

MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	260179
Address:	Westwood Cottage, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG40 4QX		
Proposal:	Application for Listed Building consent for the proposed renovation works including minor adjustments to internal layout, new electrics and heating, repair of windows and front door, replacement staircase along with internal and external redecoration.		
Heritage Assets:	Westwood Cottage – Grade II listed building since 1986 Setting of: Westwood Farmhouse – Grade II listed building since 1986 Granary at Westwood Farm – Grade II listed building since 1986 Listed buildings along with conservation areas are classed as designated heritage assets under the NPPF (2024) and in the Council’s Local Plan policies.		
Site Visit Made:	Yes		

Summary Of Recommendations

Objection – amendments required

Comments On Proposal

The application proposed alterations and repairs to Westwood Cottage, a Grade II listed building located to the south of the old Arborfield Garrison and to the east of Farley Hill.

Originally built as a three-bay thatched open hall circa 1500, Westwood Cottage was later altered and extended in the mid-18th century with further alteration and extension in the mid-20th century. Historically part of the wider Westwood farmstead, the house was likely built by a yeoman farmer, being of fairly high-status construction, but was superseded as the main residence by the construction of the larger Westwood Farmhouse just to the south-west. With the open hall floored over, the cottage was subdivided and later altered and extended in the mid-18th century. A carved brick apparently puts these alterations at 1742. Given the re-facing to a more ‘polite’ appearance – as compared to the original rudimental late-medieval elevation, this may also have been the time the building and associated land was separated from the main Westwood farmstead, becoming

known as Little Westwood Farm, although without further research this is only conjecture. Historic maps show additional structures surrounding the building, likely agricultural barns, as would be typical and expected, however none of these structures survive. The site further developed post-war with a single storey addition to the north-west and the construction of a linear garage/workshop building.

The application for listed building consent proposes the following alterations and repairs:

- The repair and refurbishment of all historic windows and the replacement of unsympathetic modern windows with appropriately designed timber windows.
- Replacement of existing staircase.
- New kitchen, bathrooms, services and internal decoration
- Cleaning of internal timbers
- New entrance gates
- Alteration of the plan form

Windows

It is proposed to repair and refurbish the extant historic timber windows which are in varying condition. The repair of the historic windows is welcomed with no concerns raised over additional secondary glazing to be affixed. The building has unfortunately had a number of inappropriate replacement windows fitted (including uPVC) without consent, of which it is proposed to further replace with more appropriately detailed units – this is again welcomed and would seek enhance the asset. The details of the new windows shall be conditioned, and to be of similar design to the historic windows, traditionally hung and timber construction, through glazing bars etc.

Replacement staircase

The extant staircase is positioned to the side of the central stack, with the positioning likely contemporaneous with the stack insertion. The actual fabric is, however, understood to be fairly modern, and given the proposed replacement in oak is appropriate in design terms, no objection is raised to this proposed alteration. As details have been provided of the proposed staircase, there would no requirement for additional drawings under condition.

New kitchen, bathrooms, internal decoration and new services, along with repairs to plaster etc.

As part of the building's refurbishment it is proposed to install new kitchen, bathroom and associated fitting and services along with internal redecoration. Provided existing service runs are utilised and impact to the fabric is kept to a minimum (through fittings etc.) then no concerns are raised to these proposed works. In terms of cabinets etc. no issues are raised to decorative fittings. Where plasterwork requires repair, this should be done appropriately as detailed in the

submitted method statement – given the acceptability of this methodology no additional details are required in this regard.

Cleaning of internal timbers

Many of the internal timbers have been inappropriately stained and painted in dark brown/black colours and it is proposed to remove this finish and return to the natural timber appearance. Whilst this is acceptable in principle and general terms encouraged, great care must be taken when enacting the works. It is noted in the methodology that the works would be undertaken by a special contractor and that a test patch would be undertaken – this is critically important to establish the right method and medium to remove the top finish(es). Results are dependent on the timber condition and type of paint/stain that has been used. Low pressure aggregate/sodium can work, but also can achieve mixed, even damaging results. More success has been seen with dry ice cleaning (which also creates less mess) – this should be considered. Provided the applicant is confident no damage to the historic timbers would occur, no objection is raised to this proposal.

Entrance gates

There is no objection to new entrance gates to the boundary with Sheerlands Road, subject to design. It is presumed there is no historic/curtilage fabric (such as extant gates/walling) here, and thus nothing to physically attach to at present? If this is the case, listed building consent is not required, however planning permission would be required by virtue of being within the curtilage and enclosing the curtilage of a listed building (GPDO Schedule 2, Part 2, Class A). It would be advised to omit this element of the proposals from this application and include (along with elevation design) in a future planning permission application.

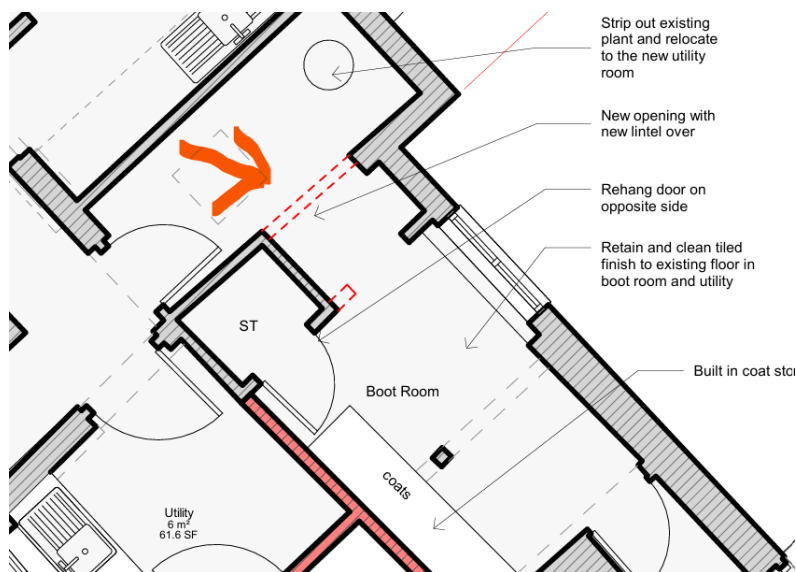
Alteration to the planform with new sub-divisions

First Floor:

It is proposed to remove part of the internal walling as to create an en-suite for the master bedroom suite. This walling is solid, presumed to be masonry and with the 18th century altered part of the building. The room of which is forms part of the division is long and thin, with the other side – a bedroom – more of traditional proportions. This 'long and thin' room is peculiar and was perhaps created to be a lavatory, it would seem to serve little other purpose, thus the walling may not be terribly historic, as the plan form of this area is not what would be expected for an 18th century plan. Whilst this is uncertain, the proposed fabric to be lost is restricted to internal masonry, and whilst the loss of any historic fabric is regrettable, on balance the alteration here is considered acceptable. No concerns are raised to the other new subdivision/removal of modern partitions on the first floor.

Ground Floor:

It is proposed to remove part of the former external walling as to create access to a newly created boot room. This area of walling contains a timber framing:



The orange arrow shows the approximate direction of the above photograph. These timbers appear to be the original 16th century box framing, and thus of the highest interest and significance. This walling was previously external, having been enclosed (as to create a plant-boiler room). As the photograph shows, the infill also appears to have lime plaster with brick exposed underneath, this brick nogging is likely 18th century (having replaced the original wattle and daub) likely concurrent with the other 18th century alterations. This area of the building is highly sensitive and in relatively well-preserved condition, as such it is inappropriate for such fabric to be lost or altered.

There is no objection to the new subdivision as to create the utility/boot room and thus is suggested an access doorway is included here.

Conclusions

In summary, the vast majority of the proposals as contained within the application are acceptable. However, the proposed loss of 16th – 18th century fabric is not acceptable and would cause harm to the significance of the listed building. Whilst the application proposes a number of benefits, these would not be sufficient to outweigh this harm. Provided the application is amended as to omit the loss of the ground floor walling/timbers, approval would be advised, however if this is not forthcoming refusal would be recommended due to the arising harm to the designated heritage asset.

Conditions

To be advised upon in due course if amendments are forthcoming.

Date:	19/02/2026	Signed:	Roderick McDonald Built Heritage Officer
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