

FAO Fiona Boardman
Oaklands North
High Street
Cuckfield
West Sussex
RH17 5EL

2nd February 2026

WSH Job Ref: J00522

Dear Fiona,

Re: OAKLANDS NORTH, HIGH STREET, CUCKFIELD, WEST SUSSEX, RH17 5EL

I write with respect to the above, concerning which you have instructed WS Heritage Ltd to produce this Heritage Statement to address proposals for the demolition of a side extension and construction of a two storey extension at Oaklands North, High Street, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5EL.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

This proposal relates to a planning application submitted to Mid Sussex District Council under local planning authority (LPA) reference *DM/25/2567*. The description of the development is as follows:

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Company No. GB14520179 | WS Heritage is a trading name of WS Heritage Ltd
Heritage Director: Mr M Sanderson BA (Hons) PG Cert MA IHBC
Planning Director: Mr S Copping BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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Proposed two storey extension to the side of the property.

The proposal involves the demolition of an existing single-storey side range and construction of a new, two-storey extension to the property.

The following account first addresses the historic background of the application site and the wider locale, before considering proposals themselves and the associated potential for impacts upon both the built and/or historic environment of the locale more generally and, associated heritage assets of relevance.

Constraints

The application site is located within the *Cuckfield Conservation Area*, this was first designated in September 1969 prior to being extended in March 1989 to include Courtmead Road with these boundaries again being reviewed and altered in 2006.

An associated *Cuckfield Conservation Area Appraisal* (the 'appraisal') was produced in May 2006 and adopted by Mid Sussex District Council in January 2007. The special qualities of the conservation area, as described on p.3 of the appraisal, is as follows:

'Cuckfield is a typical Sussex village but with some unique features. The layers of history are evident in the morphology, in the texture and grain of the settlement and in the physical form and materials employed on the buildings. The village plan is based on the original medieval street pattern and comprises a central street of South Street which dog legs and rises northwards to form the High Street. In the lower end of the High Street, in South Street and Church Street there are medieval buildings dating from the 15th and 16th century built up to the rear line of the pavement. Materials were all sourced locally and transported by horse and wagon.

In contrast buildings in the upper part of the High Street and Broad Street frequently have gardens or forecourts creating the impression of a wider street. Here there are Victorian and Regency facades and imported slate can be seen on several roofs. Several medieval buildings were refaced in brick and clay tiles in the 19th century.

In the early 20th century Courtmead Road was added to the west of the church. The layout embraces prevailing ideas on the Garden City and has detached dwellings set well back from the tree-lined road, in large gardens. Many parts of the conservation area adjoin countryside which is unusual in Sussex where more modern development has usually encircled the settlement.'

The application site is an historic building considered by the LPA as positively contributing towards the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposed scheme must therefore consider impacts upon the character and appearance of the conservation area, seeking to either *preserve* or *enhance* this designation.

Historic Background

Cuckfield

The application site is located within the historic village of Cuckfield. The name Cuckfield may have derived from the Old English 'cucku', the bird sound, and 'feld' which refers to open ground or clearings.

Cuckfield was not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, however, a church was recorded as being in the possession of William De Warenne around 1090. William gave the land at Cuckfield to the monks of Cluniac Priory, Lewes who built a chapel there. Some early settlement would have likely grown up surrounding this church. Cuckfield was to develop during the medieval period as a successful market place, being granted market charter in 1255.

The local economy was also supported by industry in the form of iron production which developed during the late 16th and 17th centuries with many local families being owners and operators of forges and furnaces. During the 17th century the village was to gradually develop into an important coaching halt on the route between London to Brighton, evidenced by a number of coaching inns, including the Kings Head and the Talbot.



Figure 2: OS Map Extract Cuckfield, 1874

The village's prominence within the parish as an important coaching stop came to an end after the coming of the railway during the 1840s. Local landowners objected to the proposed railway route, which was instead built through the nearby Haywards Heath, which led to the urban expansion of that settlement. Cuckfield therefore declined as an important transport hub over the course of the 19th century, becoming more reliant on a commuter population.

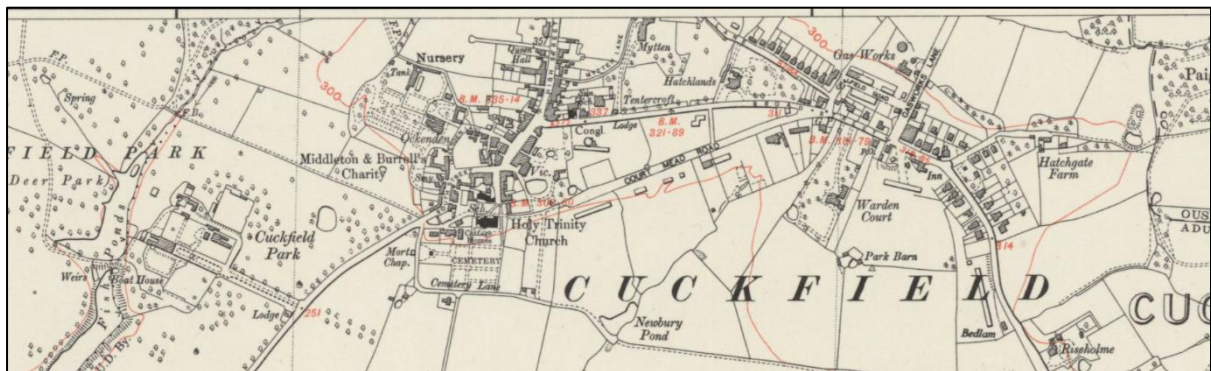


Figure 3: OS Map Extract Cuckfield, 1938

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The main, historic centre of the village surrounding the Holy Trinity Church would change little from the 19th century onwards, however, the village would expand into a much larger settlement, particularly to the north and the east over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries where larger residential areas would gradually develop.

Oaklands North

It is currently unknown as to precisely when the pair of cottages now known as Oaklands North and Howdean (formerly Oaklands Cottage South) were first constructed, however, evidence from renovation works undertaken during the 1980s recorded initials in the internal plaster with dates, the earliest of which was 1787. Whilst it is possible that the cottages were constructed earlier, it is unlikely this was much earlier than the aforementioned date and likely no earlier than the mid-18th century.

Oaklands North was first recorded as being occupied in 1780 and was part of the Oaklands Estate, also included within the Manor of Cuckfield. This estate was relatively large and included a group of other properties within Cuckfield, which by 1856 included 20 acres of land and buildings comprising Oaklands North, Oaklands South (Howdean) and Leyton House amongst others.

The single storey side range of the house is known to be a later extension to the property, however, the precise date of its construction is again unknown. The brickwork of the side range is markedly different in its general colour, texture and composition to that of the main house. The clear changes in the brick bond where the side range connects to the main house certainly suggests this was built against the main house at a later stage rather than being contemporary with the construction of the original cottage.



Figure 4: OS Map Extract Oaklands, 1874

The side range is not therefore likely to have been contemporary with the original construction of the cottages and whilst the precise date of its construction is unknown, it was certainly in existence by the Ordnance Survey map of 1874 (**Figure 4**). A further extension is also depicted to the rear (now demolished) and the date for construction of this part is also

unknown. Both cottages are labelled on the map as 'Oaklands' but are shown with separate curtilages and were historically referred to as Oaklands Cottage North & South respectively.

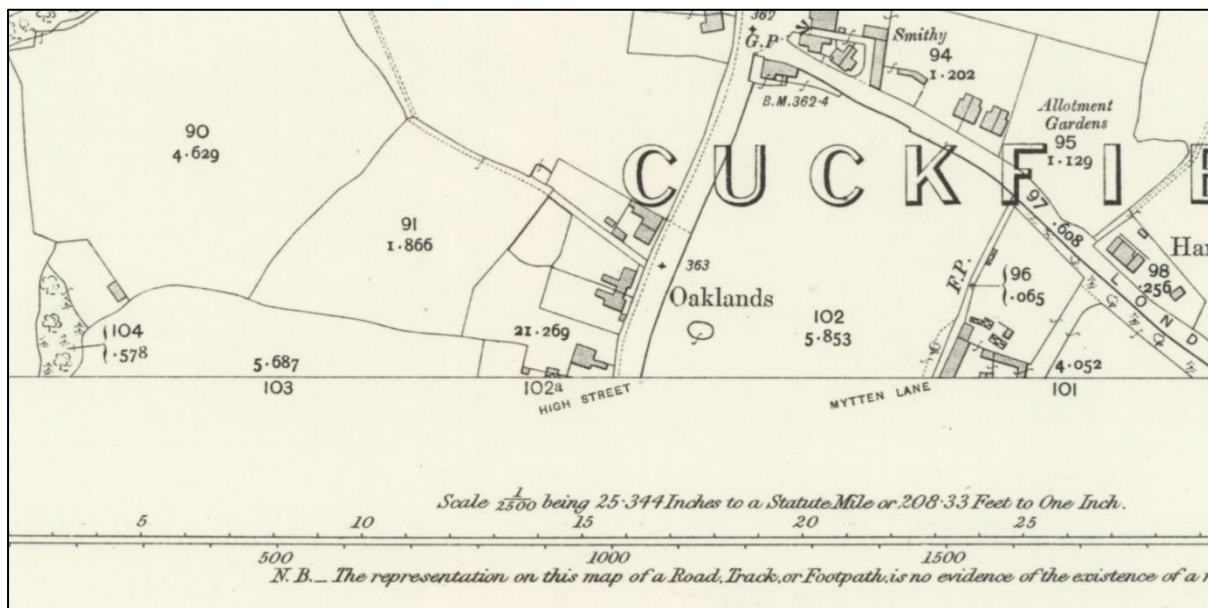


Figure 5: OS Map Extract Oaklands, 1909

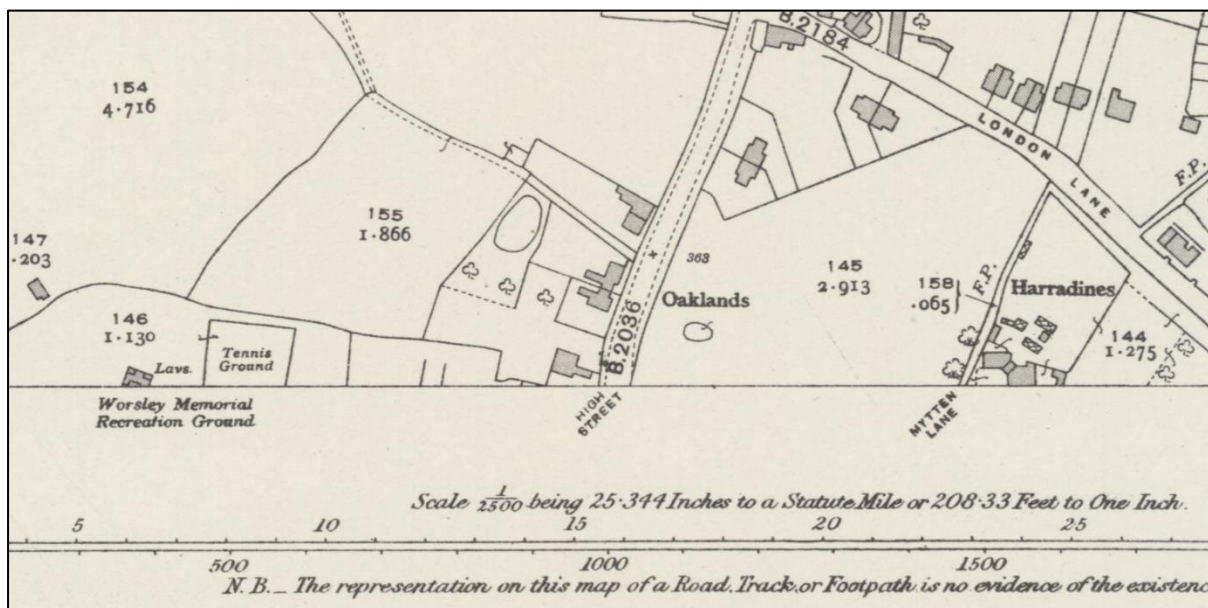


Figure 6: OS Map Extract Oaklands, 1938

Anecdotal research prepared by a previous occupier of the property reveals that the side range was used as an office for the Unity Fire and Life Insurance in 1862, which is also recorded in the contemporary Clarks Directory, and was therefore likely in existence by then and may indicate its usage.

It is difficult to date the side range from its architectural detail given the comprehensive alterations evident across its constituent fabric, however, it was probably constructed as an addition to the main house during the early 19th century. The 1832 electoral roll shows that a Boot and Shoe maker resided at the property, the first occupier noted with an occupation at the residence, and it is possible this side range was used for purposes ancillary to the main

house from an early stage and may have been specifically constructed for this purpose rather than as a dedicated living space.

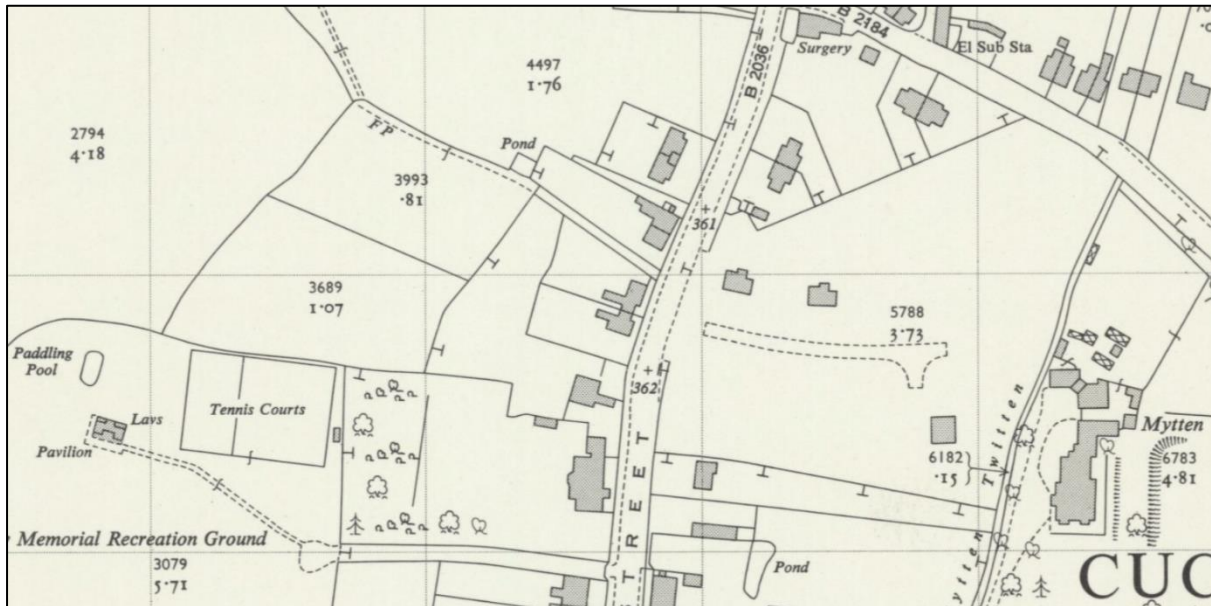


Figure 7: OS Map Extract Oaklands, 1955



Figure 8: OS Map Extract Oaklands, 1969

Later, the census shows John Gallop was a resident at the property, alongside his wife and daughter in 1871 and was reportedly joined by another daughter named Ellen by 1881 who was a school mistress. Sometime between 1871-1881 the side range of the house was opened as a preparatory school for young ladies but this had closed by 1890 and was a relatively short-lived venture.

It has been suggested that this side range may have comprised an old school house in connection with either the historic National School or the Grammar School in Cuckfield. A number of school houses were built within the village during the early 19th century. One such school was built on a premises near the Rose and Crown around 1921 becoming the National

School, which had merged with the Grammar School by 1844 for both boys and girls. This school was expanded on the site of two cottages within the churchyard in 1854.

There is no evidence available to suggest that the preparatory school for young ladies within the side range at Oaklands North was associated with the other schools within Cuckfield, neither would the dates correspond with known dates of expansion of the unified schools. Very limited, anecdotal evidence exists for this relatively short lived venture within this part of the building. Later, anecdotal evidence suggests that this side range was used as the surgery of a Dr. Wells in 1920 who was resident at the property at that time.

By 1931 the Oaklands estate came into the hands of the Public Trustee and in 1951 Oaklands North was purchased as a freehold by Miss Lillian Gibbs who immediately sold it to her niece. The property has remained in private and solely residential ownership since that time. Little change and/or alteration can be observed to have occurred at the site throughout the 19th century according to historic map evidence, other than the pond to the rear of the cottages having apparently been filled in by 1955 (**Figure 7**)

By the Ordnance Survey map of 1969 (**Figure 8**) the cottages have been renamed with the northern cottage labelled as '*Oaklands North*' and the southern cottage being labelled as '*Howdean*'. An outbuilding can also be observed to have been constructed to the south of Howdean.

More recently, a detached single storey garage was constructed adjacent the cottage after receiving planning permission in 1987. Furthermore, it is known that a number of internal alterations were undertaken within the main cottage in 1987, including the stripping out of internal plaster, but the full nature and extent of this is unknown. Lastly, in 1994, planning permission was granted to demolish the rear range/outbuildings and for the construction of a single storey extension at the rear of the property to provide a new kitchen space (LPA Ref: CU/005/87).

Howdean was extended to the south via a large two-storey extension during the latter part of the 20th century, however, no specific date is recorded as there is no information available on the local authority planning register.

Heritage Assets

As noted, the application site is located within the *Cuckfield Conservation Area*. The significance of this heritage asset is considered **Medium** by virtue of its conservation area designation. This conservation area is separated into several distinct character areas. The application site is located in Character Area 3, The High Street described on p.28 of the appraisal as follows:

'From the centre of Cuckfield, the High Street ascends, at first gently and then more steeply, as it heads due north to cross the High Weald ridgeline at Whitmans Green. In medieval times the Tuesday market overflowed into the lower end of the High Street from South Street and today it is the principal commercial and retail area of the village. It is lined on both sides by an almost continuous frontage of two and three-storey shops and commercial premises built to the rear

line of the pavement. The High Street forms part of the historic London-Brighton road. The street has two-way traffic with on-street parking on both sides of the carriageway. Traffic is slowed by the presence of the parked cars. There are wide brick pavements on both sides of the tarmac carriageway. The lower end of the High Street up to the junction with Broad Street has the ambience of a busy village with most of the amenities of daily life available however the conservation area is not without problems. While it is clearly possible to purchase a saddle, a wedding dress, antiques and paintings, and while there is no shortage of dentists, hairdressers, estate agents and cafeterias, nevertheless some basic retail functions are not present e.g. a butcher and a greengrocer. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the village has difficulty attracting and retaining these retail functions. The decline of these retail shops is partly the result of the relocation of the Infant/Primary School in 1991. Parents of young children formerly patronised such shops when delivering and collecting infants from school. The COOP has to some extent filled the gap in this function though many respondents now shop at supermarkets in Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill.'

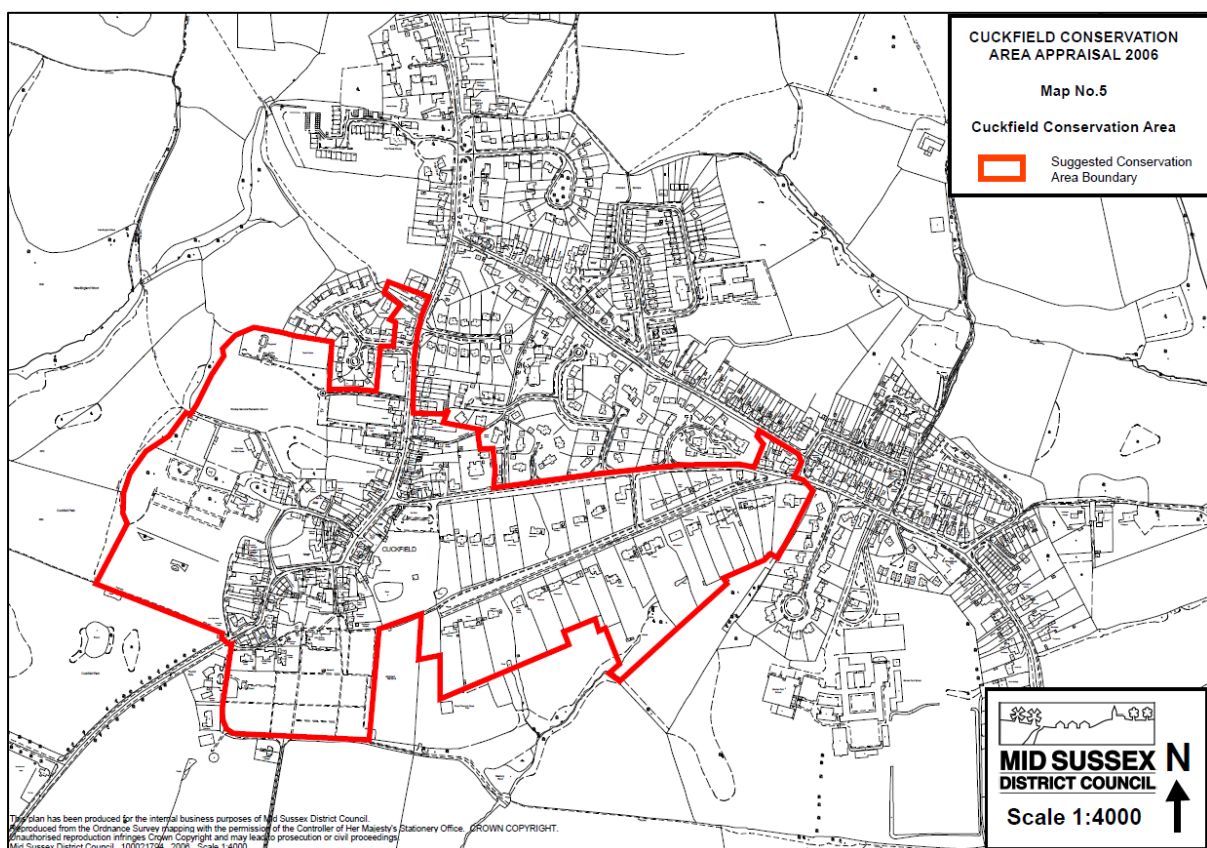


Figure 9: Cuckfield Conservation Area Map

Oaklands North is a semi-detached, two-storey cottage situated on the western side of Cuckfield High Street. The building was likely originally constructed during the mid-18th century, with the single storey side range added during the early 19th century. The building is constructed predominantly from brick under a tiled roof. The main entrance is set back from the main gable end to the right which has a single storey range with a pitched roof attached to the side. To the rear this features another part-two and part-single storey extension.

The fenestration on the front elevation features a porch over the main entrance, a diamond paned casement at first floor, 3-over-3 timber sash with lintel to the gable at ground floor and a diamond paned casement with lintel above at first floor. The single-storey side range features an 8-over-8 timber sash with lintel to the front and a side entrance door on the north elevation.

The application site is not nationally listed, is not specifically remarked upon by the conservation area appraisal either and is not recognised by any local designations. The building was most probably built during the mid-18th century, alongside its neighbour Howdean to the south, as a pair of cottages. These cottages formed part of a larger estate within the village of Cuckfield. Oaklands North, given its apparent age and rarity, could potentially be considered a non-designated heritage asset.

Both cottages have been substantially altered and extended over the course of their history, both internally and externally, and can in no way be described as intact or pristine. Neither cottage features examples of construction techniques or architectural design that would incur consideration of special interest. Furthermore, their history and contribution to the development of the *Cuckfield Conservation Area* is considered important, but only at the local level and does not comprise special historic interest.

Oaklands North would therefore comprise a non-designated heritage asset of moderate architectural and historic interest equivalent to that of a locally listed building. Broadly defined, such assets possess architectural or historic interest that notably contributes towards local character and distinctiveness and comprise a heritage asset of **Low** significance. The building has been noted by the local authority throughout the course of the associated planning application as making a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the *Cuckfield Conservation Area*.

As noted, Oaklands North was extended to the north via the construction of a single storey side range, most probably during the early 19th century. The history of this element, whilst predominantly anecdotal, suggests that it may have been originally constructed for a use ancillary to that of the main house, rather than as a dedicated living space. Its original use is unknown but may have seen use as a workshop, office, school house and surgery given the professional occupation of the individuals that lived there. This was prior to the side range becoming the dwelling's living room, probably during the mid-20th century.

This element has undergone substantial loss, erosion and alteration to its constituent fabric over the course of its history. Furthermore, a structural survey conducted by Hockley & Dawson concluded that the structure is in a seriously deteriorated structural condition due to long-term structural movement, cracking and moisture penetration to such a degree that the repair and stabilisation of the structure would comprise a highly complex undertaking with significant long-term risk.

The side range is therefore a highly altered, subsidiary structure that was not contemporary with the construction of the main house, although its possible ancillary function gives it some degree of local historic interest. The significance of this element is therefore considered **Low**,

albeit notably lower than that of the main cottage itself across the hierarchy of significance identified at the site.

Proposals

Proposals for Oaklands North comprise the demolition of the single storey side range and the construction of a two storey extension. As noted, the application site comprises a non-designated heritage asset within the *Cuckfield Conservation Area*. Impacts upon the significance of the application site and the character and appearance of the conservation area must be considered.

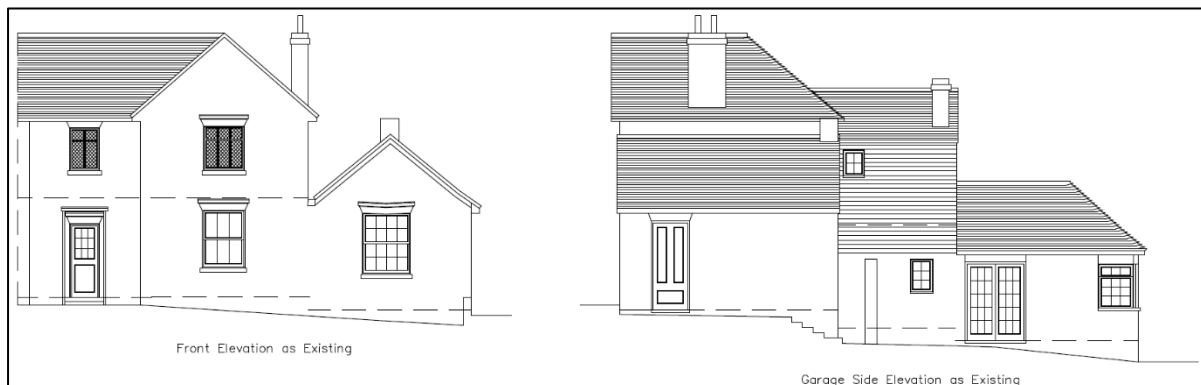


Figure 10: Existing Front and Side Elevations

Considering the demolition of the existing side range, given the low level of significance identified as residing with this structure, this would therefore result in a degree of harm to the significance of the main cottage and, in turn, the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In policy terms, being a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss to the heritage asset as per *paragraph 216* of the *NPPF*. The cottage also makes a positive contribution towards the character and appearance of the *Cuckfield Conservation Area*, therefore a degree of harm would result to the significance of this asset, albeit resulting in a relatively low level of *less than substantial harm* according to *paragraph 215* of the *NPPF*.

However, according to the structural report prepared by Hockley & Dawson, the condition of the side range is such that it is not considered a practical or realistic to aim to attempt repair and preserve the existing structure as it stands. Complete demolition and rebuilding of the side range would therefore be the only way to realistically preserve its contribution towards the significance of the main cottage and the conservation area, however, rebuilding this element would be mostly superficial, again diminishing the significance of this element even further than its current state.

Therefore, given the low level of significance residing with the side range and the significant structural issues with regards to its retention, the principle for the demolition of this structure is considered justified and acceptable if the replacement extension sufficiently *preserves* or *enhances* the significance of the cottage and, in turn, the character and appearance of the conservation area. Further mitigation could also be conditioned for the advance recording of

the side range prior to its demolition in the form of an Historic Building Record, in order to preserve its history and significance.

Considering the design of replacement extension itself this would comprise a two storey side extension attached to the northern side of the main cottage. The extension would be set back slightly from the main frontage and behind the building line of the existing side range. The roof would be extended across, whilst the width and length of the new structure would mirror that of the existing structure.

The scale and massing of the new extension has been sympathetically and carefully considered which reflects the width and length of the existing side range whilst extending upwards and extending the roof across in a logical fashion. Given the main frontage comprises a large gable end, this historic part would still read as the dominating feature and would remain legible as such, further aided by the extension being set back from the building line of the main cottage.

The new extension would feature a diamond paned casement window at first floor to the front and side and a 3-over-3 sash window at ground floor to the front. This arrangement would closely reflect the design of the fenestration of the main cottage and would assimilate well within the overall façade. This would therefore further reflect the local character and distinctiveness of the conservation area.

The extension would utilise sympathetic materials, being constructed from matching brick and tile, whilst utilising timber for the window fenestration which would further reflect the main house and the wider conservation area.

Considering the relationship with Howdean to the south, Oaklands North historically always presented wider across the main frontage (up until the late C20) and these buildings have never presented symmetrically to the street scene, at least not during the last 150 years. Howdean, due to its substantial two-storey extension to the south during the late 20th century and significant rebuilding of its front façade, complete with unsympathetic fenestration alteration, significantly unbalanced the relationship between the two cottages.

The additional massing from the two-storey extension to Oaklands North, whilst not being symmetrical (nor should it be considering their historic asymmetrical relationship), would serve to help rebalance the massing and relationship between the two cottages. The new extension would therefore constitute an *enhancement* to the relationship between the cottages, whilst the sympathetic design and use of materials would constitute both the *preservation* and *enhancement* of the character and significance of Oaklands North and, in turn, the character and appearance of the conservation area. The new extension would therefore make a positive contribution towards the significance of the heritage assets.

Overall, whilst a low degree of *less than substantial harm* would result from the demolition of the existing side range, due to the impracticality of retaining and/or rebuilding this structure due to its condition and the resulting *preservation* and *enhancement* of the character and appearance of the conservation area that the new extension would bring, the proposal is considered sufficiently justified.

Upon the implementation of the proposed scheme, the resulting public benefit associated with the *preservation* and *enhancement* of Oaklands North and the character and appearance of the conservation area would sufficiently outweigh/mitigate this harm as per *paragraph 215* of the *NPPF*.

Proposals may therefore be seen as according with the objectives set out by the relevant regulatory framework. Principally, this would include *s.72* of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* whereby special regard has been had for the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The scheme would therefore accord with *paragraph 219* of the *NPPF*, which states that *local planning authorities should look for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance*, importantly, proposals that *preserve* those elements should be treated favourably.

Proposals would as such accord with both *paragraphs 210* and *212* of the *NPPF* where these acknowledge the *desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets*, all whilst *giving great weight to the asset's conservation*.

Summary

WS Heritage Ltd have been commissioned to produce this Heritage Statement to address proposals a development at Oaklands North, High Street, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5EL.

The development for which planning permission is sought comprises the demolition of a single storey side range and the construction of a two storey extension. The application site comprises a non-designated heritage asset within the *Cuckfield Conservation Area*. Impacts upon the significance of the application site and the character and appearance of the conservation area must be considered.

Overall, whilst a low degree of *less than substantial harm* would result from the demolition of the existing side range, due to the impracticality of retaining and/or rebuilding this structure due to its condition and the resulting *preservation* and *enhancement* of the character and appearance of the conservation area that the new extension would bring, the proposal is considered sufficiently justified.

Upon the implementation of the proposed scheme, the resulting public benefit associated with the *preservation* and *enhancement* of Oaklands North and the character and appearance of the conservation area would sufficiently outweigh/mitigate this harm as per *paragraph 215* of the *NPPF*.

Further mitigation may be considered via the advance recording of the existing side range prior to its demolition in the form of an Historic Building Record, in order to preserve its history and significance.

In light of the account given above, proposals more generally seek the development of the application site in accordance with *paragraph 8 (c)* of the *NPPF*, where one of the main objectives of the scheme would include the protection and enhancement of the built and historic environment.

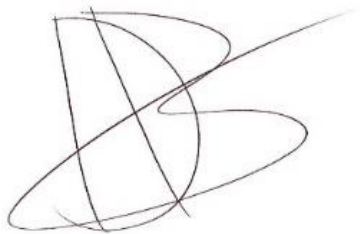
Proposals would therefore accord with s.72 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* where special regard has been had for the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Proposals therefore respond positively towards the historic and/or built environment whilst achieving a high standard of design and layout which respects the historic and/or architectural interest of the application site and the character and appearance of the conservation area.

For the reasons given above, the principle of development is not considered to be at odds with the significance of the application site and/or its wider locale.

I trust that this has been of assistance, but should you have any further questions or queries then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Baty BA (Hons), MA, ACIfA
Heritage Consultant