

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN
HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT
OF
COURT FARM,
LITTLE HASELEY,
OXFORDSHIRE**

*On behalf of
Mr & Mrs Meadon*

AUGUST 2005

REPORT FOR Mr & Mrs Meadon

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1 Introduction

1.1 Planning Background

Permission has been sought from South Oxfordshire District Council for internal and external alterations at Court Farm, Little Haseley, Oxfordshire.

The Government, through the Department of Culture Media and Sport is responsible for protecting the historic environment. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. The Department monitors the effectiveness of the controls.

The Secretary of State has a duty under the Act to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. There are three grades of listing:

- Grade II are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them
- Grade II* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest
- Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest

Court Farm has been listed as Grade II.

2 Aims of the Investigation

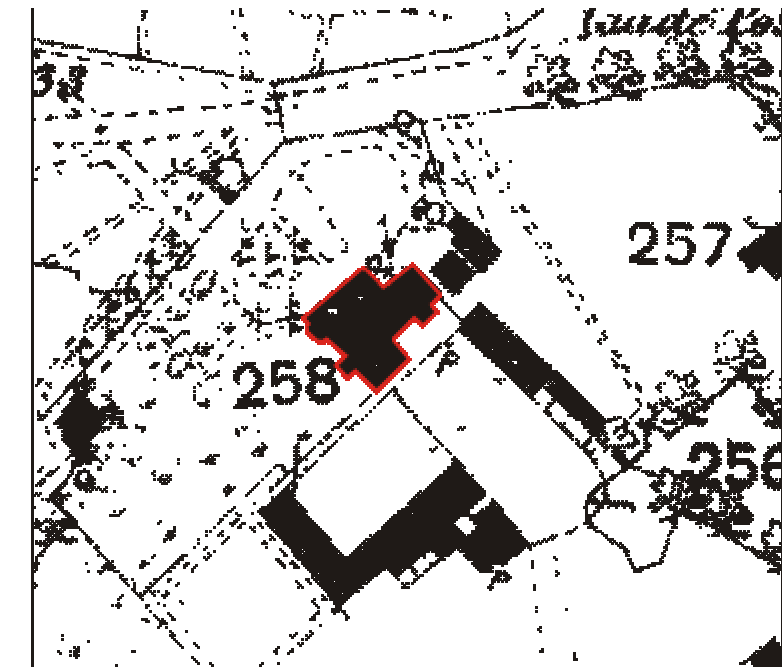
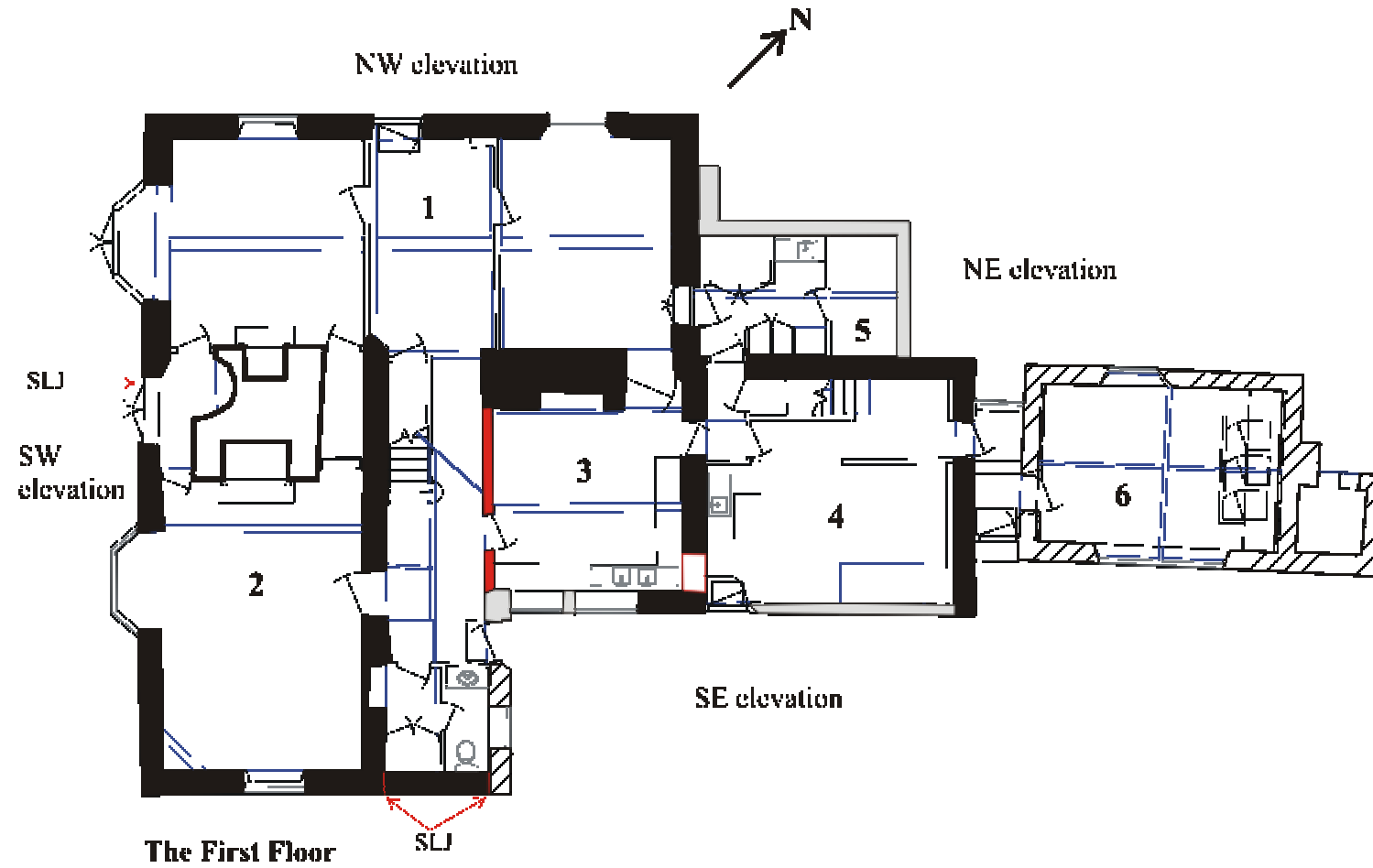
An analysis of the building has been requested to assess the significance of the fabric to be altered in order to provide sufficient information to allow Planning Services at South Oxfordshire District Council to assess the likely impact of the proposals on the special character of the building.

3 Strategy

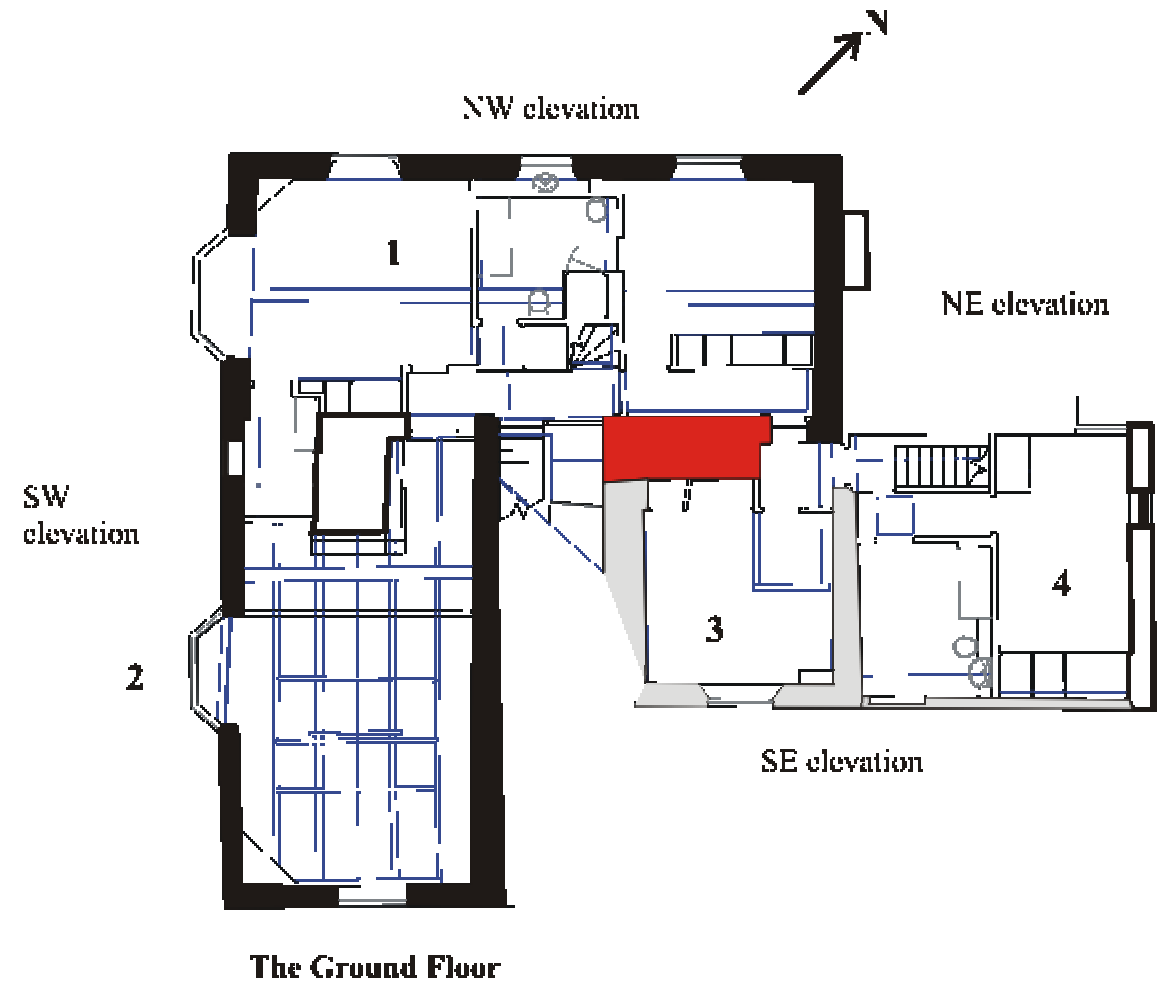
- 3.1 A study of all available historic maps and plans, together with a documentary search was undertaken at the Public Records Office in Oxford, supplemented by documentary evidence obtained at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies.
- 3.2 An on-site investigation was carried out to examine the standing building fabric in order to assess the development of the building over time. This report is the results of such an investigation.

4 Discussion

It should be noted that the quality of the finish and fittings within the building create problems in the assessment of the survival of original features and fabric. It is only with the stripping out of the finish that a true inspection of the construction and character of the building could be made. The results of this analysis must be considered in the light of these limitations. For the purposes of this report, the separate builds as far as established have been allocated numbers, to facilitate discussion; the numbers are shown on Figure 1.



 The main buildings
The property in 1881 (First Edition Ordnance Survey Map)









-  Early Coursed Limestone Rubble
-  Late Limestone Construction
-  Limestone and Brick
-  Brickwork
-  Uncertain Construction
-  Blocked
- SLJ Straight Line Join

Figure 1: The main construction materials utilised, with numbers to identify parts of the property discussed in the text including a detail of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1881)

4.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

The main body of the property is of coursed limestone rubble with plain tile roofs. The majority of the roofing material has been replaced with concrete tiles, and little of the original clay tiles remain. The windows to the front elevation are 18th century sashes. The later ancillary buildings and all later modifications are in red brick (shown shaded in Figure 1). The farmhouse may originally have been L-plan with a later Georgian two-storeys plus attics house attached and linked to the earlier structure by a roofed hallway containing the staircase. However, the later additions and modifications result in a layout that does not easily fall into any established plan. Certain elements of the property can be identified as forming particular phases of construction and the individual elements of each build and the impact of the proposed alterations are discussed in detail below.

The first impressions of the buildings are that of an 18th century house added to the remnants of an earlier build, with further modifications and additions occurring in the 18th – 20th centuries. Building (1) as shown in Figure 1, may represent a new build of Georgian origin. The Georgian build bears traces of further modifications later in the Georgian period with attempts to formalise the fenestration.

The earlier remnants of possible L-shape plan are shown here as buildings (2) and (3), so much modified over time that little remains for firm interpretation. Only stripping out of the current finishings could result in greater understanding of the development of the site.

4.2 BUILD (1) EXTERIOR

As it stands, the building incorporating the current frontage of Georgian design, is the more intact of the construction phases. This build (shown as 1, on Figure 1) is two-storeys plus attics, with many original interior features intact (discussed below). The Georgian fenestration, may be a later development added to the remains of a 17th century build, and has been altered: the two ground floor sash windows are within blocked door openings – the brick blocking is *in situ*. The doorway is also inserted, with the addition of brick quoins, and the first floor windows have cement render to the cut face of the window openings – suggesting an insertion, although the original openings may have existed in these locations, as there are no further breaches and blocking of the building fabric on this elevation. The dormers were inserted, the internal timber framework altered to facilitate the construction. The eastern elevation has the addition of a 20th century stone-built with brick trim chimneystack.

4.3 BUILD (1) INTERIOR

There are many internal features, original or early to the building *in situ* within build (1): The axial beams at ground and first floor ceiling level, remains of early timber framed partitioning in the eastern room of the first floor, and the roof structure comprising king post, wind-braces, and purlins can be seen preserved within the attics, although the purlins are truncated where the dormers have been inserted. The floorboards at attic level at the western end are original and 18th century in origin. The survival of original elements diminishes towards the ground floor. The axial beams at ground floor levels have ovolo moulding, with lamb's tongue stops however, the

beam was truncated due to the insertion of the bay window and also for the insertion of the northeastern partition wall. In both locations, ironwork supports had been inserted – probably 19th century in origin.

4.4 BUILD (2) EXTERIOR

Like build (1), this range is of coursed rubble construction, although it is impossible to assess just how much of the original fabric is still *in situ*. There is a straight line joint between this range and build (1) suggesting a different phase of construction. The roof is replacement concrete tile resting on a brick plinth. Both bay windows are inserted, one 19th century, the other added in the 20th century. The door is also a later insert, although possibly into an original opening. A porch had previously been situated at this location, but was removed in the 1960's.

4.5 BUILD (2) INTERIOR

The interior of this range had been stripped out from floor to the roof structure. The intermediate, first floor was removed, leaving the base of a corner fireplace stranded *in situ*. A mezzanine floor adjacent to the chimneystack was part of the 1968 programme of works. The roof structure as discussed in greater detail below, comprises many replaced elements, and it is possible that the whole structure was a later build, certainly not intended to be left exposed, due to the number of un-matched members.

4.6 BUILD (3) EXTERIOR

This two-storey building has a ground floor of coursed limestone rubble, and the upper storey is almost entirely a 19th century brick built addition (or rebuild). The windows are also a later insertion, and the ground floor arrangement may be 20th century in origin. It is not known if this building formed part of the original complex on the site, although it is probable that the remnants of limestone rubble at ground floor level form part of the earlier building phases on the site.

4.7 BUILD (3) INTERIOR

The internal arrangements of this building have been heavily altered with the in-filling of previous doors and the creation of new. The northwestern wall between kitchen and hall would have been affected by the removal (and possibly, the insertion) of the Georgian staircase. Further alterations took place in the form of blocking up the fireplace, creating access into build (1), and blocking access into build (4). The insertion of the current ceiling is also a 20th century modification, and the current beam exposed in this room is a later insertion; the chamfer stops don't match the room proportions, and the western end is housed in a metal bracket, rather than in the wall itself. The first floor has a chipboard floor and the window opening had been reduced to allow for the insertion of the floor.

4.8 THE CORRIDOR

The corridor linking builds (1), (2) and (3), was a Georgian insertion with roofline of building (2) extended accordingly. The current corridor was further extended and a

window inserted in the roof, probably as part of the 1968 programme of works when the staircase was replaced and inserted on the opposite side of the hall. From internal traces, it is possible that a roof light opening remains *in situ* within the earlier corridor roof extension, currently blocked, as it was no longer required due to the repositioning of the stairs.

4.9 BUILD (4) EXTERIOR

This two-storey extension incorporates a degree of coursed limestone rubble in its northwestern and northeastern walls. However, the southeastern elevation is a modern brick creation, heavily altered over time and bearing scars of numerous patches. The details are discussed below in light of the current proposed changes.

4.10 BUILD (4) INTERIOR

The internal arrangements of this building have been so altered to bring it in line with modern domestic requirements that little or no trace of the earlier function of the building can reasonably be ascertained. The interior has been broken up into two levels and the windows situated accordingly, however, it is likely that the building was one storey with a loft over originally, which would account for the slightly uncomfortable situation of the current first floor windows.

4.11 BUILD (5)

This extension is 20th century in origin and is a single storey outshut of brick construction built onto the northeastern elevation of building (1) and the northwestern elevation of building (4). It is suggested that this outshut was for the cool storage of foodstuffs and the remnants of a brick arch let into the northwestern elevation of build (4) may have been for the storage of dairy produce.

4.12 BUILD (6)

This building was constructed of limestone rubble, however, the southeastern elevation is a modern replacement – perhaps as part of the 1968 programme of works. The remaining walls are post – 1919 in origin as they are not shown on the Ordnance Survey map of this date. The map shows a far different arrangement of buildings in the location of building (6), and it is suggested that the limestone rubble used in the construction of the current build may have been re-used from the demolished remains of the earlier structures (Figure 2).

5 THE ALTERATIONS – EXTERNAL FABRIC

5.1 GROUND FLOOR

The Southwestern elevation:

This elevation is formed of the junction between two distinct ranges – the northeast – southwest orientated block (1) and the northwest – southeast range (2). The junction occurs at the southwestern corner of the gable, where a straight line join between the

two phases of construction is clearly visible, this is the location of the inserted doorway. The overall elevation has been much modified, neither of the two-storey canted bays are original, nor are they contemporary. The northernmost example is of 19th century origin, while the southern arrangement is c. mid 20th century in date.

The proposed alterations to this fenestration include new windows to replace the inserted doors. The actual breach in the fabric for the creation of the doorway was a later development as can be observed in the straight line joint at the junction between the two ranges, and in the brick quoin detail to the door surround. The current doorway was inserted post 1968, as a wide porch had previously occupied the location (Knight, Frank & Rutley, 1968).

Also proposed is the removal of the southernmost bay, and replacement with a new ground floor bay. As mentioned above, the current bay is 20th century in origin; the fabric opened up and the bays inserted with cement render used to seal the breach. Traces of an earlier, though non-original feature (it is uncertain whether doorway or window) can be seen within the fabric to the south, trimmed in brick, in-filled and truncated by the insertion of the late bay.

The Southeastern Elevation

This southeastern elevation is comprised of the gable of the northwest – southeast range (2), a later corridor and added façade (that make up part of the northeastern elevation), and the southern elevations of the current kitchen and additional extension (3) to the east. The gable of range (2) has a centrally located window, of probable 19th century date, situated within a former opening for a doorway, the lower portion filled in with limestone rubble in an attempt to match the original building fabric. The current gable incorporates a later extension, resulting in a catslide roof effect to the east. The extension, also in limestone rubble, abuts the gable and the straight line joint is clearly visible. A further extension is visible, comprising a later façade to the east, forming the current northeastern elevation at the southern end of range (2). The later façade is 20th century in character, with inserted windows and doorway, trimmed in red brick. The proposals include a new window to be inserted in the gable, in the location of the current one – no further fabric will be breached.

Further proposals for the southeastern elevation include the creation of new windows and doors in the fenestration of the ancillary building (4) that abuts the current kitchen (3) of the main house.

The northwestern wall of building (4) and elements of the northeastern elevation, were of limestone construction; the southeastern elevation however, is entirely of brick. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map (OS map 1881) shows this elevation with a rectangular building extension/abutment of some sort – perhaps an outshut, no longer *in situ*. Furthermore, the construction in brick is a late modification to the building, certainly 20th century in origin, with traces of continual modification occurring up to and including the 1968 programme of works carried out on the property. All features on this fenestration are modern in origin; renovations and modifications in this area would cause no loss of significant historic fabric.

The northeastern elevation

The proposed enlargement of the doorway opening in the northeastern elevation to the late link corridor may result in the loss of a small portion of earlier stone building fabric, however, it should be noted that the current opening is post 1919 in origin; the link corridor and associated buildings to the east were not *in situ* at the time the 1919 revision OS map was issued.

The northeastern and northwestern elevations of building (5)

New windows proposed to be positioned within original openings in the northeastern and northwestern elevations of the building (5) would not result in the loss of significant historic building fabric as the extension is of 20th century brick construction, and the proposals are for replacements within the current window locations.

The link corridor

Plans to block up the southern doorway of the link corridor would not affect significant historic building fabric as the corridor is a 20th century contrivance added to facilitate egress between the late extension (5) and building (6).

The northwestern elevation of building (6):

Proposals for the northwestern elevation of building (6) involve the enlargement of an existing opening. The building is of 20th century origin and although there are elements of rubble construction – it is suggested that the material may have come from the earlier buildings that had occupied the site (as shown on OS map, Figure 2). The current opening to the link corridor is a late modification, lined in brick.

The plan to create a new doorway in the southeastern elevation would result in no loss of historic fabric as this entire elevation is of modern origin, designed and styled to fit in with the original limestone fabric of the earlier building phases.

5.2 GROUND FLOOR INTERIOR

The internal modifications to building (1) comprise blocking access between the northern and southern rooms by inserting walls to either side of the chimneybreast. The insertion of the partitions would little affect the historic fabric of the property and may even re-establish original Georgian room proportions. An additional proposal is for the opening up of the potential fireplace in the southeastern wall of building (1). This would involve the removal of late blocking in an original *in situ* chimneybreast.

Interior changes to building (2) involve the insertion of a new mantelpiece to the fireplace; the current *in situ* piece is post 1968 in origin. It is also intended to remove the current modern staircase in the hallway to re-establish a Georgian detail staircase in its original position, west of the current one. The modern staircase was inserted as part of the 1968 programme of works.

It is also proposed that the opening between kitchen (3) and building (4) be enlarged. The current wall south of the door is thought to be a remnant of stone construction, however, an earlier opening was *in situ* between the two rooms, abutting the southeastern elevation (indicated on Figure 1). It is not known how much of the earlier building fabric survives between the earlier blocked doorway and the current opening, it is suggested that the blocking of the earlier access and creation of the current access, will have reduced any earlier fabric to a minimum. A watching brief during any works may establish survival and preserve by record any historic remains; particularly useful in this area where it is suspected the survival of any earlier fabric has been almost entirely removed.

One further modification involves the creation of a new doorway in the northwestern elevation to provide access into build (5); this may affect previously un-altered fabric, and result in loss of detail, however, the impact is minimal in that only a small area would be affected.

Removal of the staircase of 20th century origin, situated within an ancillary building (4) so modified that little, if any indication of earlier use is visible. It can be suggested that this building was stabling or cart shed with loft over, indicated by the entire rebuild of the southern elevation, suggesting that the build may have been open fronted originally. The notes in advance of sale (knight, Frank & Rutley, 1964) makes mention of garages, stabling, stalls, loose box and saddle room, of which this building may have formed part. The staircase is undoubtedly non-original to the intended purpose of the building, and instead forms part of its conversion to domestic accommodation, with the insertion of 20th century ceilings, windows and doors.

In addition, there are a few minor proposals suggested for the ground floor of the main builds; the removal of late partitions in the current cloakroom, all of which are late 20th century in origin.

5.3 FIRST FLOOR EXTERIOR

External proposals at first floor level include a new dormer in the location of the upper bay in the southwestern elevation of build (2). As mentioned previously, the current bay was a 20th century construction and as such not part of the original building layout. The intention to insert a dormer in this location would result in a breach of the roof fabric. This type of modification already occurs in the historic development of the building as can be seen in the attics of build (1), where two dormers have been inserted.

However, the material to be breached in the roof of build (2) has already been altered: the roof structure, now visible from the ground floor of the building, incorporates little of the original structure. The rafters, purlins, tie beams and struts include modern repairs and replacements in addition to the re-use of earlier timbers from elsewhere (visible at collar level, with empty mortises in locations that do not correspond). In addition, there is a brick plinth, or wall plate, possibly late in origin, as no early building elements were constructed in this material. The tiles used in the roof covering are of concrete, styled to imitate the earlier clay tiles (some of which still survive at the rear of build (1)). It is intended as part of the proposals to replace the

concrete tiles with clay, as had originally been the case in the earlier phases of the site development.

It is proposed that the northeastern elevation of build (1) be altered by the insertion of a small window. This window would alter the original fabric of the house.

The southeastern elevations of builds (3) and (4) are earmarked for modifications in the form of increased height windows in build (3) and replacement windows in build (4). The 19th/ 20th century modifications to build (3) resulted in the rebuild of the first floor gable almost entirely in brick (the ground floor is of stone). It is unknown whether this particular part of the property originally stood to two-storey height; however, the current arrangement appears to comprise late 19th brickwork at the earliest. The suggested modifications involve the increase in height of the current window opening, extending upwards into the brick built gable, rather than downwards to affect the remains of the earlier stonework. The suggested impact to the *in situ* brickwork will be minimal, earlier fabric will not be disturbed.

The replacement windows in build (4) will have no impact on significant historic fabric as such a high degree of modification already exists to what is essentially a 20th century façade. The proposals may help to make sense of the internal divisions currently in place within this part of the property.

5.4 FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR

The internal modifications proposed for the first floor are for the majority, minor in potential impact to the historic fabric. Proposals include the removal of modern built-in wardrobes from build (1), in the master bedroom, in addition to some in-fill in the northwestern corner of the room. It is also intended to block the current modern arched access between bedroom and bathroom. This will have no impact on earlier building fabric.

The partition wall earmarked for removal in the guest bedroom is a modern construction and removal will serve to re-establish the original proportions of the room.

The internal alterations suggested for build (4) will involve the removal of the staircase (as discussed for ground floor alterations), the removal of the partition between the current bathroom and adjacent room to create a larger bedroom, and the insertion of a new partition to the north to separate the alternatively located bathroom from the proposed bedroom. These changes are deemed minor, in that they do not affect early fabric or room arrangements, or any detail relating to the original function of the building. The modernisation and alterations carried out mid to late 20th century had already eradicated any trace of earlier features, or fittings.

5.5 THE ATTICS

The only proposed alteration to the attics is the proposed removal of the tanks and the replacement of the current handrail. The tanks are 20th century in origin, as is the current handrail. Removal of the tanks will open up the roof space and allow the *in-situ* original roof timbers to be visible.

6 SUMMARY

The alterations proposed for Court Farm, for the most part, have minimal effect on the earliest phases of the building. The plans for insertion of a new bay arrangement to the southern bay, would only impact upon the 20th century window itself, as the breach in fabric already exists.

The breach in roof line at this location for the insertion of a dormer window would impact upon the current roof structure, however, there is some doubt as to the antiquity of the current roofing; the brick plinth and internal timber members suggest much alteration to date, and it is certainly the case that the current tiles are a modern replacement. The actual insertion of a dormer would impact upon the fenestration, but would correspond to those inserted in the attics of building (1).

The remaining external alterations are proposed for the later buildings in the development of the site; re-arrangements and replacements in the southeastern elevations of buildings (3), (4) and (6) will have no impact on original fabric, as the areas of impact are all located within original breaches or late brickwork. The proposals for building (3), at first floor level, would have minimal impact on the 19th century brickwork for the increase in height of the first floor window.

The internal proposals will have minimal impact on early fabric and arrangements within buildings (1) and (2), and in the hall linking both builds. The replacement of a Georgian staircase in its original location would improve the current layout and circulation of the property.

7 CONCLUSIONS

It is the opinion of John Moore Heritage Services that the majority of the alterations pose little threat to the surviving original building fabric of Court Farm. The areas where the integrity of the historic building fabric may be impacted upon are within the kitchen (building 3), where some loss of limestone constructed walling may be expected; this is also the case for opening up access between builds (4) and (5). The other potential impact would be the proposed insertion of a window in the northeastern gable of building (1), it should be noted however, that the proposed window would result in the loss of a small area of fabric.

The development of the property is difficult to determine and it is suggested that should the proposals go ahead, a watching brief be carried out on the affected areas, to preserve by record any historic fabric as it is exposed *in situ* and indeed to further document any changes to buildings in order to understand the development of the site over time.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Knight, Frank & Rutley 1968 *Sales Description in Country Life Supplement*

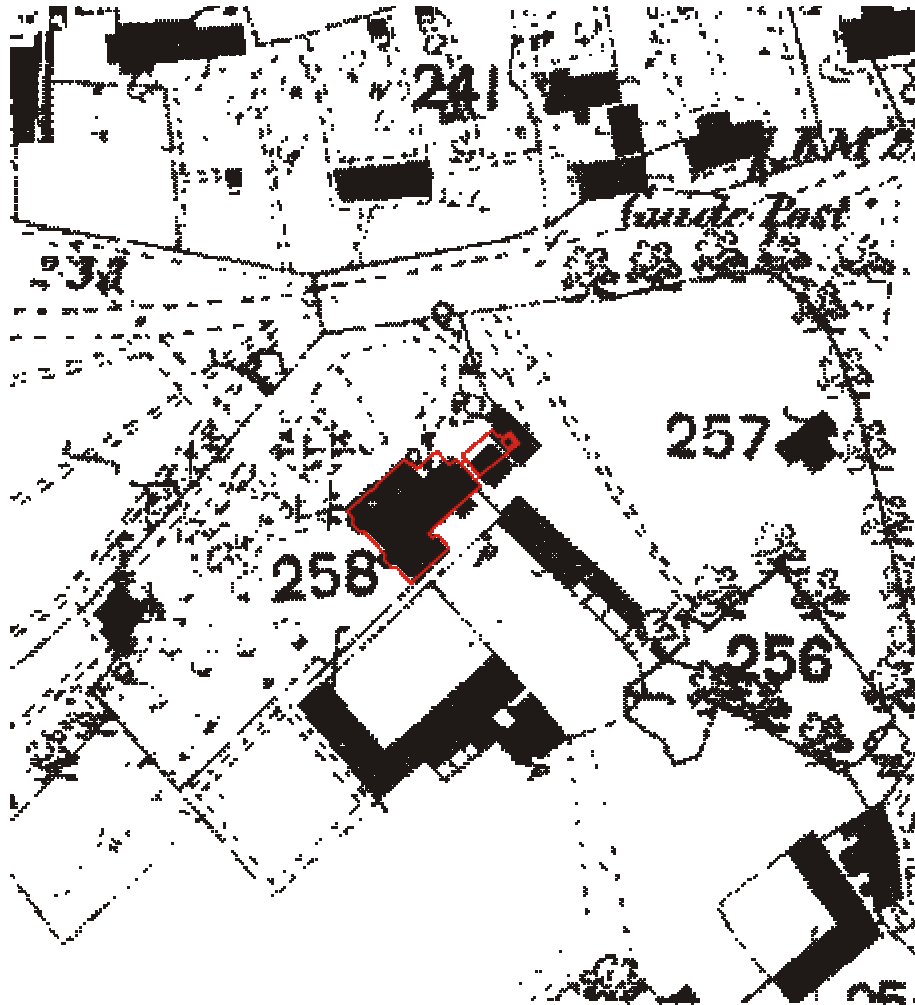


Figure 2: An overlay of the current site survey with the 1881 edition OS map: It should be noted that some vagaries will occur with mapping of this date and scale (originally 25"). However, the general outline of the building tallies with the OS mapping but the current ancillary build (6) is in an entirely different location and orientation to those shown.