

Little Lea Farmhouse, Reading

Site address

Little Lea Farmhouse
Reading International Business Park
Basingstoke Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 6DA

Description of the Building

Little Lea Farmhouse is a cottage dating from the early 17th century. It is two storeys in height and mostly of timber framed construction. External walls are partly rendered and painted, partly of fair faced brickwork and partly of brickwork infill panels between the original timber frames. Roofs are pitched and covered with plain clay tiles.

Internally the upper floor is of timber construction accessed by a central timber winding staircase, and the ground floor is of solid construction. Walls and ceilings are plastered and painted and floors covered with carpet tiles.

The farmhouse is situated in low –lying land at the loop road roundabout immediately to the north of the new office buildings. A drainage ditch/ stream crosses the site close to the farmhouse before flowing westwards into the adjoining property. A paved footpath adjoins the perimeter of the building and extends at the front entrance to join the connecting footpath. The site is landscaped and largely laid to grass.

Prior to the development of the Reading International Business Park in 1999 the farmhouse was in a dilapidated and dangerous state of repair. Planning permission for the development of the business park was given on condition that the farmhouse be renovated and restored in a manner consistent with its historic status. Consequently it received a major programme of repairs including the installation of mini-piled raft underpinning, a new solid ground floor, renovations to the superstructure including the tying of walls to the roof and upper floor, strengthening of floors with steelwork, the provision of damp proof courses in walls and a damp proof membrane to the ground floor slab, repairs to walls, replacement of the roof covering, new finishes and decorations and a complete upgrade of services.

The farmhouse is fitted out as offices and include male, female and disabled toilets and a kitchenette, but it is used only for the storage of documents.

Listed Building

The building is on the statutory list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest maintained by the Historic England. It is listed Grade 2 under the title 'Little Lea Cottage'. The listing text reads: "Early 17th century, 2 storeys, ground floor stucco with buttresses, Timber framed with brick nogging (stucco to south). Gable to left, 3 ranges of leaded 3 light casements (early 19th century on 1st floor to right). Projecting lean-to porch off-centre left. Tiled roof. External chimney to right hand gable end. Interior has inglenook fireplace to ground floor west room."

The listing was made in March 1957 and the listing text is the same date. There have been subsequent alterations in a few details.

A listed building may not be demolished, extended or altered without listed building consent from the local authority. All repairs must be carried out sympathetically and any repairs likely to affect the character of the building are included in the requirement to obtain listed building consent.

Current Building Condition

The schedule gives a brief explanation of the defects and recommended remedial works.

A summary of the principal defects is given here.

The building suffers from dampness, both from below and above. The front wall around the entrance door shows peeling paint on the outside and detached plaster and blistered paint on door reveals internally. Damp meter readings confirm high levels of moisture in the wall. The dampness is not confined to the entrance door, but shows elsewhere at low level externally along the front wall and at the south elevation buttress.

The low lying location and the known presence of a below ground drain across the site contribute to high moisture levels in the ground. The insertion of a chemical damp proof course in the refurbishment works has not proved adequate to prevent ground water rising into walls. A new damp proof course is required but it would also be advantageous to lower ground levels externally as a first measure. The perimeter paving is at ground floor level which allows no leeway to prevent splashback from falling rain.

The north wall also suffers from penetrating dampness, evidenced by blistered paint and detached plaster in the open plan area and ladies toilet and confirmed by damp meter.

The most likely cause is the offsets in the rendered wall externally, beneath the first floor timber frame and at the chimney breast. They are not weather protected and allow rainwater to soak into the rendering. Flashings should be provided to shed water.

However ensuring that no water enters the wall will not be easy to achieve and if the internal walls are to be free of dampness internal dry lining should be provided. The schedule makes an allowance for this.

What remains of very old brickwork continues to deteriorate. Patches have been replaced and some bricks have been re-faced with rendering, but spalling, whereby the outer face is removed leaving a crumbly interior continues. They are probably poor quality original bricks, but the defect is exacerbated by the use of hard impermeable cement based mortar which traps water and forces it to escape through the bricks which are evidently not frost resistant. Replacement bricks should be bedded in permeable lime mortar.

The front window to the reception area is rotten beyond repair and requires replacement.

Paint on woodwork is in poor condition and external redecorations are required.

There are isolated slipped and missing tiles on the roof and the front verge has slipped downwards dislodging the eaves gutter. Repairs are required but the roof otherwise remains in good condition.

The external works are largely concerned with the prevention of water entering the building and should be carried out as soon as possible. Internal works are more cosmetic and could be left to the end of the lease with the exception of strengthening the stairs which has a safety implication.

Schedule of proposed works:

External works:

Fabric

Roof Works

Isolated patch repairs		item
	1.00	
Rain water goods - clear out and re fix all areas		item
	1.00	
Fill hole at ridge to prevent birds, bats and insects entering roof void		item
	1.00	

Joinery

Splice upper windows where required		no
	6.00	
Supply and fit new softwood windows to ground floor		m2
	5.00	
Splice structural frame		LnM
	2.00	
Specialist treatment to rotten frame		lm
	10.00	

Rendering

Insert lead flashing beneath first floor level timber beam to weather protect rendering		item
	1.00	
Grind out and repair cracking		m2
	25.00	
Hack off and repair failed render		m2
	26.00	

Brickwork

Rake out and repoint all external brick areas (excluding chimneys)		item
	1.00	
Replace spalled bricks		no
	20.00	

Decorations

Repaint all rendered areas		item
	1.00	
Prep and repaint exposed structural timbers		item
	1.00	
Paint exterior of external windows		no
	11.00	
Paint exterior of external doors		no
	4.00	

Groundworks

Dig out ground and provide 100mm base layer		item
	1.00	
50mm cement bound sharp sand and flags.		m2
	25.00	
Dig out grassed bank and lay 15 no 1m2 landing steps to front of farmhouse. Flag spec as patio.		m2
	20.00	
Dig footings and construct 30 LM of retaining paving slab walls		item
	1.00	
GRP contrasting nosings		no
	15.00	

Internal Works:

Strip out

	-	
Partitions - Stud - Main Area		item
	1.00	
Flooring - All carpet areas		m2
	120.00	
Tiles - North facing wall to GF toilets		m2
	6.00	
Sand and cement plastering - patch rip out		m2
	15.00	

Partitions

-

Making good	10.00	m2
Plastering	-	
Bond out and skim North wall	12.00	m2
Misc repairs to other walls	26.00	m2
Joinery		
Doors & Frames (1/2 hour rated)		
Single (inc vision panel) - Main area	1.00	no
Single (inc vision panel) - Main area	1.00	no
Single (inc vision panel) - Main area	1.00	no
Single (inc vision panel) - North exit	1.00	no
Single (inc vision panel) - Patio exit	1.00	no
Ironmongery - Internal	8.00	no
Ironmongery - External	3.00	no
Strengthen staircase with additional timber in below-stairs cupboard.	1.00	item
Decorations		
Walls - emulsion - Main areas (2 coats)	260.00	m2
Walls - emulsion - Toilets (2 coats)	98.00	m2
Walls - emulsion - Kitchen (2 coats)	20.00	m2
Ceilings - emulsion - all ground floor areas (2 coats)	180.00	m2
Architraves - gloss - Main areas	25.00	lm
Architraves - gloss - Toilet	15.00	lm
Architraves - gloss - Kitchen	5.00	lm
Door frames - gloss		lm

	50.00	
Window boards - gloss		lm
	5.00	
Bulkhead - emulsion - Main area		lm
	6.00	
Bulkhead - emulsion - Toilet		lm
	3.00	
Windows - gloss		lm
	5.00	
Doors - gloss		no
	11.00	
Floor coverings		
Screed		m2
	120.00	
Carpet - Interface Contemplation Range		m2
	120.00	
Electrical	-	
Strip out & Make safe all areas		
isolate and remove old light fittings		no
	1.00	
isolate and remove old switches and sockets		no
	1.00	
Small power		
Double Sockets		no
	6.00	
switched fused spurs		no
	4.00	
Data cabling to 2 TVs from BT incomer		no
	2.00	
Supply and install 3 x wall mounted PIRs for WCs		no
	3.00	
Socket for arcade machine – floor box in above 1st floor room		item
	1.00	
Lighting		
Supply and install new LED wall lights		no
	9.00	
Supply and install new LED wall lights - emergency		no
	4.00	
Supply and install new emergency lighting to overhead		no

exit doors	2.00	
Supply and install illuminated running men over fire escape doors	3.00	no
Replace all ceiling spot lights with new LED spots – 4 x normal D/L size, 3 x large D/L size	7.00	no

Containment

Surface run metal trunking	10.00	lm
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Fire Alarm

Excluded

Misc items

Supply & fit new hand driers - Air Vent type	3.00	no
Run data cable from BT box to TV point	1.00	item
Aerial for 2 x TVs including cabling and aerial on roof/external walls	1.00	item

Misc -

Cut out spalled bricks from fireplace	15.00	no
Form new channels for floor box	1.00	item
Rake out and repoint internal chimney breast	1.00	item

Internal venetian blinds 5.00 no

Plumbing -

New sink to staff kitchen 1.00 item

Kitchen -

Supply and install new worktop to existing units 1.00 item

Condition Photographs



1. General view: Front elevation



2. General view: Front and north elevations



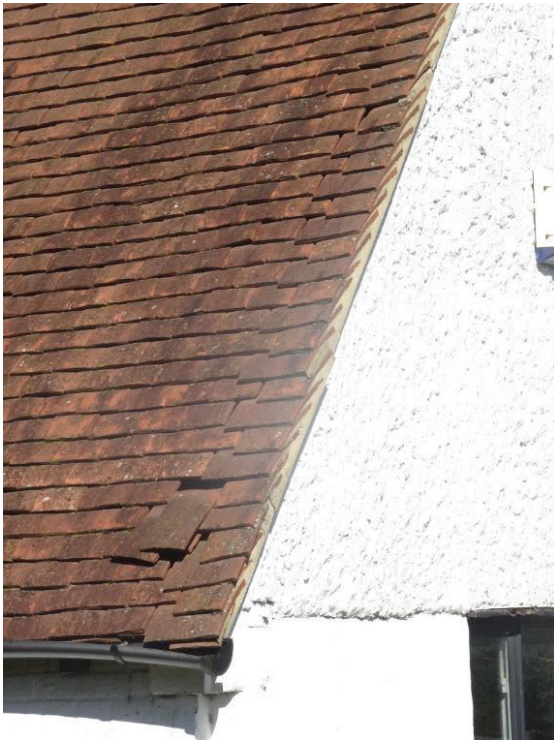
3. General view: North and rear elevations and Reading International Business Park.



4. General view: Rear and south elevations.



5. External paintwork in poor condition with bare wood exposed.



6. South elevation: slipped verge tiles



7. Slipped verge tiles and dropped gutter.



8. South elevation: Damp affected paint and detached rendering on buttress.



9. Front elevation: Detached gutter at north end.



10. Front elevation: Dampness in wall at ground level.



11. Front elevation: Horizontal crack with moss growth on buttress.



12. Front elevation: Reception room window rotten



13. Front elevation: Reception room window rotten



14. Front elevation: Timber frame degraded and crumbling.



15. North elevation: Rendering cracked, hollow and detached in patches.



16. North elevation: Hole at ridge.



17. North elevation: Cracks in brickwork joints and through brick



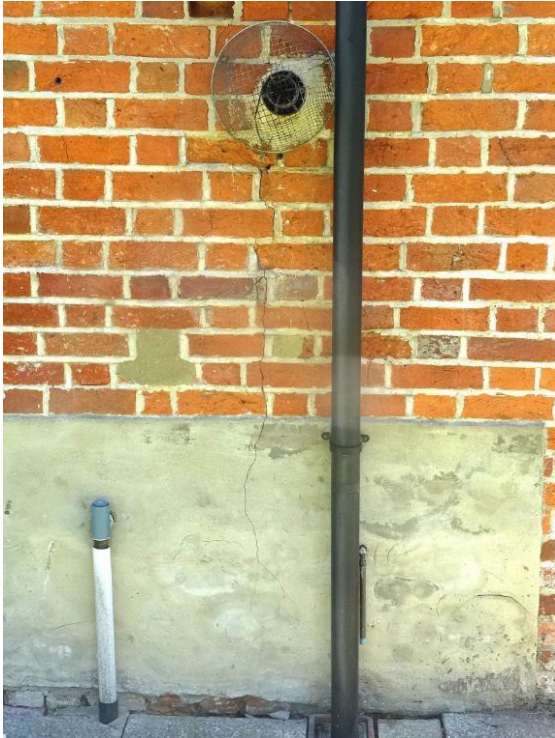
18. Rear elevation: Slipped and missing roof tiles.



19. Rear elevation: Open joints in brickwork in timber framed panels.



20. Rear elevation: Vertical cracks at window apron.



21. Rear elevation: Vertical crack beneath boiler flue.



22. Rear elevation: Diagonal crack at south west corner.



23. Rear elevation: Spalled bricks. Spalling exacerbated by the use of impermeable hard cement mortar, also cracked and detached.



24. Rear elevation: Spalled bricks and patch of recently replaced bricks.



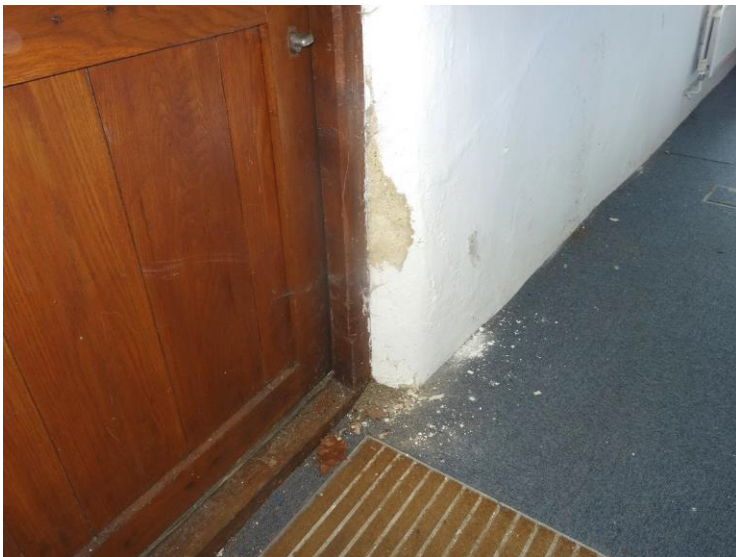
25. Rear elevation: Facing of rendering on spalled bricks.



26. Reception room: Spalled bricks in fireplace.



27. Open Plan Area: Spalled bricks in fireplace.



28. Open Plan Area: Detached plaster and dampness at front entrance door.



29. Open Plan Area: Detached plaster and dampness at front entrance door.



30. Open Plan Area: Detached surface plaster, cracked paint film and dampness on north wall.



31. Ladies Toilet: Dampness and detached plaster and paint. Hollow wall tiles.



32. Staircase: Splits in timber and treads deflected.