



Background

John and I (Lucy) Lowrie, moved to Water End in 2013 from the Surrey, Kent borders and fell in love with the special hamlet of Water End, beautiful surroundings and cottage we are lucky enough to call our home.

From the outset, we knew the house and grounds needed some work, as the previous owners had lived here for 54 years, were enthusiastic DIYers but not professional builders. Our initial surveys confirmed that the cottage would require investment to replace the roof on the kitchen, guttering, damp proofing and windows as some of the basic areas, we want to do this work using local craftsmen and high quality materials that the cottage deserves and to maintain its character.

The roof of the present kitchen, an alteration during the 1970s was confirmed by various roof experts as dangerous from the outset, it has been temporarily “made good” but leaks when it rains and the wall that faces onto our neighbours courtyard is of poor quality and unsightly.

We wanted to engage an expert, to help us work out how best to both maintain and improve Oak Cottage with the limited savings we have. We joined the Listed Property Owners Club, who recommended our Architect Stephen Langer, who specialising in Historic buildings. (App 1) After a year of living in Oak Cottage we realised that the rooms could be repurposed to better support the way we and future families live, to make the most of our internal space. This primarily involved relocating the kitchen to an under-used room, creating a kitchen-diner area. The ‘snug’ is great in the winter with the cosy fire, but is only big enough for three adults. Entertaining more than that causes crowding. The current kitchen area is the same size as the snug. The ideal evolved to increase the area of the current kitchen (1m in length and width from current size) creating a space with views over our mature gardens, and access to an adjacent patio area for family entertaining.

Planning Application

Our first set of plans were submitted in November 2014 and after a number of healthy discussions with the Conservation officer and our Architect, a few key adjustments were made to the plans, which you can see below the Conservation officer was clearly happy with (see email below addressed to Guy our Architect on 11th March) we then

submitted as a second application with these amends on 19th March 2016. We expected these to flow through the system as every point had been discussed, reviewed, amended and agreed in advance with the Conservation Officer.

From: Helen Cal-Fernandez [<mailto:Helen.Cal-Fernandez@dacorum.gov.uk>]

Sent: 11 March 2015 14:06

To: Guy De Montfort

Subject: RE: Oak Cottage - Revised Scheme

Dear Guy,

I have reviewed the revised scheme that you emailed over last week, the revisions follow the on site discussions held with Stephen Langer.

Over all the proposals seem more in character with Oak Cottage. The scale of the living room has been reduced and made more linear in form so similar to the existing rear projection. The side extension to the rear wing has been reduced in size and the roof lights omitted. The porch does add another roof form to this elevation and increases visual clutter but is a fairly small scale addition. Internally it seems as if the former end wall of Oak Cottage is being retained at first floor level which was a concern I had.

I can see no objection to the moving of the utility room door.

The use of slimlite glazing will need to be assessed as part of the listed building application; as the existing windows are relatively modern their replacement is unlikely to be an issue but double glazing can appear awkward on multi-pane windows.

The garage is of a reduced footprint and scaled back, it is therefore likely to be considered acceptable from a conservation viewpoint.

Kind regards

Helen Cal-Fernandez

Conservation Officer (Wednesdays only)

Planning, Development & Regeneration Service

Dacorum Borough Council

Tel: 01442 228494

We were therefore very surprised during the summer that the Conservation Officer, who had helped to shape our plans and clearly supported them, then started to back track on a few elements. We met on a number of occasions and our District Councillor tried too to facilitate discussions and whilst we made progress and were very close to agreements (namely the need for the new Living/Garden rooms size as there the SNUG is too small) we were unable to agree on the detail to achieve this that would not compromise the quality of the design and flow.

To ensure our plans were of the highest quality and to ensure we were doing the right thing for Water End, Oak Cottage and contemporary family living we engaged with the planning members of our local Parish Council, Great Gaddesden. Who kindly came to view our plans, visit the cottage, they have provided their active support below as they are keen that owners of the cottages in Water End, maintain and sympathetically improve them.

From: Graham Cox

Sent: 22 March 2016 08:33

To: Andrew Parrish

Subject: FW: Details for Planning Application

Dear Andrew,

Great Gaddesden Parish Council supports this development and submits the following statement:

Great Gaddesden Parish Council supports the Planning Application for improvements to Oak Cottage, Water End.

The plans have been drawn up by an architect who specialises in Grade II listed buildings; the improvements and their design are sympathetic to the surroundings and of a high quality. The plans take into account the character, age and location of the house and are in keeping with the neighbouring houses in Water End and other Grade II listed buildings in the parish of Great Gaddesden.

Oak Cottage fronts the A4146, a busy route with a high volume of heavy traffic, in particular recycling waste vehicles. GGPC has been campaigning for many years to reduce the weight and volume of heavy vehicles on this road and is sympathetic to the requirement for householders to double glaze their windows to mitigate the high level of noise pollution.

Yours,

Graham

We also approached a local Architect who had developed the plans for our near neighbours, Mr and Mrs Horner, just a few hundred yards away, who own a 'Grade 2 A' listed property and from where we had drawn our inspiration for the Living/Garden Room. Their Architect made a site visit and reviewed our second set of plans and from a design quality/preservation of the historic interest of the house agreed that these were high quality design plans. We therefore have absolute confidence these plans are the best for Oak Cottage, the changes are minimal and most importantly sympathetic to character of the cottage. This investment assures quality family living for the future.

A picture of our neighbours addition (they didn't have anything there originally) may bring our plans to life for you (see below). NB We will only have glazing on two sides of our new Living/Garden Room.

Ref 4/01327/12/FHA (Moor Cottage, Water End HP1 3BL)



Development Committee - Key points

We now have submitted our 3rd set of plans, which include all the changes agreed with the Conservation Officer up to March 2016 which overcame all the areas of concern expressed in our initial plans, they also keep the “older” window in the snug, which is of historic specific interest as estimates suggest it is circa 80 – 100 years old. These plans are supported by both next door neighbours, Great Gaddesden Parish Council, Upper Gade Valley Conservation Society (see their note below) and our local District Councillor Bert Chapman, we believe they:

- Maintain the integrity and character of all the original features of our Grade 2 listed home
- The reference to the slightly extended footprint from today, 1 metre in two directions (15 sq metres additional space) for the new living/garden room as “bulky” is subjective, the room is in proportion with other rooms in the house and appropriate for a 3 bedroom cottage, necessary for contemporary family living
- The amount of glazing on the elevation facing the gardens, of the new living/garden room has been reduced from our first submitted plans, is a design feature and creates a link between this room and the gardens and river beyond, views to be enjoyed.

The last area to cover, is the request for double glazing on the two front bedrooms, you will all be familiar with the busy road that goes through Water End, the A4146 and the current proposal that this reverts to a “B” road. Whilst this is a positive move, it is important to note that the current c12,000 vehicles passing through a day is anticipated by Hert’s County Council to become c18,500 per day by 2018. The level of noise makes the two front bedrooms unusable today, unfortunately family and friends choose not to stay for this reason. We would like to make the end room, our master bedroom as it affords wonderful views of the Manor house and fields to the back of Water End by the river. John is a Police Officer and works nights on occasion, so quality of sleep whatever the time of day is vital to ensure he can be effective in his role. The volume of traffic and levels of noise emitted create an exceptional set of circumstances which should be considered alongside this application.

The windows are low quality 1970’s simple, single pane windows (which are now warped and rotting in places) and beyond economic repair (see picture below which shows two front bedroom windows and the distance to the road).



The windows do not form part of the “Special Interest” of the cottage and what is most important for Water End, the hamlet is that these match with the neighbouring row of cottages. General policies say that single glazing should be used where relevant, however the windows need replacing and so it makes economical sense to use quality Double glazed windows which will look similar to single glazed from the front but have significantly reduced heat leakage and improved sound insulation, the windows will be of a high quality and produced by a local craftsman whose work is so good he makes windows for the Tower of London.

High quality double glazing on the front of the cottage (it is supported to the side and back of the house by Dacorum planning) will reduce noise pollution, making the rooms quieter than today, support better quality sleep, improved quality of life and ensure less heat leakage. The lead will be antiqued and so will provide uniformity with the windows along the row of 4 cottages.

Independent Validation

Water End and Great Gaddesden residents established many years ago Conservation Group, the Water End and Upper Gade Valley Conservation Society. They are familiar with our plans and their support is documented below.

WATER END & UPPER GADE VALLEY

CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Chairman

Peter King

01442 256556

peter_king@btinternet.com

Secretary

Vicky Waites

01525 222412

vickywaites@hotmail.com

Planning Application No. 4/00639/16/LBC

We would like to comment in respect of the above Application by Mr & Mrs J Lowrie of Oak Cottage.

The aims of this Society set up over 20 years ago is the preservation of the Hamlet of Water End and the Upper Gade Valley. Our particular concerns are the buildings, many of which date back to the 16th Century, the upper River Gade and use of the Countryside in this area.

In respect of the buildings the main threat is the road and we have campaigned for many years for relief by a Bypass or weigh restrictions. It is the view of the Society that the buildings need proper and regular maintenance. The Society recognises that over the past 400 years there have been many changes. It is not how it was. Furthermore in a modern environment it is necessary to use modern materials and to take advantage of scientific advancement. This can be done without detracting from the attractiveness of what is a picturesque hamlet. Most of the

properties in Water End have double glazed units and in addition some have secondary glazing for noise abatement. We live in a world where energy conservation is very important.

The Society can see nothing wrong with the proposed plans in this Application. It views it as progress in the conservation of the buildings in the Hamlet. There have been no objections from neighbours or the Parish Council. We have in Water End an eyesore of a Cottage which has not been maintained for the past 40 years. It is almost derelict. We are therefore pleased that Mr & Mrs Lowrie are doing things to bring modern life to Oak Cottage without detracting from its character. Similarly the Society views the Application of Mr & Mrs Collis to restore the Barns at the rear of their property and make practical use of them as positive and progressive. The buildings in Water End were listed as Grade II only relatively recently – within the last 25 Years. The listing brings responsibilities to both the owners and the local authorities to work together to conserve our heritage in the modern environment.

Architects Summary

Our Architect has kindly submitted this statement for your consideration which acts as a succinct summary to support your decision on our plans for Oak Cottage

Statement for the extension / alteration of Oak Cottage Oak Cottage, Water End, Hertfordshire, HP1 3BH

The main part of the application is to provide a modest single story extension and porch at the rear of the dwelling. These additions have been designed proportionally in relation to the size of the dwelling catering for its three double bedrooms (six persons). Exterior and interior alterations are also included which have been designed to unify all aspects of the house, improving the internal layout, needed for contemporary family living. The proposal addresses the problems of the existing house and the impact it has on its users, especially in relation to the busy adjacent road.

The additional glazing is located at the rear of the property on the new extension. As this is located on the extension it will create a distinct separation from the old to the new built fabric. This has been intentionally designed not to mimic the historically important fabric of the house.

On the ground floor Slim lite and double glazed replacement doors and windows are proposed with the exception of the existing road-side window in the snug and WC which will be secondary glazed. These replacements will significantly improve the building's thermal envelope and improve the sound insulation from the busy adjacent road.

On the first floor, replacement windows are proposed.. The road side windows are to be Slim lite double glazed leaded lights with the remaining windows on the side and rear of the house to be clear Slim lite double glazed (no glazing bars or lead). These replacements will significantly improve the building's thermal envelope and improve the sound insulation from the busy adjacent road. At present the rooms adjacent to the road are noisy therefore unfit for family living. As two proposed bedrooms are located on the road side of the house it highlights the importance that these replacement windows are Slim lite double glazed to reduce the noise from the road. This will improve the occupant's physical and mental health as the constant noise of the road will be significantly reduced. We understand that from a conservation argument leaded lights and Slim lite double glazing is a un-conventional mix, as architects we would never want to harm such an important / building by specifying unsympathetic materials, however, as the property sits next to a busy road we believe an exception to this rule can be exercised. The original house was built

in a time when vehicular traffic levels were low compared to modern day levels, therefore we believe in order for the house to remain attractive and a viable place to live it should move with the times to reflect the increase in traffic.

We believe that the current volume of traffic on Leighton Buzzard Road and its close proximity to the house makes this an exceptional circumstance. 12,000 vehicles a day are currently predicted to be passing through the road and by 2019 this is predicted to rise to 18,000 vehicles, with 6% of those being 6 wheel axle recycling waste vehicles which are extremely noisy and cause significant vibrations to be felt inside the house. Great Gaddesden Parish Council have been campaigning for a number of years to reduce the weight and volume of heavy goods vehicles on this road and understand the need for residents to double glaze their windows to mitigate the high levels of noise pollution. This road (A4146) was reclassified some years ago from a 'B' to an 'A' road and has been an area the local MP Mike Penning and Local Councillor David Lloyd have tried to campaign to change back for many years.

We very much believe we have provided an attractive and well thought through design for this listed building whilst complimenting the building's heritage. We also believe that the house needs to be fit for purpose for 21st Century living and able to respond to its location of being beside a busy road with high traffic volume. This road will inevitably get busier; therefore, the proposal is justifiable in our view to improve the longevity of the property and the well-being and health of its occupants. The design has gained the support of Great Gaddesden Parish Council who understand the site, the building and the traffic problems of the local area.

Stephen Langer BSc Dip Arch RIBA IHBC TAG Stephen Langer Associates Ltd. RIBA Chartered Practice Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation Member of the RIBA Traditional Architecture Group

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Stephen Langer Architects

STEPHEN LANGER ARCHITECTS

“Combining the Art of Architecture with the Craft of Building” Stephen Langer BSc (UCL) Dip Arch (Bartlett) RIBA IHBC TAG Member of the RIBA Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) Member of the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) Member of the Vernacular Architecture Group Member of the Listed Property owners club

The practice was established in 1982 by Stephen Langer, who grew up in the area, and specialises in all aspects of traditional building design and conservation. Principal area of interest and specialisation is the history of the architecture and archaeology of the Weald of Kent and Sussex. This area has been the hot bed of architectural style for centuries and we are based in the capital, the spa town of Royal Tunbridge Wells. Our office, York cottage was the original sawmill site for the Pantiles. The express aim of the practice is to bring history to life with its work. To this end, the training and development of young architects for the preservation and perpetuation of Wealden Architecture is paramount.

The practice is a member of the RIBA Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) that recognises that historically the tradition of local building in this country is that the style and form is largely determined by the availability and characteristics of locally available materials and traditions. The real tradition of house building in this country derives from a process of continual re-invention and sensitivity to the vernacular. The work of the practice is eclectic and not tied to one style. The houses we create for our clients are expressed in many styles to reflect their lives and characters.

The history of style in the Weald was very much of one mood following another, often as a reaction to its predecessor. We believe that whichever approach is taken, it respects the local traditions in its use of materials, and as a traditional building technique draws heavily on the locality for both skill and material. The apprenticeship and perpetration of skilled craftsmen in local building is ensured by the use of quality materials and detailing.

Stephen Langer is a member of the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), to which the majority of conservation officers belong. The wide experience the practice has with listed buildings, Grade I, II* and II, (the most notable of the former being Hever Castle) feeds and informs our work both on listed buildings and new buildings. The use of traditional idiom does not preclude embracing the latest technologies, green architecture and the use of contemporary components where appropriate. The practice encourages and supports the use of sustainable building methods....in essence Vernacular architecture in its fundamental form.

We are both private and corporate members of the Listed Property Owners club and support this organisation every year with a stand at their show at Olympia. We work with Archaeology South East and are members of the Vernacular architecture group founded by the building archaeologist David Martin. We are involved with preserved steam railways, as our heritage is more than just the built form and are currently working on a heritage railway museum and station (new) project.

The practice now has over 30 years' extensive experience and expertise in this field; our work involves all forms of traditional buildings, including the conservation/restoration and alteration/extension of Listed Buildings, conversion of redundant Agricultural or industrial structures, new Country houses, Flats and Housing schemes (new or conversion), alternative uses for Rural buildings.....as well as the odd railway station! Visit our website www.stephenlanger.co.uk.