

CEROWSKI ARCHITECTS

Outbuilding, Harwoods, Henfield Architectural Supporting Narrative for Proposals



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Architectural Supporting Narrative for Proposals

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The following text has been prepared by Jonathan Cerowski, the Specialist Conservation Architect who has been engaged to prepare initial concept designs for the alteration/extension of the outbuilding located within the grounds of Harwoods, a historic house in Henfield. These notes, and the orthographic and sketch drawings prepared alongside them, were informed by the advice of Maggie Henderson of HB Archaeology & Conservation Ltd, who prepared a high-level Heritage Statement in relation to the building.

Background

Harwoods house proper is a two bedroom cottage, with additional land to the East of the domestic curtilage. In 2011 consent was granted for an extension to the house, almost doubling its footprint, however the owners (the current applicants) decided not to carry these works out, instead refurbishing the extant house to a high standard using traditional materials: lime mortar, sheep's wool insulation, and lime plaster.

Now, the extent of accommodation is being re-evaluated by the owners, with a need for ancillary accommodation for family and visitors.

Rather than, as in the 2011 scheme, proposing an extension, our brief has been to evaluate the possibility of repairing, adapting and extending the existing outbuilding to the south-east of the house, to act as occasional ancillary accommodation. The outbuilding once housed livestock but now acts as a garden and tool store for the owners. The works to the main house sought to repair and adapt the existing building and this has been successful in meeting the owners' needs whilst respecting the history of the property. We have endeavored to take the same approach to the proposed scheme to which this application relates.

Historic Considerations Made in Developing the Design

HB Archaeology note that 'the footprint of the group as first built is unchanged to date despite the addition of modern structures or their remains'. They go on to say:

'The building's significance is derived from it surviving near intact in its original form, built at the very end of the High Farming Era, the most important period of farm building development. There is sufficient surviving fabric and form to illustrate the original livestock related function. The compact group with its integrated ranges, yards and slurry pit are an example of the model farm in miniature. The well-designed group, each building with its own specific function, designed in conjunction with an integral yard and slurry pit, intended as a compact streamlined agricultural factory: each building in its place in order to maximise efficiency, a very compact example of: '...the application of process-flow in the development of multi-functional barn ranges and the development of courtyard layouts, where the various on-farm processes were carefully placed in relationship to each other...' (Forum Heritage Services, 2006;13)'

HB Archaeology went on to recommend that as far as possible the outward appearance remains unchanged, to safeguard the setting of the listed building and ensure that any domestic changes to the outbuilding do not compete with the host building's nature. In relation to this they also recommended avoiding visual impacts on the main house.

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With this in mind, we developed the following approach to developing a design:

- As far as possible, changes to the existing building are minimised, particularly ensuring that the North and West elevations (those which face towards Harwoods house) are not changed.
- Repair the built fabric of the existing building: replacing the cement tile roof with hand made clay tiles, retaining the existing windows to the North and West side (which evidence the High Farming Era past and development of the building), repairing cracks in the brickwork and lintels, and replacing cementitious mortar with breathable lime mortar.
- Retaining the low brick livestock enclosing walls and slurry pit of the western side of the building, continuing to use it for its current purpose: the storage of pots, bean poles, and other items associated with the vegetable beds to the immediate south-west of the building.
- As far as is practical, retaining the cellular form of the interior of the outbuilding, with a three bay main range, and a smaller three bay 'shelter shed' below the western catslide roof.
- Limiting new openings to the eastern elevation, currently a blank brick wall (though structurally unsound and requiring either replacement or alteration in any case), ensuring that the architectural language of change to this area references the humble, agrarian, and vernacular detailing of farming outbuildings.
- Removing the dilapidated timber lean-to and concrete hardstanding to the southern side of the building, reusing the existing doorway to create a subservient extension in this location, to meet the accommodation needs of the owners.

Architectural Design Proposed

Based upon the approach set out above, the concept design that we have developed collaboratively with the owners and project team seeks to:

- Repair the building and resist changes to the North and West sides of the structure: those which face towards the listed house.
- Insulate and repair the main building range, to form an open plan space suitable for use as a home office and sitting area, with a small kitchenette to one corner and a log-burner to the other.
- Split the western 'shelter shed' into three cells, as historically, to act as tool store, garden W.C. and general garden store. The existing vertical timber boarding would be retained, with a portion acting as a 'jib' door (without an architrave and other domestic detailing) leading into the garden store, and a pair of slot windows set between the timber boards, to serve the tool store and garden W.C.

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- Remove the existing southern lean-to store and concrete hardstanding, reusing the existing southern doorway to provide access to a new extension. The extension would contain an ancillary bedroom and bathroom. The design of the extension would be a simple gabled form, set in from the external walls and down from the ridge of the main range, with windows largely facing eastward, away from Harwoods. The detailing of the design would reference the proposed tripartite doors to the eastern wall of the main range (having curved brick 'specials' to the reveals, and repeating the timber and glazed fenestration detailing). It would also use simple architectural detailing such as stacked tile slip corbels to the eaves, and Sussex bond brickwork, to help tie the building into its setting, and relate positively to the host building.

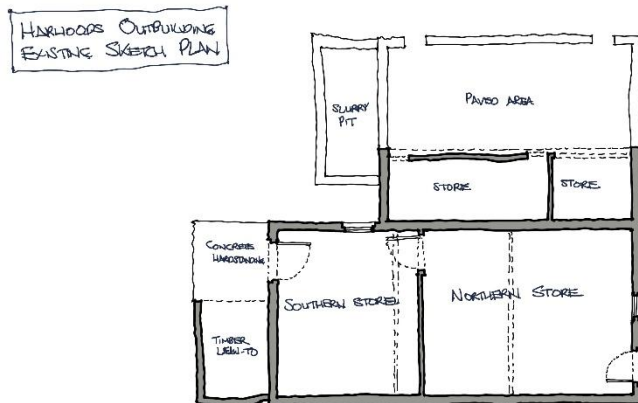


Fig 1: The existing floorplan in sketch form, taken from design development sketches.

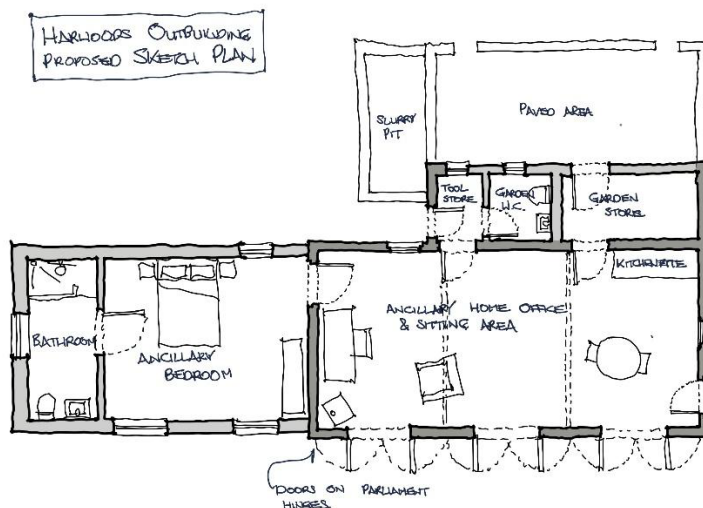


Fig 2: An earlier version of the proposed floorplan in sketch form, with a larger extension, now reduced to increase the appearance of subservience to the host structure.

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The architectural proposals would seek to retain as much of the historic built fabric as possible (excepting the cementitious tiles and later phase built fabric alterations which are detrimental to the outbuilding and the setting of Harwoods).

To allow the building to function as ancillary accommodation it would however be necessary to thermally improve the envelope of the building. It is proposed that this could be achieved to the existing building through the use of breathable materials, such as:

- **Walls** – Once the walls are repaired, a levelling bonding coat is added internally, and to that is fixed breathable woodfibre boards (here shown with Steico Therm), with a lime plaster and breathable paint inner finish.

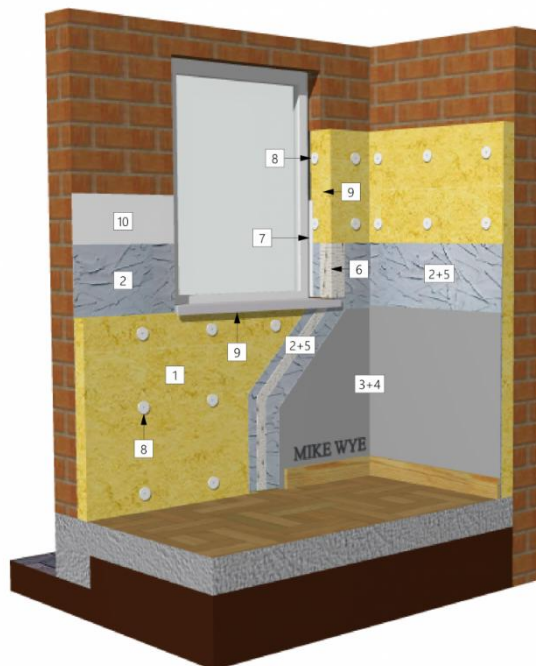


Fig 3: 3D render of wood fibre boards, applied over a lime bonding coat, with a lime plaster and breathable paint internal finish.

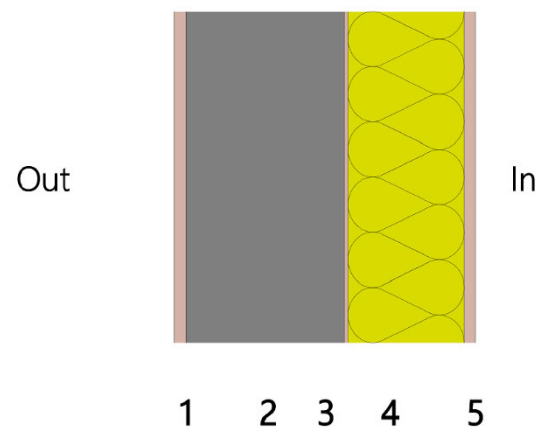


Fig 4: An indicative cross section through the internal wall insulation. The grey is the existing brick thick wall, whilst the yellow 'batting' is the breathable insulation.

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- **Roof** – At roof level, a flat ceiling could be introduced to the space (to form an unheated storage area above, as currently shown on the drawings) this would be a breathable insulation solution, and would work with the vapour openness of the existing historic building.



Fig 5: Steico Flex 036 wood fibre insulation being installed above a ceiling, forming a 'cold roof'.

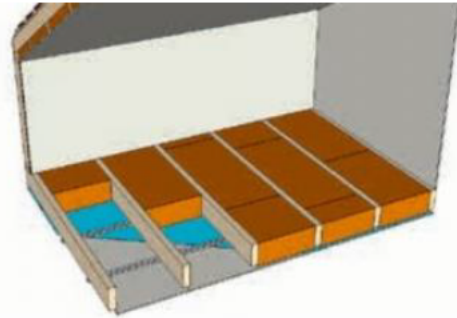


Fig 6: An indicative 3D render/diagram of wood fibre insulation being installed between floor joists.

- **Floor** – At floor level, if the space was heated with a limecrete slab, it could be both breathable and thermally efficient, with a traditional stone or pavement floor finish.



Fig 7: 3D render of limecrete slab, with no floor finish shown. The system is only as breathable as the least vapour open element, and so a natural material such as stone, brick, terracotta tile, or wooden boards would be most suitable for conducting heat and allowing the floor to breathe.

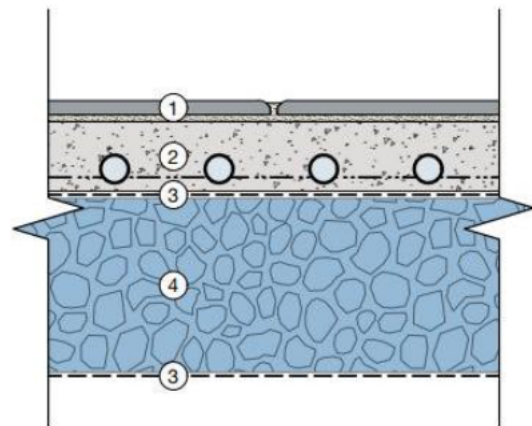


Fig 8: An indicative cross section through the limecrete slab. In blue, foam glass aggregate is packed between two geotextile membranes to prevent dampness tracking upward into the floor buildup, and over that sit underfloor heating pipes in a limecrete slab, with the final floor finish above.

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Architectural Summary

The proposals prepared by Cerowski Architects have been informed by the advice of the highly experienced Historic Building Consultant, and are based on our extensive knowledge and experience of works in retrofitting and extending historic buildings.

The works are intended to be as de-minimis as possible, working with and repairing the built fabric of the existing ancillary building, and extending it in a proportionate and subservient manner. As an alternative to the previously approved substantial extension to the main house, these concept proposals are felt to better protect the significance of the principal heritage asset, Harwoods house, whilst still meeting the needs of the applicant's family.