

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements

TR010044

Volume 6

Volume 6.3 Environmental Statement

Appendix 6.10: Brook Cottages Heritage Appraisal

Planning Act 2008

Regulation 5(2)(a)

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and
Procedure) Regulations 2009

26 February 2021

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms and
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

**A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet
improvements
Development Consent Order 202[]**

Appendix 6.10: Brook Cottages Heritage Appraisal

Regulation Reference:	APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)
Planning Inspectorate Scheme Reference	TR010044
Application Document Reference	TR010044/APP/6.3
Author	A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Project Team, Highways England

Version	Date	Status of Version
Rev 1	26 February 2021	DCO Application

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet

Brook Cottages Heritage Appraisal

Project Information

Project: A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet

Document title: Brook Cottages Heritage Appraisal

Job number: 60541541

Client: Highways England

DOCUMENT APPROVAL RECORD

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Revision history

Issue No.	Date	Details of Revisions
1		
2		

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Scope

- 1.1.1 AECOM has been appointed by Highways England to carry out a visual assessment of Brook Cottages Great North Road, Chawston, Bedford. The purpose of the assessment is to gain a full understanding of the significance of the building to inform the options for the proposed A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet road improvements.
- 1.1.2 Brook Cottages are located to the north-east of Bedford, to the south-east of the village of Chawston, just off the Great North Road (A1). They were listed at Grade II in 1983 in acknowledgement of their historic significance. The purpose of this report is to establish whether the surviving fabric of the building supports this designation.
- 1.1.3 This report has been informed by a site visit undertaken on 12th March 2018, alongside archival research carried out at Bedfordshire Archives Office on 4th December 2017.

2 Legislative Framework

2.1 Legislative framework

2.1.1 The following legislation and advice are considered relevant to the listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

2.1.2 Section 1 (5) of the Act states that "listed building" means a building which is included in a list compiled or approved by the Secretary of State.

2.1.3 Section 1 (3) of the same Act points out that the Secretary of State in order to decide whether to include a building in a list, should take into account not only the building itself but also the following:

"(a) any respect in which its exterior contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part; and

(b) the desirability of preserving, on the ground of its architectural or historic interest, any feature of the building consisting of a man-made object or structure fixed to the building or forming part of the land and comprised within the curtilage of the building."

Principles of selection for listing buildings

2.1.4 The Government has set out the criteria for selection in its guidance: Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (2010). The guidance sets out the general principles that the Secretary of State applies when deciding whether a building is of special architectural or historic interest and should be added to the list of buildings compiled under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

2.1.5 Paragraph 6 of the guidance states that:

"The statutory criteria for listing are the special architectural or historic interest of a building. Many buildings are interesting architecturally or historically, but, in order to be listed, a building must have "special" interest."

2.1.6 Paragraph 9 sets out the two statutory criteria that determine if a building will be added to the statutory list. These criteria are the following:

- **"Architectural Interest.** To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;
- **Historic Interest.** To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural, or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people. There should normally be some quality of interest in the physical fabric of the building itself to justify the statutory protection afforded by listing."

- 2.1.7 Paragraphs 12 to 16 identify the five general principles that contribute to the decision of the Secretary of State to include buildings of historic or architectural interest in the statutory list. These are age and rarity; aesthetic merits; selectivity; national interest; and state of repair.

Historic England Good Practice Advice Notes

Domestic 1: Vernacular Houses - Listing Selection Guide

- 2.1.8 The Vernacular Houses - Listing Selection Guide (2017 edition) covers one of twenty broad categories of building types. It includes a historical overview of vernacular houses and helps to decide which of these houses are possible to meet the relevant test for national designation and be included on the National Heritage List for England.
- 2.1.9 The assessment of the special interest of vernacular houses takes into account their ability to represent regional and local characteristics such as local geology, farming and tenurial practices, social hierarchies, and building traditions and materials. Typical and representative examples of a region can have special interest and be listable, but also listable are exceptional or unusual examples of vernacular houses.
- 2.1.10 In addition, some of the specific considerations that inform the decision to list vernacular houses also include the age of the buildings, proportion of survival and alteration, the historic interest of their plan form and the possibility to contribute to our understanding about the use of the rooms and circulation.

3 Brook Cottages

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section includes a description of the Brook Cottages and provides an overview of the historical background of the cottages and their location. In addition, it includes a statement of significance of the cottages including any contribution made by its setting.

3.2 Historical background

- 3.2.1 Brook Cottages date from the 18th century, but the first recorded evidence for the building comes from the Bedfordshire first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1882-3. The map shows Brook House located within a triangular piece of land with an outbuilding to the north-west. South Brook, after which the cottages were named, runs just to the north of the building. The brook crosses the road to the east, that leads from Bedford to Huntingdon through Wyboston, under a bridge marked Brookhouse Bridge and subsequently ends up into the River Ouse that lies further east.
- 3.2.2 The village of Chawston lies to the north-west of Brook House. The properties to the very south-east end of Chawston include Bridge Farmhouse and associated farm buildings. An unfenced road connects Bridge Farmhouse with the main road to the north of the cottages and then with land to the south east. The farm extended to the south and east of the cottages and it is likely that the building was constructed as farm labourer's dwellings. This is consistent with their size and construction.
- 3.2.3 In 1927, Chawston was assessed as required by the Rating and Valuation Act 1925. According to the valuation in 1927, Brook Cottages were owned by Harry A. Dalton, the farmer at Bridge Farm. At that time, the cottages were divided into two dwellings while there was a weather-boarded and tiled pigsty and store barn associated with the cottage to the south-east. Both cottages were divided into four rooms, a kitchen and living room downstairs and two bedrooms above, consistent with the current arrangement. Although there were two dwellings, the name of the cottages on the Valuation map of 1926 (Figure 2) continues to be marked as Brook House.
- 3.2.4 The cottages were listed in 1983. The listing description provides the following details:
"Pair of Cottages. C18. Colour washed rough cast over timber frame. Half-hipped thatched roof. 4-room plan overall, gable end to road. One storey and attics. 4 windows to ground floor. 4 dormers, all with 2-light casements, most with glazing bars. Plank doors to both cottages, that to left with C20 pantiled gabled porch. One red brick double ridge stack at divide, external stacks to both gable ends. Various C20 one storey additions to rear."

3.3 Description and Statement of Significance

Description

- 3.3.1 Brook Cottages are aligned, roughly, west to east facing away from the A1 northbound onto a private garden screened by high and mature hedges. An opening in the hedge provides access to the site off Great North Road. The wider site, where Brook Cottages sit, has a rather triangular shape and its other boundaries are also defined by mature trees and hedges. The cottages are surrounded by agricultural land to the south and west while to the north, the site adjoins South Brook, after

which the cottages were named. Further north, there is agricultural land possibly related to Bridge Farm to the north-west of the cottages that dates at least from the 17th century. Great North Road separates the property from a series of more modern properties to the west that form an extension to the main historic core of the village of Wyboston to the north.

- 3.3.2 In terms of external appearance, Brook Cottages is a pair of single storey cottages with attics that date from the 18th century. The cottages are of vernacular style and are almost mirror images of one another. They are of timber frame construction with clay daub under colour washed rough cast. They have a half-hipped thatched roof with a central red brick double stack and four dormers on their south elevation (Figure 3).
- 3.3.3 The south elevation comprises four bays, each cottage, nos. 1 and 2, comprising two bays. Each outer bay has early 20th century metal framed six-light casement window while each of the two inner bays benefits from a plank door with a metal letter slot and also a six-light casement window. There is a 20th century pantiled porch on the western door.
- 3.3.4 There are two gable elevations to the east and west (Figure 4), each one with an external brick chimney stack. The north elevation (Figure 5) comprises a series of 20th century single storey extensions of utilitarian appearance.
- 3.3.5 In the interior, the cottages are each divided into two main rooms on the ground floor and two bedrooms in the attic. Modern extensions, to the north of the ground floor, provide utility rooms kitchen and bathrooms.
- 3.3.6 Each room on the ground floor has a fireplace however most of them have been altered and the surrounds have been replaced. The main entrance doors in the south elevation provide access to the biggest rooms on the ground floor that were originally used as kitchens. These rooms have large inglenook fireplaces (Figure 6) under large supporting beams. Both retain a bread oven to one side. That within no. 2 Brook Cottage also retains a substantial brick lined curved interior, projecting beyond the inglenook (Figure 8). Also within No. 2 is a panelled divide surrounding the stairwell, a quarter turn stair which opens directly into bedroom 1. This is not present in No. 1. It is within this area that the only evidence for the close-studded timber frame is exposed.
- 3.3.7 The adjoining ground floor rooms contain smaller fireplaces within the gable, both with inserted 20th century surrounds. Access is through low doorways in timber surrounds. To the threshold are horizontal beams (Figure 9) retaining evidence of former tenons suggesting the possibility that the building was originally divided into four dwellings. Within No.2 there is also evidence within the ceiling for a former stair which would support this conclusion.
- 3.3.8 To the rear are the 20th century additions which house the kitchens and bathrooms. The only features of note within these are the brick floor surfaces.
- 3.3.9 To the first floor are two interconnected bedrooms. Exposed timber rafters (Figure 7) are apparent in all upper rooms, sitting on the wall beam.

Statement of Significance

- 3.3.10 The pair of cottages has historic interest as an 18th century building that illustrates aspects of the rural life of the time. The cottages have retained most of their historic fabric and appearance, despite internal reorganisation, with survival of interesting features such as the bread ovens. Exceptions are the 20th century additions that are mostly concentrated to the rear of the building. The architectural and aesthetic interest of the cottages derives from their vernacular style, their plan form and materials. Of special interest is the timber frame construction highlighted by the exposed timber beams in the interior of the building while the thatched roof is a characteristic feature of the vernacular architecture.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1.1 The pair of Brook Cottage is Grade II listed and dates from the 18th century.
- 4.1.2 A visual assessment of the building took place on Monday 12th March 2018.
- 4.1.3 The assessment confirmed that the historic fabric of the building survives internally and externally. The cottages have retained much of their original plan, character and appearance. Later alterations, such as the modern rear extensions and the replacement or rebuilt of some of the fireplaces detract from that significance however not to a considerable extent.
- 4.1.4 The cottages are associated with Bridge Farm to the north-west and the also Grade II listed Bridge Farmhouse. The location of the cottages illustrates the relationship of the farm with land to the south and south-east and the BrookHouse Bridge.
- 4.1.5 The condition of the cottages, as assessed during the visit, fits the criteria as set out by the government's principles of selection for listing buildings and the relevant Historic England's Listing Selection Guide. The cottages are considered of special architectural interest as they are a typical example of vernacular architecture where local techniques and materials were used. They are also of historic interest as they illustrate important aspects of the agricultural history of the area and generally the country. However, while the building contributes to the local distinctiveness of the area, it is considered that the building is not rare, but rather listed due to their typical character as workers cottages. Other examples survive both locally and nationally in equal, or better condition.

5 References

5.1 Legislation and Guidelines

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. 1990
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/9/contents>

Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2010

HE 2008 Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment. English Heritage, London. Available online at <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/>

HE 2017 Domestic 1: Vernacular Houses Listing Selection Guide.
<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-vernacular-houses/heag102-domestic1-vernacular-houses-lsg.pdf/>

HE 2017 Agricultural Buildings - Listing Selection Guide. <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-agricultural-buildings/heag122-agricultural-buildings-lsg.pdf/>

5.2 Archives

Bedfordshire Archives and Record Office

5.3 Online Sources

National Heritage List for England. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

National Library of Scotland maps – <http://maps.nls.uk/>

British History Online – <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

Illustrations



Figure 1: Photo of the cottages in 1953



Figure 2: 1926 Valuation map



Figure 3: South Elevation, Brook Cottages



Figure 4: West Elevation, Brook Cottages



Figure 5: North Elevation, Brook Cottages



Figure 6: Central Fireplace, No 2 Brook Cottages



Figure 7: Timber rafters in the attic



Figure 8: Bread Oven, No 2 Brook Cottages



Figure 9: Horizontal beams at threshold, No 2 Brook Cottages

