

**REPORT OUTLINE FOR AREA PLANNING COMMITTEES****Report No.**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	04 January 2017
<b>Application Number</b>	16/09965/LBC
<b>Site Address</b>	Mays Farmhouse, The Street, Hullavington SN14 6DP
<b>Proposal</b>	Application to include replacement of bedroom timber floors with plywood, replacement of living room, sitting room and dining room floors and hearths, alterations to master bedroom partitions, installation of freestanding bath on raised platform, alterations to kitchen window, removal of second floor bedroom ceiling, and reinstatement of recently blocked up gate in the garden boundary wall (retention of)
<b>Applicant</b>	Kim and Penelope Swithinbank
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	Hullavington
<b>Electoral Division</b>	By Brook– Cllr Scott
<b>Grid Ref</b>	389581 182060
<b>Type of application</b>	Listed Building Consent
<b>Case Officer</b>	Caroline Ridgwell

**1. Reason for the application being considered by Committee**

The application has been called to committee at the request of Cllr Scott so the committee can consider the social benefit against the significant harm.

**2. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of retaining the works already carried out against national policies in the Planning Act, NPPF, BS7913 and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that listed building consent should be **REFUSED**.

**3. Main Issues**

The key issues in considering the application are as follows:

- Principle of the works.
- Impact on significance of the heritage asset.
- Impact on the setting of the heritage assets

**4. Site Description**

The application site is a grade II listed detached farmhouse originating from the C17 and C18 set well back from the road. The stone built house is an L plan with outbuildings (now converted) continuing back from the rear of the house. There are stone walls surrounding the front and rear gardens, and a series of former barns and byres (also now converted) on the opposite side of what would have been the rear farmyard. The barns are now in separate ownership but are curtilage listed, as are the boundary walls. The house is centrally located within Hullavington village and in close proximity to several listed buildings. The site is not within a Conservation Area.

## 5. Planning History

N/01/00563/LBC	REPLACE STONE TILES WITH SECOND-HAND CLAY, RE-ROOF KITCHEN ROOF IN STONE TILES, RE-ROOF REAR ELEVATION OF OUTBUILDING IN ARTIFICIAL TILES – <b>REFUSED</b>
N/01/01875/LBC	REPLACE STONE TILES WITH SECOND HAND DOUBLE ROMAN CLAY TILES - <b>CONSENT</b>
N/03/02666/LBC	STRIP STONE TILED ROOF, REPAIR ROOF STRUCTURE AND RELAY TILES INCLUDING MAKING UP ANY DEFICIENCY USING MARSHFIELD TILES ON REAR ROOF SLOPE - <b>REFUSED</b>
N/13/00425/LBC	Insertion of New Bi-Fold Doors to Rear Elevation & 6 New Rooflights to Side Elevation of Single Storey Roofs. Removal of Breeze Block Walls and One Victorian Brick Wall to Create New Kitchen Area. Erection of New Studwork Partitions on Upper Floors to Create New Shower Rooms. - <b>CONSENT</b>
14/03621/FUL	Change of Use of Main House & 2 Outbuildings to Christian Retreat Centre - <b>PERMITTED</b>
15/03767/FUL	Erection of Summer House to Rear - <b>PERMITTED</b>
15/12311/FUL	Change of use from C1 back to C3 standard residential use – <b>PERMITTED</b>
16/04835/FUL	Retain Alterations to New Fuel Tank Location, Car Park Boundary Treatment and Summer House Materials (Amendment to 15/03767/FUL & 13/03584/FUL) - <b>PERMITTED</b>
16/05380/LBC	Retention of Various Works, Including Removal of Second Floor Ceiling, Alterations to Partitions and Lowering Window Cill - Amendment to 13/00425/LBC - <b>WITHDRAWN</b>

## 6. The Proposal

The application seeks listed building consent for the retention of various works already carried out to the interior and exterior of the house, as well as to the garden wall. These include:

- replacement of bedroom elm timber floors with plywood (glued & screwed);
- reuse of elm bedroom floorboards on landing;
- replacement of flagstone and tile living room floor with new stone flooring;
- replacement of, and alterations to, the living room hearth with new stone and tiles;
- replacement of sitting room and dining room timber floors with new timber flooring;
- replacement of, and alterations to, the sitting room and dining room hearths with new stone and tiles;
- alterations to master bedroom partitions;
- installation of freestanding bath on raised platform;
- enlargement of kitchen window opening;

- removal of second floor bedroom lath and plaster ceiling;
- recent blocking up and recreation of gate in the garden boundary wall

## **7. Local Planning Policy**

NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework)  
Section 1- Core Principles (paragraph 17(10))  
Section 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment  
Decision Taking – paragraph 202

Historic England Planning advice note 2  
Managing Significance in Decision Taking in the Historic Environment – Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning:2:

BS 7913:  
British Standards Guide to the conservation of Historic Buildings

Wiltshire Core Strategy:  
Core Policy 58 – Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment

## **8. Summary of consultation responses**

Hullavington Parish Council- No response received.

0 letters of objection have been received.

0 letters of support have been received.

## **9. Publicity**

The application was advertised by a site notice and press advert. No comments were received.

## **10. Planning Considerations**

### Principle of Development

In April 2013, consent was granted under application N/13/00425/LBC for various internal and external works to be carried out at Mays Farmhouse. The proposals were to make internal alterations to the main building and the rear range, re-roof the modern flat-roofed extension, alter the ground floor windows in the modern extension to form concertina glazed doors and add some rooflights in the rear range.

Internal alterations included opening up of the two fireplaces in the ground floor front rooms, removal of partitions to open up the utility and ground floor bathroom in order to create a large kitchen, remove the existing kitchen from the modern extension and create a breakfast room, subdivide the cheese room to create a utility room and make a breakthrough to the old kitchen and create a study and playroom in the store rooms. The timber ladder stair from the old kitchen to the upper storage floor was to be replaced with a timber staircase and the upper storage area to become the master bedroom with an ensuite bathroom. The small bedroom at the front of the main house was to become a bathroom and a breakthrough to be made in the breeze block partition wall between the front bedroom and storage area in order to create a small shower room for the front bedroom. The existing WC on the first floor of the modern extension was to become an ensuite shower room for the rear bedroom. A bathroom for each of the attic bedrooms will also be created.

The floors to the rear range were flagstones laid on earth. The flagstones were to be carefully lifted, an insulated Limecrete floor added and the flagstones replaced on top. Timber repairs were to be carried out to the doors and windows, adding glazing where necessary. The modern extension was to be rendered to a wood float finish. In order to add natural light to the master ensuite bathroom, one CR-1 rooflight was to be added on the east elevation, set just above the flat roof so that it is not easily visible. There were also six CR-1 rooflights added on the west elevation in order to improve the degree of natural light serving the last three rooms in the rear range. There were to be two rooflights for the new living room, study and playroom. All the rooflights were to be installed to sit flush with the roof tiles.

Prior to this application there was a very lengthy pre-application negotiation, followed by further negotiation once this application was submitted. The degree of alteration was to have been kept to a minimum, materials used were to be Natural and breathable where possible and historic features retained. Consent was therefore granted for these works.

### Impact on Heritage Assets

One of the principal ethics of conservation is to repair rather than replace, in order to retain as much as possible of the historic fabric in-situ. In the vast majority of cases this is possible but may be more complicated than removing the original fabric and replacing it. For this reason, applicants are often advised by builders etc that replacement is the only available option, or the quote for repair is disproportionately high to deter owners from that option. With this in mind, I will go through the list of unauthorised works that are included in this application:

#### **Replacement of bedroom elm timber floors with plywood (glued & screwed)**

No works affecting these floorboards were included in the original LBC application. For some reason, someone decided to start lifting the boards up and decided that they were rotten and could not be reused. A structural engineer who was also working on site for some reason, advised that the floorboards should be removed and replaced with glued and screwed plywood boards. This creates a rigid floor that is unable to flex and move with the building and is used in modern building construction. It also fixes the materials to the building so that is very difficult to remove them without further loss of historic fabric from the building but it is not impossible. However, it is claimed that there is now a danger that in trying to remove the plywood, the ceiling will collapse. This begs the question how exactly was the plywood fixed and to what?

Nobody contacted the planning office to discuss why the floorboards were being lifted, the consequential problem or the solution.

These works constitute an unjustified loss of historic fabric, inappropriate materials and repair methods and harm to the significance of the heritage asset. Works such as these have been reversed in other listed buildings in North Wiltshire. In situations where replacement of Elm boards is considered to be the only possible option then they need to be replaced with matching boards in type and dimensions, or the closest possible alternative (in this case we acknowledge that Elm is difficult to obtain so Oak could be considered). The applicants have been asked to do this but refused.

#### **Reuse of elm bedroom floorboards on landing**

No mention has been made as to what was covering the first floor landing previously. However, once most of the Elm floor boards from the bedroom had been removed someone made the decision to replace the landing with some Elm floor boards from the bedroom.

Another conservation ethic is that one doesn't move historic fabric around as that falsifies the history of the building. One assumes that there was some Elm flooring on the landing previously but nothing has been confirmed.

Nobody contacted the planning office to discuss why the floorboards were being replaced on the landing.

These works could constitute an unjustified loss of historic fabric, falsification of building integrity and harm to the significance of the heritage asset.

#### **Replacement of flagstone and tile living room floor with new stone flooring**

The permitted proposals were to carefully lift the existing flagstones, pour a Limecrete floor base and relay the flagstones back on top of the Limecrete. The flagstones were not reinstated and the reason given was that they started breaking up when they were removed. However, there is a large quantity of flagstones stored on the site. Again, this is an unjustified loss of historic material which has not been fully explained. If the stones started to break up then work should have stopped immediately and discussions about a solution should have taken place. Nobody contacted the planning department to mention this problem. The flagstones are still on site but there seems to be a reluctance to re-lay them. This work is an unjustified loss of historic fabric, harmful to the integrity and significance of this heritage asset and contrary to the NPPF.

#### **Replacement of, and alterations to, the living room hearth with new stone and tiles**

We are unclear as to why the hearth was removed in the first place. However, the same principles as per the rest of the floor apply which is that stone should be reinstated in the same location and pattern. The new hearth has been brought forward of the fireplace opening but also take the full width of the room, either side of the fireplace. Whilst a hearth area may have been present in front of the two features either side of the fireplace (copper for washing and heating bread oven), the levels change because the stones have not been reinstated. This results in poor architectural detail and loss of integrity.

#### **Replacement of sitting room and dining room timber floors with new timber flooring**

The same principles apply as mentioned before. There did not appear to be a problem with the timber floors but they have now been replaced with new timber floors which is very regrettable as the original fabric is now lost forever. In discussions, it was agreed that the timber floors could remain but that the work needed to be regularised with a listed building consent application.

#### **Replacement of, and alterations to, the sitting room and dining room hearths with new stone and tiles**

The same principles and argument apply as mentioned previously. The sitting room hearth has also been brought forward and across the room giving an incorrect and harmful detail, as well as change of levels that would not usually be seen. The applicants have been asked to remove the tiles back so they are flush with the fireplace openings but they have declined to carry out this work.

#### **Alterations to master bedroom partitions**

The room that is now bedroom 1 was originally the cheese-room and was one open space. Consent was granted for a bathroom to be added at one end, which results in some subdivision of the space but it was considered that the harm caused was outweighed by the benefits of the additional bathroom. Subsequently, further partitions were added to create two dressing rooms, which have resulted in almost half the space now being subdivided. The storage function of these dressing rooms could have been carried out by free-standing wardrobes which can be removed easily. Addition of these dressing rooms compromises the architectural proportions of the room and harms the integrity of the heritage asset.

### **Installation of freestanding bath on raised platform**

The addition of the free-standing bath on a raised platform looks odd but can be accepted.

### **Enlargement of kitchen window opening**

There is evidence in the stonework that this opening may historically have been larger than seen in 2012 before work commenced. The opening as seen now does not seem to relate particularly to the dimensions of other windows on the ground floor but the works can be accepted. Although possibly larger than one would have considered, the detail is an improvement on what was there previously. Replacement of the stone lintol with timber would not have been supported had this work been requested prior to its realisation.

### **Removal of second floor bedroom lath and plaster ceiling**

Advice was given at preapp stage that removal of this ceiling would not be supported and that it would be an unjustified loss of historic fabric and harm the significance and architectural integrity of the heritage asset. However, during works to create an ensuite shower room, a small area of plaster detached from the ceiling so, without reference to the planning department, the whole ceiling was taken down. The argument has been put forward that as the purlins are not parallel, the lath and plaster ceiling was not always intended to be there. It is possible that the gable dormers were a later addition and their creation would have necessitated alterations to the purlin positions on the front elevation. No historical research has been submitted by the applicants to support the concept that the lath & plaster ceiling was not originally intended to be there. It's removal has resulted in the unjustified loss of historic fabric and harmful alteration to the architectural integrity of the heritage asset. The applicants have been asked to reinstate the lath & plaster ceiling but have declined to carry out the work.

### **Recent blocking up and recreation of gate in the garden boundary wall**

There was a timber garden gate set in the boundary wall between the garden and the track opposite the threshing barn, and directly opposite a matching gate in the wall to the neighbouring property, was removed and the wall infilled. This was an unjustified removal of historic fabric and removed evidence of the original relationship between the farmhouse, garden and outbuildings. The applicants were asked to reinstate this gateway and fix a timber gate in place to match that which had been removed. To date, the gateway opening has been re-formed but the stonework on either side of the gate opening has been very crudely mortared in to the extent that the large coping stones running across the top of the gateway are not horizontal as previously seen, but slightly arched. Whilst an attempt has been made to reinstate this opening, the result is unacceptable and harms the character and setting of the heritage assets. There is another doorway in the boundary wall opposite which could be used for reference.

## **11. Conclusion (The Planning Balance)**

The works that have been carried out have resulted in the loss of more historic fabric and architectural details than were necessary or justified. The level of information supplied to support these works is poor and has little reference to conservation policy or ethics. As this is a private dwelling, there is no public benefit from these works to outweigh the harm caused. The works are therefore contrary to Section 16(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, which requires that "In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.." They are also contrary to policies in The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the BS7913 and Historic England's Planning Advice Note 2 (Managing significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment).

On a local level, CP58 (Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment)

**RECOMMENDATION**

Listed Building Consent should be REFUSED for the reason set out below:

- 1 The works, by reason of its design, size and location fails to conserve the character and special interest of the heritage asset and the setting of adjacent heritage assets. This harm is not otherwise justified by any public benefit so the proposals are therefore contrary to section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and paragraphs 131, 132, 134 and 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Core Policy 58 of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy.