

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

2 RIVERSIDE COTTAGES,
GITTISHAM,
EX14 3AE

April 2024

The Listing text is as follows (omitting references to No 1 Cottage) and with comments in italics:

"House divided into 2 cottages. Circa early C17 with circa C18 additions. Rendered, probably cob and stone; thatched roof with a plain ridge, half-hipped at the left of the main range...hipped at left end of left hand block; picturesquely sited on the outskirts of Gittisham.

Plan: single depth main range, 2 rooms wide with lower roofed block at left end, slightly set back from main range. The main range is probably early C17 in origin...end block possibly C18. The house has been divided down the centre, leaving the approximately central front door to serve No 2.

Exterior: 2 storeys; Plank front door. C19 or early C20 2-and 3 light casements with glazing bars. On the left return of the main range a blocked 2-light timber-mullioned window (*since restored*).

Interior: Left hand room has a plastered-over chamfered crossbeam (*since revealed*)

Roof: One jointed cruck roof truss survives in No2, the foot descending to the ground at the rear and probably removed at the front. The trusses in Riverside Cottage appear to be "A" frames, apex not inspected.

An extremely attractive building, sited above Curlditch and Crabbs Cottage and forming a good group with them"

Existing Rear Bathroom:

The Cottage has been sympathetically renovated in recent years, in line with approved planning applications. A single storey extension to the side and rear was completed in 2016, providing much needed kitchen, utility and dining space. The rather unsightly mid C20 rear bathroom block was originally of rough cast render,

metal window with fan-light, and corrugated cement fibre roof sheets. The appearance was improved in 2017 with replacement corrugated roof sheets and a painted softwood window, along with new painted fascia and galvanised guttering; whilst this has helped improve the external appearance, it remains a small and rather unattractive protrusion off the main house.

Internally, its single skin construction and solid concrete floor – along with size constraints - limit efforts to properly insulate this block. Altogether, it would benefit from replacement with something that resolves the external disconnect of the single storey extensions, which would also allow for a marked improvement internally.

Proposed Rear Bathroom and 3rd Bedroom:

With a growing family, and a desire to stay in the cottage, the proposed replacement extension would create an additional 6m² of floor space, which would allow for a small third bedroom.

The property has characteristics of a reasonably sized family home, with a large garden, two off-road parking spaces and adequate ground floor living space. However, the first floor is limited to two bedrooms and a small family bathroom, with no possibility of a third bedroom. It is considered that the proposed re-use of the space at the rear of the property represents the most sympathetic solution, and in doing so will balance up the property with a proportionate number of bedrooms.

It is also considered that this proposal would resolve the mismatch of the existing single storey extensions; the roof material and pitch will match that of the existing kitchen extension, with a subtle glazed canopy providing a covered porch for the rear door. The render will match the texture of the recent kitchen extension and be painted the same colour. The existing section of stone wall that remains on show will be repointed with a lime based mortar matching that used on exposed stonework at the front of the cottage.

The new slate roof will be tucked under the eaves of the thatch and be 'cut out' around the existing first floor windows – the flat sections and upstands will be finished with rolled lead. The existing bathroom window (installed in 2017) will be re-used to serve the new bedroom, and the new bathroom window will share the same section detail and painted finish. The existing small crittle style window with fan light will be blocked in to create shelving space on either side. As with the recent kitchen extension, the style of this bathroom extension - whilst using traditional materials - will easily be read as a modern addition to the original cottage.

Impact of Bathroom Replacement:

Being situated at the rear of the property and sunk down from the garden and orchard surrounding the property, this rear section of the property is rather hidden

in the landscape, and not visible from public view. The rear elevation is dominated by the thatched roof, which drops down to an eaves height of just 2.4m at its minimum, and the same thatched roof continues further (c.2.3m) and lower (eaves c.1.5m) on the adjacent property (no.1).

The existing bathroom block has very little merit – a recently modified mid C20 addition most likely built by the Estate to provide an attached bathroom for the tenants in the cheapest possible way; the extension fills the ‘L’ shaped, north-facing, sunken corner space to the rear of the main house, where services come in, and waste exits the property.

The existing bathroom block is slightly squint to the main house, probably done so to allow for the small metal framed window opening, which it is thought to have served a dining area before we purchased the property in 2014; with no need to retain this opening, the replacement building can be built parallel to the main house (see ‘Proposed’ drawing).

Other than the C20 small metal framed fan-light window, the replacement bathroom will work around the older existing window openings to minimise the impact on the rear elevation. The new bathroom will be approximately 1.8m longer than the existing, thus covering an area of cement based rough cast render on the main house. The section of exposed stonework will be retained and re-pointed with a lime based mortar matching the old (and that of the re-pointed front elevation). The new walls will be finished with a painted smooth cement based render to match the texture of the existing kitchen extension, and be distinct from the remaining re-pointed stonework.

The proposed slate roof and glass canopy will be tucked under the eaves, requiring no alteration to the existing thatch roof, and follow the same pitch as the 2016 kitchen extension, thus resulting in a similar relative eaves height from ground level. The existing soil vent pipe will be predominantly covered by the replacement building and the additional guttering can be removed.

Overall, whilst being larger than the existing, it is hoped that the replacement bathroom will result in a ‘cleaner’ elevation, which leaves its most important characteristics untouched – the thatch roof, the older windows, and the exposed stonework.

Front Porch:

The existing front porch is thought to be a C20 addition and was repaired in 2015. It features a corrugated metal roof (replacing previous cement fibre), supported by a hardwood timber post (replacement of rotten softwood post) off a small stone and brick wall. Given the original cement fibre roof covering, this porch is likely a relatively modern addition to provide a degree of shelter from rain dripping off the thatch roof above. This porch and doorway constitutes the main entrance to the

house, opening directly into the dining area, with very little lobby space to separate living space from outside space.

It is proposed to enclose and slightly increase the size of the porch by incorporating the small outside corner nook between the porch wall and the house (currently used as 'overspill' for wellies etc). The structure would constitute a low masonry wall, which will take the non-opening painted timber windows. The render and window section detail will again match that of the recent kitchen extension. There will be a flat rolled lead roof which will project approximately 40cm past the front door to provide some shelter. Rainwater will discharge via a galvanised steel downpipe (as existing), exiting the flat room from a hidden gully.

The main intention of this alteration is to create a dry storage space for coats, boots, shoes etc as required by the daily to-and-fro of a busy young family. Other than re-use of the existing front door, the proposal avoids any attempt to imitate the original listed building, thus allowing it to be read as a modest modern addition.

Impacts of Porch Replacement:

The recently repaired C20 porch is of little merit, but its positioning on the front elevation of the house means it is a clearly visible feature. It infills the 'L' shape between the C17 main house and the C18 wing addition. A similar C20 porch inhabits the opposite 'L' of no.1, but is enclosed with a man-made slate roof covering; these symmetrical corners have obviously provided a naturally inviting space for previous owners to create covered structures.

The proposed replacement will make it clearer that the porch is a modern addition to the main house, being predominantly glazed with materials to match the recent kitchen extension and the proposed bathroom extension. Although larger, the replacement flat lead roof will provide less of a visual impact than the existing lean-to corrugated roof. The existing open porch allows a view through to the doorway and the external walls of the main house; by incorporating a significant amount of glazing in the new structure, this positive feature will be retained.

Although enlarging and enclosing the existing, the new porch will be clearly read as a modern addition to the main house, whilst occupying a space that allows it to sit subtly within the principal elevation of the property.

Overall Summary:

In the wider context of the significance of the group that Riverside Cottage forms along with Curlditch and Crabbs Cottage, these modest alterations pose no threat. The cottage will be improved by replacing the existing bathroom block at the rear, and by remodelling the existing open porch into an enclosed dry space. Existing important characteristics of the main house will not be lost, and the design of the

proposed replacements will better complement the overall appearance of the property.

The time and money spent to implement these changes will hopefully allow 2 Riverside to remain as our family residence - and insure its upkeep - for many years to come. Work carried out in recent years hopefully illustrates our commitment to sympathetic renovation work, where every attempt is made to enhance the property as a heritage asset.