

Design & Access and Heritage Statements

For retrospective listed building application for loft works to
create storage space at

1 Sells Close Cottages, Barley

Ref: DAS/2316LA



1 Sells Close Cottages

PREPARED BY DONALD PURKISS and ASSOCIATES LLP

ON BEHALF OF Mr and Mrs Hedges

August 2025

Donald Purkiss & Associates LLP, 1A King Street
Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1HE.
Tel: (01799) 523087

Introduction

This document has been prepared to accompany a retrospective listed building application for works in the loft space of the listed cottage. This includes the insertion of a new paddle staircase and partition at first floor level, relocating an existing door, removing a short section of existing partition, forming a new storage floor in the loft and undertaking repairs to some of the existing first floor ceilings.

Other work at the cottage has recently been completed to provide a rear extension and side porch canopy (ref: 24/01197/FPH & 24/01198/LBC). Towards the end of this work being completed the applicant also undertook work in the loft to remove a large water tank and relocate the hot water cylinder on the advice of their structural engineer. The existing water tank was balanced on modern collars within the loft. The tank platform was 'strengthened' by a single strut from the platform down onto the historic spine beam within the floor, a far from ideal arrangement.

A previous application to fully convert the loft was submitted in September 2024 (ref: 24/02067/LBC) but was withdrawn following the comments received from Place Services. However, during correspondence with the Planning Officer, Vicki Wood, prior to the formal withdrawal of the application, further comment from Place Services was received (in addition to the publicly available response on North Herts' website under 24/02067/LBC) which indicated that using the loft for storage without the need for steels and accessed via a paddle stair may be acceptable. Their comments are copied below from an email dated 11th November 2024:

The proposed works are still considered harmful, however, if the occupants don't need the room to be habitable in terms of building regs, a paddle stair might be an option? See image below:



This would be considered to lessen the loss of fabric as it requires a much smaller opening and potentially give the occupants more usable space. The steel supports, appear quite an extreme intervention and not fully justified, if the occupants were to change to a smaller staircase and potentially remove the need for steel supports, the scheme may be acceptable.

Having received these comments, and those of their structural engineer, the applicant undertook additional work in the loft at the same time as removing and relocating tanks. This was done believing that the work in the loft would meet with approval and that an application would be made to regularise this. We have now been asked to make that retrospective application following correspondence between the applicant and Simon Curling from North Herts Council.

Background

1 Sells Close Cottages is a grade II listed property dating from the early 17th Century. No.1 is part of a small terrace of three cottages with the original building having been one tenement. It is thought that the original building was divided into three during the 18th century. The listing for the property is as follows:

BARLEY HIGH STREET TL 3938 (West side) Barley 7/98 Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Sells Close Cottages GV II

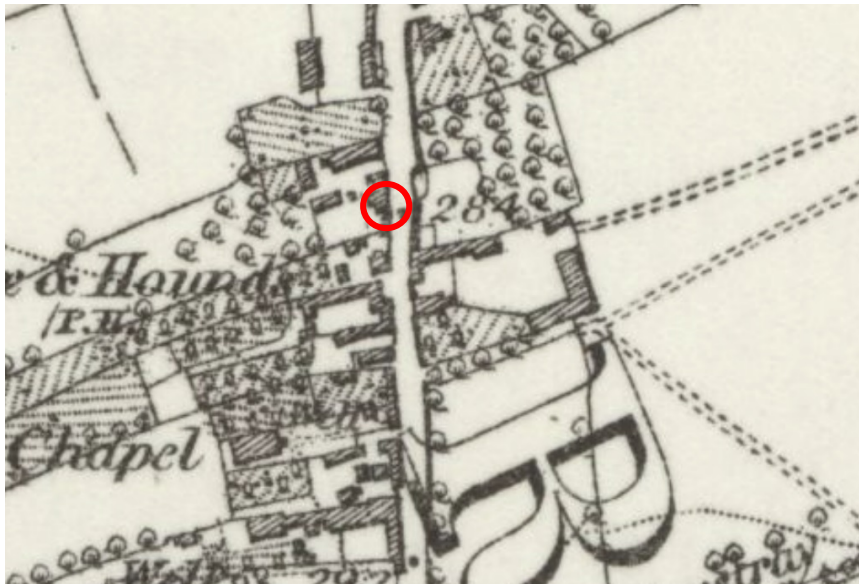
List Entry Number: 1175387

House, now 3 dwellings. Early C17 with minor C18 and C19 additions and alterations. Timber frame, rendered and weatherboarded. Steeply pitched tiled roof. 3 cell lobby entry plan. 2 storeys and attic. Ground floor bead moulded weatherboarding, first floor rendering with traces of panelled comb pargetting. 4 window front. Ground floor: 3 recessed entrances with panelled doors: No. 1 has 2 raised panels, No. 2 has 4 panels and No. 3 has 6 panels with the upper 4 raised and fielded. To centre and left 3 light small pane flush frame casements, to right a horizontal sliding sash, all with hoodboards. First floor: two 3 light small pane casements to left, an early 2 light iron frame leaded pane casement over original entrance and a larger C19 2 light small pane moulded frame casement to right. Rebuilt axial ridge stack to form lobby with entrance to No. 3. Left end external stack with offsets, exposed plates and purlins. Half hip to right end with an entrance, small first floor and latticed attic casements, exposed plates. Early lean-to outshut addition to rear right. Mixed casements to rear. Attached to left end and set back is a C19 lower 2 storey gabled outshut with a 2 light casement on return. Interior: No. 1 has a stop chamfered axial bearer, Nos. 2 and 3 not inspected.

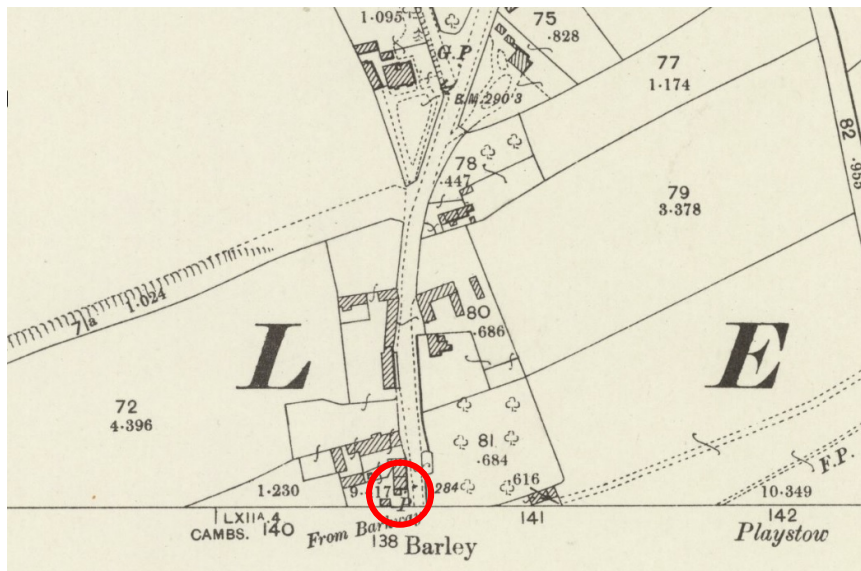
Listing NGR: TL3992438666

Context

Barley is an historic village with reference being made to it in the Domesday Book (ref: Barlei having been derived from Beora's Ley meaning the woodland clearing of a Saxon Lord). The following maps show the High Street which is the historic London to Cambridge Road. The travellers along this road were served by the Fox and Hounds pub as can be seen noted on the following maps but after a fire in 1955 the pub was relocated to the Waggon and Horses pub at the southern end of the High Street. The Waggon and Horses was renamed the Fox and Hounds and the famous sign, which survived the fire, repositioned. With the exception of the pub having burnt down there has been little change to the cottages' surroundings since the mid-19th century.



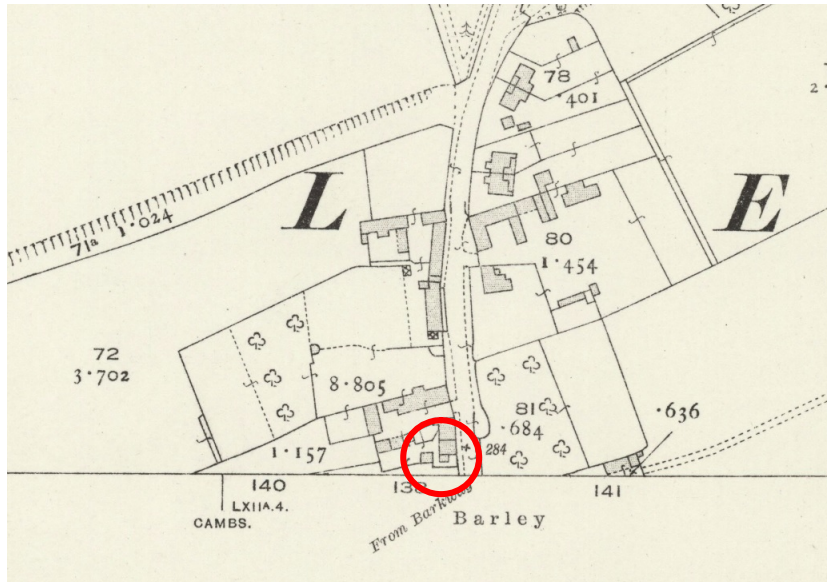
1880 map



1898 map



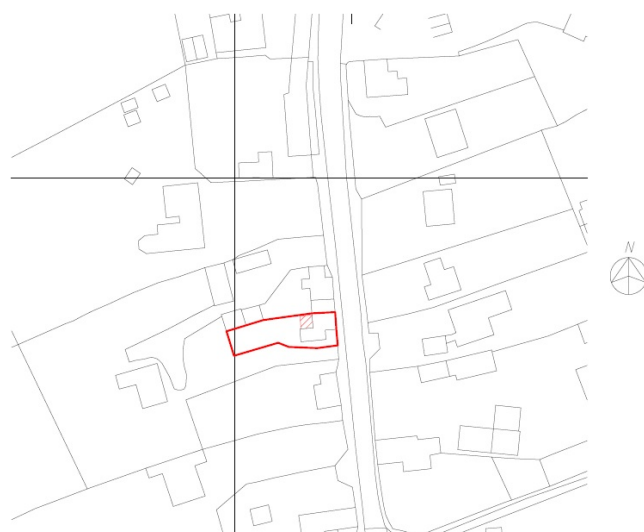
1903 map



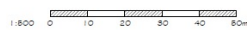
1921 map



1950 map



Site plan as proposed



Current OS map

Planning history and assessment of significance of the existing cottage

Reference to recent planning and listed building applications are made within the introduction above. As with those applications, a previous submission for a rear extension submitted by Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects is referenced again here. Please refer to pages 4, 5 & 6 of the Heritage, Design and Access Statement submitted with applications 18/01866/LBC & 18/01865/FPH, with regard to the planning history and the assessment of the significance of 1 Sells Close Cottages.

However, neither the recently completed or previously approved scheme by Kay Pilsbury Thomas Architects considered converting the loft and so the impact on the significance of the listed building is assessed separately at the end of this document.

Proposals & Design

Due to the steeply pitched roof, the loft space had plenty of height and space which was currently unused. From the top of the existing ceiling spine beam to the underside of the ridge was 3.3m with a width of about 1500mm horizontally at the 2m height line. The loft was accessed via a small loft hatch and was used for a very small amount of storage. Storage space was limited by the size of the original first floor ceiling joists which are small in depth (approximately 85mm -100mm) and bowed between the central spine beam and the rafters. These ceiling joists had been given ad hoc additional support with timbers nailed to their sides which are in turn nailed to the rafters above.



Before works undertaken - existing loft space with supports to the bowed/sagging ceiling joists and strut supporting the water tank platform above.

Although not visible on the photograph above, the modern lighter coloured post in the foreground was what provided additional support to a large cold water tank which sat on a platform above, supported by two modern collars which spanned between the original purlins. Removing this water tank instantly gave some relief to the existing structure.

It should be noted that the cottage was over-roofed in its recent history with new modern rafters and breather felt clearly visible above the line of the original rafters which all remain in place, albeit significantly bowed inwards. As such, there are two sets of purlins, one between the underside of the modern rafters and the top of the original historic rafters and then the original purlin below the original rafters.



Gap between the new rafters and the old rafters



Historic purlin beneath original rafters and lots of modern packing down from the new rafters

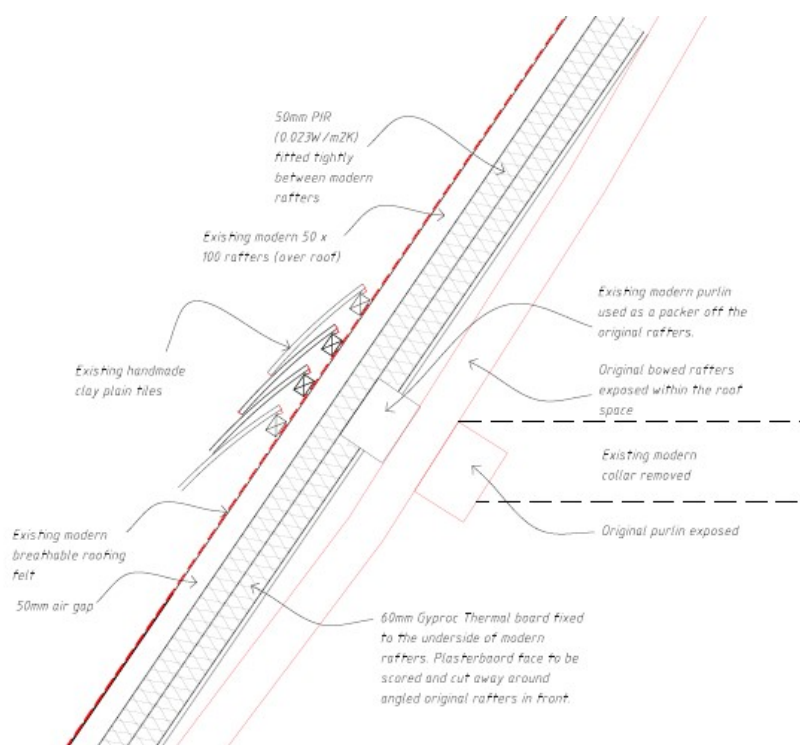
Removal of the cold water tank and the hot water cylinder has been made possible by installing a new pressurised system throughout the cottage with a new horizontal cylinder (and no cold water tank) located in a newly created eaves cupboard above the first floor bathroom. Previous proposals to locate this within the loft space of the existing modern two storey side extension proved not to be possible due to the access requirements to all sides of the cylinder.

It was clear that the existing ceiling joists, which span between the spine beam and the rafters (they do not bear onto the eaves plate) were not strong enough to support any additional weight. In order to make the loft suitable for storage, it was necessary to insert a new floor that is independent and above the existing ceiling. The proposals involved carefully inserting new 6" x 2" timber joists above the existing historic structure and bolting the ends to the existing modern rafters to create an independent storage floor without the need for any steel structure.

To access the loft a new paddle stair has been inserted within bedroom 2. Inserting the stair involved the removal of a small section of ceiling between the spine beam and the wall which separated bedroom 2 from the landing and the bathroom. The modern built in cupboards in bedroom 2 have been adapted to suit with a new cupboard created under the new stairs. A new partition runs along the right hand side of the paddle stair beneath the concealed spine beam above. The bedroom door has been relocated into this partition. There is a new door at the bottom of the paddle stair which now discharges onto the first floor landing. A short return of partition has been removed, further increasing the size of the landing.

Within the loft, a timber handrail and balustrade surround the new stairwell. The roof has been insulated between and beneath the existing modern rafters allowing the

original rafters to be seen within the completed storage space. The purlin level modern collars have been removed with new high level collars inserted to provide a small void in which to run services and ashlar walls have been added above the new floor to seal off the eaves area.



Detail section showing roof proposals with the bowed original rafters in red

Use

The loft storage will not affect the use of the building as a private dwelling. The loft area will be used for storage.

Amount

The loft adds approximately 8m² of storage space.

Building form & scale

The building form and scale externally does not change as a result of these proposals.

Materials and appearance

Materials will be as follows:

New floor:	Softwood joists with floorboards.
Gable treatment:	Woodfibre boards and lime plaster
Rafter insulation:	PIR insulation and PIR thermal board with plaster skim finish between rafters.
New partition:	Softwood studs with lath and plaster finish.
Staircase:	Softwood paddle staircase for carpet finish.
Balustrade:	Reused timber.
Door to bedroom 2:	Reuse existing.
New door:	New door into new lobby at bottom of stairs to be vertically boarded oak door to match existing.

Ceiling in bedroom 2: Existing ceiling to be carefully taken down and new laths fixed to existing ceiling joists. New lime plaster finish over laths. Existing ceiling joists to be strengthened by supporting from new storage floor joists.

Significance and impact on the listed building

The impact on the listed building's fabric is limited but can be summarised as follows:

- **Insertion of storage floor.** The new timber floor joists are primarily connected to the ends of the modern rafters and so do not impact the historic structure. They also provide support to the existing bowed ceiling joists
- **Removal of existing ceiling to provide access for the new staircase.** The ceiling above bedroom 2 was 'live' in many areas and so has been taken down and repaired as part of the works. For the new stair opening it was necessary to remove the ends of the ceiling joists as well as removing the laths and lime plaster (approximately 750mm between the existing partition and the spine beam) and five of the ceiling joists were affected. The remaining ceiling joists over the bedroom, the bathroom and the landing remained unaffected. The ceiling joists are relatively spindly timbers with no historic merit in themselves especially when compared to the exposed elements of timber frame in the ground floor areas. Without the removal of this section of ceiling, the loft space remained relatively unusable. The amount of ceiling removed is less than indicated in the withdrawn application.
- **Visual impact.** The historic roof structure is currently all visible following the works to create a storage space in the loft. This retains the historic fabric visually even if its structural contribution has long since been eroded by the over roofing works.

Access

Access to the cottage remains unchanged.