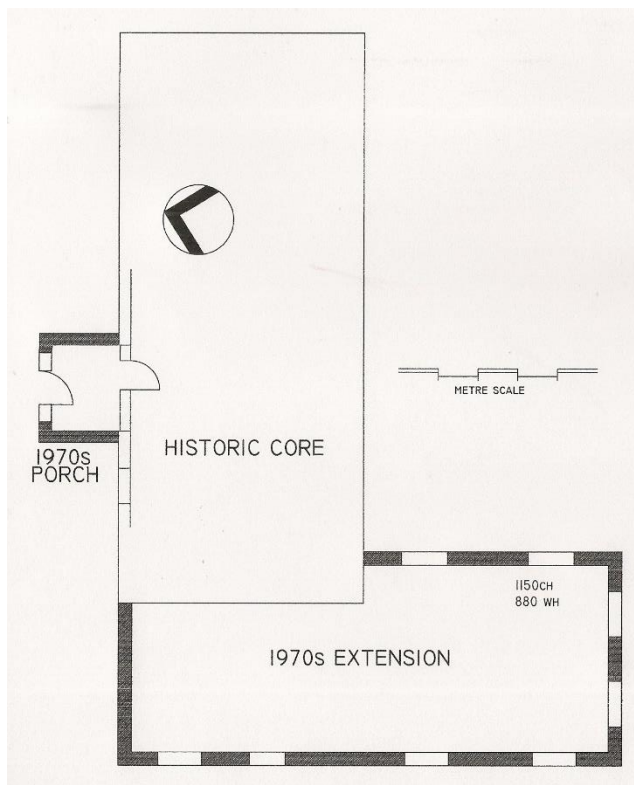


Fen House, Fen Lane, Creeting St Mary IP6 8QD

Alterations to thatched roof of 1970s extension proposed for Mr & Mrs Hillier – Design & Access Statement V2 3 July 2023

Introduction

Fen House is a detached family house on a large rural site fronting Fen Lane. Gardens, hedges and trees partially screen the house from the approach along Fen Lane. The historic core of the house is built as a timber frame, running on an east-west axis, externally rendered below a thatched roof. Not many original architectural features survive, the building having undergone significant alterations over many years. In the 1970s the house was extended with the addition of a porch facing Fen Lane, and a substantial two storey wing running north south, also thatched but with walls of rendered masonry. This latter addition almost doubled the footprint of the dwelling. The re-entrant angle facing south west, where the earlier and later construction meet, shelters a herb garden.



Following years of lack of maintenance, and a change of ownership, on 8th November 2021 Listed Building Consent DC/21/04808 was granted for 1) re-roofing the existing thatched porch with clay tiles, 2) altering the thatched valley to a leaded valley, and 3) changing the existing rear window to french doors. Conditions were attached, which were discharged under DC/22/03295.

Listing

Coordinates - Latitude: 52.175 / 52°10'29"N Longitude: 1.06 / 1°3'35"E

OS Eastings: 609325 OS Northings: 257382 OS Grid: TM093573

Mapcode National: GBR TL6.QS9 Mapcode Global: VHLB5.BL6J Plus Code: 9F4353F5+XX

Entry Name: Fen House

Listing Date: 26 March 1987 **Grade:** II

Source: Historic England **Source ID:** 1182656

English Heritage Legacy ID: 279347

Location: Stonham Earl, Mid Suffolk, Suffolk, IP6

Civil Parish: Stonham Earl **Traditional County:** Suffolk

Lieutenancy Area (Ceremonial County): Suffolk **Church of England Parish:** Earl Stonham St Mary

Church of England Diocese: St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Listing Text

EARL STONHAM FEN LANE
TM 05 NE
4/98 Fen House
- II

Former farmhouse. Late C15 or early C16, altered and extended C20. A 3-cell open hall house. 2 storeys. Timber-framed and plastered. Hipped thatched roof with axial chimney of red brick. Mainly late C20 casements. Thatched gabled C20 entrance porch with boarded door. A substantially-built and relatively unaltered late-mediaeval house. The open hall is in two bays, the open truss having a cambered tie-beam, with massive chamfered arch-braces springing from pilasters rising from floor level (one brace is missing). Tension-braced close studwork and heavy unchamfered joists. Good complete smoke-blackened coupled-rafter roof. In late C16/early C17 a chimney was placed in the cross entry and an upper floor of chamfered joists inserted into the hall; the service rooms were united, and the house functionally "reversed" - the service accommodation being placed at the right-hand end. The rear wing to right is a C20 extension, possibly remodelling a pre-existing structure.

Listing NGR: TM0932557382

This application

This application is to replace the thatched roof covering of the 1970s extension with plain tiles, to match the porch.

Existing

This application does not propose alterations to the thatched roof covering of the original house, which is an integral part of its design and the reason for its characteristic steeply-pitched roof.

Proposed alterations

The alterations proposed are to the 1970s extension which was designed to provide substantial additional floor area over two stories. Obvious efforts were taken at the time to make this extension sympathetic, by limiting its width to traditional proportions, by maintaining the existing ridge and eaves levels, and by matching existing facing and roofing materials. However, whilst the original thatched roof was of simple hipped design, with a block ridge, and small first floor windows nestling under the eaves, the extension was much more elaborate. The 1970s roof includes no less than twelve valleys serving six dormers, enabling the first floor windows to be much larger than the older part of the building. The result of this is that instead of shedding rainwater uniformly along the full length of the roof, as on the original roof, the valleys in the new thatch concentrate run-off into narrow gullies, so much greater volumes of rainwater and snow are channelled into smaller areas, some shaded, impeding drying out and increasing the risk of saturation. With climate change bringing about more intense rainfall, this situation has become markedly worse in recent years, so the valleys are degrading at an alarming rate. It is understood that major re-thatching works have been carried out to the 1970s roof on at least three separate occasions since it was completed, less than 50 years ago, and another round of work is currently overdue. The problem is not restricted to the valleys, because the concentration of water down them means that the gutterless eaves then discharge run-off to the ground below, not evenly distributed, but in specific locations, and this in turn puts the foundations at risk of local disturbance. In addition, there is an increased risk of decay to the wallplate where the extension abuts the original house.

It is also relevant that the extension is closer than the original house to the canopy of the adjacent mature trees, which raise humidity levels and slow the drying out of the roof slopes following heavy rain.

Replacing the 1970s thatched roof with plain clay tiles has the following benefits:-

- the remaining thatch will bring greater significance to the original, historic part of the house
- the tiled roofs, being much thinner than thatch, will sit down relative to the thatched slopes
- more generous valleys can be provided, with guttering installed to collect rainwater and discharge it properly to new soakaways located at least 5m distance from the foundations
- new rainwater goods to be black finished cast metal, half-round gutters 125mm diameter and 68mm diameter downpipes discharging to back inlet gullies
- constant maintenance to the complicated roof slopes of the 1970s thatch can be avoided
- the 1970s roof slope will match the recently tiled porch



Aerial view of Fen House



The house is screened by hedging from Fen Lane

The Thatch Advisory Service makes the following comments on its website:-

Typical service life for thatching material when supplemented by a regular maintenance schedule which is carried out by an experienced thatcher, are considered to be:

Water Reed - 25 to 40+ years.

Combed Wheat Reed - 25 to 35 years.

Long straw - 15 to 25 years.

The ridge of a thatched roof bears the brunt of the weather and, as the fixings are external, it requires attention on average every 10 to 15 years. The material used is usually the same as that used for the main roof areas, however, water reed may be considered too stiff and brittle. As a result, the ridge of a water reed roof is often made with sedge.

A common misconception with thatch is that it absorbs large amounts of water, however this is not the case. Water is transferred down the roof from stem to stem until it drops from the eaves. The steep pitches associated with thatched roofs allow for water to be shed at a very fast rate.

The design must incorporate appropriate designed measures to ensure rain water is discharged from the roof as intended e.g. to guttering, or via deep overhanging eaves and water projection. Where the intention is to project water clear of the building, ample allowance should be made for the projection of the eaves and gables and the ground should be well drained, to avoid water logging of the ground around the foundations. The more complex the roof layout, the more rapid is likely to be the wear on the material e.g. valleys, dormer windows, porches and joins. The simplest design will be the easiest to maintain.



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Valleys

A valley is term used for the roof where two sections of a building meet at an angle. A building which is L shaped will have one valley whereas a building which is T shaped will have two.

Valleys are a channel for water and their construction needs to acknowledge this. Due to the amount of water which travels down a valley the construction has, over the years, varied. The larger the roof area feeding the water to the valley, the more the valley has potential to wear.

Some valleys are thatched and it important that the thatch is applied very tightly. The way it is formed it will create a slightly thicker thatch but it is the way it thatched which will make it last, not the thickness.

Some thatched properties may have a tiled valley with a thatched barge either side.

A lead valley is similar to a tiled one.

The construction of valley is where a lay board is placed on the main roof where the valley will be. The jack-rafters go into this lay board and the roof is then constructed at right angles to this. The pitch, as with all thatch, should be a minimum 45', the steeper the better. Usually a double rafter is placed where the ridge board from the valley roof joins to give strength to the construction.



1) WEST ELEVATION.



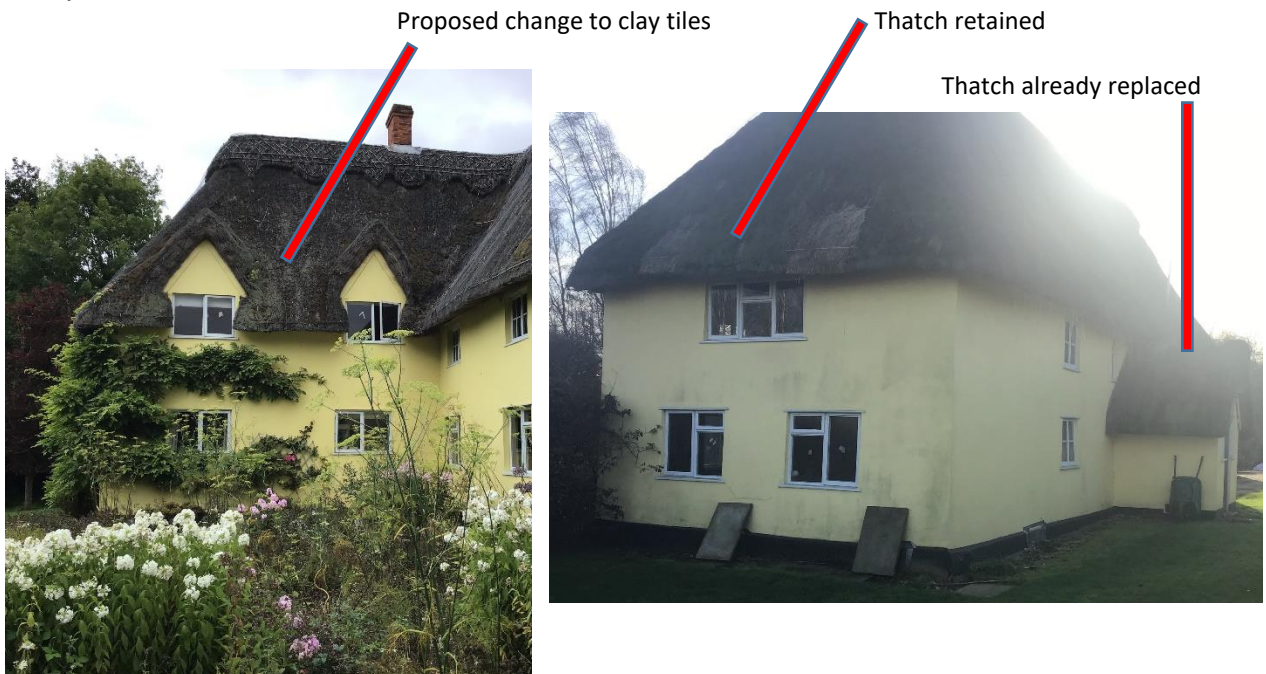
The whole of this elevation dates from the 1970s, being a large extension to the original house, with walls of colourwashed hard render onto blockwork, and painted softwood windows, beneath a thatched roof. The proposal is to remove the modern thatch and re-roof the whole of this elevation in plain clay tiles. The proximity of the dormer windows and their roofs, together with the natural thickness of the thatch, means the valleys between them are having to cope with large quantities of rainwater discharged into small channels, and the fabric is suffering as a result.

2) SOUTH ELEVATION



The projecting left wing of this elevation dates from the 1970s, being a large extension to the original house, with walls of colourwashed hard render onto blockwork, and painted softwood windows, beneath a thatched roof. The recessed wing to the right is the back elevation of the original house, no alteration to existing thatch proposed.

3) EAST ELEVATION



The projecting wing on the left photo dates from the 1970s, being a large extension to the original house, with walls of colourwashed hard render onto blockwork, and painted softwood windows, beneath a thatched roof. The photo on the right is of the original house, no alteration to existing thatch proposed. The porch to the extreme right has been reroofed in plain tiles under a previous consent.

4) NORTH ELEVATION

Thatch retained

1970s end proposed as tiled
approx verge line shown in green



The porch and right hand end of this elevation (including the right-hand ground floor window NG6) are 1970s additions to the earlier construction, being walls of colourwashed hard render onto blockwork, and painted softwood windows, beneath a thatched roof. The proposals would form a thatched verge running from the end of the existing ridge down to the eaves, below which the new tiled roofslope would run into a hip returning along the west elevation.

Justification

Improvements in appearance, greater legibility of the historical development of the building, and reduction in maintenance to the complicated roof over the 1970s extension.

Access Statement

No effect on access.

Summary of materials proposed

New roof tiles to be a mix of Medium Antique and Dark Antique tiles from Tudor Rooftiles, with a clay ridge, and traditional white painted bargeboards in painted softwood, together with painted softwood eaves fascia and soffit approx 180mm deep.

New rainwater goods to be black finished cast metal.

Tudor Roof Tiles @TudorRoofTiles · 6 Jul

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Our mix of colours blend so well on historic [#Roofs](#). This [#renovation](#) uses our [#handmade](#) clay [#rooftiles](#) in beautiful mix of our Medium Antique & Dark Antique colours, which will naturally age and weather over time.

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