house and the connection of internal spaces relative to this. The current u-shape associated with the core of the house is a legacy of a former life as two dwellings and has been reinforced by the apparent use of the structure partially as an office. This division reads very strongly in the form of the house and is continued into the front landscape beyond with a tall wall dividing the garden from the parking forecourt. Whilst creating a confusing and unattractive exterior arrangement, it also provides an opportunity to translate this negative space into a logical point of access, with the main extension elements of this proposal infilling this void with a two-storey entrance lobby and atrium which houses a new, well-defined front door and a focal stair in place of the two existing secondary staircases introduced as adaptations during the house's various functions. This then makes better sense of the parking area, as well as connecting the house more directly to the garden around it by opening up views through to the rear and removing the dividing wall to the front.

The southwest portion of the house remains relatively untouched in terms of layout, with only external facade treatments, including new windows, new bay windows, gable treatment and a porch to the old front door being proposed. The northerly section of the main house sees the majority of the rearrangement of function, with an open living, kitchen and dining area proposed alongside ancillary uses such as utility and boot room. To further enforce the external unification of the house as one dwelling, the bay window treatment has been replicated to the northwest face to bring symmetry and a formal composition suited to its Victorian heritage. The other external treatments, including leaded porches, new windows and eaves treatments have been continued across the dwelling to provide a high level of consistency, with the proposed materials mirroring what is there as existing.



*Fig. 9. Proposed new front entrance via infill extension
(Note: Where discrepancies exist between 3d perspectives and formal plans, plans take precedence)*

The rear facade has been entirely reconsidered within the existing constraints, introducing large sets of french doors to the ground floor and a rational ordered approach to the first floor windows in a departure from the haphazard, unattractive existing condition. The large expanse of white render to this rear is now broken up by both the doors and windows, as well as an extended leaded portico over the main, southeasterly stretch of the elevation. This portico is included both to function as solar shading, but also with its cast iron columns and other details, to instil a strong Victorian feel to the back of the house.



Fig. 10. Proposed new rear elevation with existing walled garden wall to the right



Fig. 11. Proposed new side elevation with additional window opening and pre-existing front door redefined as a side access door

The single storey workshop wing has been considered to be more integrated to the main house, offering laundry and office functions in a newly refurbished, insulated structure with a replacement roof and new steel windows which reference its current workshop manifestation. The northern most sections of this structure are given over to garaging and an open car port. This structure looks out over the walled garden, very much fulfilling the applicants' desire to give this landscape greater connectivity to the main house.

Within the walled garden, tucked in the western corner, a timber clad structure is proposed to house plant equipment for renewable technologies which are being designed into the refurbishment, including those to support ground source pumps and photovoltaic panels. These are part of a wider strategy to improve the energy consumption of the house and to reduce its overall carbon footprint. The timber cladding to the plant space is intended to reflect the facade of the upper section of the Dutch barn to the northeast of the garden, providing a structure which integrates well into the garden layout without detracting from the existing brick and flint of the surrounding wall and adjacent workshop.

3.2 Materials

The materials proposed in the design are either to match existing or to instil a character more readily associated with buildings of the period to which the house belongs. To the main house, all external wall treatment will be undertaken in white render to match the existing, as well as the retention of the black rendered plinth around ground floor level. New render will be lime based to enable the structure to breathe and to address pre-existing issues of damp and mould present in certain parts of the house. Window openings will be reconfigured to establish more suitable proportions with careful consideration of the golden ratio and other key features of Victorian architecture. All windows are proposed to be replaced with traditional timber sashes, fabricated and installed using traditional methods but meeting modern thermal standards. These will all feature glazing bars, a detail which will also be applied consistently to external doors.

The roof has been recently upgraded in terms of fabric. It is a grey slate but its more modern soffits and fascia will be reviewed, bringing in character details to the verges of the gables around the house. Bay windows will be made more uniform, with Victorian cornices to their eaves to enable them to suit their context more suitability with regards to scale and their proportions. The house will feature three porches in place of the two existing structures. The southwest porch to the original main entrance of that section of the house will be replaced with a leaded mono-pitch structure on a single Victorian style cast-iron column. The front door will feature a second, larger porch on a pair of the same columns whilst the porch to the west of this, currently enabling entry to a side door with an incongruous circular window, will be remodelled with a similar aesthetic. The leaded roof treatment will also feature to the rear, as outlined in the above section.

New sections of the roof will match existing, with a large new heritage style rooflight over the newly created atrium space.

With regards to the existing workshop wing, as alluded to above, windows will be replaced with efficient double or triple glazed painted timber units. This and the reconfiguration of the garage doors and opening of the pair of carports will be the only visual difference to this structure aside from the addition of two new window openings in the new sitting room and the inclusion of a number of rooflights to both sides of the roof to bring daylight into spaces which suffer from small, or a total lack of, window openings. The roof itself will be subject to replacement due to its current structural failings and thermal inadequacy.

4. Material Considerations

4.1 Ecology

A number of bat surveys have been undertaken on the property in order to ascertain the extent of usage of the structure for roosts. Bats were identified as using the building, primarily the roof of the workshop wing, and therefore a series of mitigation measures have been established in line with current legislation.

These are outlined in more detail in the attached Ecology Report, which also recommends other measures to the site in order to protect the pre-existing wildlife around the house.

4.2 Sustainability

Various moves to reduce the footprint and increase the sustainable credentials of the dwelling are being proposed as part of the works. These include mounting photovoltaic cells on the roof in concealed locations, which will enable a future ground source heat pump system to be powered as well as offering power to the house.

The roof surfaces proposed to have photovoltaic cells installed are the southwest and southeast faces within the inward section of roof (see drawings for clarity). These surfaces will not be visible from any point on the ground but have appropriate orientations for maximum efficiency.

As part of the renovations, various fabric upgrades will be undertaken to improve the thermal performance of the dwelling. Aside from new windows and external doors throughout the property, an entirely new heating system will be installed as well as insulation to external walls and roofs will be upgraded where existing and built to exceed building regulations where new. Materials used will be breathable products based on natural materials that have a reduced carbon footprint and enable the existing fabric of the house to breathe and function as originally intended.

4.3 Summary of Material Considerations

Below is a summary of the material considerations that affect the application. The design approach to tackle each is outlined alongside.

Material Consideration	Design Approach
Loss of privacy/Overlooking	The dwelling is very isolated within its own land and there are no overlooking or privacy issues.
Overshadowing/Loss of daylight or sunlight	The dwelling is very isolated within its own land and there are no overshadowing or loss of daylight issues.
Provision of adequate amenity space	The site is extensive and offers a huge amount of amenity space and ancillary facilities.
Character and distinctiveness	The proposals are sensitive to their host dwelling and the wider area, and aim to reinstate the lost character of the dwelling from its Victorian heritage.
Physical size of structure/overbearing	This is essentially remaining the same as existing except for an infill extension within a negative space in the u-shaped plan of the current house.
Materials used	This has been outlined in 3.2 above
Highways	There are no changes to parking or occupancy that affect highways issues.
Trees, ecology and nature conservation	No trees or hedges are affected by the works. A full ecology report has been undertaken and is attached.
Effect on special buildings/areas	The property is not in a conservation area and the only nearby structure of note is a non-listed heritage asset of a large brick barn on the other side of the walled garden from the house which was recently converted with relevant permissions.

5. Summary

Given the proposals are:

- designed to improve the accommodation and functionality of the dwelling
- aimed to enhance the character of the Victorian core of the house
- offer no impact on neighbour amenity
- have no impact on highways, trees or other special structures
- have been undertaken in parallel with the necessary ecology surveys and reports

it is felt that they represent a design which meets policy stipulations and should be permissible within the planning application framework.

End of Statement