

TOYSWOOD COTTAGE, BRASTED, KENT

HERITAGE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION FOR LISTED BUILDING CONSENT



PREPARED BY

MICHAEL COPEMAN MSC BA IHBC

March 2021

CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| 1.1 | Commission..... | 3 |
| 2 | HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT | 4 |
| 2.1 | History..... | 4 |
| 2.2 | Description | 5 |
| 2.3 | Architectural development..... | 8 |
| 3 | SIGNIFICANCE | 10 |
| 3.1 | Assessing and grading significance. | 10 |
| 3.2 | Summary statement of significance | 11 |
| 4 | PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT | 12 |
| 4.1 | National planning policy and guidance | 12 |
| 4.2 | Local planning policy | 12 |
| 5 | THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT..... | 13 |
| 5.1 | Summary of proposals | 13 |
| 5.2 | Assessment of impact on heritage significance..... | 13 |
| 6 | SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION | 14 |
| 6.1 | Summary | 14 |
| 6.2 | Conclusion..... | 15 |

FIGURES

Cover: South-east elevation

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| Figure 1: | View from west; 1960s/1979 extensions to left and right | 4 |
| Figure 2: | Ground floor living room with reconstructed roof and fireplace..... | 5 |
| Figure 3: | North-east extension, showing originally external timber first floor framing..... | 6 |
| Figure 4: | Jowled post, wall plate and tie beam to first floor (east) | 7 |
| Figure 5: | Roof structure | 7 |
| Figure 6: | Timber framing to south end of attic | 8 |
| Figure 7: | Chimney at first floor level..... | 9 |
| Figure 8: | 1979 LBC plans (Sevenoaks DC planning ref. 79/01407/HIST)..... | 10 |

Michael Copeman Historic Buildings Consultant

www.michaelcopeman.com

© Michael Copeman 2021

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Commission

- 1.1.1 This report was commissioned by Simon Sharpe of Theis and Khan Architects on 19 February 2021, on behalf of Matthew Rodgers. It supports proposals for alterations to the attic floor and the installation of dormer windows.
- 1.1.2 Listed Building Consent for alterations and repairs to the house was granted in 2020 (Ref. 20/01308/LBCALT), which included alterations to the attic and the installation of rooflights. The current proposal seeks to amend the original design to improve the quality of the attic accommodation. It has been developed in line with pre-application advice from the Council.¹
- 1.1.3 Toyswood Cottage is situated in woodland some 1km south of the hamlet of Toys Hill near Brasted. The cottage is grade II listed. The statutory list entry is as follows:
- Probably C15 timber framed cottage of 2 storeys, 2 windows, with alterations. High pitched tiled roof with right end chimney. Tile hung 1st floor, red brick ground floor with some blue headers. Small modern casements and French door. Modern lean-to right extension and short rear extension. Close-set beams and rebuilt inglenook in downstairs room.'*
- 1.1.4 The house was listed in 1975, since when it has been altered and extended. There is some doubt as to the 'probable' 15th century date attributed to the original building in the list entry.
- 1.1.5 A detailed heritage statement was submitted in support of the consented LBC application and the resent report includes the historic building analysis and statement of significance (sections 2 and 3) from that report. A site visit was made on 18 February 2020 but no separate visit has been made in connection with this statement and the understanding of the structure and the photographs that follow relate to the building as it was before any work was undertaken.

¹ Letter from Ms Hayley Nixon 1 Feb 2021 ref. PA/20/00484

2 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 History

2.1.1 Toyswood Cottage is a small house with probably 16th century origins, in a hilly, wooded, rural setting. It was originally fully timber-framed, but much of the frame has been replaced in brick. The first floor is tile-hung. The primary range comprises two bays with a chimney at the north-east end, under a steeply-pitched clay-tiled roof. A full-height extension to the south-east extends the primary range by a third bay. A single-storey lean-to extension at the north end of the house extends north to form a single storey range to the north-east, with a shallow pitched roof. The extensions are faced in late-20th century red brick in stretcher bond.



Figure 1: View from west; 1960s/1979 extensions to left and right

2.1.2 Its origins and early history are unknown, but in the context of its date it would have been is a substantial building of middling social status, such as a small farmhouse. The first documentary record of the property is the Brasted tithe map of 1844.² The house itself is not marked, but it is identified in the corresponding tithe award as a ‘cottage and garden’ in the occupation of William Burnett. He does not appear to have held any other land in the parish. The cottage was owned by John and Samuel Williams, who farmed the adjacent property. Much of what is now the surrounding woodland was then arable land.

2.1.3 The 1896, 1909 and 1921 25in Ordnance Survey maps show the house as a simple rectangular block, corresponding with the extant, historic, two-bay structure. It is named, with the adjacent house, as ‘Red Hill Cottages’.

² Kent Library and History Centre, ref. CTR/42/B

- 2.1.4 By 1975, when the house was listed, it had been extended with a single storey range to the north-east. This is shown in a painting (at the property) dated 1976, by GA Towers. The main range then consisted of two bays, gabled at each end.
- 2.1.5 The only historic planning and listed building consent found for the property is dated 1979;³ for ‘internal and external alterations and single and two storey extensions to front and side of dwelling’. This gave the house its present appearance, with full-height extension forming a third structural bay to the south west of the main range.

2.2 Description

- 2.2.1 The primary range consists of two unequal bays, with a chimney rising within the structure, to the north side of roof ridge at its east end. The timber framing of the ground floor walls has been entirely replaced in red brick with blue headers in Flemish Bond, of 19th or early 20th century date.
- 2.2.2 To the north-west (present entrance) elevation there is a small canted bay window of late-19th or early 20th century appearance, consistent with the surrounding brickwork. The other windows are late 20th century timber casements, with a pair of French doors at the centre of the ground floor of the south elevation.



Figure 2: Ground floor living room with reconstructed roof and fireplace

- 2.2.3 Internally, almost nothing of the timber frame walls now survives at ground level. The chimney has been rebuilt in modern brickwork. The ceiling to the eastern bay has the ‘close-set’ beams noted in the list description, but its present form is not primary; some of the joists appear to older than others. The ceiling has been raised

³ SDC Ref. 79/01407/HIST

and the joists run into a transverse timber beam with a modern steel beam above it. The date of the alteration is unknown.

- 2.2.4 Adjacent to the stack at the north end of the primary (now internal) east end wall, an early beam is visible at first floor level. Modern stairs occupy the space to the south of the chimney (a typical location for the primary stair). At the central division between the two main structural bays a cut-off transverse beam with a mortice is visible in the north wall. In the present ground floor room of the north extension some primary first-floor wall framing is exposed.



Figure 3: North-east extension, showing originally external timber first floor framing

- 2.2.5 At first floor level the principal, jowled posts defining the two historic bays, the wall plates and central tie-beam are primary. The tie-beam has mortices for longitudinal spine beams and braces to each of the central posts. The chimney stack at this level is of old brickwork, now partly enclosed by blockwork. A few possibly primary studs survive in end walls but otherwise the wall framing has been lost and replaced with blockwork. The studwork partitions and ceiling/attic floor structure are modern.



Figure 4: Jowled post, wall plate and tie beam to first floor (east)

2.2.6 A clasped purlin roof to the two primary bays, with a central Queen-post truss, is substantially intact. The primary common rafters are pegged at the ridge. Several rafters have been replaced with modern softwood. There is an arched brace to the north-east corner and mortices for similar braces at the other corners. The purlins, remarkably, are each of a single timber extending the full length of the roof. Immediately in front of the chimney is an inserted collar beam.



Figure 5: Roof structure

2.2.7 Some timber-framing survives to the original end walls of the attic storey. The frame is more substantial, although incomplete, at the north-east end. To the south-west end framing includes few primary timbers. Absent or misaligned pegs to most of the joints suggest that this panel has been reconstructed, probably using some salvaged timbers. Most of the studs have been replaced with softwood. A doorway to the 1979 extension has been cut through the collar.



Figure 6: Timber framing to south end of attic

2.2.8 The upper part of the chimney has been partly rebuilt in modern brickwork. The timber framing is smoke-blackened around the chimney to the north-east and north west. The rest of the roof primary roof timbers are clean.

2.3 Architectural development

2.3.1 The form of the roof and surviving timber framed structure suggest that the house as built comprised the two extant, unequal structural bays, with a primary, ceiled, first floor. The extant timber frame and the roof in particular, suggests a date in the for the second half of the 16th century. The extent of later alteration and the loss of so much of the primary structure means that it is difficult to interpret or reconstruct the primary form of the building with certainty, especially at lower level, but there is no clear or compelling evidence for the 15th century date given in the list entry.

2.3.2 The pattern of smoke blackening suggests that the present brick chimney may have been added after the roof was built, in place of a timber flue. (If roof and brick stack were of the same date, one would expect the chimney to be axial, and fully built into the end wall.) The stepped brick chimney cannot easily be dated exactly, but is probably late-16th or 17th century.



Figure 7: Chimney at first floor level

- 2.3.3 The house remained in primary two-bay form until the second half of the 20th century. The roof was evidently substantially reconstructed in the later 20th century. A substantial proportion of the rafters have been replaced with softwood, and many do not now bear directly onto the purlins, suggesting that the historic rafters may have been rearranged. Information provided by neighbours suggests that this work dates from c1950s when the roof had, at least partially, collapsed.
- 2.3.4 The exact date of the north and north-east extension is not known. The details of its unaltered north elevation (stretcher bond and concrete lintels) suggest a date of c1960s. The date 1967 scratched into a cement cill-beam beneath a first floor window on the south-east elevation suggests that some work was undertaken then, which consistent with the appearance of the extension.
- 2.3.5 The 1979 drawings are very rough. They indicate that the west end of the main range was extended by a full bay, to full height, and the present entrance, porch and staircase were formed. The existing single storey wing was slightly extended to the north and east and its existing gabled roof was hipped over the new structure.

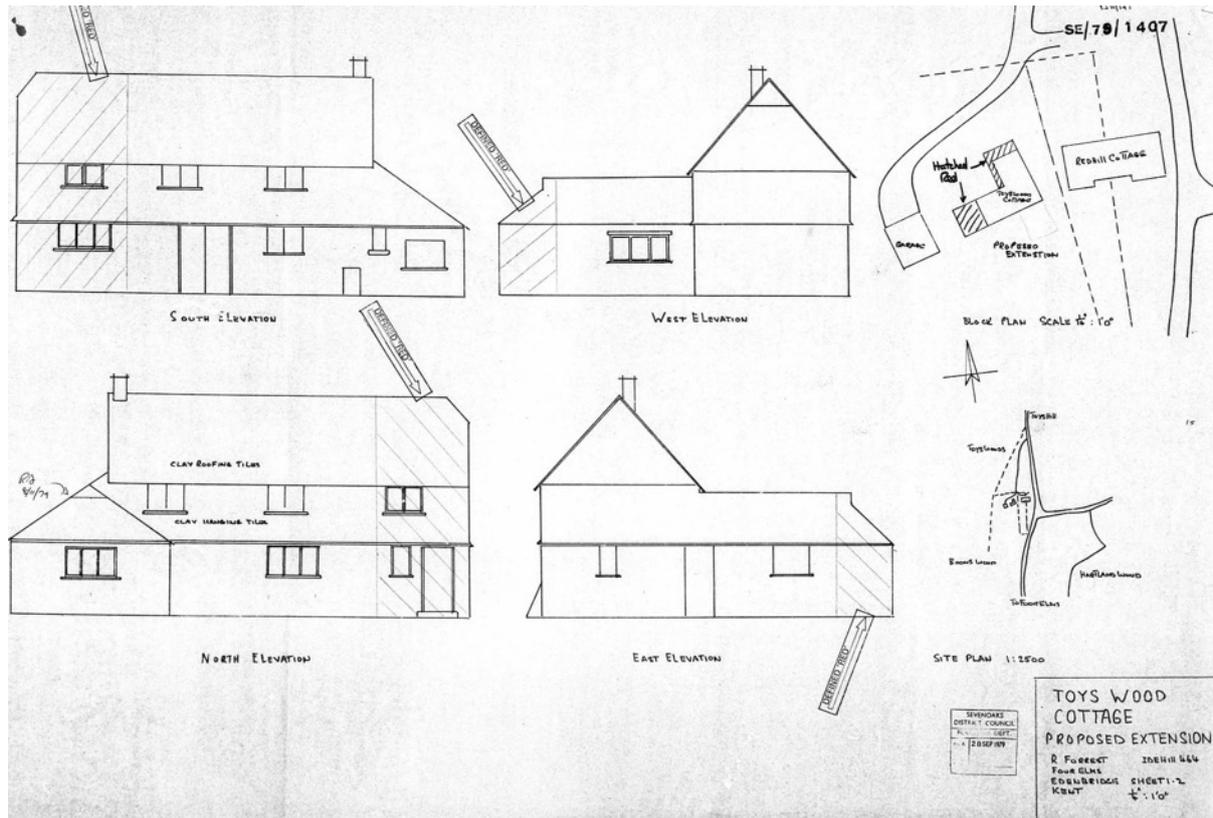


Figure 8: 1979 LBC plans (Sevenoaks DC planning ref. 79/01407/HIST)

3 SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 Assessing and grading significance.

3.1.1 The heritage significance of the cottage has been assessed in line with the recent Historic England guidance.⁴ The following categories have been used to evaluate heritage significance, based on well-established English Heritage/Historic England *Conservation Principles* and ICOMOS best practice:

- *Considerable significance*: Elements that contribute to the building's status as a nationally important place. These are the qualities that justify statutory protection through listing at national level.
- *Moderate/limited significance*: Fragmentary elements of primary fabric, which provide some indication of the original form of the building and elements that make a contribution to the way the building is understood, primarily in a local context.
- *Neutral significance*: Elements which neither add to, nor detract from, the significance of the building.
- *Intrusive*: Elements of no historic interest or aesthetic or architectural merit that detract from the appearance of the place, or mask the understanding of significant elements.

⁴ *Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets* Historic England (Advice Note 12), 2019

- 3.1.2 The significance of the building lies in its traditional appearance as much as in its historic fabric. The surviving timber frame is the most significant structural element, and the primary reason for its listing. The frame indicates the age of the building and its primary form. Despite being incomplete, it is relatively a rare survival. Although a substantial number of such medieval and post-medieval buildings survive in Kent and Sussex, they represent a tiny minority of the total number of pre-1914 buildings in the region.
- 3.1.3 The evidence suggesting a there may possibly have been a timber chimney is of particular architectural and historic interest in illustrating the development of such houses during the period c1550-1600 when chimneys were widely introduced into old houses and included in new ones. Timber flues were a somewhat ineffective transitional feature, of which few examples survive. They were almost invariably replaced with brick relatively early on.
- 3.1.4 The building is highly characteristic of the region in aesthetic and historic terms. Timber-framed houses with tile-hanging protecting the upper floors are archetypal of late-medieval and early-modern vernacular architecture in Kent and Sussex, and as such, an embodiment of the '*genius loci*'. The materials- essentially clay and timber- of which the house is built, are an elemental representation of the place in which they were dug and grown. The form and details of such buildings reflect long-established regional patterns and craft skills. In its external appearance and character the building is of considerable significance.
- 3.1.5 The late 20th century alterations do not seem to have been carried out with particular care. They are not in themselves of heritage significance, but broadly respect the traditional form, proportions and material character of the historic building. The casement windows are typical of the type used in vernacular houses and cottages since the early 19th century.

3.2 Summary statement of significance

- 3.2.1 Toyswood Cottage is of *considerable significance* for:
- The surviving elements of the primary timber frame in the walls, floors and roof;
 - The pre-20th century external elevations of the primary range including its traditional local brickwork and tile-hanging;
 - The surviving evidence for the primary two-bay plan and its early evolution, including the possible timber flue;
 - The brick chimney.
- 3.2.2 The following elements of Toyswood Cottage are of *moderate/limited significance*:
- Small-paned timber casement windows;
 - Re-set timber framed ceiling to ground floor.
- 3.2.3 The following elements of Toyswood Cottage are of *neutral significance*:
- Post 1945 extensions to the north, north-east and south.

3.2.4 The following elements of Toyswood Cottage are *intrusive*:

- Post 1945 doors and internal partitions and finishes in blockwork and plasterboard;
- Timber-framed lean-to porch at north end of building.

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 National planning policy and guidance

4.1.1 The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF, as revised 2018) sets out national planning policy for the conservation of historic built environment. Its over-arching principle is a presumption in favour of ‘sustainable development’ (para. 11). The key provisions in relation to historic buildings are that the significance of heritage assets (including the contribution made by their setting) should be fully understood (paras. 189-192); that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets (para. 193); that substantial harm to heritage significance should be justified (paras. 194, 195) and that less than substantial harm should be weighed against the benefits of a development (para. 196), and that the settings of heritage assets should be protected. NPPF is supported, but its provisions are not altered, by the *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* (2014).

4.2 Local planning policy

4.2.1 Local Policy is set out in Sevenoaks District Council’s *Core Strategy* (2011) and its *Allocations and Development Management Plan* (2015). The Core Policy relevant to these proposals is Policy SP 1 (Design of New Development and Conservation) which states *inter alia* that: ‘All new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated.... and that ‘The District’s heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings... will be protected and enhanced.’

4.2.2 The key local plan development management policy is Policy EN4 (Heritage Assets). This states that: ‘Proposals that affect a Heritage Asset, or its setting, will be permitted where the development conserves or enhances the character, appearance and setting of the asset. Applications will be assessed with reference to the following: a) the historic and/or architectural significance of the asset; b) the prominence of its location and setting; and c) the historic and/or architectural significance of any elements to be lost or replaced.’ The supporting text paras. 2.19-2.23 refers specifically to listed buildings.

5 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Summary of proposals

To be read in conjunction with plans submitted by Theis and Khan architects, refs. 1142_TW (2021)

- 5.1.1 When it was inspected last year, the house was in poor condition. The conservation works approved under approved under 20/01308/LBCALT, including the timber-frame repair and strengthening have now begun. This application seeks to vary the approved design for the attic (second) storey, to improve the quality of the accommodation. No new works are proposed elsewhere in the building.
- 5.1.2 The proposed alterations will refurbish the second floor to create two bedrooms and a bathroom in the existing, historic attic space. They will be lit by three new, traditionally detailed, dormer windows on the south-east (rear) elevation of the house. In plan, the attic will be as previously agreed (20/01308/LB). Access to the two bedrooms (to the west) will be via the new staircase, also as approved.
- 5.1.3 The new bathroom, to the east, will occupy what was an unused space in the approved scheme. Access will be via a simple timber staircase beside the chimney, in the traditional location for a staircase in this type and date of house. No historic timber framing will be affected by the staircase. (The floor structure is modern at this level.) There will be no link between the bedrooms and attic bathroom, so the historic roof truss to the centre of the roof will remain intact and a new partition will be formed to butt against it.
- 5.1.4 Three rooflights were proposed to the north-east roof slope under the approved scheme. Two of these will now be omitted. The remaining roof light will serve the new staircase.

5.2 Assessment of impact on heritage significance

- 5.2.1 The attic will be upgraded to modern standards, to make best use of the existing space in the listed building. The key change will be the introduction of dormer windows, which have been designed to fit within the constraints imposed by the historic timber frame. As noted, the roof was reconstructed in the mid-late 20th century when many rafters were been replaced with modern softwood and others repositioned. Therefore, the two outer dormers can be fitted without affecting any historic rafters and only modern softwood rafters will need to be trimmed. To allow for the central dormer, one old rafter will be moved and relocated in place of a modern one, within the roof. The purlins will be unaffected, being retained as ‘cills’ within each dormer. The rooflight will be located within the section roof added in 1979, so it will not affect any historic fabric.
- 5.2.2 The design of the dormers is a simple contemporary iteration of the flat-roofed, lead-clad, 18th-century type often found in this region. As noted, they will be on the

rear (garden) elevation of the house. The rooflights to be omitted would have been on the front elevation, which will be less affected by the alterations, as a result.

- 5.2.3 The work will require a very minor alteration to the timber frame, which has already been altered in the area affected. The historic rafter to be moved will be retained within the roof and therefore the historic form and evidential value of the frame will remain. Any resulting ‘harm’ to the historic fabric in terms of NPPF is considered to be negligible.
- 5.2.4 New services will be run within the existing structure (in the ‘eaves’ space and into the modern part of the building) without the need to cut into the timber frame. The services will be easily accessible for maintenance, and could be removed in the future without affecting the heritage significance or historic fabric of the building. The new attic rooms (including the bathroom) will benefit from natural ventilation through the dormers, and from insulation to modern standards.
- 5.2.5 By making use of the whole attic as now proposed, the scheme will increase the usable floorspace of the house, without effecting its historic plan or structure. The architectural hierarchy of spaces will be preserved by using the existing attic spaces as proposed. This will make a substantial contribution to the ‘added value’ that justifies the investment necessary to repair this relatively small house and thereby support the sustainability of the development. This outweighs the very minor ‘harm’ noted above.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

- 6.1.1 The proposed alterations will enhance the quality and extent of the accommodation in the approved scheme, while conserving the special architectural and historic significance for which the house is listed. The alterations continue the traditional, accretive approach to the alteration of an historic building such as this, adapting it to the differing requirements of succeeding centuries and occupiers with incremental changes determined by, and working within, the existing structure.
- 6.1.2 The changes to the exterior appearance of the historic main range have been designed in keeping with the historic character of the house and local architectural tradition of which it is a part.
- 6.1.3 In line with the requirements of NPPF, the approved scheme together with the variations proposed in this application is sustainable in economic and practical terms. Any impact on historic fabric that could be regarded as causing ‘harm’ to heritage significance is very minor indeed, and is greatly outweighed by the benefits that arise from the repair and refurbishment of the house. In line with local policy and guidance, the proposal ‘conserves or enhances the character, appearance and setting of the asset’, responds to the ‘distinctive local character of the area’, and protects its relationship with its natural landscape setting.

6.2 Conclusion

- 6.2.1 The proposal will make good use of a space within the historic building that would not otherwise have a function. The impact of the scheme on heritage significance will be very minor. It reduces the visual impact of the development on the front elevation by omitting two of the rooflights approved in 2020.
- 6.2.2 The historic fabric, features and character of the house identified as being of heritage significance will be conserved. The new work will be of high quality, contemporary design, in keeping with the historic character and appearance of the house.
- 6.2.3 The benefits of the proposal outweigh any slight 'harm' that may be considered to arise from it. We submit that the scheme meets all the relevant national and local heritage planning policies and guidelines and that listed building consent should be granted.