

HERITAGE & DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

WELL COTTAGE, THE KNOLL, ANSTEY.



NEIL GASKELL ARCHITECTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report assesses the impact of the proposed works to Well Cottage, Anstey.

It is intended to accompany a request for pre application advice to remove some extensions, which are of low value to the heritage asset and replace the lost floor area with a more complimentary and less impactful extension.

The building is grade II listed and is defined on the local map as being of archaeological interest, the site is within a conservation area and the village is defined as a rural area beyond the green belt.

The proposal is to remove the 20th century additions which have a negative impact upon the heritage asset and to replace the lost floor area with a more compact extension which has minimal impact upon the cottage and limited physical connections. By improving the layout of the asset and upgrading the negative fabric the sustainability and desirability will be enhanced as will the conservation of the building.

We believe that the proposals are consistent with the advice and policies in the NPPF.

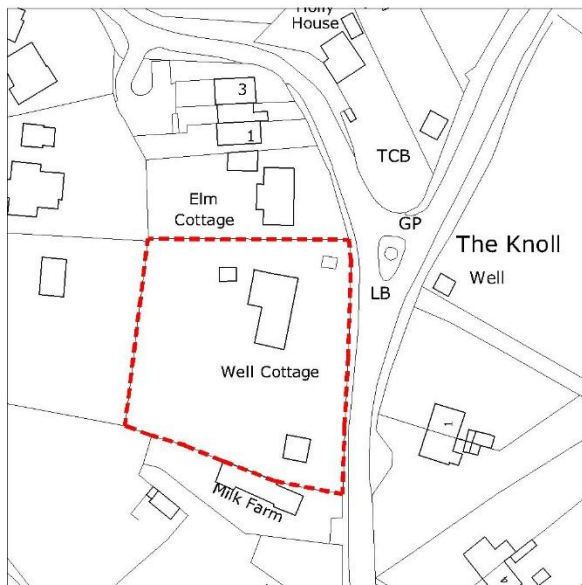


Figure 1 2021 OS Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. HISTORY OF THE ASSET

The property was given a grade II listing in 1984 and the listing states "House. C17, matching N part 1865. Timber frame, white weatherboarded with steep thatched roof. A 1½ storeys, 3 cells, end chimneys plan house facing E. 3 dormer windows of 2-light casements cut into thatch at eaves. Lean-to weatherboarded and thatched porch central to older S part with 2 windows to left and one to right. A pair of windows to N part. Flush 2-light casement windows with small panes. (Bailey (1980)21)." No reference is given to the rear elevation or the single storey extensions to the side and rear, this is either because they were not present at the time or access was not afforded to examine them.

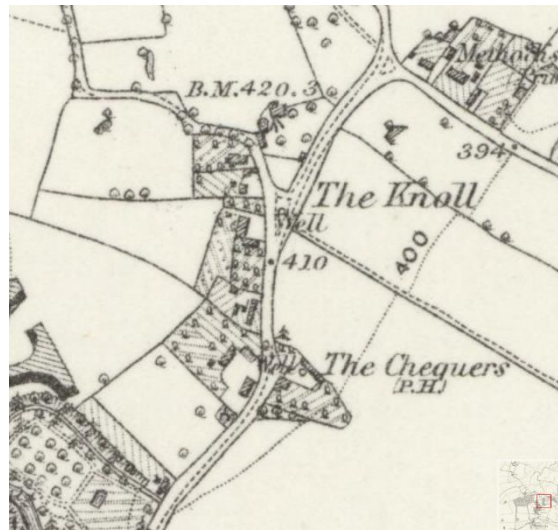


Figure 2 19th Century OS Plan

We have limited historical data other than that referenced above, and evidence suggests that the building being extended in 1865 is correct due to the timber cladding to the internal part of the north room, which would at one point been external. The late 19th Century ordinance survey plan indicates a building to the south running perpendicular to the dwelling, but no physical evidence remains, and it seems to have been disappeared by the start of the 20th Century. The 1960s OS plan indicates that the building was split into three separate dwellings and some evidence exists to back this up, and a smaller side extension is also present. The later additions to the side and rear date from the 20th Century and a lack of planning record would suggest that they were present before 1947 as would the construction technique and quality, though no reference is made to them in the 1980 listing or are they visible on the ordinance maps of the time. They are clear on the first areal photographic record of 2000. It should be noted that the extensions contain all the services, kitchen, and bathroom as well as modern drainage with very little evidence of these being present in the original house. Therefore, we are confident to assume that these modernisations would have taken place in the early to mid-20th



Figure 3 20th Century OS plan indicating the three dwellings on the site.

century. We also believe that the windows to the rear at first floor level were adapted and widened at this time, new timbers can be seen in the roof void, and it is unlikely a domestic worker cottage of this nature would have such wide windows at first floor level, they would more likely be similar to the east elevation or none at all. It is also noted that two of the windows are very close to each other which is unusual in properties such as this where traditionally the separation was much larger between bays to allow for the bundles of straw and ease of installation.

The village of Anstey itself can be dated back to the Domesday book and was dominated by a castle in the Medieval times, the surrounding motte can still be seen, and St Georges Church which stands in the centre of the village. The village is a dispersed collection of dwellings which primarily sit set back from the main thoroughfare and stretch along Hare Street which runs between Lincoln Hill to the South and Mill Lane to the North. Limited commercial activity takes place within the village and the residents are served by a public house, The Blind Fiddler.

As can be seen from the online search the property has very limited planning history.

PLANNING HISTORY

Reference 3/17/0358/HH
Address Well Cottage Anstey Buntingford Hertfordshire SG9 0BN
Description New vehicular entrance (retrospective).

Reference 3/78/0824
Address Land Off Main Road Through Anstey
Description SITE FOR DWELLING

1.2 PROPOSALS – DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

It is proposed that the existing timber frame extensions from the 20th Century be carefully removed, and the existing fabric of the property be made good to match the original weatherboarding. This will mean the loss of a dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom as well as a functional link between the hall and the sitting room. The 1865 extension can currently be accessed via a circuitous route through the bathroom and then bedroom or a door from the hall which has a headroom of less than 1.5m.

To replace these spaces an extension is proposed with a glass link to connect to the existing building at ground and first floor level. The ground floor link will allow passage from the hallway to the northern room, it is deemed that the works required to the fireplace to facilitate access directly from the hallway would not be acceptable. The first-floor link will be narrower and sit in the centre of the central bay window, having no impact upon the existing thatched roof.

The two-storey arrangement sits away from the heritage asset allowing it to be viewed independently and improving its setting in the environment. The first floor will have two additional bedrooms to replace the existing and the existing en-suite on the first floor is extended to create a single-family bathroom. The ground floor will be sunken slightly to help reduce the impact of the development and to increase the headroom. A downstairs WC and utility room are provided as well as an open plan kitchen dining space. The overall area will be similar to that which it replaces.

2. SIGNIFICANCE (HERITAGE)

2.1 Assessing significance.

Assessing the relative heritage significance of heritage assets is now a fundamental part of conservation and decision-making in relation to historic buildings. Significance is defined as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest' (NPPF). Historic England (previously English Heritage) has provided some guidance on the four main types of heritage value: evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal (Conservation Principles, 2008).

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present - it tends to be illustrative or associative.

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Significance can also be defined in relation to levels:

- **Exceptional** – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings and World Heritage Sites.
- **High** – a designated asset important at a national and a regional level, including Grade II listed buildings and conservation areas.
- **Medium** – an undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including local (non-statutory) listed buildings or those that make a positive contribution to the setting of a listed building or to a conservation area. May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.
- **Low** – structure or feature of very limited heritage or other cultural value and not defined as a heritage asset. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings, and buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.

- Negative – structure or feature that harms the value of a heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

2.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The asset has high evidential significance, as the site has been occupied since at least the 17th Century and with the proximity of the medieval castle it is likely human activity has been evident on the site since the medieval times. The building itself has a thatched roof which although renewed frequently can have base layers dating back to the construction of the building. An initial investigation into the thatch indicates that it may have been fully thatched in the not distant past due to the mixture of original and machined timber in the roof space, but this may be localised, and original thatch may be present. However, as the proposals do not have any impact on the thatched roof no further investigation has been undertaken. The structure of the building is exposed so gives an interesting insight into the construction of the property and how it has developed over the years, including the differences in weatherboarding and the timber frame. Further investigation may be required but evidence of cement-based renders being applied to the gable ends of the building as well as mortar replacement with cement-based materials means that some remedial works may need to be undertaken in these areas. The timber frame seems to be pretty much intact but again the use of plasterboard as a finishing material is noted in some areas. As with the thatch the only areas where intervention in the main property is where modern materials have been noted, such as removing the plasterboard from the timber frame to open the hallway or where the extension is removed, and the weatherboarding is to be reintroduced. Finally, evidence of previous structures to the south of the building may lead to uncovering artefacts which give an indication of the previous function of the site, and it seemed to form a courtyard with the main building with a wooded area, possibly an orchard, behind.

Historical value is again high as it is one of the few remaining thatched cottages in the Anstey area, photographic evidence suggests that thatch was a much more prevalent roofing material here at the turn of the 20th Century and our initial investigation reveals that this may be one of only two that remain. The siting of the building, set back from the main road is also a feature of the village which with this being one of the older buildings in relatively original form provides a strong link to the spatial development of Anstey. We are not sure of the original use of the property, but it once stood as three separate dwellings, likely workers cottages most likely linked to the surrounding farms. The name Well cottage is a later addition most likely linked to its location adjacent to the village well, which is still located on an island in the middle of the road outside the property. This is the reason why we feel that the removal of the later additions, particularly the lean-to structure on the south side will significantly enhance the setting and significance of the listed building.

Aesthetic significance is again high, the asset sits within a conservation area and makes a positive contribution to the place. Thatch is a distinctive material with clear connections to the past and has such a significant impact on the buildings that contain it that they are invariably named after it, the only way this building will ever be described is a thatched cottage. Therefore, the significance of the roofing material cannot be overstated and has been an overriding factor in the heritage value of the building, therefore no works are intended to take place to the thatch. The significant number of changes already made in the 20th century including the extensive extension to the side and rear have had a negative impact and make no contribution to the listed building and therefore should be removed.

The asset has a low communal significance in that no record of its earlier use and it is now seen as a single residential dwelling in the village.

3. PLANNING POLICY

National NPPF 197-208 & Local Policy HA7

The proposals satisfy the requirements set out in the NPPF and Local Plan in that they secure the future of the heritage asset by removing only elements which have a low or negative significance. These elements make a harmful contribution not only to the historic value but to the functionality of the property and reorganising these spaces into a more coherent and organised layout will be highly beneficial.

The proposals have a positive, effect on the architectural and historic character and appearance of the building and its setting and the extension respects the scale, design, materials and finishes of the existing building and preserves historic fabric.

4. SUMMARY

The proposed residential extension is a sympathetic alteration and will have no adverse impact upon the setting or significance of the building as a listed building or a property within the conservation area and the removal of the later additions will make a positive contribution to the asset.

5. SITE PHOTOGRAPHS







