



**Castle House,
Sevenoaks Road,
Otford
Kent**

TN14 5PB

**Addendum to existing (2015) Heritage Statement in light
of proposed alterations**

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SUMMARY

This addendum to an existing Heritage Statement by James Weir (Historic Buildings Consultant; Weir 2015) of Castle House, Sevenoaks Road, Otford, Kent TN14 5PB (TQ 52948 59163, centred; Fig 1), was commissioned by Mrs Irene Roy in May and September 2021 in view of proposed changes to the eastern stairwell and to the second floor of the building, a Grade II listed house located adjacent to the Archbishop's Palace at Otford, and in the Otford Conservation Area.

In our opinion, the proposed removal of under-stairs space, including part of the ground-floor ceiling, and the introduction of a bathroom into an existing space on the second floor will not be detrimental to the special architectural or historical interest of the building.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is an addendum to the existing Heritage Statement by James Weir Historic Buildings Consultant (Weir 2015) of Castle House, Sevenoaks Road, Otford, Kent TN14 5PB (TQ 52948 59163, centred; Fig 1), a Grade II-listed house located in the Otford Conservation Area (SDC 2010); it was commissioned by Mrs I Roy in May and September 2021 in view of proposed changes to a xstairwell, and conversion of a the second floor attic room to a bathroom ,.

2. POLICY AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORKS

2.1 This addendum has been prepared in accordance with national and local policy regarding heritage assets and with reference to research frameworks, which have been updated since the production of a Heritage Statement for other works (Weir 2015).

National policy

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a series of core planning principles designed to underpin plan-making and decision-taking within the planning system. Paragraph 184 (NPPF 2021, 55) states that Heritage Assets are:

“an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”

2.3 By definition, the historic environment includes all surviving physical remains of past human activity. Heritage assets include extant structures and features, sites, places and landscapes. Furthermore, the historic landscape encompasses visible, buried or submerged remains, which includes the buried archaeological resource.

2.4 When determining planning applications, the following paragraphs (*ibid*, 56–8) are pertinent:

“194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

195. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the

impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

196. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

198. In considering any applications to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), local planning authorities should have regard to the importance of their retention in situ and, where appropriate, of explaining their historic and social context rather than removal.

Considering potential impacts

199. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

200. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;

b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional⁶⁸.*

68 Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

201. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

204. Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

205. Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible⁶⁹. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

206. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

207. Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 200 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 201, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

208. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies.”

2.5 A footnote to paragraph 200b reads: "Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets".

Local policy

2.6 Applying the same general principles on a local scale, the relevant Sevenoaks District Core Strategy and Local Plan policies are as follows.

Sevenoaks District Core Strategy (SDC 2011)

Policy SPI – Design of New Development and Conservation

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. Account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of Kent Design, local Character Area Assessments, Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans, Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. In rural areas account should be taken of guidance in the Countryside Assessment and AONB Management Plans.

In areas where the local environment lacks positive features new development should contribute to an improvement in the quality of the environment.

New development should create safe, inclusive and attractive environments that meet the needs of users, incorporate principles of sustainable development and maintain and enhance biodiversity.

The District's heritage assets and their settings, including listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological remains, ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, historic buildings, landscapes and outstanding views will be protected and enhanced.

Sevenoaks District Draft Local Plan (SDC 2018)

Policy 17 – Heritage Assets

Proposals that affect a designated or non-designated 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.*

Where the development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the

public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. It is recognised that the economic future of buildings should be preserved where possible.

Any development that might affect the significance of a listed or locally listed building, conservation area, registered park or garden, scheduled monument, historic landscape or an archaeological site will be required to submit a Heritage Statement with any Planning Application. This includes development affecting their setting. The assessment of proposals should make reference to the Sevenoaks District Historic Environment Review and relevant guidance.

Where an application is located within, or would affect, an area or suspected area of archaeological importance an archaeological assessment must be provided to ensure that provision is made for the preservation of important archaeological remains/findings. Preference will be given to preservation in situ unless it can be shown that recording of remains, assessment, analysis report and deposition of archive is more appropriate.

Research frameworks

2.7 The national and local policies outlined above should be considered in light of the non-statutory heritage frameworks that inform them. While the regional South East Research Framework for the historic environment is still in preparation, initial outputs are available (SERF on-line) and have been considered in preparing this addendum, in order to take current research agendas into account.

3. PROPOSED NEW CHANGES AND INTERIM IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Proposed changes

3.1 The proposed changes to the property are as follows:

- The removal of a small cupboard area under the second-floor eastern staircase (Plates 1 and 2). This would open up the stairwell, removing some of the ceiling outside the kitchen door, and allowing more light from the large landing window on the first floor into the windowless space below (Plates 2–6 and Plan 1).
- Whilst carrying out these works, improvements to the banister on the second flight of stairs and landing (Plate 7) would be undertaken, with the aim of replacing the modern spindles with something more in keeping with the character of the house as a whole, such as those present on the main seventeenth-century staircase in the north range (Plate 8).
- The conversion of one of the attic rooms to a bathroom, to include a bath, W.C and wash hand basin, with deep boxing to push sanitary wear away from skieling (Plan 2a and 2b). The new plumbing will be boxed in, and will exit through the soil vent pipe via an existing first-floor bathroom below; the build will also require the installation of a ceiling extractor fan to extract through a roof tile vent (not visible on any elevation). Changes to the existing bathroom on the floor below will be limited to a point of ingress of the drainage route from the second floor ensuite to the existing soil vent pipe.

Context

3.2 The earlier Heritage Statement (Weir 2015) is clear that the original house is sixteenth century in date; however, the stairwell in question were probably added in the nineteenth century, respectively.

3.3 The original first floor, the 2015 report adds, originally comprised ‘a series of three chambers over the ground-floor rooms which, in the absence of any evidence for internal stairs, might have been accessed from external stairs on the south or north elevations, probably the latter as the stairs on the front would have interfered with the continuous jetty’ (*ibid*, 24). The assessment report goes on to say that, in the seventeenth century, a number of additions were made, including attic floors to both front and rear ranges (*ibid*, 25), which now constitute the second floor. The report (*ibid*, 34) adds that, at present:

the attic floor... rooms generally have a mixture of skelings formed by the sloping roof pitches with high-level ceilings just below apex level leaving a small roof void. The infilling between the rafters on the skelings are generally in lath-and-plaster, as are the high-level ceilings.

3.4 The present ceilings and floors of the attic (see Plates 9 and 10) are unlikely to be original, although the report does state there is a possibility of some original seventeenth-century floors being present in some areas of the first and second floors, where carpet cover did not permit closer inspection. The doors of the attic, it states, are not likely to be ‘older than the 19th century’ (*ibid*, 43), with at least one twentieth-century example, and it is possible that the visible plasterwork in the attics is similar in date.

3.5 The present stairs, at the eastern end of the property (providing access from the ground to first-floor and the first-floor to the attic floor) are described as

*both timber straight-flight stairs with top winders and have timber balustrades of nineteenth or twentieth century date. The provision of a second staircase, which would invariably have been used for servants in later centuries, would be unusual in a house of this size in the seventeenth century, and both sets of stairs are nineteenth or twentieth century in date. However, the setting back of the adjacent bedroom wall appears to suggest that space was made to accommodate an earlier stair here (*ibid*, 48).*

3.6 The present staircase might therefore have replaced an earlier (seventeenth-century) original.

Impact Assessment

3.7 In our opinion, the proposed changes will not be detrimental to the special architectural or historical interest of the building. The changes to the attic room constitute a change of use, but the impact on the fabric of the building is limited, including access/exit points for drainage/ventilation, which will necessitate removal of some roof and floor material, most likely not original in the case of visible plaster; likewise the proposed loss of ceiling and under-stairs space will have no detrimental effect on the building - - Both staircase and under-stairs storage are a late addition to the premises, dating from the nineteenth century at the earliest.

- 3.8 The internal location of these proposed changes also means they will have no impact, visual or otherwise, on the wider setting of the Conservation Area or nearby Scheduled Monument. The proposed bathroom has been designed to have no visual impact from external viewsheds. Furthermore, as the impact on the fabric of the building from all proposed changes is minimal, there will be no detriment to any further research into the evolution and original purpose of the building, and, indeed, the removal of the nineteenth-century cupboard and ceiling in the case of the stairwell, may provide an opportunity to examine the stairwell for traces of an earlier staircase, helping our understanding of the development of the building.
- 3.9 The proposed removal of the modern banister spindles and their replacement with a design more in keeping with the rest of the house (and possible original stairs mentioned above) would not be to the detriment of the overall character of the house.
- 3.10 A watching and recording brief on any work impacting on any fabric other than the stairs is recommended.

SOURCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (INCLUDING WEB RESOURCES):

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(<https://planningconsult.sevenoaks.gov.uk/consult.ti/dlp2018/view?objectId=10262164>)



Plate 1. Small cupboard and area under the second-floor staircase.



Plate 2. Rear of small cupboard under the second-floor staircase. The proposed removal of this would open up the void beneath and allow more light into the windowless space below, on the ground floor (*see* Plates 3–6).



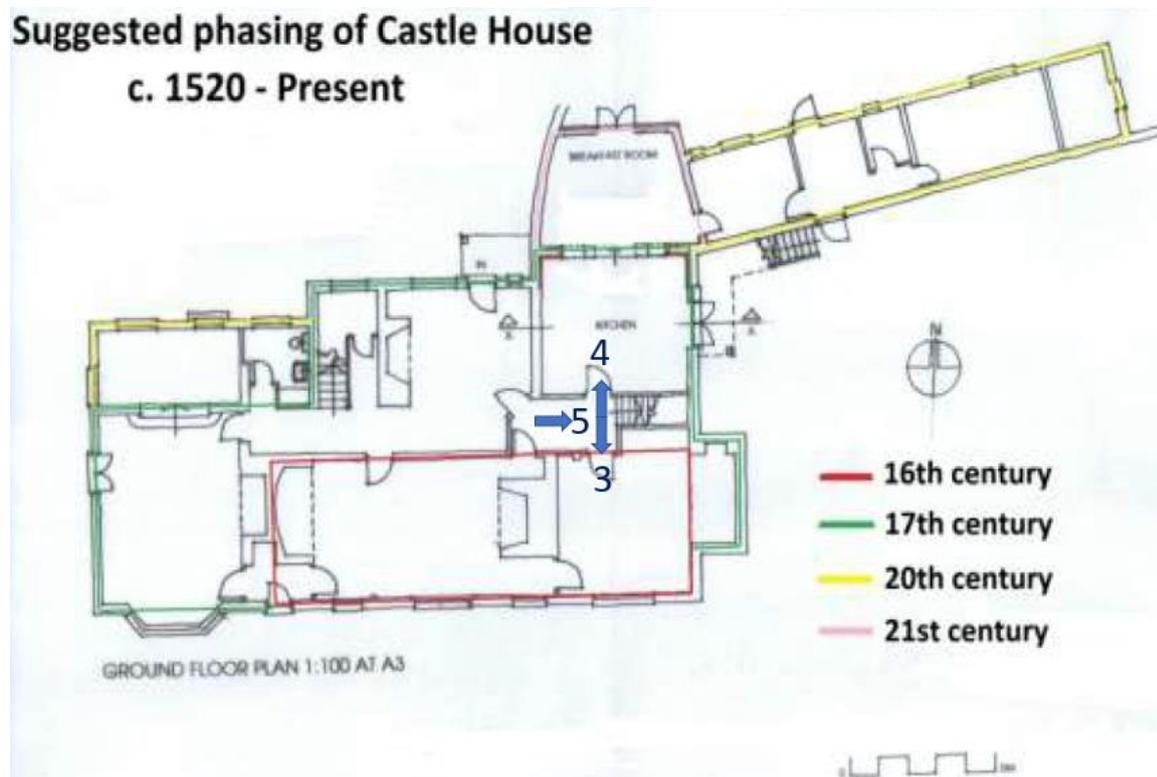
Plates 3 and 4. Area below second-floor under-stairs cupboard looking towards the living room (left) and kitchen (right).



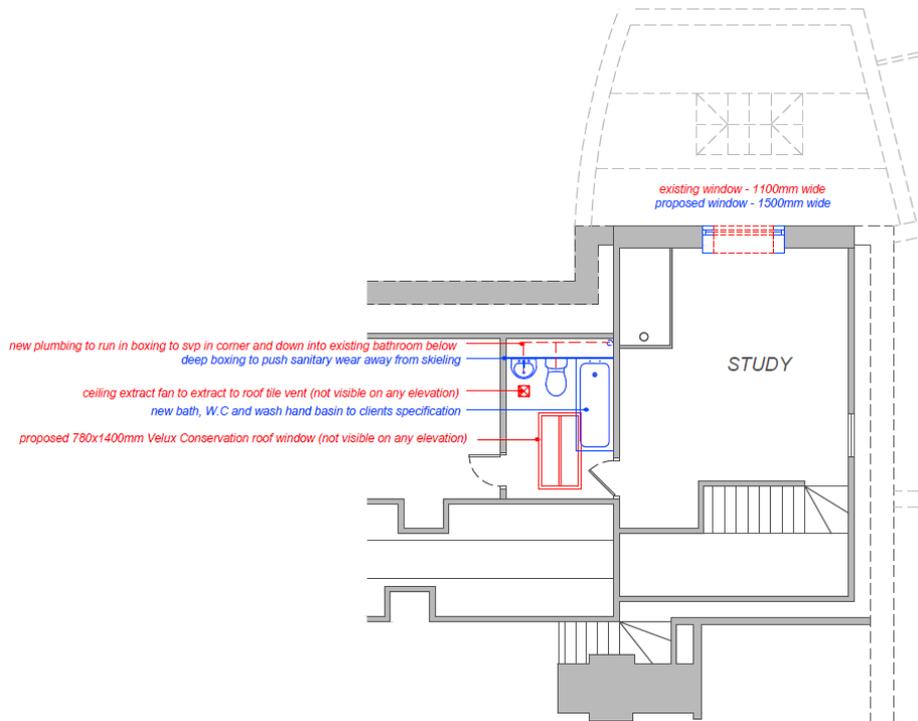
Plates 5 and 6. The underside of the cupboards as seen from the ground floor. The removal of this under-stairs feature would bring back the line of the ceiling to about a third of the way along the doorway into the kitchen (mock-up, right, by CAT, for illustrative purposes only).



Plates 7 and 8. The modern spindles (left) would be replaced by a more appropriate style, such as those on the main staircase (right).



Plan 1. Plan of ground floor showing location of Plates 3–5



Plan 2a (above) and 2b (below): the location of the proposed second-floor attic bathroom (above) and the present first-floor bathroom (below)

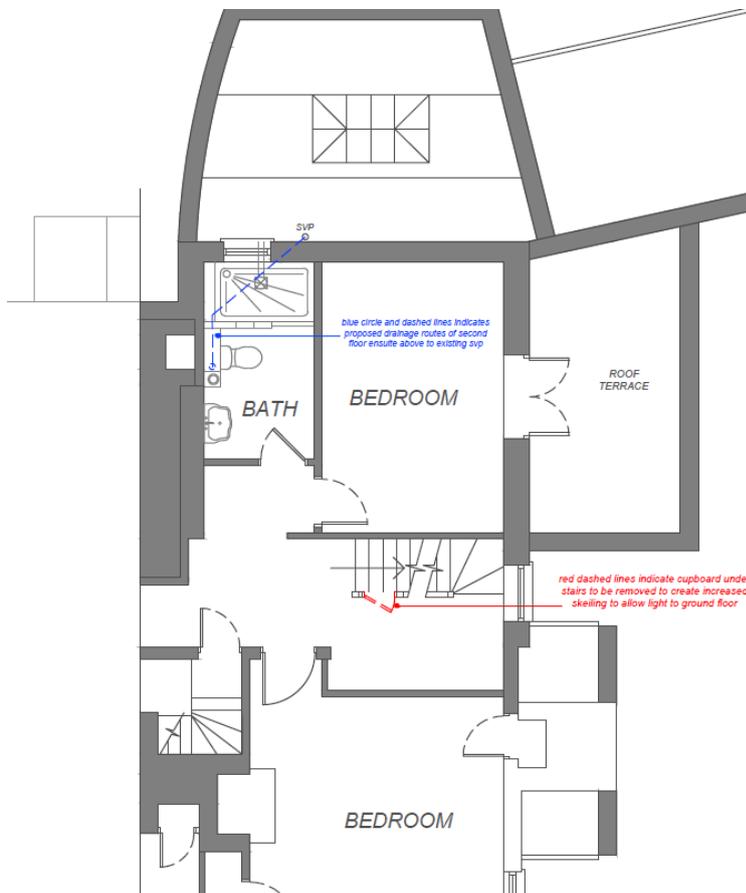




Plate 9 (above left) Plaster skielings and Plate 10 (above, right) floorboards in the attic/proposed bathroom