

Design Statement to support a planning submission for

THE OLD FORGE, Upper Woodford

The Old Forge is a notable building of character, visible on the side of the Woodford Road and having long been derelict and falling into disrepair.

The proposal looks to convert the building for domestic use whilst retaining its specific character and charm as part of the local setting. This will be done by using as much of the original building as physically possible, preserving features and fitting a layout into the building to suit the space, its existing openings and the building's style. The building will be entirely converted, making best use of all the existing floorspace and footprint.

The current lean-to off the east (rear) side of the building would be replaced with a newly constructed building that would replicate the appearance of the original timber clad shed space. Set 3 steps down to maximise headroom and avoid raising the roof too high, the new lean-to would have a single rooflight within the corrugated sheet metal roof structure, and all the walls would be clad with timber boards, to echo the original construction. The lean-to would have sanitary provision for the property with a shower, WC and basin.

The existing pitched roof storage extension on the north side of the building would be retained as a space with an open, vaulted roof and act as a vital 'lobby' entry point to the property. Its existing external double doors would be transformed to serve as a bi-fold doorset as external security shutters when closed. A new timber framed doorset with side glazing and a single 'front' door would sit back in under the existing roof, making a covered space by the door without any additional roofing needed.

From this lobby two new openings through the walls would connect to the WC/shower room on the east side, and the main section of the building on the south.

The interior of the Old Forge is a large, single volume space with high steeply pitched roof. The space divides naturally on the line of the single king post truss which lies at the half point in the room. An existing chimney stack serving the old forge would serve a new woodburning stove and fireplace within the sitting/snug area to the south end of the space.

The large roof space lends itself to provide one gallery, with the existing truss already containing plastered infill panels to the two bottom sections below the raking struts that, supplemented by glazed panels would provide good protection from falling.

The northern half of the forge space is given over to kitchen and dining provision using the existing window on the north side and forming new windows in the location of the existing double doors. These would be created with lower section in timber panelling, creating a timber infill below the window cill to emulate the original doors that existed – to the casual passer-by the infill would passably seem like doors without a more diligent review.

The east wall is in poor condition having been covered in ivy for an extended period of time. Here, with the formation of a new window opening and widening the existing doorway to form a set of double doors from the dining space, the wall is likely to need rebuilding from the line of the plinth. For this reason, the wall above plinth would be timber clad in horizontal boarding, contrasting to the vertically boarded lean-to.

The sleeping gallery would be formed with a new independently framed structure – timber posts which sit spaced off the wall supporting a lattice of beams to take a floor for a sleeping gallery. The ceiling over the kitchen and dining area would sit at 2.2m off finished floor level but giving over to a double height volume in the southern end of the room.

The attic would be lit by a pair of Velux ‘balcony’ windows that would sit in line with the roof profile and be of minimal disruption to the wider setting when closed, allowing views of the river from the bed.



When open, the ‘balcony’ will maximise the benefit of exceptional views up and down the river on an elevation that is remarkably private, not seen easily from any public viewpoint. Glimpses of it from the fields across the river can only be seen through a thick hedgerow, and arguably, with the exception of the houses some distance away, the east elevation would be rarely seen.

Few new openings would be created in the building and those that have been, are small and suitable for a cob construction. The gable windows at both north and south ends of the building would be reinstated with new windows.

The existing fabric is proposed to be retained wherever possible. The floor internally would be lowered to allow the installation of a limecrete floor with glapor sub-base to give good moisture attenuation beneath the building and help the cob construction to ‘breathe’ at the foot of the building. The expectation is that the cob walls would require some stabilisation work and perhaps underpinning in places, but once stable would be repaired and then internally lined with lime plaster. In places, where the cob remains in good condition it could remain visible without plastering although this would have to be judged during the construction works themselves and where suitable, such as the full height south wall in the sitting room area.

A small timber deck would be formed on the east side – enough to have a table and chair to sit out and enjoy the river view and watch the kingfisher and other wildlife, as the sun sets.

In summary, the conversion proposal is designed to be a simple layout, that makes best use of the existing spaces, reusing features such as the chimney and retaining the existing appearance from the road, giving something remarkably similar visually to the existing building.

Materials:

- **Roof coverings** will reinstate single roll roman clay pantiles, with the exception of the lean-to that will have a corrugated metal roof.
- The **external walls** will remain in cob with brick quoins and plinth with some areas of flint. There is expectation that a large section of the the east elevation is past repair, and this will contain new openings giving onto the river. This section of wall would be rebuilt in timber framed construction with timber horizontal boarding to contrast the lean-to, with vertical timber boards. All timber cladding would be larch, or spruce, left to weather down naturally.
- **Windows and doors** would be Accoya timber, with double glazing units, painted to a colour of client's choice - to be determined. (note that the door colour shown on the illustrations is indicative).
- **Rainwater goods** would be replaced in matching grey plastic.