



# Case Study: From corn merchants to family home

**2**8 High Street, formerly home to the Adams family and corn merchants for over 100 years, has been restored back to a family home, with a contemporary twist.

## THE BRIEF

The client bought an office in the busy market town of Hungerford and wanted to restore it back to a family home. The building was formerly a house and corn merchants until the 1950's when a solicitor's office moved in. The building was altered and extended in the 1980's, when it also became Grade II listed.

The brief for the conversion focused on reimagining the rear extension and opening up the interiors. The goal was to return the heavily altered building back into a traditional home, in both look and feel.

This project came with a number of challenges, but huge potential to create

a charming home. The building was a muddle of rooms and levels, all of which had deteriorating décor, and none of which did justice to a historical building in such a prominent position on the High Street.

In the client's words: "When we took on the building the project appeared very daunting. Converting a rabbit warren of solicitors' offices with no central heating, 4 loos and 4 sinks seemed utter madness. But at the outset we quickly saw the potential and explained our vision and desire to create a beautiful family home to the designer."

## THE TRANSFORMATION

Our design work often seeks to recreate the sense of openness and lightness of traditional proportions, with spaces that can easily cope with the demands of modern family life. In this case, we created double door openings through the library and formal sitting room in the front of the house to the new extension at the rear, creating a seamless flow between the old and new. Similarly, the hallway was

opened up to create a lovely formal space, again leading through the house to the new extension.

Elsewhere in the building, the entrance hall was quite closed and gloomy, and included a modern staircase addition. Our designs created a double height area with a gallery staircase, bringing the same sense of space to the front of the house. The local authority agreed that reimagining this space would not harm the historic fabric of the house, and the result is a grander entrance that adds a new character to the original house.

The biggest transformation was the rear extension. The 80's addition was removed and replaced with a full width, glazed, open plan structure. Now built, the simplified space and light created by the full height glass lets us see and appreciate the rear elevation of the original house in a new way.

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The new rear extension, incorporated into existing modern additions, has created a fantastic open-plan space for modern family life and entertaining



Turning the entrance into a double height space would not harm any historic fabric of the building, and the result is a characterful, light-filled welcome into the home

**THE PLANNING JOURNEY**

We made an application for planning permission and listed building consent in October 2015, supported by a Planning Statement which incorporated the mandatory Design and Access Statement as well as a Heritage Statement. Over the course of the application, we met with West Berkshire Council's Conservation Officer at the house, and discussed the proposals.

We were able to satisfy the Conservation Officer that the layout and structure of the original core building was respected by our proposal, which largely affected parts of the building that were not original. All other technical consultees (Highways, Waste Management, Hungerford Town Council, and others) raised no objections to the scheme.

The Conservation Officer in particular noted: "A welcome addition to the proposals is the replacement, where necessary in terms of the front elevation, of modern windows with traditional timber sashes, which is particularly important in terms of improving the frontage character and appearance of the building."

Following the grant of planning permission and listed building consent, some minor changes were needed to the design. In particular, what had previously been approved as sliding doors were now proposed as bi-fold doors and, amongst other changes, an application for these material amendments was made in early 2016.

Following planning approval, we produced the technical design drawings to discharge any planning conditions and for building regulations approval in 2016. The client undertook the works on site with a local builder, and have achieved a high-quality result and a wonderful family home.

**ABOUT US**

Fowler Architecture & Planning are a family-run practice of Chartered Architects and Chartered Town Planners, based in Wiltshire. Fowlers has over 35 years of experience working with Listed Buildings across the South of England and beyond. We have an in depth understanding of the sensitivities surrounding working with historic properties, but we are not afraid to be ambitious when creating wonderful places to live. 🏡

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Top: The house boasts a prime spot on the High Street, so our challenge was to make interior equally charming whilst bringing it into the 21st century.

Before: The old office spaces were described by our clients as "a rabbit warren"



(Before & After of the rear extension) Perhaps counter-intuitively, contemporary structures can often create something that is altogether more congruous than more traditional structures, which run the risk of looking hotchpotch.

