

**REPORT TO THE EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Report No.4

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2011
<b>Application Number</b>	E/10/1563/LBC
<b>Site Address</b>	Yew Tree Cottage Huish Marlborough SN8 4JN
<b>Proposal</b>	Demolish the existing lean-to extensions to the rear of no's 1 and 2 and replace with new symmetrical brick extensions. Minor alterations to the cottage interiors (resubmission of E/10/0343/LBC)
<b>Applicant</b>	Mr and Mrs James & Lygo Roberts
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	HUISH
<b>Grid Ref</b>	414557 163541
<b>Type of application</b>	Full Planning
<b>Case Officer</b>	Peter Horton

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

This application has been called to committee at the request of the ward member, Cllr Hall, in association with the parallel planning application reported at the previous item on the agenda.

**1. Purpose of Report**

To consider the recommendation that the application be refused for the reasons set out.

**2. Report Summary**

The main issue to consider is the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the listed building.

**3. Site Description**

As per the previous report

**4. Planning History**

As per the previous report

**5. The Proposal**

As per the previous report. In addition, various minor alterations are proposed to the cottage interiors.

**6. Planning Policy**

Central government planning policy on planning and the historic environment is set out in PPS5.

**7. Consultations**

**Parish Council:** No objection.

**Wiltshire Council Conservation Officer:** No objection to the minor internal alterations. However objects to the proposed extensions as set out in the previous report.

## **8. Publicity**

As set out in the previous report, one letter of support has been received.

## **9. Planning Considerations**

The sole issue in the determination of this listed building consent application relates to the impact of the proposed extensions on the character and appearance of the listed buildings.

No objection is raised to the proposed internal alterations, which are all relatively minor.

The main historic cottages (i.e. the thatched part of the building) survive in a relatively unaltered state and are therefore prime examples of this vernacular building type. The existing rear elevation has an unspoilt thatch roof i.e. no extension, dormers or eyebrow windows.

The cottages have been sensitively extended in the past with a single-storey lean-to extension that nestles neatly under the eaves level of the thatch. This is likely to have been the most traditional solution to extending a vernacular building such as this, when there was a growing need to provide additional service accommodation accessible from the main living accommodation.

Thatched roofs are characterised by their simplicity of form and uninterrupted roof slopes. In this case the characteristic simple linear shape of the thatched roof remains uninterrupted, with the existing lean-to extension having been positioned under the eaves of the rear roof slope.

The existing lean-to does not compromise the special interest of the building or the rear elevation as a whole. There would be no objection to the principle of its alteration, demolition or replacement with an appropriate structure. However the proposal for a two storey extension would disrupt the clean line of the thatch roof at the rear of the property, resulting in a loss of roof structure and material. It would therefore have a negative impact on the special interest of the listed building.

The application demonstrates that the proposal will not involve cutting through an historic purlin as originally assumed. However the works still require intervention into the roof structure, cutting through principal roof timbers (such as the wall plate) and a loss of thatch.

So the proposal will involve the loss, removal and disturbance of historic fabric. This is contrary to PPS5 policy HE9.1, which states that 'significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification'.

The supporting information claims that the existing living space within the cottages is tight and it is important they are updated to continue as practical living accommodation, by slightly altering the existing layout and adding a 'modest amount

of additional accommodation added to make the best use of the space available to facilitate modern family life'. The design and access statement also states that 'the extra space created will ensure the cottages are continued to be lived in by people who work on the land locally, the purpose they were built for originally and not be reduced to holiday cottages for use by visitors to the area.'

If however the applicants are claiming that the buildings are unviable in their current form (which the Design & Access Statement does), then it must be borne in mind that PPS5 policy HE9.3 requires applicants to provide evidence that other potential owners or users of the site have been sought through appropriate marketing and that reasonable endeavours have been made to seek grant funding for the heritage assets' conservation, to prove the redundancy of the building in its current form.

However no evidence has been provided that supports these claims, as they are currently functioning, successful habitable, dwellings in their current form. The applicants have owned the building for some time without the benefit of the proposed extensions and there is no certainty that they would necessarily continue to do so in the future, were the proposed extensions to be permitted.

Point 85 of the PPS5 Practice Guide states that there is a 'presumption in favour of the conservation of designated assets, and harmful impact on the significance of the designated asset needs to be justified' on the grounds of either substantial harm or less than substantial harm. Notwithstanding the desirability of the two-storey extensions, nothing has been submitted to indicate that these two-bedroom cottages are not viable dwellings in their current form and therefore the provision of the extensions does not justify the harmful impact to the significance of the listed buildings.

PPS5 policy HE9.4 requires the local planning authority to weigh the public benefit of the proposal (such as securing the optimum viable use of the heritage asset in the interests of its long-term conservation) against the harmful impact of the proposal on the significance of the designated heritage asset and recognise that the greater the harm to the to the significance of the asset, the greater the justification will be needed for any loss. Point 89 of the PPS5 Practice Guide stresses the importance that any use of the building is viable and states that 'the optimum use is the one that causes the least harm to the significance of the asset' and that the 'optimum viable use is not necessarily the most profitable one'. It is considered that the cottages are already functioning at their optimum viable use.

The application points out that the majority of the cottages within the village have rear extensions. However if this is indeed the case, this increases the importance of retaining an unaltered roof slope within the locality on a key pair of listed cottages.

The application makes specific reference to the neighbouring property 'Porch Cottage', which had a two storey extension approved in 1994. This was assessed against earlier, obsolete legislation relating to the historic environment, there having been two changes to national planning policy guidance since then. However in any case, each designated heritage asset is viewed independently and therefore each application is judged on its own merits – the fact that extensions to other listed buildings have been permitted in the past is not a reason, on its own, to allow unacceptable works to these particular ones.

## 10. Conclusion

The properties are fine, relatively unaltered examples of vernacular cottages in which the characteristic simple linear form of their thatched roofs remain uninterrupted. However the proposed extensions would completely alter this vernacular form and in addition would involve the loss of historic fabric in cutting through historic roof timbers to achieve the new first floor openings. It is therefore recommended that the application be refused.

## RECOMMENDATION

Refuse listed building consent for the following reasons:

1	These properties are fine, relatively unaltered examples of vernacular cottages in which the characteristic simple linear form of their thatched roofs remain uninterrupted. However the proposed extensions will completely alter this vernacular form and in addition will involve the loss, removal and disturbance of historic fabric in cutting through roof timbers to achieve the new first floor openings. The proposal will therefore be detrimental to the character, appearance and architectural integrity of these grade II listed buildings, contrary to central government planning policy set out in PPS5 'Planning for the Historic Environment'.
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**Appendices:**

None

**Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:**

Planning application file; PPS5