

LOCAL REVIEW BODY

27 January 2022

Application No: 21/00879/P

**Pressmennan Lake House, Stenton,  
EH42 1TF**

Applicant's Supporting Information  
Part 2



# CONSERVATION STATEMENT

Pressmannan Lake House & Grounds

WT Architecture

July 2021





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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Property Details:

Pressmennan Lake House  
Stenton  
East Lothian  
EH42 1TF

OS map reference NT 62960 73403

The property is wholly in the private ownership of the Client/Applicant

### 1.2 Background Information:

This private house, sitting within its own grounds, is about 150 years old. Its grounds extend down to and include Pressmennan Lake, which has popular public walks along its southern shore. The house was originally the farm house for the adjacent Pressmennan Farm steading, but the farm and house have been in separate ownership since the mid twentieth century.

This Conservation Statement Report is an initial assessment of the significance of the listed building, its interiors and its setting, and to establish the parameters for any potential alterations to the building and its setting. These parameters will then inform any proposals for change and addition in the curtilage of the house.

### 1.3 Research Methodology:

This conservation statement was prepared following the guidelines set out by the Prince's Regeneration Trust:

- A concise history of the building, including major changes over time.
- Which characteristics of the building and site are of significance and why.
- The current condition of the building.
- What changes to the building would be acceptable.
- What action is needed to keep the building in good condition / preserve that setting.

Historical research has been limited to a review of extant published work, combined with a critical review of the evidence that can be seen "on the ground". The National Library for Scotland contains detailed historical maps of the area within their Map Room, details of which can also be found on their website. Some sections of old maps have been included within this report.

To date no formal discussions have been held as yet with officials of East Lothian Council Planning department.

### 1.4 Summary:

Pressmennan Lake House is an elegant Victorian lodge, built to overlook the artificial Pressmennan Lake which sits down a steep slope from the house. This appraisal examines the capacity of the house and its setting for change.





## 2.0 HISTORY & CONTEXT

### 2.1 Statutory Designations:

Pressmennan Farmhouse with Terrace Walls and Gatepiers, Category B listed (LB14801)

### 2.2 Non-Statutory Designations:

None

### 2.3 Description of the Site and Building:

Circa 1870. 2-storey gabled farmhouse, with 1st floor breaking eaves. Roughly squared red sandstone rubble with grey ashlar dressings, base and band courses. Chamfered reveals. Stone mullions.

N ELEVATION: 4-bay, asymmetrical. bipartite stair window off-centre to right, under eaves, with small window at ground, narrow gabled bay to left with windows to each floor, flanked to outer left by wider and taller gabled bay with porch adjoined at right and 2 varied 1st floor windows; gabled timber porch with decorative details; geometric tiles to floor; 2-leaf door with decorative fittings. Outer bay to right gabled, with bipartite at ground and 1st floor window.

W ELEVATION: 2 gabled service buildings projecting at ground, adjoined at W. Service court enclosed by ashlar coped walls to W.

E ELEVATION: gabled bay to left, bipartites at ground; 1st floor windows, that to right breaking eaves in gabled dormerhead. 6-pane glazing pattern to sash and case window; timber eaves brackets and plain barge boards. Grey ashlar stacks with moulded coping.

TERRACE WALLS: red rubble walls with grey ashlar coping to terrace on falling ground to S and E.

GATEPIERS: pair of red sandstone ashlar drum piers with hemispherical caps.

### Statement of Special Interest

Sited to N of Pressmennan Lake which was constructed circa 1819, with backdrop of evergreen plantation. The gabled form of the house, with low service wing and enclosed court to one side, is similar to that of Ninewar, Dunbar Parish, listed separately, though with different details, and to Drumcherry, Montrose Road, Auchterarder Burgh; the latter was by Alexander MacGregor and it is possibly that Pressmennan Farmhouse and Ninewar were also by him.

(Source: Historic Environment Scotland Data web site for listed buildings)

The description above should be updated to note significant alteration to the west service wing, and western terrace and addition of a substantial new west wing of accommodation in the early 21st century.

In addition to the features noted in the Listing the house contains some interior features of interest: Timber panelled eastern reception room with bay window to south, panelled doors and architraves, localised original fireplaces, cantilevered stone main staircase with cast iron balusters. These are described in more detail below.



Aerial Photographs of Pressmennan House, walled garden, woodland garden and ponds  
*Canmore, RCAHMS Aerial Photography, 2003*



## 2.4 History of the Site and Building

### Location

Pressmennan woodland is recorded on Roy's map of c.1750, and it is thought that oak from Pressmennan may have been amongst the wood used to build The Great Michael at Newhaven in the 15th C. although definitive records do not exist. Pressmennan Lake is a reservoir which was formed in 1819 with the damming of the gully through the woods, much of the water filling the lake coming from fresh water springs within the gully.

### House

The house is likely to have largely been constructed in the early 1800's, with a house shown on the site by 1825 when Greenwood's Haddington map shows the layout of the grounds close to how they are today, with a walled inner garden and a boathouse on the lake. This timing may be similar to that of the construction of the adjacent Pressmennan Farm Steading (C-listed, Ref LB14802). The footprint of the house on the 1853 OS map differs from today and it may be that remodelling in the later 1800's led to the form largely surviving today. The listing notes a construction date of around 1870, and indeed an apparent change in footprint shown on the map by 1895 may support this. Additionally the gabled style is more typical of the late 1800's. It is likely the house was remodelled rather than rebuilt entirely as the footprint of the house is largely consistent. The late 1800s also saw changes to the layout of the garden with a new driveway loop created to the NE corner of the grounds. This route became the only access drive in the late 1900's, possibly when the farm and house ownerships separated.

The house was listed in 1990. The special interest note is curious, speculating that the architect for Pressmennan was Alexander MacGregor given similarities to two other buildings, which in themselves are not definitively by MacGregor, Ninewar in Dunbar credited to David Bryce in its listing.

There have been significant alterations to the western end of the house in the last ten years (2012), with the construction of a substantial stone faced extension incorporating kitchen, utility and three bedrooms (11/00339/P & 12/00403/P). A further free standing outbuilding to the west of the house apparently dates from the later part of the 20th century. The 2011 and 2012 permissions secured consent for creating a substantial garage building on the site of this outbuilding to the west of the main house, which was then revised and freshly consented again in 2016. (16/00650/P & 16/00082/LBC).



Greenwood 1825



Ordnance Survey 1853



Ordnance Survey 1895



Circa. 1880



## Garden

The walled garden enclosure largely dates from the early 1800's, although it was reduced in size in the late 1800's when the new access drive was built. The northern side of the wall is built in brick whereas the rest of the wall is in stone.

The upper terrace in front of the house itself was until the last ten years, only partly paved when paving from the lower garden pond area seems to have been robbed to this area to create a fully paved terrace. This terrace and its surrounding walls were extended west during the 2012 extension work and permission was secured to extend it further as part of the garage permission in 2016, although this was only partly carried out.

Maps indicate that the southern-most enclosure may have been an orchard in the nineteenth century. In the late 1900's this area was extensively re-landscaped to create a series of concrete-brick edged ponds and water chutes. These ponds and surrounding pathways are now derelict and not holding water.

A raking track to the boathouse was created around the time of the formation of the lake. This track remains passable for four-wheel-drive vehicles. From the boathouse a private footpath continues to the eastern lake dam. Paths along the shore of the lake, shown on maps from the 1850's to 1905 have become heavily overgrown with trees and neither identifiable nor passable. Photos from the 1960's show that the northern banks were largely free of trees then, and it is apparent that many of the trees between the house and the lake are fast growing pioneer species such as ash and birch. Along the shore itself more mature trees survive.

The boathouse, which is not mentioned in the listing, is made of stone with a slate roof. Planning Permission to build a new slipway and jetty around the boathouse was secured in 2011.

To the south side of the lake Pressmennan Wood was acquired by the Forestry Commission in 1955, when they clear felled the whole wood, including a number of mature oaks, to plant commercial species. The woodland Trust acquired the wood in 1988 and have been thinning the commercial species and replacing with native species. Walking routes on this southern side of the lake are promoted and popular. The whole lake and shore on both sides is in the ownership of the Applicant, and the public paths do not cross the private ground.

## 2.5 Condition of the Site and Buildings

### House

The house itself is in good condition, and immediate environs reasonably well tended. However, rounds of upgrading and change, the dates of which it is hard to be sure of, have changed and removed some of the building's interior fabric.

### Walled Garden

*The lower walled enclosure of the garden where a series of ponds are located is in very poor condition, neglected and ostensibly derelict. The garden walls are intact to the east and south. Walls marked on 19th century maps around the SE lawn have now tumbled down. The north site boundary wall is in poor condition and will need to be repaired and repointed.*

### Woodland Garden

*The enclosed woodland to the south of the house that leads down to the lake is in need of some woodland management, with dead and weak trees attended to, and localised thinning. The upper pathway that follows the contour here is in need of clearance and maintenance. The track to the boathouse is also in need of clearance and maintenance. The boathouse itself is structurally sound but in need of some roofing maintenance.*

## 2.6 Setting

*While the walks along the southern side of Pressmennan Lake are popular the house itself is fairly secluded and can only be glimpsed through the trees during winter. The trees themselves contribute to the delight of the wooded valley around the lake.*

## 2.7 Archeology

*There is little evidence of occupation of the Pressmennan house site before 1800, and there is no evidence that finding older archaeological remains on site will be likely. Canmore note prehistoric Pit Alignment in the fields to the NE of Pressmennan.*

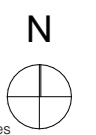
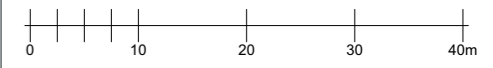
## 2.8 Social and Community Value

*Pressmennan Lake itself has a significant community value, and has been the subject of much discussion with regard to public access to a circular walk around the Lake. Irrespective of ownership, its value as a place of leisure for locals and others coming from the wider area, is high. Any impact of any proposals within the curtilage of the Lake must be carefully considered. The house itself is significant in its connection with Pressmennan farm, which was a classic successful East Lothian arable farm, and one of the last in the region to use horse-drawn machinery.*





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 To be read in conjunction with all other associated drawings, specifications and schedules. Immediately report any discrepancies, errors or omissions to the Architect/CA. If in doubt ASK.



- - - - - Ownership Boundary Lines
- - - - - Application Site Boundary Lines

Rev	Date	Stage	Changes
A	01/07/2021	Planning Submission	

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Site plan zoning diagram - nts

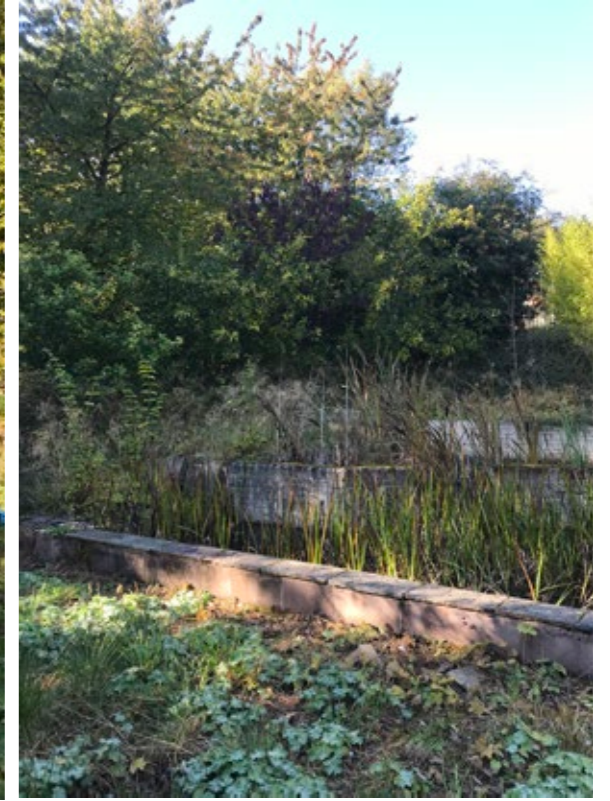


*Walled Garden*





Derelict Ponds

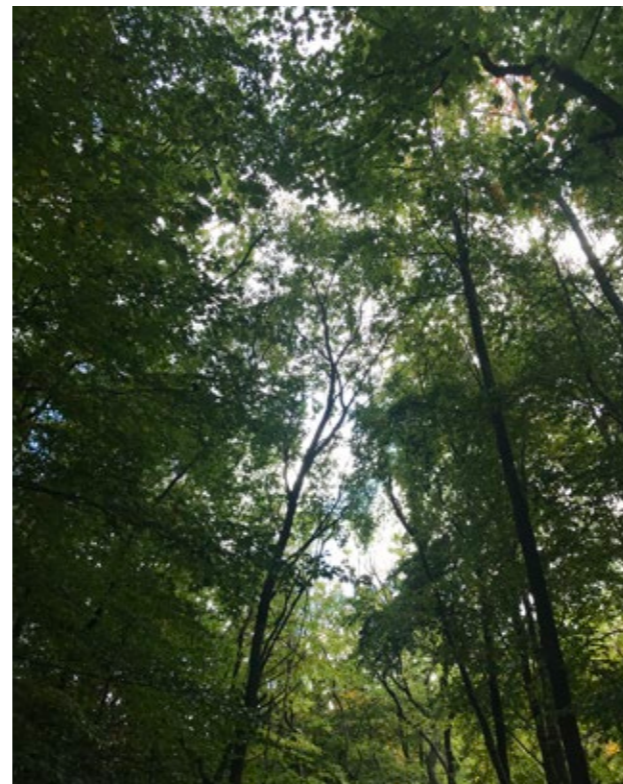




*Boathouse and track*



*Woodland Garden*





## 3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

### 3.1 Assessment of significance

There are a number of reasons for the preservation of a building and its setting on cultural grounds:

- Historical: for the information or evidence of the past embodied in it.
- Aesthetic/Architectural: for its beauty, for its value as a work of architecture.
- Social: for the value embodied in both tangible and intangible attributes of the site to the local and wider community.

Below there are brief descriptions of the exterior and interior spaces in the house which identify points of significance. The significance of these spaces and/or features is then assessed in the table on page 15, along with the capacity for change.

#### Exterior

##### A North (arrival) frontage

A classic Victorian frontage with impressive timber posted open porch, flag pole, decorative gable timber work and ashlar carved chimney stacks. Attractive yellow/grey ashlar string courses, mullions, chimneys and quoins, with pink East Lothian sandstone between. Recent 2012 stone-faced extension to west of uncomfortable scale and mixed quality of detailing and materials.

##### B East frontage

Gabled and dormer stone frontage with carved stone mullions between bipartite sash and case windows. Continuation of stonework as north frontage.

##### C South frontage

Multi-gabled elevation with continuation of yellow/grey ashlar string course and dressed ashlar stone, with red rubble sandstone infill. Finialed stone bay window to eastern drawing room with arched attic window above. Retaining terrace wall with recent stone slabs to south. Terrace wall noted in listing with rounded top ashlar coping stones and corner stones. Recent stone-faced extension to west of uncomfortable scale and mixed quality of detailing and materials. Original scullery incorporated in to new extension with prominent roof light detail above. Large sliding folding doors and general fenestration of extension in the context of a semi-pastiche new construction. Open lawn and axial steps are important to the setting of the balanced but non-symmetrical frontage of the house, which is unbalanced by the recent extension. Modern Velux roof light to bathroom in roof.

##### D West frontage

Dominated by the recent extension and outbuildings. The ground levels here have also been changed through banking up on infill for a new garage and terrace extension which was never completed.



D - West frontage - modern extension



D - West frontage - original house





A - North frontage - original house



A - North frontage - modern extension



C - South frontage - modern extension



C - South frontage - original house



B - East frontage



Interior

Ground Floor

E Entrance Hall

Northern window added in 2012 work which also joined and enlarged the entrance hall with original library space and WC. Original fireplace and stone surround to south wall, original cornicing, doors, and door architraves, modern ceiling rose, and modern matched panelling around window splays. Patches in floor reveal lines of earlier internal partitions.

F Stair and Hall 2

There have been some historic changes to spaces here with internal walls removed to WC/Cloak room and through to the western corridor section. Original cornices in stair and eastern hall area, modern cornice and lower ceiling to western end of space beyond down stand beam. New partition was formed in the 2012 alterations to the northern side of this corridor. Original floor slabs and floor boards in cloak room space, with modern laminate flooring in stair and western corridor area. Corbeled stone stair with cast iron balusters.

G Drawing Room

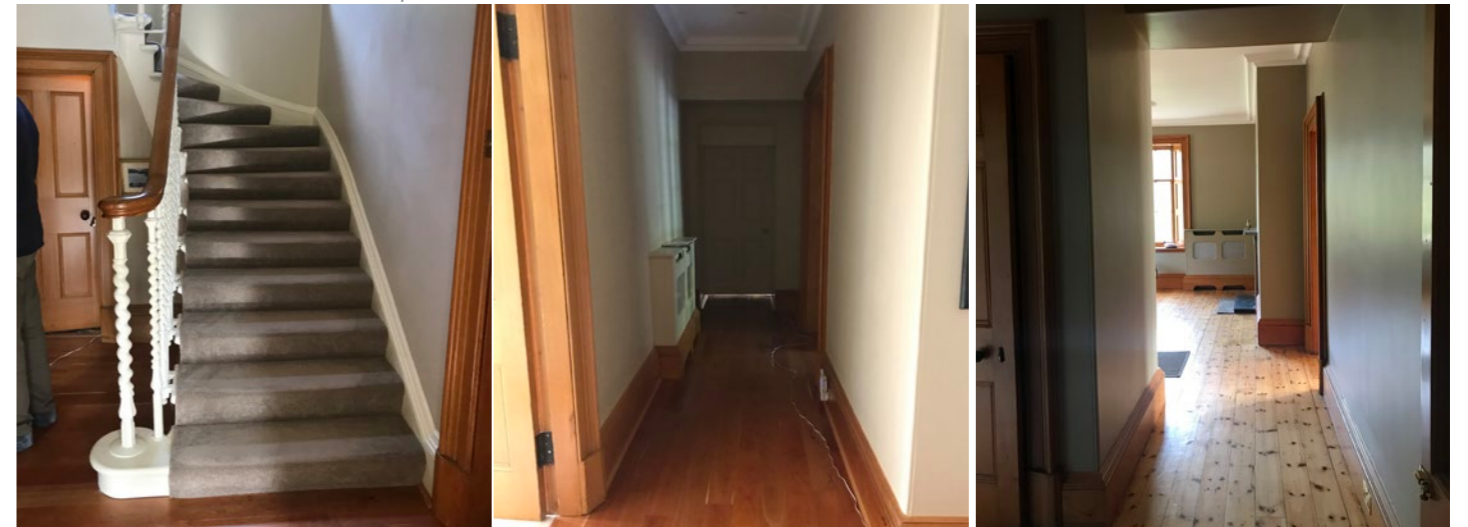
Well preserved pine panelling to walls, original cast iron fire basket, inset and stone surround within panelling, adjacent to wall press with door. Pine floor boards, possibly replacements of original. An earlier pine panelled ceiling, evident in particulars from the 1980's, is now plastered. The original southern bay window has side opening central sashes leading out on to stone steps on the south terrace. Original pine shutters to all windows.

H Living Room

Original cornicing and panelling/shutters around windows. Modern mock-antique cast iron fireplace and surround, with original servant bell winders adjacent. Original wall press with door, skirtings and architraves, with some patching in around modern fireplace. Floor carpeted.



E - Entrance Hall main door and fireplace



F - Stair

F - Hallway



G - Drawing Room wall panelling & bay window



I Dining Room

Original windows, panelling at ingos, wall press, architraves and cornicing. Fireplace likely to be a reclaimed inset and surround not from this house. Evidence of large hatch in north wall from patched skirting, plaster undulations and historic photos. Cill of SW window dropped to form door during twentieth century with modern multi-paned glazed door inset.

J Study/Library

Formerly part of kitchen with adjacent corridor. Lowered plasterboard ceiling with new cornicing, modern laminated flooring and no other original features apparent other than the windows themselves.

K Kitchen/Living/Dining and utility extension

This extension post-dates the listing and was built in 2012. Incorporates remnants of the original scullery walls to the north and south, and reusing some of the original slate on the roof. Extension fabric in new yellow and red sandstone with timber framed primary structure. Plasterboard and timber laminate flooring internally, and no historic features.



H - Living Room



J - Study/ Library



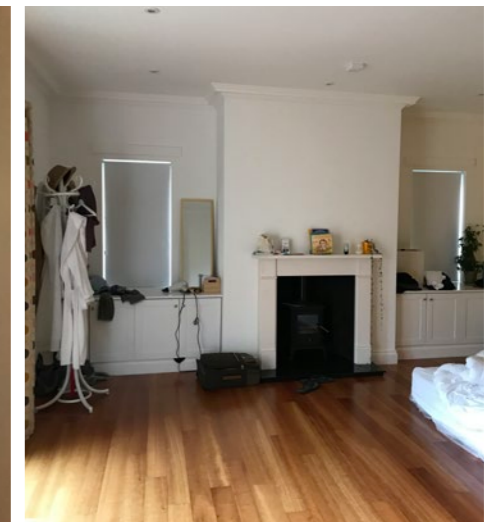
J - Study/ Library (photograph taken in 1960's)



I - Dining Room



K - Kitchen, utility, study (currently used as a bedroom)





First Floor

L Landing/hall

Some adjustments were made to the east and west bedroom links on the landing, and a new stair was installed to the attic spaces. Doors, architraves, skirting and cornices are generally original and more modest than those on the ground floor. The modern stair to the attic floor is in timber and sits uncomfortably in the space. New steps lead down to an internalised link to the recent extension with a polycarbonate roof light over.

M Bedroom 1 (east)

Original cornicing, window, shutters, architraves, panelling at window reveals, skirtings, panelled door, fire place and surround.

N Bathroom 1 (east)

Conversion of previous bedroom to bathroom, retaining original fireplace inset and surround, architraves, and shutters/panelling to east window only. Cornices replaced to match original during 2010 reconfiguration which altered the line of the west partitions around shower recess and reopened the north window.

O Bedroom 2

Original cornicing, window, shutters, architraves, panelling at window reveals, skirtings, panelled door, fire place and surround.

P Dressing room/corridor

Formerly a bathroom area, reconfigured in the 2012 alterations to be an access route to bedroom 1, with new cupboards and partitions to one side. Original shutters and window remain. Modern panelled doors to stores, and modern replacement cornicing.

Q Bathroom 2 (south)

Originally a smaller bathroom, enlarged during the 2012 works by incorporating part of adjacent Bedroom 3. The landing was reconfigured at the same time to accommodate the stair to the loft. Original door reused, otherwise no historic features. Modern Velux over.



L - Landing/Hall: top of original stair from GF, modern stair to 2F and hallway



M - Bedroom 1 (east)

N - Bathroom 1 (east)

O - Bedroom 2



P - Dressing room/ corridor

Q - Bathroom 2 (south)



R Bedroom 3

Room size reduced and doorway moved during 2012 reconfiguration. Cornicing reinstated and door and architraves renewed. Original windows, shutters and panelling at ingoes, fireplace and surround all in tact.

S Bedroom 4

Original shutters, window and ingoes panelling, fireplace and surround, and door in tact. No cornicing.

T Extension bedrooms and ensuites

New roof link with GRP roof light over, modern fitted cupboards and completely new roof structure. Generally plasterboard timber framed building with modern windows and roof lights, and no historic features.



R - Bedroom 3



S - Bedroom 4



T - Extension link, bedrooms and ensuites



Area / Significance / Capacity for Change			
Area of Grounds / Curtilage			
A	Northern frontage - eastern part	4	6
	Northern frontage - western part	2	2
B	Eastern frontage	4	6
C	Southern frontage and terrace - eastern part	4	6
	Southern frontage and terrace - western part	2	2
D	Western frontage	2	2
E	Entrance Hall	4	4
F	Stair and Hall 2	3	3
G	Drawing room	5	6
H	Living room	4	4
I	Dining room	4	4
J	Study/Library	2	3
K	Kitchen/Living /Dining extension	2	2
L	Landing / Hall	3	3
M	Bedroom 1	4	4
N	Bathroom 1	3	2
O	Bedroom 2	4	4
P	Dressing area/corridor	3	2
Q	South Bathroom	2	2
R	Bedroom 3	3	4
S	Bedroom 4	3	3
T	Extension bedrooms and ensuites	2	2



## 3.0 SIGNIFICANCE

### 3.2 Gaps in knowledge

The exact form and architectural nature of Pressmennan house before any late 19th century makeover is not certain.

### 3.3 Threats

Ongoing general maintenance is required, although there are no significant areas of deterioration at present.

### 3.4 Overview of capacity for change

Pressmennan House is an elegant but perhaps unremarkable building, but retains a number of valuable features internally and externally. It is otherwise typical of buildings of its age, which remain common throughout the country. Its setting and relationship to the Lake are perhaps of more significance, even though the listing does not highlight this aspect of the building within the Statement of Special Interest.

The original house sat comfortably on the shoulder of ground above the Lake, and would almost certainly have been prominent from the Lake at the time of its construction. It continues to sit well within the broad lawns of the garden, but the 2010/11 extension to the west unbalances the building, and the partial pastiche diminishes the quality of the whole. Given this there is significant capacity for change to the western extension area, but the remaining house itself should be treated with care, and only has minimal capacity for change.

Historic changes to the topography of the ground to the west mean the setting from this direction is also less important and indeed could be improved through considered change.

Internally, the main reception rooms retain much of their original features and gentility, but there is some limited capacity for change to the living and dining rooms without diminishing their historic value. The spaces around the halls and stair have been altered extensively over time and there is scope for change and improvement to these areas.

On the first floor the connections to the eastern bedroom suite and the new western extension have created a somewhat distended circulation. This would benefit from the reinstatement of the access door to Bedroom 1, and re-establishing the dressing area/corridor as a discrete room, as it was originally.

## 4.0 OUTLINE POLICIES

### 4.1 Building/built structure maintenance

Any proposals for repairs to the existing fabric should be made with the benefit of detailed knowledge, obtained through the process of a Condition Report, which will be carried out by an experienced architect. These proposals should aim to minimise loss of original or early fabric, while balancing the need for the building to be structurally sound and to provide the essential resistance to weather and other decay mechanisms for the foreseeable future. Materials that are capable of being re-used should be carefully set aside, in a manner which reduces waste. Any new materials used in carrying out repairs should normally be selected to be an exact or very close match to existing; detailing should not wilfully deviate from the existing. However it will be recognised that in areas (such as with lead work) our knowledge of the performance of the material and detailing has improved. Where wear and tear is rather superficial then there should be a presumption against intervention, instead seeking to conserve as found, minimising further damage.

Where large sections of new work have to be introduced then thought might be given to making such changes visible to a discerning eye and, where possible, also reversible.

### 4.2 Archeology

It is not expected that significant archeology will be found on this site as there is no apparent history of previous occupation here. However, excavations should nevertheless be monitored and if necessary resources secured to record any finds should any evidence to the contrary be found.

### 4.3 New development

The original house frontages have limited capacity for change but the area of the 2010/11 extension may benefit from considered change, with any new structure architecturally and materially distinct from the original house. There should be some articulation and where possible separation of new structures from the mass of the main old house. There is capacity for integrating new spaces and/or outbuildings in to the landscape to avoid a proliferation of structures on the site. Any new structures to the west of the old house should be subservient in scale to the main house and sensitive to the topography in that area, which is distinct from the open driveway, terraces and lawns that surround the old house on the other sides.