

Heritage Statement

Introduction

This statement is written in support of a Listed Building consent application to change a small section of the rear roof slope from clay to slate tiles.

Background

Permission was previously granted for the replacement of the clay roof tiles. Refer to LBC 233044, 8th February 2024.

The nature, extent and significance of the asset

East Court is a private residence in the village of Finchampstead, which lies around 5.5km south-west of Wokingham and around 13km south-east of Reading.

The property is bounded on the south by Jubilee Road, B3348 and Church Lane to the north-east. To the west is East Court Farm and beyond that the village playing fields. East Court enjoys views of the spire of the Norman church, St James' which is around 500m to the north-west. East court is a large property within grounds of approximately 0.6 hectares.

The property is a grade II listed building. The English Heritage entry is at the following link- <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1118091?section=official-list-entry>

The property comprises the main house, a separate converted stables and coach house wing, a detached



office and store building and a garage with attached chicken coop.

The main house is part two and part three storey with a small basement area below the main staircase.

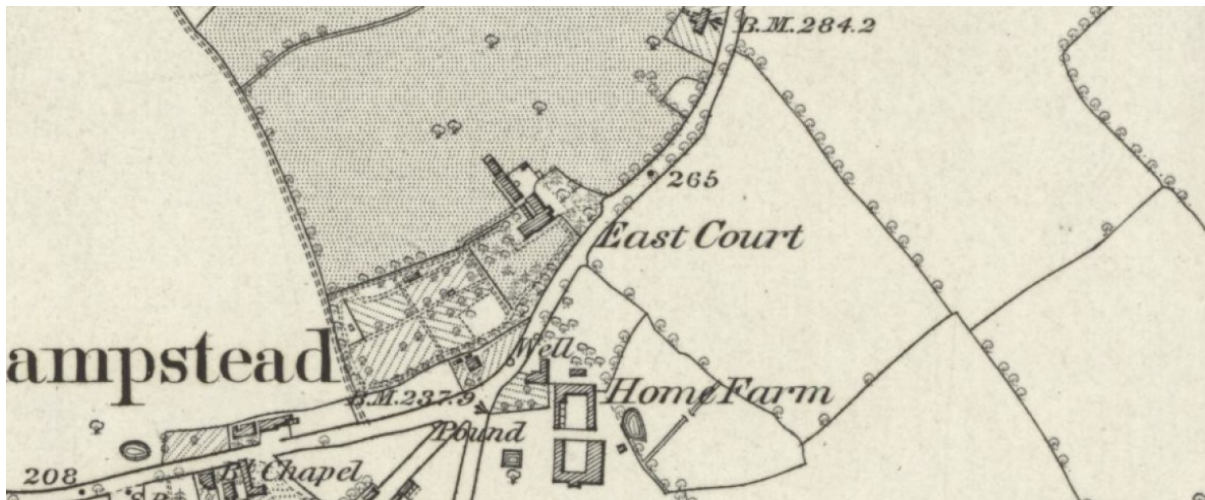
The converted stables is single storey and the former coach house two-storey.

Development at East Court

17th Century

The Manors of East and West Court were dynastic formations which trace back to the late 13th century. East Court was at that time located close to St James's church in Finchampstead. In the early 17th century East Court relocated to its current site.

The origins of the property are unclear, however the oldest part of the house (shaded red on plan), a two-storey timber frame construction is probably late 16th or early 17th century. This structure has been considerably altered, with major extensions and remodelling in the 18th and 19th centuries.



OS map from 1878 - source The National Library of Scotland - <https://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch->

Evidence of the way that East Court has been adapted and extended is revealed through a variety of indicators, such as its irregular plan, suggesting organic growth and including the variation in external wall thickness and materials. The house is largely built of facing brick, with clay lump used on the 19th century extension to the south-west. There are also sections of vertical hung tiling interspersed with courses of shaped tiles. Some of the facing brickwork has been lime-washed and other areas including the vertical hung tiling have been painted. Window openings have been altered both in size and style.

Traces of the oldest structures (shaded red on plan) are evident in the surviving painted exposed timbers visible to the front north-east elevation. The roof structure over this part of the house is generally well preserved. It comprises hand hewn oak timbers, rafters, ties and purlins of varying thickness which have been packed out to align the roof to form the contiguous and level ridge line visible today.

The substantial brick chimney on the north-west (8 pots), through this section of the house has some 17th century brickwork.

It is likely that the secondary stair as well as internal beams in this part of the house are 17th century. Over time, the extensive remodelling and enlargement of the house, including the formation of more generously proportioned rooms has relegated this area of the house to that of a service wing.

18th Century

Enlargement during the Georgian era almost doubled the size of the original house. This development was carried out whilst in the ownership of the Fyshe-Palmer family, who owned East Court as part of their estate from the late 17th to mid-19th centuries.

This segment of the house (shaded blue on plan) contains the hall, stair and stairwell and adjacent drawing rooms. They are reflective of their age in that they are larger and more generously proportioned than the early parts of the house. The hall and stairwell are timber panelled as is the main staircase. The panelling to the hall is 18th century.

The windows on the ground floor south-east and north-west elevations appear to be Edwardian enlargements, compared to those at first floor above them. The south-east facing five pot chimney structure may have been a later addition. The passage that leads off the stair hall between the rooms would then have continued to the external wall. There are two central windows at this location, on the south-east elevation, the

one at ground floor has been bricked in and at first floor the window remains in place but has been infilled from behind.

The origins of the Doric porch are unclear, but it is to be expected that it was built as part of the Georgian enlargement works as it is centred on this element of the house and aligns with the panelled hall beyond. It was re-built sometime during the 1990s following the discovery of dry rot. The roof is currently finished in felt, which would almost certainly have been metal originally and most probably lead.

At second floor, the accommodation comprises rooms in the roof, which were likely to have been servants' quarters.

The roof structure, painted timber truss sections and purlins are visible in several locations. It has been suggested that the roof timbers here pre-date the 18th century, although no testing has been undertaken to confirm this.

The roof over the main stair has been altered with the insertion of several large rooflights. Two of these sit on either side of the inner ridge, with a further rooflight in line with these, which provides daylight to the first-floor landing.

19th Century

The 19th century additions to the south-west and north-west increased both the main and ancillary accommodation.

The two-storey accommodation on the south-west comprises a Drawing Room on the ground floor with Master Bedroom above. Both rooms are much larger than those added during the Georgian period with proportionately higher ceilings. The Master Bedroom is divided structurally into three bays, with large windows within each bay facing south-east. The two windows in the outer bays extend up into hipped dormer structures.

The master bedroom has a part vaulted ceiling that shows the roof trusses which define the structural bays.

Late 19th century photos show that there was another large two-storey element to the house on the south-west side. This no longer exists and it may be that during the periods of the 20th century when the house was untenanted and it was not being regularly maintained, that this wing fell into serious disrepair and was demolished. The kitchen extension that was built around 2017 (under consents 160243 and 160244) occupies the same footprint.

Additions to the north-west include the two-storey add-on to the 17th century part of the house and the single storey service wing.

20th Century

A single storey kitchen extension was added to the rear/side of the house in around 2017 following the granting of planning permission and LB consent, reference 160243 and 160244. This also granted permission to reinstate the pitched, hipped roof over the single-storey north-west service wing.

The Significance of the Asset

Like many historic properties, the significance of East Court is that it illustrates the development of a building through time. It embodies how the resources, materials and construction techniques of different eras were employed to affect changes reflecting the aspirations of its owners and of society more broadly.

Proposed Works:

The proposed works are to change from clay tiles to slate tiles over a section of the rear north-west facing roof slope. A curiosity of this roof slope is that it is at a significantly shallower pitch than the majority of the roof.

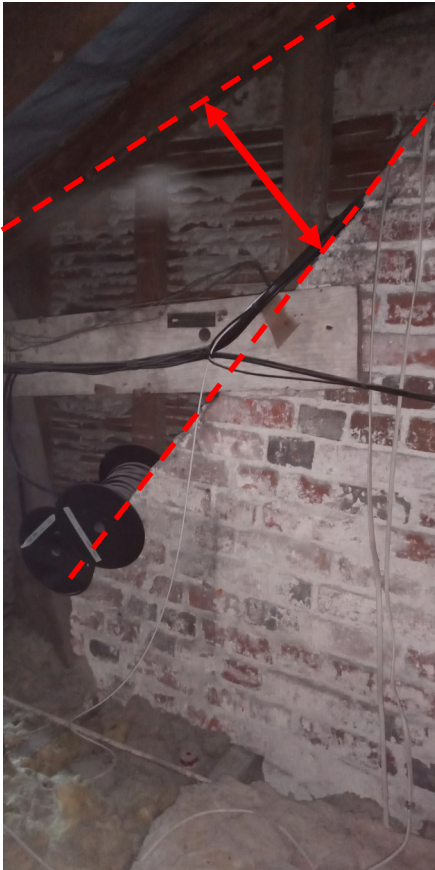


Photo A: view shows where the rear roof pitch has been altered

The roof structure appears to have been altered at a later date. Quite why is unclear, although the most likely explanation is that this wing of the house may have been widened and in order to keep the ridge in line with the earlier Georgian ridge line, the roof pitch was made shallower. The difference between the roof slopes to the front and rear of the house are evident from photos A & B. Both views are looking north-east within the roof void—refer to the Proposed Roof Plan D15 for locations.



Photo B: view showing the different front and rear roof pitches

The difference in roof pitches is less evident from the exterior of the house as can be seen in photos C & D below.

The main house roof pitches vary between 45 and 50 degrees. However this section of the rear roof slope pitch is around 25 degrees which is too shallow for the majority of clay roof tiles. At such a relatively shallow pitch there is an increased risk of wind driven rain or melting snow infiltrating the roof. Clay tile manufacturers will not guarantee that the tiles will resist the passage of rain if the roof pitch is below their minimum recommendations for pitch.

The alternative is to use a different roof tile and the proposal is to use slate, which is suitable for use on pitches down to 22½ degrees. The choice of slate is appropriate as a vernacular material and also there is already a discrete section of slate roof forming a mansard roof section— see photo E below:



Photo C: view from the garden looking south-east



Photo D: view from garden looking due east

Benefit: Permission was previously granted for the replacement of the clay roof tiles – see LBC 233044. This application seeks to change from clay to slate tiles in order that this shallower pitched section of the roof is adequately protected from the weather. Slate is a traditional and enduring roofing material. Its use will safeguard the existing structural fabric, which in turn helps to ensure the preservation and sustainability of the house into the future.

The Impact on the Asset:

The rear roof slope is not visible from the public realm and as photos C and D illustrate is not especially visible from the garden. The large chimney stack on the north-west elevation as well as the roof structure of the kitchen extension and south-west hipped gable all obscure views. The proposed works are minor in nature and will have only a limited impact upon historic fabric.



Photo E: mansard roof with section of slate tiles

Relevant Planning History

233044—Householder/Listed Building Consent applications for the proposed maintenance, re-roofing and structural investigation.

240202—Householder application for the proposed alterations to internal stairs, formation of internal screen, alterations to external joinery and terrace, changes to fenestration.

2422451—Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 240202 to allow change to a first-floor window, plus internal alterations.

160243/160244 - Householder/Listed Building Consent application for single storey side extension and pitched clay tile roof over service wing with conservation roof lights plus changes to fenestration - Approved: April 2016

Relevant planning policies referred to:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- NPPF section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- NPPF section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy:

- Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)
- CC01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC02 - Development Limits

Design and Access Statement:

Use:

Existing long established residential use.

Amount:

Not applicable, no alteration to existing.

Layout:

Not applicable, no alteration to existing.

Scale:

Not applicable, no alteration to existing.

Landscape:

Not applicable, no alteration to existing.

Protected Species:

Please refer to Spires Ecology Final East Court Finchampstead Final Bat Survey Report Dec24 .

Access:

Not applicable, no alteration to existing.

Flood Risk Assessment:

A flood risk assessment is not required. The environment agency website notes that the application site is within Zone 1 and has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.

Structural survey:

A specific structural survey has not been carried out.

Transport assessment:

Not applicable, no alteration to existing.