

Proposal for a rear extension providing ground floor living space at 17 St John's Street, Hythe - V3 December 2023

Design, Heritage and Access Statement in support of a planning application and a Listed Building Consent application



View from rear of cottage across courtyard showing proposal (centre) earlier kitchen extension to left

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| Site: | 17 St John's Street Hythe; SO456BZ. |
| Planning history: | 22/10239, planning application, refused 22/10252, listed building consent application, refused; Planning appeals: APP/B1740/W/22/3311254, dismissed; APP/B1740/Y/22/3311950, dismissed. Pre-application submissions: ENQ/23/20240/EHH; ENQ/23/20236/EHH. (No formal response at time of writing) |
| Proposal: | Modification of existing outbuilding to provide a rear extension for use as a flexible living space/studio. |
| Date: | November 2023 |
| Applicant | Barrie Willacy RIBA; 17 St John's Street Hythe; SO45 6BZ |

1.0 *Location*

1.1. No. 17 St John's Street lies at the southern end of a short terrace including number 11 (originally No.13) and number 15 on the east side of the street. St John's Street is a busy road serving the village centre. The terrace lies across the street from the church of St John and the Lidl supermarket whilst to the north is Waitrose. A commercial boatyard is situated over the southern boundary of No. 17. Southampton Water bounds the property to the east.

2.0 *The site.*

2.1. The plot is between 6 and 8 metres in width, 93 metres in length with an area of approximately 815m² (0.08 Ha). The property extends to the Water where it terminates in a set of flood gates beyond which is a small beach. The boundary to No. 15, is delineated by a close board fence of varied height; the southern boundary to the boatyard is defined partly by a 1.8m brick wall and partly by a 1.8m chestnut pale fence. A series of 20'0" shipping containers form the most dominant enclosure along the southern boundary.

2.2 No. 17 St John's Street is a Grade II listed building, added to the list in 1973. and together with the rest of the terrace lies within the Hythe Conservation Area.

2.3 The cottage was built by a local family. Over the two and a half centuries or so since it was built successive owners have extended and altered the main shell to accommodate changing family and economic circumstances and have constructed a number of outbuildings to the rear including a narrow brick and slate range attached to the rear of the cottage, part of which is the subject of this proposal, and various other small structures of indeterminate use.

2.4 When my wife and I bought the property from the District Council in 1975 the main cottage and all the outbuildings were in a derelict state (figures 2 and 3) the property having lain un-occupied and un-maintained for a number of years. The next door property (No 19 The Jungle) which was in a similar state of dereliction but not listed was demolished in the same year. The range of outbuildings adjoining the cottage, originally incorporating a washhouse, workshop and store, had partially collapsed and at the garden (east) end little remained of the external walls above ground level. They were overgrown: a large tree occupying the eastern end of what was once the workshop. The property had no main services.

3.0 *Brief background to the current proposal*

3.1 In 1976 planning permission and listed building consent were granted for a kitchen extension within that part of the range of outbuildings closest to the cottage. Shortly afterwards the remainder of the range was repaired as a temporary workshop to provide an all-weather space together with the facilities necessary to repair and restore the cottage and build the kitchen. This was subsequently extended to provide an additional width of floor space of 1.5 metres along both sides with doors at each end – essentially a covered corridor - to allow the use of woodworking machines necessary to convert long lengths of reclaimed timber. The extended workshop was integral to the economic repair and



Fig 1 - Number 17 in 1975.



Fig 2 - Number 19 (the Jungle) in 1975.

restoration of the main cottage allowing my wife and I to carry out the work and to live in the cottage at the same time.

3.2 Planning permission was not obtained for this temporary extension which was later used as an office and studio. This lapse led to the subsequent retrospective applications (planning and listed building consent) for the purpose of regularising the existing extension. These applications were refused and the subsequent appeals were dismissed.

3.3 Two pre-application enquiries were submitted at the end of August 2023 to explore potential alternatives with the planning officers. Both schemes pulled the end of the existing extension back to the end wall of the rear extension to No 15 – slightly shorter than the length of the original range of outbuildings. One option also reduced the width of the extension whilst the other option kept the width the same as the existing structure. Both options suggested significant changes to detailed design and materials and in particular explored alternative construction for the roof. Formal responses to the enquiries have not received but the Conservation Officer's internal consultations on both enquiries were forwarded and both were unfavourable. The main objection appeared to be the projection beyond the face of the existing kitchen (which was also that of the original range of outbuildings)

3.4 The current proposal seeks to reach a mutually acceptable solution for what is a modest extension. Having carefully explored other solutions, it represents the only practical and least environmentally harmful option which would enable retention of a modest ground

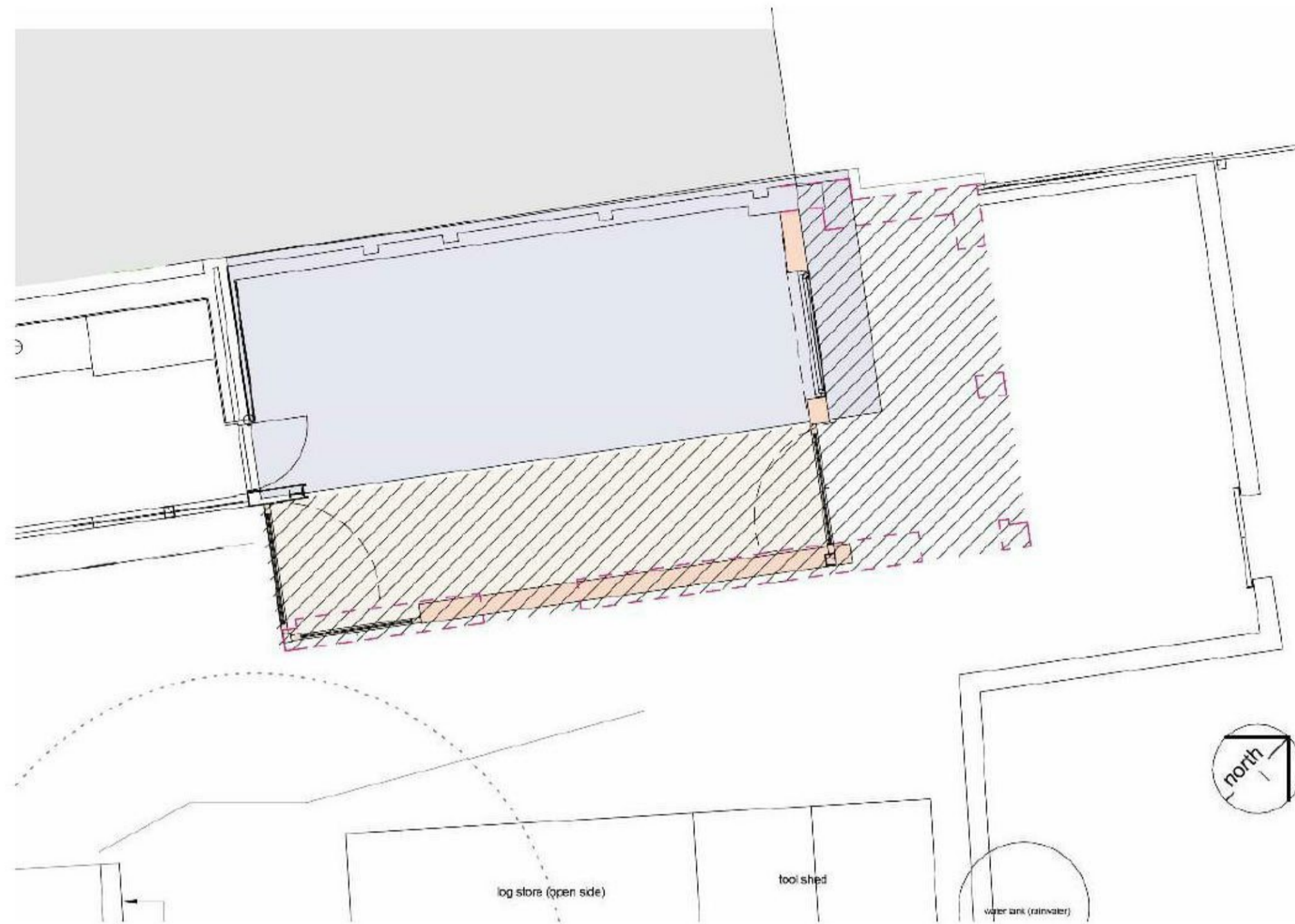


fig 3 – plan showing relationship between the original outbuilding shown in blue shading; the existing extension shown hatched and the current proposal shaded pink..

floor living space with good mobility access, thus allows us to keep a ground floor living space and therefore to continue to live in this property for which we have a great affinity.

4.0 The proposal – design principle

4.1 The proposal is very different to the existing extension. It has been considered as a simple structure reflecting the character of the earlier workshop which occupied this end of the original outbuilding. It is significantly smaller than the existing structure; a different shape and of different detail design and materials. It addresses, and seeks to resolve, the objections to the retrospective applications raised by the planning inspector and is therefore probably most useful to describe the design changes in the context of the planning inspector's decision letter. The plan (fig3) and the sketches taken from the computer model (figs 4 and 5) illustrate the basic form of the proposal.

4.2 The proposal is substantially shorter than the existing extension– it is slightly shorter also than the original outbuilding – to allow it to align with the rear wall of the extension to the adjacent property, No 15. (fig 3). The width of the earlier scheme has, however, been retained in order to achieve a useable living space with good mobility access. This would result in a reduction in floor area of just under 45% that of the existing, extension. The gable of the original outbuilding has been reinstated – the hipped end removed - and the flat roof (designed as a green roof but not implemented) has been replaced with a shallow pitched lead roof.

4.3 The reduction in length reduces intrusion into the rear garden referred to in the officer's reports on the earlier applications (although it should be noted that the rear garden

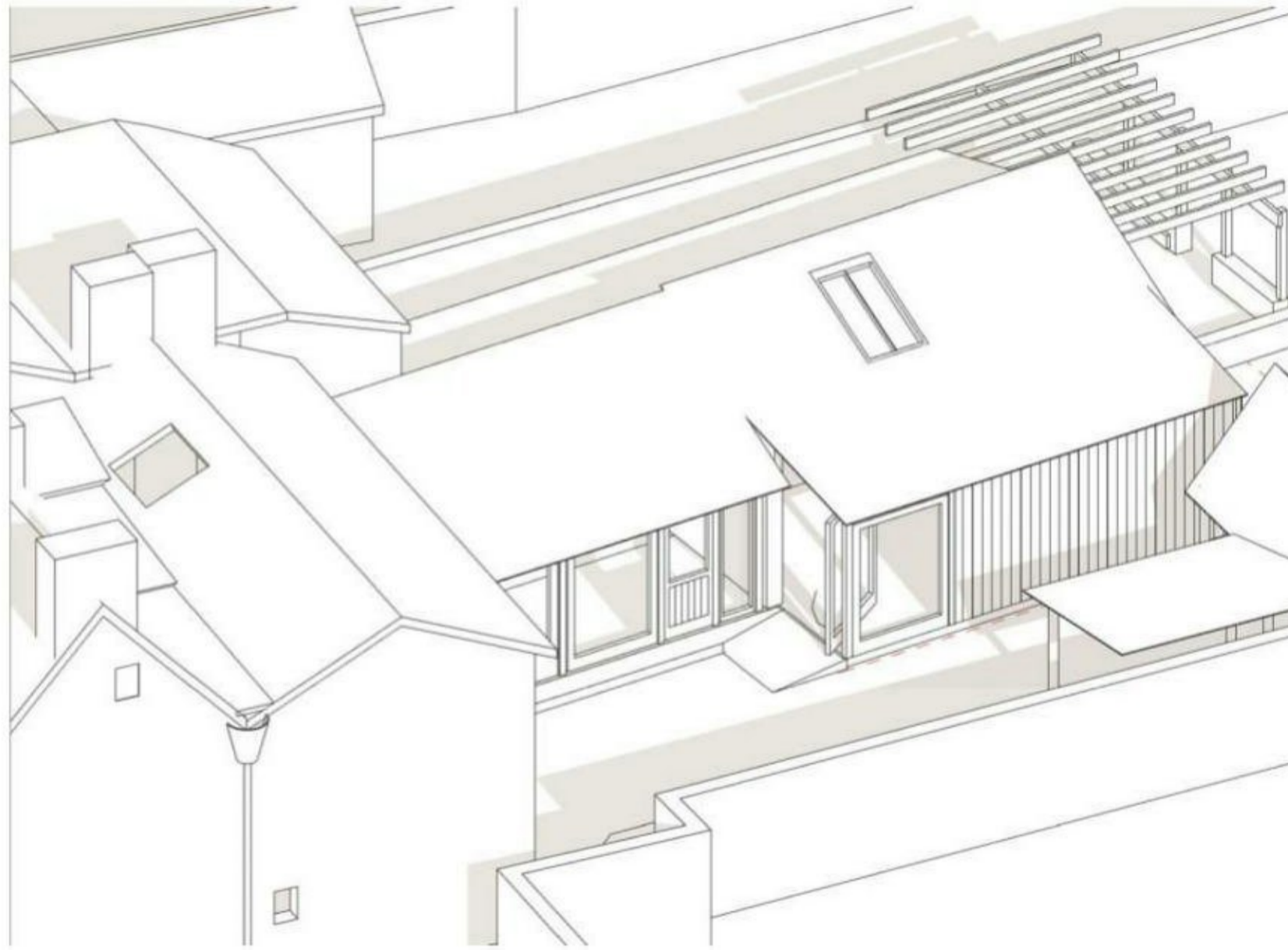


fig 4 - model view of proposal from south west



fig 5- model view from SE

– excluding the courtyard - is 70m in length with an area of 615 m²). The change in roof shape aims to address the inspector's concern over the introduction of a hipped end.

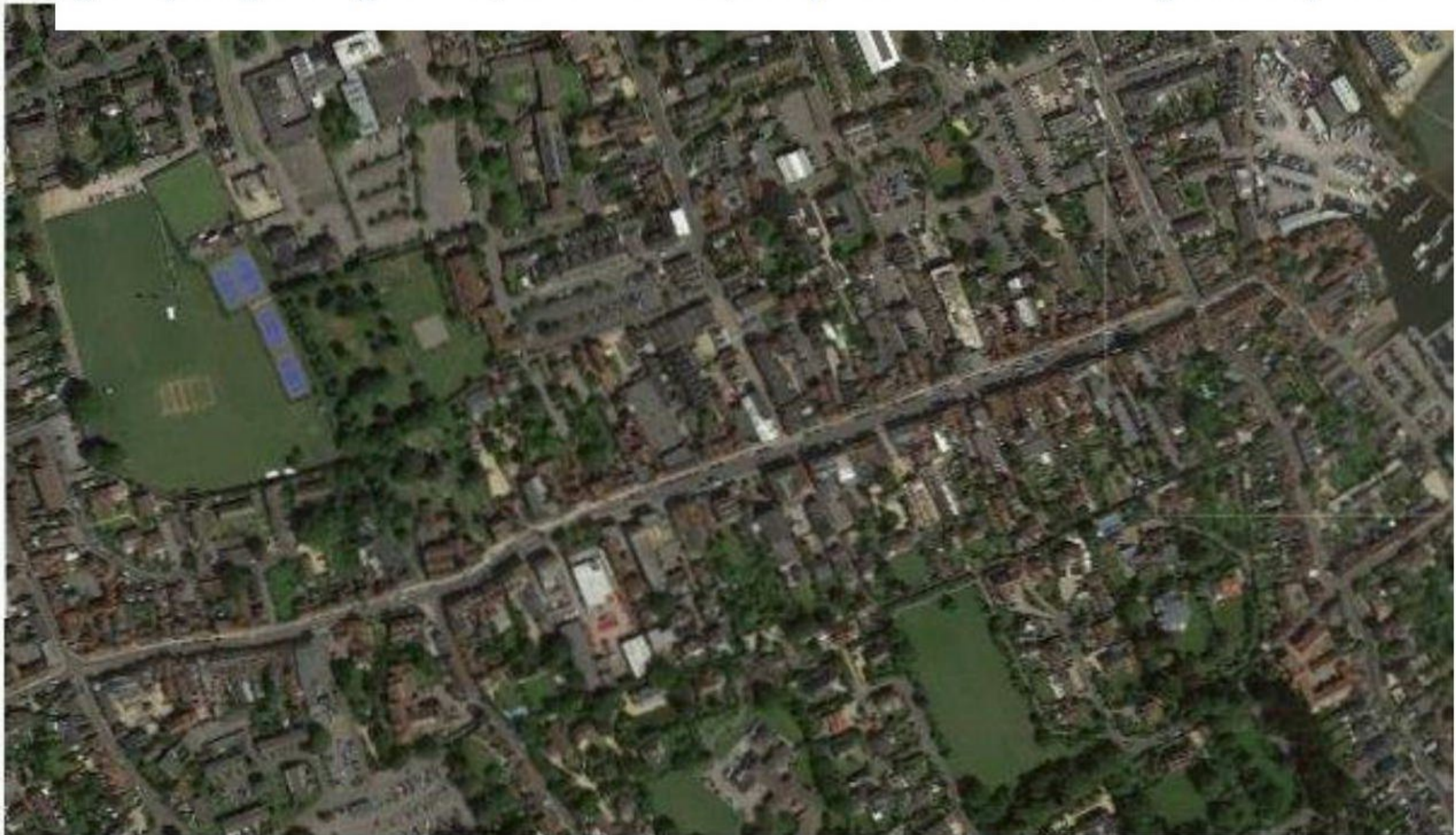
4.4 The planning inspector made reference to the burgage plot (planning inspector para 7). The proposal does not change the delineation of the original land tenure boundaries as shown on the 1909 OS map (based on an 1865 survey). There are no other permanent structures on the site of No.17 other than those shown on the 1909 map but this is most

likely to be a result of the socio-economic conditions of the village at that time rather than land tenure restrictions.

4.5 The burgage form of land tenure did not seek to constrain development of land but rather to encourage it. The Burgage Charter is credited with being instrumental in the development of towns. Plots were subdivided, often multiple times, within the terms of the lease inevitably generating additional building and reconfiguration of space within the plot. Lymington, possibly the finest example of medieval property boundaries in the District, demonstrates this. Fig 6 includes an extract of the 1860 OS map of Lymington with the High



fig 6- Lymington High Street, 1860 OS base; compared with recent Google Earth photo



Street together with a recent aerial photo of the same area taken from Google Earth. It is clear that there was extensive development within the tenure boundaries even before the end of the 19thC – long after the foundational charter – and continuing to this day.

4.6 Hythe was not so large or so wealthy as Lymington and therefore the pressure for development was not so great. However Lymington shows that the extension and proliferation of structures within this form of tenure was relatively common and did not, of itself, harm the historic significance of burgage which was a flexible format and, almost by definition, a means of encouraging change rather than resisting it.

4.7 The extremely small scale of the current proposal does not therefore, we think, by virtue of its scale or arrangement within the site, cause harm either to the historic significance of the documented pattern of burgage or the historic spatial or architectural character of the plot.

5.0 *The proposal – detail design.*

The planning inspector notes that a contemporary approach may not be prohibited by the planning policy (planning inspector para 11) but goes on to query the specific approach implicit in the existing extension. The kitchen, previously approved, and to which the proposal is attached, is evidence of a contemporary approach. The current proposal is a serious attempt to balance the competing influences of the form of the existing range of outbuildings and the kitchen; to recognise the relevance of distinctive difference and to achieve an acceptable outcome.

- The flat roof of the previous extension (planning inspector - para 10) – designed as a green (planted) roof - has been changed to a shallow pitch (10deg) lead roof merging with the original form of the slate pitch.

This is a traditional detail using traditional materials suited to providing a narrow width extension where, as here, the pitch of the original roof could not be extended in tiles or slates because the angle of pitch would either be too low to prove weathertight or would result in too low headroom for practical purposes. It is of a piece with the pragmatic manner in which artisans dwellings of this period were adjusted over time to suit the changing needs of their occupiers - including those in this short terrace. Such a solution enables the eaves level to remain approximately the same as the original roof – retained by the existing kitchen.

- The hipped end at the east end of the existing extension has been removed and reinstated as a gable (planning inspector - para 10). This will be implemented using Welsh slate seconds and lead flashings to match the existing.
- The external walls of the proposal have been re-designed (planning inspector para 11). The horizontal Douglas Fir rain-screen cladding has been removed and replaced with a mixture of purpose made timber framed windows - matching in style those of the existing kitchen - in conjunction with wide vertical boarding – timber species and detailing to be agreed. This is shown as a durable timber left natural but it could be painted to be in greater conformity with the period and social status of the cottage. The use of glazed corners within the timber cladding assists in minimising the <hard> edge of the projection beyond the line of the kitchen.

- The reinstatement of the gable end to the roof brings with it a reinstated gable wall with a rendered finish.
- One of the roof-lights within the outbuilding section of roof would be removed and the slating made good with slate. The other roof-light will be modified by recessing it into the roof plane; changing the facings from bronze to black and adding a glazing bar. This seeks to address the issues of overall size and the lack of vertical emphasis raised by the inspector (planning inspector - para 10).
- The difference in height between the ridge to the existing monopitch roof over this end of the existing range of outbuildings and that of the existing kitchen roof is less than 70mm (planning inspector - para 12) The ridge was surveyed in response to the inspector's comments and the result is included at Appendix A. The difference in height will be reconciled when the roof of the outbuilding is re-slatted in the next couple of years.

6.0 *Heritage aspects.*

6.1 The proposal would not be visible from beyond the site. The short length of restored ridge which will be visible from The Promenade (replacing the hipped end) was part of the original outbuilding ridge and abutment which has been visible from public space since The Promenade was built in 1974/75.

6.2 The planning inspector's point, in connection with the existing extension, that the protection of heritage is not limited to what can be seen or touched (planning inspector para 13) is understood however, as noted above, the current proposal does not impact upon the historic plot pattern of Hythe and neither, we believe, would it cause harm to the non-material historic, architectural or spatial values of the site or of the wider conservation area.

6.3 The roof form of the current proposal creates a shallow <cat-slide> in traditional lead detailing which, in conjunction with the extended gable, articulates and differentiates the shape and material of the original range of outbuildings. This, in conjunction with the detail changes in wall design, softens the impact of the proposal upon the main cottage (No. 17).

6.4 The inspector recognises that the existing extension does not cause physical harm to No. 17 and that the impact upon the setting of No. 11(13) and No. 15 is of lesser significance than to No. 17 (planning inspector para 12) and is largely a consequence of the difference in height of the different sections of ridge. That almost certainly arises from a drawing error in the earlier planning application. The differential is less than 70mm (Appendix A). This will be adjusted when the roof is re-slatted.

6.5 The wall materials and detailing pick up those of the earlier kitchen extension - for which permission was granted— which was a carefully considered contemporary approach to the problem of adding to an historic building and reflected the relatively simple enclosure of the original outbuilding albeit using different materials.

6.6 The impact of this minor proposal will have minimal impact upon the setting of the wider conservation area particularly when seen in conjunction with the very significant

commercial and retail developments – a feature of this developing local centre - which now surround it.

7.0 Access

7.1 A primary purpose of this proposal is to provide a ground floor useable living space for my wife and I as we move along the age spectrum. Such a space needs to be easily accessible for wheelchair and/or mobility scooter. It will be impractical for us to use a first floor living space. The wide pivot doors proposed will allow level access direct into the living space and from there direct access to the adjoining kitchen and small shower room/WC and bedroom.

8.0 Summary

8.1 It is perhaps stating the obvious that this proposal is made in the face of some resistance to the idea of extending this listed building. That it is made at all, therefore, is a reflection of the importance we place on being able to continue to live here. Whilst we recognise that facilitating the continued occupation, use and enjoyment of this historic building should not be seen as a prize for restoring it nor as a prime function of the planning process but the advantage of keeping people in their own home is of some social benefit which we argue is worth weighing against the level of harm such a modest intervention might cause.

The planning inspector noted (para 16) that the existing extension is of less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets. The current proposal is a result of serious attention to all the planning inspector's points. It is much more modest in scale and reflects more accurately, in form, that of a pragmatic addition not uncommon in the 18th C and early 19th C. The structure does not alter the historic plot boundary. There is additional building (less than 10 sq metres of floor space) but additional buildings and subsequent modifications are features of historic land tenure throughout the ages and represent a key determinant of social and economic change. The fact that there is no precise precedent on the site should not, we think, preclude such an approach.

We do not believe that this proposal causes environmental harm but any perceived harm it may be thought to cause – material or non-material - is extremely small and surely does not outweigh the gain in increased flexibility in the use of this building.

Barrie Willacy RIBA
V3 - December 2023

Design, Heritage and Access Statement - Appendix A

Survey of differential ridge heights 07/08/2023

A survey was carried out to explore the difference in height between the ridge of the kitchen extension of No 17 implemented in 1976/77 and that of the ridge to the pitched roof forming the residual range of outbuildings (that part of the range left after the kitchen had been constructed) comprising part of applications 22/10239 and 22/10252 subject of the recent appeals and referred to by the planning inspector in his decision letter.



The purpose of the survey was to check the <as built> differential between these roof heights. All the photos were taken with a compact camera date and time stamped. Since it was difficult to be sure of adequate resolution the first photo shows the general arrangement whilst the additional photos show more clearly the rule; the level vial and the nature of support on the higher ridge.



The rule is a standard Helix 150mm metric rule taped to the end of the level. The end of the ruler has been arranged to just touch the top of the lead flashing over the kitchen ridge. It will be noted that the scale does not start at the end of the ruler. An addition of 4mm was made to give the correct difference in height between the ridges

In order to establish a level line a timber block cut precisely to the pitch of the roofs (25.5 degrees) packed out to suit was bonded temporarily to the leadwork at the junction between the roofs of the two extension to No 17.



Result

The difference in height between the ridge to the earlier kitchen extension and the section of the range of outbuildings - subject of this proposal - is approximately 70mm.

End

Barrie Willacy RIBA
December 2023