

Heritage Statement in support of Listed Building Consent

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1102442

Date first listed: 08-Feb-1988

Date of most recent amendment: 07-Nov-2023

List Entry Name: Keeper's Cottage

Statutory Address 1: Keeper's Cottage, 2a Orchard Way, Breachwood Green, Hitchin, SG4 8NT

Reasons for Designation

Keeper's Cottage is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

* for the architectural quality of this vernacular cottage, built in the C17 or earlier; * for the high proportion of survival of the historic plan form and historic fabric, sensitively extended in the late C19 and C20, and renovated in the late C20 prior to listing.

Historic interest:

* for the historic role this former game keeper's cottage played in supporting the historic deerpark of Kingswalden Park, around 730m to the north-east.

Group value:

* it forms an important historic group with nearby listed buildings of the same period, including Hillside Farmhouse, Old Hill Farm, and 11 and 13 Lower Road (each listed at Grade II).

History

Keeper's Cottage was constructed in the C17 or earlier, as is evidenced by its historic planform, timber-framed structure and brick chimney stacks. It is located around 730m south-west of the historic deer park of Kingswalden Park, a well-timbered former deer park of around 190 acres. The name of the cottage and its close proximity to the historic park suggest it played a support function for the estate, likely as a game keeper's house. Most of the cottages in the parish belonged to the estate and housed its many workers; several cottages still retain the professions of their occupants in their name, such as Buffer's Cottage, Laundry Cottage, The Bothy and Keeper's Cottage. At one time there were as many as eight game keepers tending the pheasants and other wildlife on the estate. The 1851, 1861 and 1881 censuses document game keepers living at Breachwood Green, possibly at Keeper's Cottage.

Keeper's Cottage may have originated as a two-unit cross passage house, with a heated room to the south-west side, a stair winding around the fireplace, and an unheated room to the north-east side to which a subsidiary fireplace was later added (no longer present). Its roof was likely originally thatched, as evidenced by the brick spurs of the chimneystack and exposed rafter ends to the rear. The footprint of the building is shown on the 1881 Ordnance Survey map, rectangular on plan with a single-bay projection to the rear (what is now the pantry). By the time of the 1898 OS map the

rear projection appears to have been extended to its north-east side with a two-storey extension (now the breakfast room and bathroom over). It was extended again to the east side around 1910 with a single-storey lean-to (now containing the kitchen, utility room and WC), and this extension is depicted on the 1924 OS map. The cottage underwent some renovation in the late 1970s, and the western gable was underpinned at that time. A single-storey porch was added to the front of the cottage around 1979, and the cottage was listed at Grade II in 1988. A single-storey garage was added to the south-west side in 1989, and this was converted to living accommodation in 1997 (both with planning permission and listed building consent).

Details

Cottage, built in the C17 or earlier, extended around 1890, 1910, 1979, and 1989.

MATERIALS: the roofs of the cottage and extensions have a red plain-tile covering, and the timber-framed walls are faced in brick and roughcast.

PLAN: the house is roughly rectangular on plan, aligned north-east to south-west, and faces south-east to Lower Road. Extensions were added to the north-east side of the rear elevation around 1890, to the north-east side around 1910, to the front around 1979 and to the south-west side around 1989.

EXTERIOR: the two-storey three-bay cottage has a pitched plain-tile roof with a pair of tall, diagonal, red-brick axial chimneys slightly left of centre, having brick spurs to their bases and corbelled caps. The front slope has a lower red brick internal chimney to its north-east end. The walls are constructed of brick and roughcast over a timber frame. The first floor has three bays of recessed, wooden two-light casement windows, each of four panes, and the ground floor has two bays of two-light casement windows, each of nine panes, the ground floor window openings being segmental arched. The sills are of timber applied over brick. A single-storey gabled porch was added to the central bay around 1979, built of red brick with a plain-tile roof, and contains a six-panel door with glazing to the two top panels, and a glazed four-paned window to each side of the porch. A two-bay single-storey garage extension was added to the south-west side around 1989 and converted to living accommodation around 1997. The north-east side of the cottage has a single-storey lean-to extension, added around 1910, with a plain-tile roof, roughcast walls and casement windows. The north-east side of the rear elevation has a two-storey gabled extension, added around 1890, with two-light casement windows to the first floor, each of eight panes, and a row of three casements to the ground floor, each of four panes. A single-storey lean-to projects from the centre of the rear elevation with a plain-tile roof; it has a four-paned casement on its south-west side, now inside the lean-to sunroom which was added in the late C20 and extended to connect to the garage around 1997. Over the sunroom, the first floor of the cottage has a small four-paned casement window. The wooden casements of the extensions imitate those of the earlier cottage.

INTERIOR: the interior of the cottage likely had a two-unit cross passage plan, and was later altered and extended. The lobby has applied joists over the entrance (nailed into place), and has a straight stair rising along the north-east side of the axial chimneystack to the first floor. The door surround from the lobby shows evidence of reuse from elsewhere, including an empty brace socket on its north side. To the north of the door opening, the stair rises past a blocked pointed-arched door opening with plain chamfered spandrels, indicating reconfiguration of the stair.

South-west of the lobby, the sitting room has a substantial chamfered beam with a lamb's tongue moulded stop over the fireplace. The joists are exposed with carpenters' marks and lamb's tongue stops; some of the joists appear to be machine-cut later replacements. A large inglenook fireplace occupies the centre of the north-east wall, with a chamfered wooden bressummer over and a stop on the south end. The fireplace is rendered and contains two slate-covered benches.

North-east of the lobby, the dining room has an exposed beam, chamfered on its south side; empty sockets and plug holes on its downward face suggest it has potentially been reused from elsewhere. The exposed joists are hand cut. Brick infill to the south side of the doorway appears to be of late C20 construction or reconstruction.

To the rear, the breakfast room likely constructed around 1890 retains a wooden door surround to the former single-bay rear projection (now the pantry). The single-storey extension to the north-east added around 1910 was renovated in the late 1970s to provide a kitchen, utility room and WC.

From the lobby the straight stair rises alongside the north-east side of the chimneystack, the brickwork of which appears to have been reconstructed in the late C20. At the top of the stair, exposed wooden partitioning to the north-east side appears to have been reused from elsewhere. The south-west bedroom retains exposed box framing, likely originally open to the roof and with a ceiling inserted in the late C20. The timber framing on the north-east wall looks most recent, and retains carpenters marks. The walk-in wardrobe off the north-east side has exposed timber framing on its north-east wall. The north-east bedroom has a central chamfered beam and the south-west end rests on a jowl post which shows evidence of reuse or reworking. The north-east wall retains two inbuilt cupboards. The late-C19 extension to the rear does not retain any historic features of interest. A high proportion of ledged wooden doors survive throughout the interior and are likely of late C19 or early C20 date.

Justification.

The proposed timber framed slimline glazed double glazing double are required to provide noise insulation to retain the property in a habitable state. This has been confirmed by the Secretary of State in the decision PUR/3342127 of 10th December 2024. Regrettably the current and planned expansion of London Luton Airport have significantly affected the property because the property is under the flight path, and the expansion has increased the number of flights throughout the day and night.

In the decision notice of 10th December the secretary of state HEREBY DIRECTS that North Hertfordshire District Council shall grant listed building consent, if an application is made, for the replacement of 16no. single-glazed timber-framed windows with slim profile timber double glazed windows at Keeper's Cottage, 2A Orchard Way, Breachwood Green, Hitchin SG4 8NT. If such an application is made it shall be submitted to the Council within 2 months from the date of this decision.

There are no requirements on design of the timber frames other than they are timber and are glazed with slimline glazing.