

**Prepared by John Sime & Associates**

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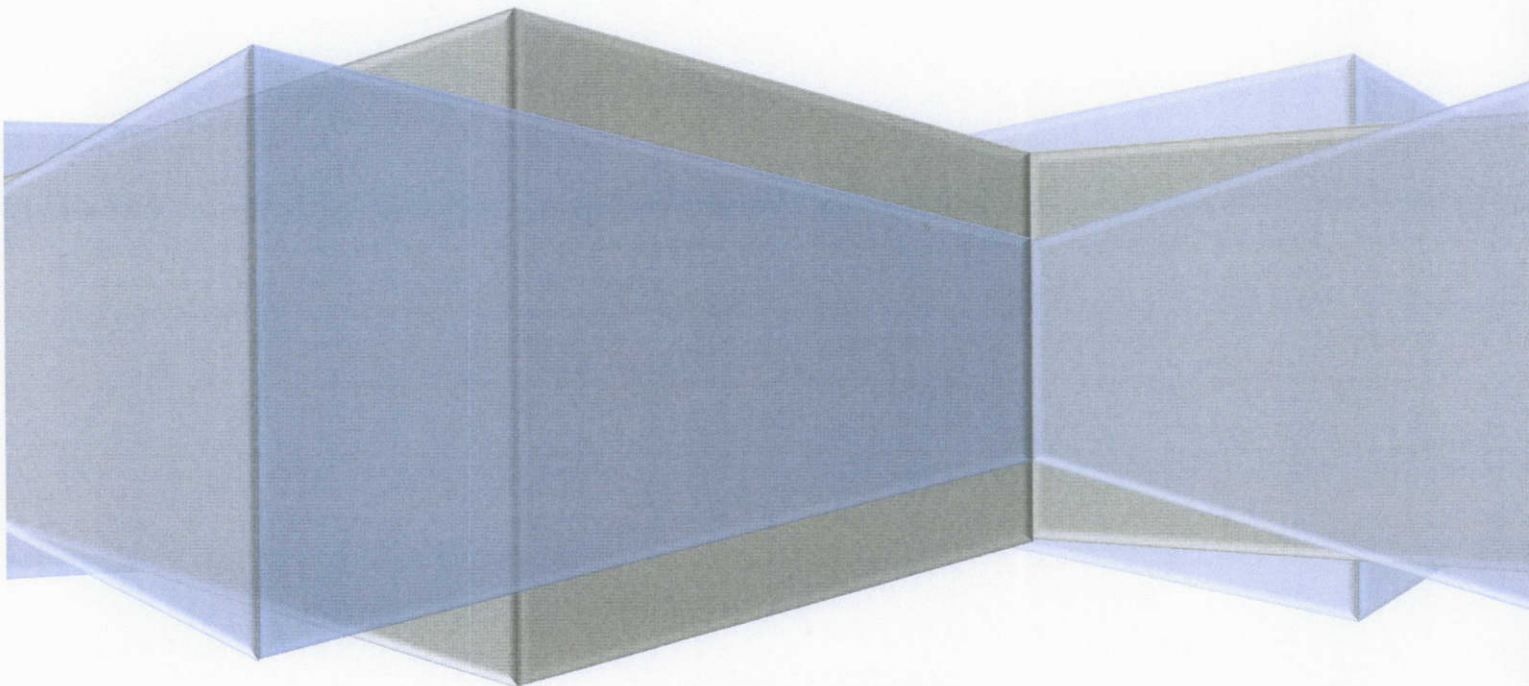
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# **Heritage Statement**

**Fir Tree House, 24 East Street, Rochford, Essex**

**Mr Steve Thornton**



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## **1.0**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This heritage statement is regarding Fir Tree House, 24 East Street, Rochford, Essex. SS4 1DB. The statement has been prepared by John Sime & Associates on the instructions of Mr Steve Thornton.

Fir Tree House is a grade II listed building therefore any proposals which may impact upon the special architectural or historic interest of the building will be managed in relation to the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This statement assesses the impact of proposals to carry out remedial works to both the internal and external aspects of the house, and to provide structural support and strengthening to all floors and roof. Any impact is assessed in relation to the special architectural and historic development of the building. This statement is in support of a planning and listed Building consent application submitted to Rochford District Council.

In order to inform this statement a number of site visits were made during July and August 2011. During these visits physical evidence of the historic development of the building was assessed. This fieldwork was supported by available documentary sources including information supplied by APA surveying Ltd, John Sime & Associates and Mr Steve Thornton.



## 2.0 LISTING

### Listing

TQ 8790 NE

24 EAST STREET, ROCHFORD

15/200

27.7.59-GV II

FIR TREE HOUSE

*Fir Tree House. C18 or earlier is timber framed with plaster faced weather boarded returns, plastered rear wing. Red plain tiled gambrel roofs. Right and left chimney stacks to front range, central stack to rear range, moulded and dentilled eaves cornice. The house has two storeys, attics and basement. Three flat headed dormers to rear range. Three window range of tripartite small paned vertically sliding sashes excepting single first floor centre window, moulded canopies over. Right and left basement windows. Rear range of three 2-light casements. Central 3-panel 2-light door approached by steps, capitals and bases to fluted pilasters, moulded frieze, moulded and dentilled pediment. Central door to rear range.*



The 18<sup>th</sup> century property (Fig. 1, 2). is semi-detached Grade II listed Georgian residence comprising of 5 bedrooms, 3 of which have en suite bathroom, separate family bathroom and 2 bedrooms.

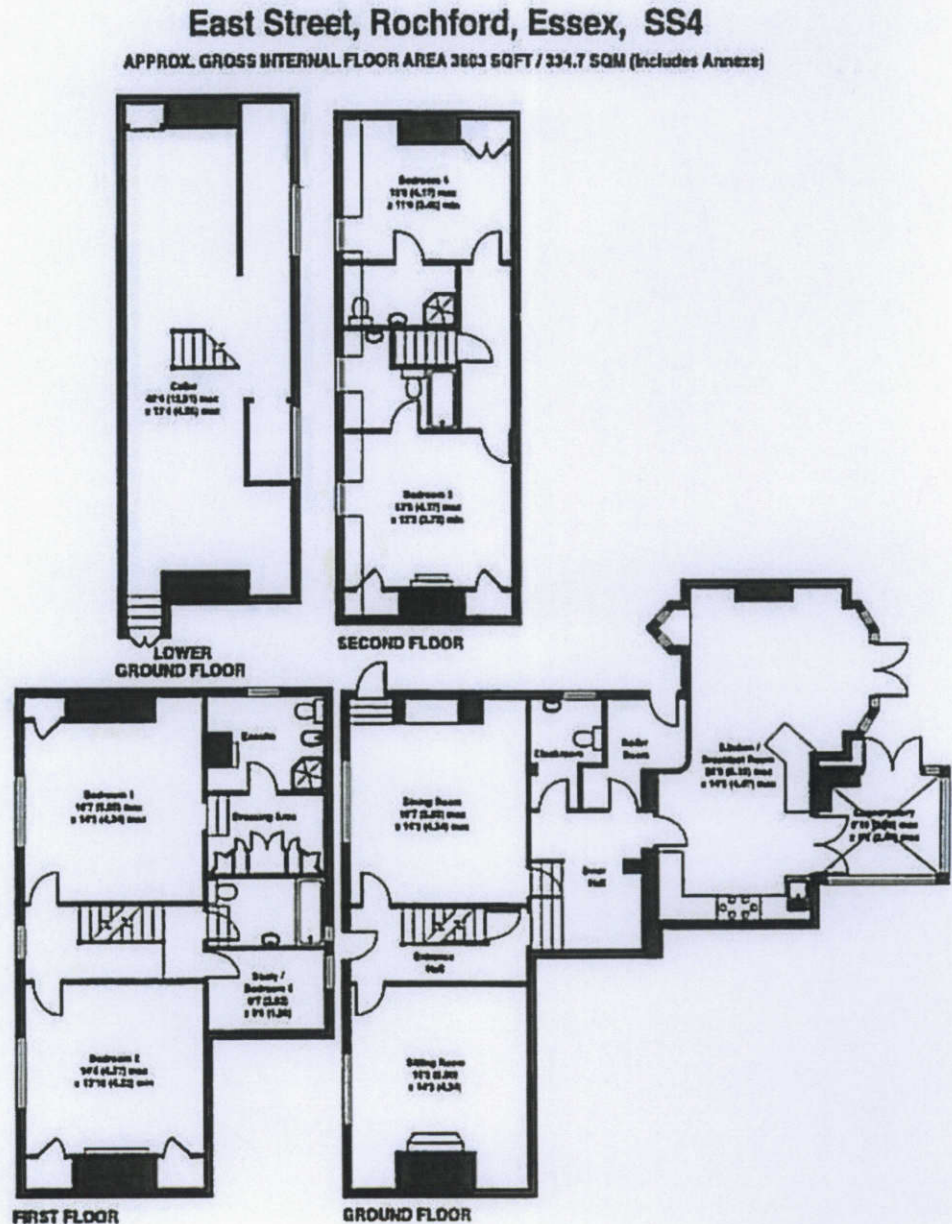


(Fig.1 &2).





The property extends over four floors (incorporating a cellar) (See Fig.3). And is on a plot of approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre with a south facing rear garden. The property has to the left side a courtyard car parking area, with a shared right of way.

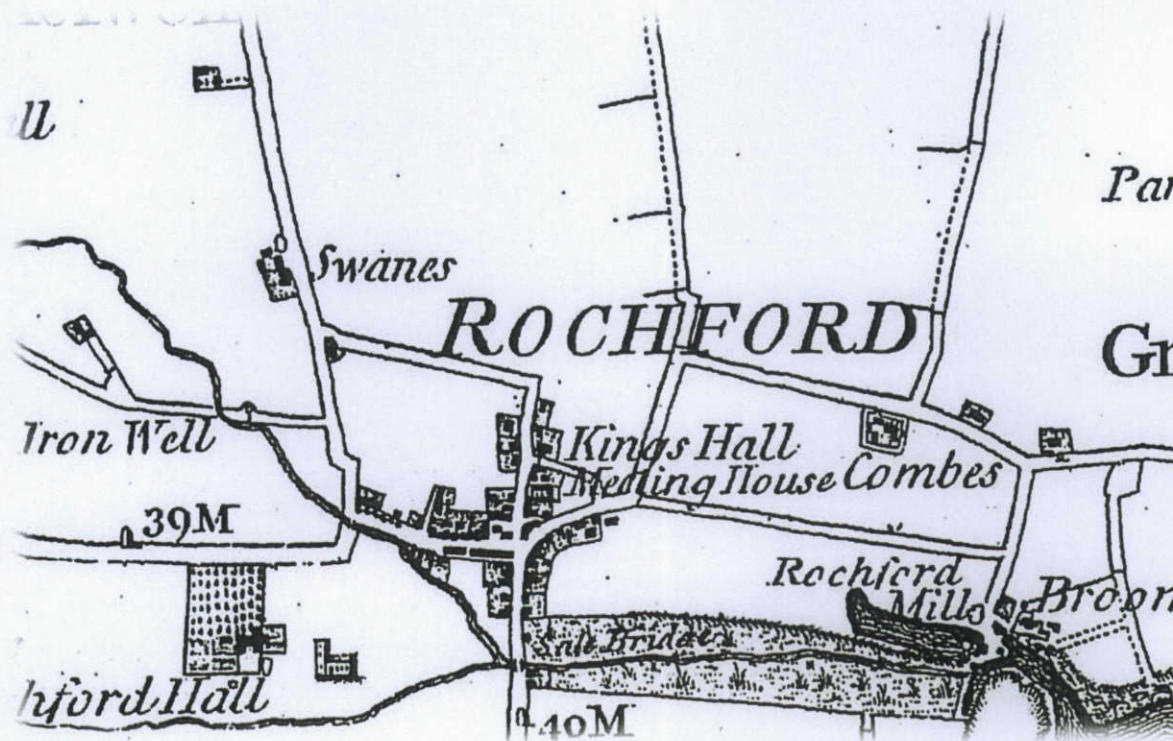


(Fig.3).

### 3.0

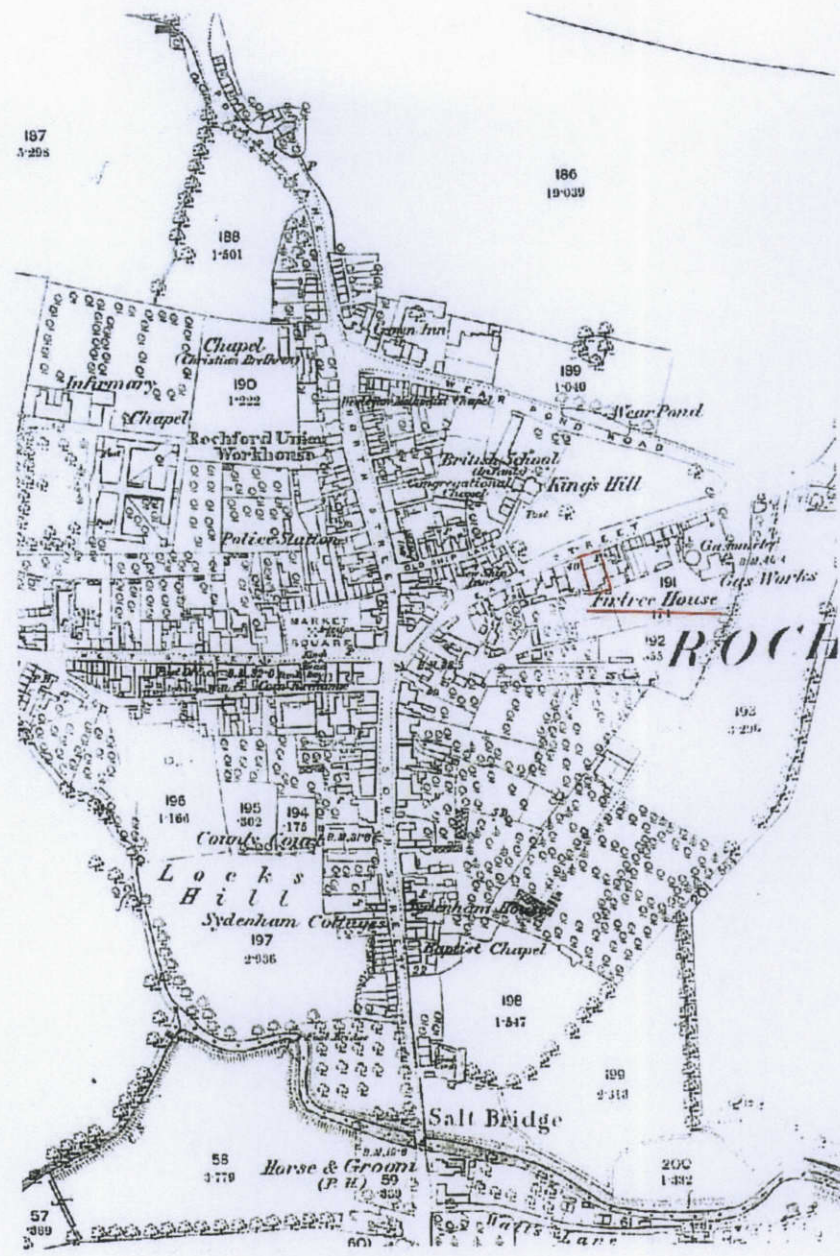
### LOCATION & SETTING

Fir Tree House is located in the centre of the old market town of Rochford. The town still preserves its original character in spite of its close proximity to Southend, and is a testament to the local and national planning system. Rochford is centred on a cross roads system that has been in place since 1257 (Fig. 4). Around the road junction, and along the main streets, there is an historic core consisting of mostly Brick and weather boarded buildings Of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance of which description, Fir Tree House most definitely falls under.



(Fig .4).





Fir Tree House is designated as being in residential use and now comes within the boundary of the current local Conservation area. The conservation areas are deemed 'Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance'. As per the aforementioned Planning act. (Fig. 6).



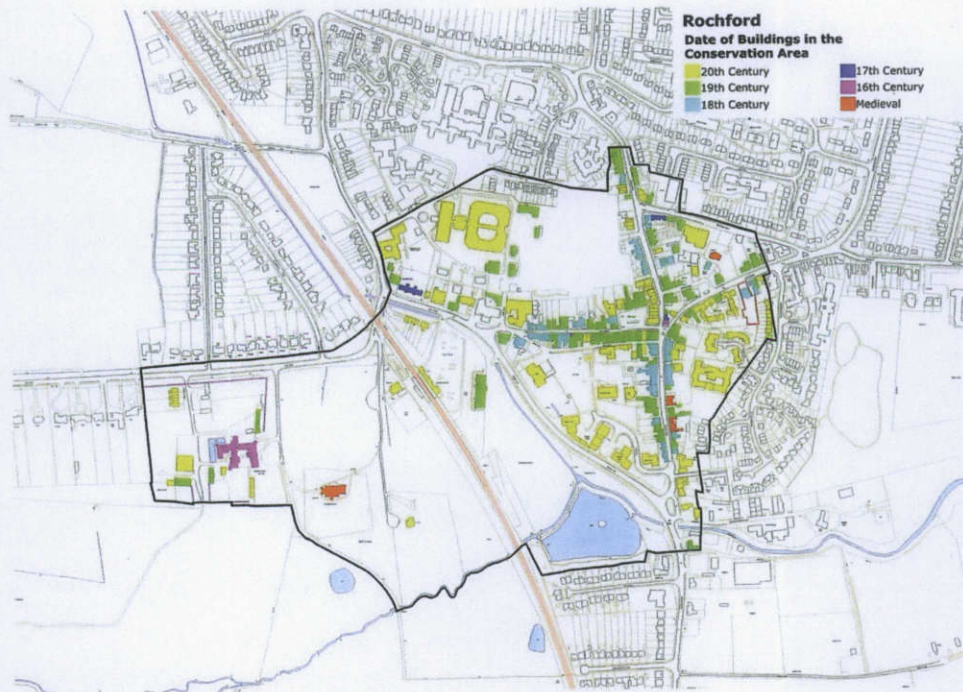


Fig. 8 Date of construction of buildings in the conservation area.

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(Fig 6 & 7).

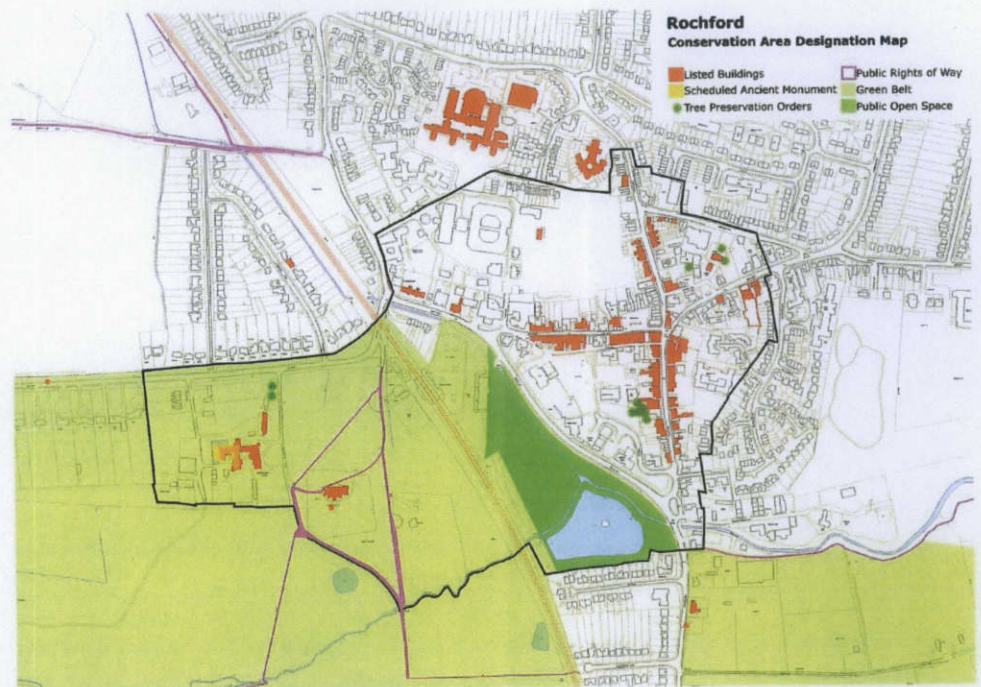


Fig. 1 Rochford town centre, map showing statutory designations within the conservation area.



There are currently seventy listed buildings within the conservation area, and Fir Tree House has the honour of being included amongst them. (Fig. 7). If I could draw your attention to (Fig 4. A map late 1800's. shows the position of the house in relation to Rochford the junction and East Street.

*East Street does not fit readily into the grid plan of the town's street pattern, being set on a diagonal to it. The street has a different look to the other main axial roads, with gaps in the frontage on the north side, modern blocks of flats on the south side, and a more spacious suburban feel at its eastern end.*

*The two most significant buildings, Kings Hill and Fir Tree House, make little contribution to the street scene, the former practically invisible within an oasis of greenery, and the latter set back from the frontage.*

*(Excerpt from Rochford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan)*

## 4.0

### EXTERNAL CHARACTERISTICS

Fir tree House is a typical example of the older type of buildings within the Rochford area. The House is timber framed with both render and weather board cladding as was common with building in South Essex and London from the 18 century. Characteristically the façade is painted white and the side's black, with black and white joinery. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, houses were improved by cladding in render, this work often confined to the front elevation, and weatherboard can be found on the sides. The latter point clearly describes Fir Tree House with its rendered front elevation and weatherboarding to the other three elevations.

Furthermore the roof is typical of the era with its Gambrel appearance, and covering of plain clay tiles. Added to which the property is afforded by sash windows with its ten over ten panes.



## 5.0

### REMEDIAL PROPOSALS AND JUSTIFICATION

The current owner is very aware that they are in effect the custodians of a building that holds significant architectural importance to the local area and are very keen to not only preserve its heritage, but to enhance it.

The current owner of Fir Tree house therefore commissioned a Building and structural Survey due to the very obvious physical appearance of numerous aspects to the building. These have highlighted specific areas that need urgent attention before the property can become habitable once again.

The owners fully realise that timber frame houses of Fir Tree House type have unique issues of which movement is definitely one. However both the independent Building and structural surveys have commented on the significant movement that has occurred which both deem to be greater than what would normally be associated with acceptable levels. This has been particularly evident in the Roof and Floor spaces. This above average movement has in turn caused cracking to the ceilings and distortion to the internal doors.

The surveys have also highlighted serious issues with the building's façade. In particular there has clearly been a lack of maintenance to the external decorative finishes. This has in turn had a knock on effect and caused detrimental damage to joinery in the windows, doors, render and featheredge boarding. Furthermore the chimney stacks have suffered both from movement and a lack of general maintenance.

The owner has also identified that the guttering, front ironwork and gate needs urgent action in order to not only make them safe, but to re-establish the aesthetic integrity of the property.

The major remedial proposals centre on the structural integrity of the building. In summary the roof and floors need to be strengthened to provide adequate tying of the structure in order to bring the building up to current standards. New timbers and fixings will need to be placed where they have previously perished due to the age of the building. Strengthening details have been designed in accordance with the existing structural mechanics of the timber framed building and will not adversely affect the building in the long term.

The ceiling to the second floor should be replaced with lathe and plaster to reinstate the ceiling to match its original construction.

For details around the structural strengthening proposals please see drawings 4550/01 & 4550/02. Which clearly illustrate and define the strengthening needed to stabilize the building and ultimately ensure the buildings long term habitability.

Moving on to the building's exterior and in particular its cosmetic appearance.



Both the building and structural surveys have highlighted that the building's exterior needs a lot of work. The current status of the exterior appears to establish a consistent trait of neglect and poor maintenance. We therefore propose to continue the buildings restoration and recommend that the following works are to be carried out in order to restore the property to the highest standards that both the current owner and the local community will be proud of.

The chimney stacks (See Fig 8, 9.) And ridge to be repointed using the tradional lime mortar to bring a uniformity of appearance and re-establish its historic appearance.



(Fig 8, 9)

The envelope structure to the building has cracking to the render at plinth level and at the corners of the windows (See Fig 10, 11.). This is to be locally repaired to ensure the front elevations vista is enhanced and improved and to ensure the buildings envelope is watertight. Redecorations to the front elevation using a like for like colour match.

(Farrow & Ball Home white)



(Fig 10, 11)



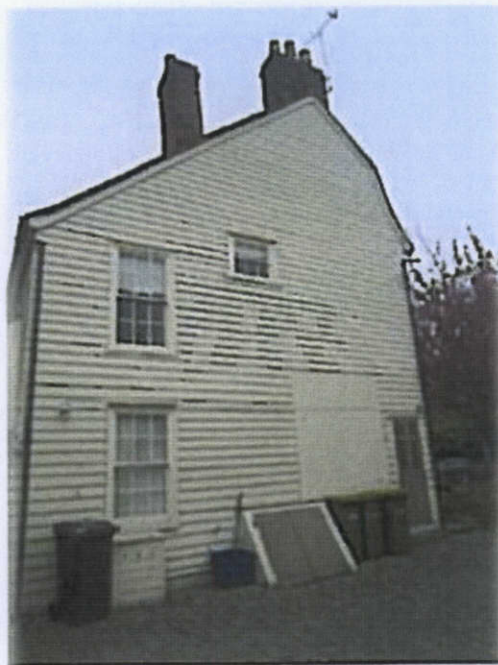
The weathering to all joinery (See Fig 12, 13.). To be repaired by stripping back to the timber sub-strata and re- decorate using a like for like colour match. (Farrow & Ball Eggshell White) (Front Door – Farrow & Ball Powder Black)



(Fig. 12, 13).

We propose that the weatherboarding to the gable ends and rear elevation (see Fig.14). are to be replaced due to the substandard decoration that is currently in place. Countered with the fact that the in-situ weatherboards are not original, and that any preservation method would seriously undermine the integrity of the timbers. The new timbers are to be decorated with a like for like colour match.

(Farrow & Ball Home white)



(Fig.14).



We propose that the existing rainwater elements (plastic OGEE guttering), that are clearly not original and broken and furthermore causing extensive water damage to the building be replaced with a far more architecturally sensitive cast iron style looking rainwater and soil system. (See Fig. 15). Manufactured by Brett Martin Plumbing and Drainage. We propose to use the 'Cascade Domestic rainwater range 112mm system' We are looking to establish a like for like colour match in classic black ensuring that it is in keeping with the heritage of the building.



(Fig.15).

Lastly the Owner would like to propose the replacement of the existing Ironwork railings and gate to the front boundary of the property (*See Fig 1*). Under close inspection large portions of the metalwork have rusted beyond repair and appear to be very dangerous, and thus would make any repairs extremely problematic and not cost effective. The owner therefore wishes to replace with exactly the same style, design and using Ironwork as the preferred material of choice. This would ensure that the architectural heritage is kept consistent, and in line with the overall appearance of the property and the local community.

Generally the condition of the premises is good however the exterior has suffered and its maintenance has not been carried out in relation to its listed building status and generally in a poor state of repair.

Many of the internal features have been retained including Doors, windows and staircase; however the ceilings do require some attention following the structural movement previously described.

The condition survey and structural survey have both been commissioned for the premises and will assist with the prioritisation of essential works ensuring the building is habitable and then a focus on the key features to be preserved. Internal decorations and features will be undertaken to the main floors and ceilings of the house.



## 6.0

### RELEVANT POLICIES

In considering any planning application for alterations to Fir Tree House, Rochford District Council will be mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15). The following section assesses the policy implications relating to the statutory historic built environment designations identified in association with the proposed alterations.

#### **PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE 15**

Planning legislation relating to the built historic environment is set out in planning (listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Guidance relating to this act is contained in Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15). The guidance accepts that change can be managed appropriately within the historic environment and **Paragraph 1.2 states that “The objective of the planning processes should be to reconcile the need for economic growth with the need to protect the historic environment.”** The alteration proposals at Fir Tree House have been designed and managed in order to minimise the impact upon the historic environment in compliance with the guidance provided in PPG15.

**Paragraph 2.12 states that “authorities are required...in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting or any features of architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”**

Careful consideration of the significance and sensitivity of the historic building have created a proposal that minimises the impact on the historic fabric, and its special architectural and historic interest.

**Paragraph 3.8 states that: “Generally the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use. For the great majority this must mean economically viable uses if they are to survive, and new, and even continuing, uses will often necessitate some degree of adaptation.”** Clearly the guidance accepts that change may be necessary to maintain the viability of the historic asset. In this respect the owners of Fir Tree House wish to commit to the significant investment required in order to undertake the sympathetic restoration and adaptation of the House to provide a historic family home which will secure its future.

**Paragraph 3.9 states “Judging the best use is one of the most important and sensitive assessments that local planning authorities and other bodies involved in conservation have to make. It requires balancing the economic viability of possible uses against the effect of any changes they entail in the special architectural and historic interest of the building or area in question. In principle the aim should be to identify the optimum viable use that is compatible with the fabric, interior, and setting of the historic building.”** It is considered that the proposals are sympathetic both in terms of impact on fabric and special architectural and historic interest of



the building. Furthermore the proposal will secure the appropriate restoration and conservation of the building and a viable long term future.

**Paragraph 3.10** states *"The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed and the continuation or reinstatement of that use should certainly be the first option when the future of the building is considered."*

The proposal ensures that the building will continue in use as a dwelling.

**Paragraph 3.15** states *"achieving a proper balance between the special interest of a listed building and proposals for alterations or extensions is demanding and should always be based on specialist expertise; but it is rarely impossible, if reasonable flexibility and imagination are shown by all parties involved. Thus a better solution may be possible if a local planning authority is prepared to apply normal development control policies flexibly."* In establishing a sympathetic proposal for the alterations proposals through consultation with the current owner and Rochford District Council we believe that a proper balance has been achieved in this application in line with this guidance.

## 7.0

### CONCLUSIONS

Fir Tree House is a Grade II Listed building and has been listed for its special architectural and historic interest. The building is currently uninhabited and in need of significant repair and restoration work.

The proposals set out in this application represent a genuine opportunity for a significant investment in a high quality restoration and alteration of Fir Tree House which will secure a viable future for the building as a family home. Considerable care and effort has gone into the evaluation process through consultation with structural and building surveyors and conservation officers from the local authority.

As a result the proposal made by the applicant reduces the level of change to the more significant elements of the building. For the reasons set out in this statement it is considered that the alterations and other interventions associated with the proposal will not have a detrimental impact upon the special architectural and historical interest of the listed building and will preserve and enhance its character.

It is therefore considered that the proposals comply with local and national policies regarding listed building heritage. Furthermore the proposals will specifically secure the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of the building without adversely affecting its architectural or historic character.



