

Heritage Statement **REV A**

Site: Soames Farm, Nine Ashes Road, Stondon Massey, Brentwood, CM15 0EL.

Proposal: Replacement windows, removal of cement render and installation of woodfibre boards and lime render, and insertion of insulation.

Date: Jan 2024

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been written and prepared by JBell Design and Conservation, to accompany a listed building consent for replacement windows, removal of cement render, installation of woodfibre boards and lime render to external walls and insertion of insulation at Soames Farmhouse, Stondon Massey. This application is similar to a previously submitted and withdrawn application 21/00285/LBC.

2.0 Description and History of the Soames Farm

2.1 Soames Farm is a Grade II listed 16th century Farmhouse of timber frame construction. The original form of the building was split over 3 bays that is currently arranged from left to right as a kitchen, living room and dining room. The kitchen bay is lesser in width than the other 2 bays, similar to that of early hall houses, where service rooms would have been located. Internally the chamfered floor beam and floor joists are exposed, along with mid rails and corner posts. There is also external chimney stack that has been constructed to the South wall of the kitchen to facilitate a ray burn or aga. This was most likely added in the late 19th century. The middle bay (living room) is the main reception room and features a inglenook fireplace. Within the living room the chamfered floor beam and floor joists over are exposed. A post in the South wall of the bay is also exposed, along with the mid rail and tie beams. The North Bay (dining room) features the same large exposed chamfered floor beam, floorjoists covered by lath and plaster ceiling, mid rails and corner posts exposed. The fireplace within the dining room, that backs onto the living room fireplace also has a inglenook fireplace. A point to note is the North external wall has been re-built with brickwork, however this looks to be an historic alteration, most likely constructed in the Victorian period. The dining room is also less deep than the other 2 bays, this is due to the rear wall (West) adjoining the outshut, appears to have been demolished and re-constructed making the room less deep. All of the bays have had concrete floors constructed at some point in the 20th century.

- 2.2 To the 1st floor; Bedroom 3, the layout of the bay is legible with the ceiling beam over and studs to walls exposed. The middle bay to the 1st floor is the largest of the bedrooms (bedroom 1) has the corner posts, wallplates and studs to the rear (west) wall exposed. To the ceiling the room does not feature a ceiling beam and instead an exposed tie beam. Further inspection within the roof space over reveals a raised tie beam. Further inspection of the roof space within this bay also reveals a historic plastered wall in front of the chimney stack (constructed prior to the construction of the chimney) which indicates that the room may have been open to the underside of the roof and a smoke screen constructed to direct smoke up prior to the construction of the chimney. The North Bay (bedroom 2) much like the South bay, features exposed studs, wallplates, corner posts and large ceiling beam. All of the bedrooms have pine floorboards that appear to date from the Victorian period.
- 2.3 At a later date the outshut to the rear of the building was constructed to facilitate a hallway (to access rooms from the West), stairs and stairwell, pantry, downstairs w.c to the ground floor. The outshut is of timber frame construction and most likely dates from the late 18th to early 19th century. The layout of the rooms within the outshut appear to have been altered, however the stairs are of later construction, along with window positions and windows altering the external appearance and openings within the frame.
- 2.4 The windows within the front elevation (East) are mid-20th century metal casements with lead lights. The majority of the other windows are mid-20th century timber framed casement windows with exception for a metal casement window to the ground floor stairwell and a Victorian cast iron window to the North elevation. The proportions of the window openings appear to have also been altered at some point in time.
- 2.5 Other modern alterations include the external wall finish that appears to have been pebble dash rendered at some point in the 20th century.
- 2.6 Historic maps and photographic records reveal that the North Bay of the building was split from the remainder of the house as it served as the Village post office in the early 20th century.

- 2.7 Below is a historic photograph of the front elevation. There is no date on the photograph, but what it does show is that the windows historically were once horizontal sliding timber windows. Furthermore, the window opening sizes appeared to have been altered since the time of this photograph. The only remaining feature from the photograph is the door surround, which is still present. It would appear the photograph dates from somewhere between 1920-1940.



Fig 1. Historic Photograph of when the building served as the village post office (un-dated)

3.0 Existing windows

- 3.1 The existing windows to the front (east) elevation are mid-20th century metal casements with lead lights. The historic photograph supports the evidence that the windows had been changed from sliding timber units.
- 3.2 The remainder of windows are a mixture of timber windows most likely dating from the early 20th century, with exception for the metal casement window to the ground and first floor stairwell, metal casement windows to the side (north) elevation ground and first floor, and a Victorian metal window to the North elevation bedroom.
- 3.3 The condition of the windows to the front (east) elevation are poor. The cills are completely rotten and the paint has peeled from most of the frame. The lead comes are in a good condition, however the windows are not of any historical value. (refer to window types 01 to 05 and photographs below)

Fig 2. Photograph of the front elevation



Fig 3. Photograph of one of the rotten timber cills



4.0 Proposals

- 4.1 The proposal is to replace the windows indicated on the drawings. The windows have been numbered into types delineated by the size of the window openings.
- 4.2 The windows to the front elevation are in poor condition and of no historical merit and therefore need to be replaced to ensure continued deterioration does not occur, which may lead to water egress and damage to the frame of the building. (Windows W1 – W5).
- 4.3 The two windows indicated on the side elevation (north) are mid 20th century metal frame casement windows and are completely out of character with the appearance of the building. The metal frame window types from this period reflect a more modern style of architecture associated with post war architecture, not listed timber frame farmhouses. It is therefore proposed to replace both of these windows (window W06).
- 4.4 The windows to the side elevation (south) are a mixture of timber windows and a metal casement window to the bathroom. In order to reform some continuity, the proposal is to replace the metal casement window in the bathroom to result in all the windows to this elevation being timber.
- 4.5 Some of the windows will not be replaced. These being the Victorian metal window to the 1st floor bedroom on the side elevation (north) as this is an original window it has some historical value and is still in a good condition. The crittall window to the stairwell, rear elevation will be retained as this is also in a good condition. The small windows to the rear elevation lighting the landing area will be retained as they are in a good condition and are simple metal windows. The timber casement windows to the side elevation (south) appear to be in a repairable condition and therefore do not need to be replaced.
- 4.6 Photographs of windows to be replaced

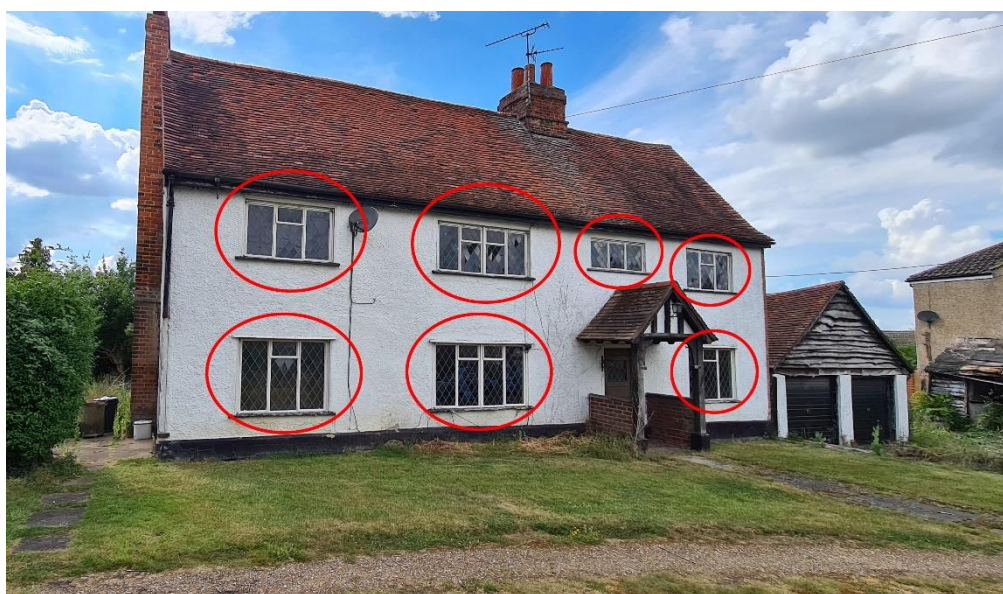


Fig 4. Front elevation – Metal frame 20th century windows



Fig 5. Side elevation (north) mid-20th century metal framed windows to be replaced.



Fig 6. Side elevation (south) mid-20th century metal framed windows to be replaced.

4.7 Proposed windows – The proposed windows will be timber flush casement windows with puttied astragal bars. The proposed glazing will be a thin glazing profile to reflect the historic character of the building. The size of the current window openings do not reflect the size of the original window openings or sympathetic to the historic appearance of the building, so the proposal is to slightly alter the aperture of the current structural openings for a small number of the windows, so the proportions of the casements can be regularized. The proposed windows will have a horizontal glazing bar to better reflect the character of the building. The casements will be flush with the frame to also reflect traditional casement windows.

4.8 Replacement cement render – The elevations are currently pebble dashed cement render. The replacement of the windows will disturb the existing cement render and so it is an opportune time to replace the render with a breathable lime render. The proposal is to remove the existing pebble dash cement render, using hand tools only (a club hammer and bolster). This will reveal the original frame of the building and indicate how the window openings have been altered over time. It is suggested as a planning condition is imposed for a section of render to be removed to reveal the frame and inspected by the planning officers prior to work continuing.

Once the render has been removed, and windows removed, the aperture of some of the windows can be altered reduced using softwood studwork (so in future generations the alteration appears a modern alteration and not confused with a historic alteration). Once the frame has been insulated (as below in section 4.9) a breather membrane can be stabled over the frame and woodfibre boards nailed to the frame. The woodfibre boards will provide a suitable surface to lime render and provide additional insulation properties. The woodfibre boards will be lime rendered with a lime wash finish as per a conditioned method statement.

The woodfibre boards will result in some change to the depth of the render on the outside of the frame. To the front elevation, to the base of the render, it will result in the render being closer to the level of the rendered plinth. This will therefore require the removal of the existing cement based creasing tile and replace with a lead flashing over the rendered plinth. To the side and rear elevation a thinner wood fibre board will be used to ensure the detail over the plinth remains similar to the current appearance and a lead flashing is not required to the side and rear elevation.

4.9 Insulation – With the frame exposed there is an opportunity to insulate between the studs. Currently the property has no insulation to the external walls resulting in very cold conditions internally, the risk of condensation in the walls and increased energy consumption to heat the property. The proposal is to insert sheeps or lambs wool insulation between the studs to greatly improve the energy efficiency of the property and reduce the risk of condensation in the walls, while also retaining breathability of the fabric. The insulation can be inserted externally, whilst retaining the lath and plaster internal finish.

5.0 Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Any changes to a grade II listed building may impact on the significance and character of the building and the setting of the building and surrounding buildings. Therefore, any changes to be assessed and justified.
- 5.2 The existing windows to be replaced are of no historical value, single glazed and in a very poor condition. If no action is taken then water egress may occur, damaging the timber frame structure of the building. It is noted the windows are part of the historical evolution of the building, however, they are resulting in continued deterioration of the building and resulting in very high energy bills to heat the building, whilst having little reflection of how the original windows would have appeared. The sizes of the current windows are also at odds with the proportion of most historic timber framed building windows, indicating the frame and original openings have most likely been altered to fit the windows in the mid-20th century.
- 5.3 The removal of the existing windows will result in some impact on the cement render to the front elevation, however, this is to be removed and replaced. Some of the windows will be smaller in size than current structural openings and therefore the proposal is to insert softwood studwork to reduce the size of the openings. This will not involve the removal or replacement of historic fabric and the new studwork will be clearly legible from the historic Oak studs.
- 5.4 The replacement windows will reflect the typical appearance of the original windows on timber framed buildings of the period. The building has been subject to replacement windows in the late 19th century (horizontal sliding sash) and mid-20th century (current metal framed windows). The proposed replacement windows will better restore the character and appearance of the building.
- 5.5 The replacement windows will greatly improve the thermal efficiency of the building. This will improve the living conditions and humidity levels within the building, which in turn will maintain the fabric of the building and stop condensation building up on the windows.
- 5.6 The existing cement pebble dash render is resulting in the building fabric being un-able to breathe and a un-sympathetic appearance. The proposal to remove the pebble dash render by hand will result in no impact on the fabric of the building. The replacement render on woodfibre board will both insulate the frame of the building, retain breathability of the fabric, whilst restoring the appearance of the building.
- 5.7 The proposals result in an opportunity to further insulate the walls of the building by inserting sheep or lambs wool insulation between the studs, from the outside of the frame, prior to the installation of the woodfibre boards. The insulation will be breathable, whilst will greatly improve the thermal efficiency of the building and remove the risk of condensation with the walls. The insulation will have no impact on the appearance of the building.

6.0 Response to previous withdrawn application

6.1 A previous application for timber windows was submitted, however, this was withdrawn due to insufficient information and the design of the proposed replacement windows.

6.2 The design of the replacement windows has been altered following the response to the previous application. Furthermore, attention has been drawn to the other considerations, such as the replacement of the cement render and insulating the frame, which could bring wider benefits to the fabric of the building and conservation of the building.

6.3 The consultation response from the previous application stated;

'the removal of windows from the inter-war period and justified as these being non-contributors to the special architectural interest of the listed building; it should be recognised these windows are part of the buildings architectural evolution and whilst replacement can be tabled as part of a coherent approach, a robust basis as to why any replacements would be of greater benefit to the architectural interest alongside a clear commentary being submitted with evidence as to any loss or impact upon historic fabric.'

In response to this statement; whilst the windows from the inter-war period are recognised as being part of the buildings architectural evolution, the windows do not reflect the original proportion, materials or appearance of how the original windows would have looked. This in turn impacts on the overall appearance of the building. The replacement windows will better reflect the original appearance, whilst greatly improving the thermal efficiency of the building resulting in two-fold benefit. The insertion of the replacement windows will result in no loss of historic fabric.

6.4 The consultation response from the previous application stated;

In terms of appearance as proposed, the types of glazing style is haphazard, for example there are varying panes e.g., 'two over two' casements on WO3 and 'two over three' on window WO1. The featureful WO5 which has merit in its medieval mullioned aperture has a squeezed in 'two over two', given the variety of pane sizes and taking into strong consideration the vernacular typology this is not the appropriate detailing and it would result in a high level of harm to the special architectural interest and character. Casements (if justified) are a consideration in part but the applicants own Heritage Statement makes reference to a sliding sash as part of the buildings history as a Post Office.

In response to this statement; The sliding sash windows shown the historic photo would not have been the original windows as there are very few examples of sliding sash windows in Essex. These windows were most likely inserted in the Victorian period (and most likely resulted in the loss of historic fabric when the structural window openings were altered). The proposals to insert simple casement windows with a single horizontal glazing bar will better reflect the appearance of the original windows, improving the overall character and appearance of the building.

6.5 The consultation response from the previous application stated;

I note the proposals pertain double glazed units, given this is a timber frame structure, commentary as to the approach for thermal upgrade is required as a consideration within the weighting. It is not accepted that replacements will automatically be accepted as double-glazed units, more detail for the overall works here is required if thermal upgrade at fenestration level is being sought.

In response to this statement; The thin double glazing is being sought due to the other thermal upgrades now being proposed, resulting in an overall coherent improvement to the thermal efficiency of the building.

6.6 Refer to Appendix B for full consultation response to the previous application

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Soames farmhouse is a good example of vernacular architecture from the 16th century. The building follows a typical layout of the period with the layout being split over 3 bays and a baffle entry fireplace. Many of the original studs, beams and posts within the original 3 bays of the building have survived and are exposed internally.
- 7.2 All of the windows have been changed over time resulting in a mixture of metal framed windows dating from the mid-20th century and timber framed windows dating from the late 20th century and a gable end window from the 19th century.
- 7.3 The metal framed windows inserted in the front and side elevations are single glazed metal framed windows with lead comes that date from the mid-20th century. Due to the properties of the windows, they result in heavy condensation build up, no insulative values and rotting of the timber cills. The windows are not original and not very sympathetic in appearance or proportion. Although the windows are part of the evolution of the building, they detract from the significance of the building, whilst result in deterioration of the fabric of the building.
- 7.4 The elevations have cement pebble dashed rendered and painted white. This most likely occurred at the same time as the windows being inserted. The appearance of the pebble dash detracts from the appearance of the building, whilst not allowing the fabric of the building to breathe.
- 7.5 The proposal is to replace the metal windows with timber flush casement windows that will better reflect the appearance and proportions of what the original windows could have appeared. The replacement windows will appear more sympathetic whilst also being more thermal efficient. The insertion of the windows will result in no harm to the fabric as the existing lintols can remain in situ whilst the depth and width of some openings will be reduced using softwood studwork. It is therefore concluded that the replacement windows will enhance the appearance of the building whilst leading to the long-term conservation of the building. The windows will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the building.
- 7.6 Some of the cement render will need to be altered to insert the windows, therefore the proposal is to replace the render with woodfibre board and lime render. With the appropriate methods, this process will result in no harm to the fabric of the building. The woodfibre board will enhance the insulative values of the walls, whilst the lime render will ensure the fabric can breathe. To conclude; The proposal will enhance the appearance of the building whilst improving the fabric which will lead to the long-term conservation of the building. The proposals will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the building.
- 7.7 The proposal to insert sheeps or lambs wool insulation between the studs prior to rendering will improve the thermal efficiency of the building, retain breathability of the baric, whilst having no impact on historic fabric or appearance, resulting in 'no harm' to the significance of the building.

- 7.8 To summarise; The proposals will restore the original appearance of the building, better revealing the significance, ensuring the future conservation of the building and therefore following guidance from historic England and the policies within the NPPF 2023 and historic England conservation practice guidance. Any small levels of harm need to be balanced against the benefits of the proposals, which in this case will be far outweighed.
- 7.9 The proposals respond to the points within the previous withdrawn application.
- 7.10 It is considered that appropriate conditions are imposed subject to approval, these being; A condition imposed for 1msq section of render to be removed for inspection prior to the continuing of the works, and, A condition for method statement for removal and replacement of windows and removal and replacement render.

Appendix A. List Description

Statutory Address: SOAMES FARMHOUSE, NINE ASHES ROAD

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Essex

District: Brentwood (District Authority)

Parish: Stondon Massey

National Grid Reference: TL 58504 00606

Details

STONDON MASSEY

TL50SE NINE ASHES ROAD 723-1/1/538 (West side) 20/02/76 Soames Farmhouse (Formerly Listed as: BRENTWOOD NINE ASHES ROAD, Stondon Massey Soames Farmhouse)

II

House. c1600, C18/19 and C20. Timber-framed, roughcast rendered, red brick, roof peg-tiled with off centre stack and C18 rebuild but containing some early thin bricks. Plan rectangular, 3 cells with continuous rear out-shut. C18/19 secondary stack to S gable wall. 2 storeys. E front elevation - all windows are C20 metal casements with diamond leaded lights. Ground floor, N-S one light window, porch of timber and brick, gabled peg-tiled roof, door C20 flush panelled with a single leaded light, one 4-light window, one 3-light window. First floor, one 3-light window, one small 3-light window over porch, one 4-light and one 3-light window. S gable end (extending over out-shut). Ground floor C20 flush panelled door, stack, one C19 fixed light 4 panes, one C20 casement, 4 panes. First floor, one metal framed C20 casement, one wooden framed C20 casement. N end gable has brick walling on main house but rendering on out-shut. Ground floor outshut, 2-light iron casement and first floor 2-light metal casement above, first floor also segment headed window in brick wall, 2 lights, C19 iron casement, small panes, 3x4. Rear W elevation - outshut wall, one and a half storeys. Windows irregular, two 2-light C20 casements, one 3-light C20 casement, door to N end, simple framed and 2 panels, upper panel glazed, simple C20 hood over on shaped brackets. INTERIOR shows 'classic' 3 celled arrangement. Stout plain timbering and chimney bay containing back to back fireplaces (now partly blocked and rebuilt). Ceiling bridging joists with lamb's tongue chamfer stops. Original doorway from first floor central room to closet over site of lobby entrance in front of stack. Also, original doorway from N end of first floor room at rear of stack to site of original stair at rear of stack. Middle rails at house front are particularly deep sectioned and this together with peg evidence suggests that large windows existed in the same positions as at present. Face halved and bladed scarfs, stout tension braces in transverse partitions and a cyma moulded corbel in the ground floor central room suggest a date c1600. The visible construction in the out-shut is now completely of C20. The out-shut was used as a dairy and is no doubt of considerable age. It probably also dates to the C17 and may have had a contemporary 'catslide' roof but later alteration has probably raised the roof eave to present height.

Listing NGR: TL5850400606

Appendix B. Response -

Historic Buildings And Conservation Officer

Comment Date: Tue 16 Mar 2021

Significance:

SOAMS FARMHOUSE, List UID: 1197347 is a Grade II listed building. Date first listed: 20-Feb-1976. Date of most recent amendment: 09-Dec-1994, curtilage listed buildings within its immediate setting.

The proposals within this application for Listed Building Consent pertain to 'Replacement of existing windows'

Background:

No preapplication has been undertaken.

Discussion:

The description for this Listed Building Consent application refers to 'replacement windows' these are annotated on existing drawing 2020-383-010. The proposals do not encompass every window at the property when referencing the existing and proposed elevations.

Within the submission pack there is no window schedule setting out what is repair and what is replacement, this is best practice given other apertures appear to require repair from my viewing the Heritage Statement submitted. A cohesive approach to fenestration is required as a baseline.

The Heritage Assessment sets out the approach for replacement is based on the removal of windows from the inter-war period and justified as these being non-contributors to the special architectural interest of the listed building; it should be recognised these windows are part of the buildings architectural evolution and whilst replacement can be tabled as part of a coherent approach, a robust basis as to why any replacements would be of greater benefit to the architectural interest alongside a clear commentary being submitted with evidence as to any loss or impact upon historic fabric.

From my assessment of the proposals, I find a retrograde step is being proposed in appearance alongside no detail provided around intervention with the timber frame which could occur by works as set out.

Aside from the appearance which I will comment upon in the next section of this advice letter, it is common ground between the applicants Heritage Consultant and the LPA that a great significance is weighted upon the vernacular timber framed building, therefore having agreement for areas of opening up to inform the works is advisable in the first instance if boxing, lintels etc. are to be replaced.

In terms of appearance as proposed, the types of glazing style is haphazard, for example there are varying panes e.g., 'two overs two' casements on WO3 and 'two over three' on window WO1. The featureful WO5 which has merit in its medieval mullioned aperture has a squeezed in 'two over two', given the variety of pane sizes and taking into strong consideration the vernacular typology this is not the appropriate detailing and it would result in a high level of harm to the special architectural interest and character. Casements (if justified) are a consideration in part but the applicants own Heritage Statement makes reference to a sliding sash as part of the buildings history as a Post Office.

I note the proposals pertain double glazed units, given this is a timber frame structure, commentary as to the approach for thermal upgrade is required as a consideration within the weighting. It is not accepted that replacements will automatically be accepted as double-glazed units, more detail for the overall works here is required if thermal upgrade at fenestration level is being sought.

In summary the proposals are not supported, I advise a cohesive approach to the works at the listed building are embarked upon and additional advice sought via Preapplication if there are areas where discussion is required.

To conclude, the proposals would, in my opinion, fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building, contrary to Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. For the purposes of planning, the level of harm is considered less than substantial. As such the local planning authority should weigh this harm against any public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (Para.196 NPPF 2019).

I trust the above advice is of assistance.