

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Proposed Works: Installation of supporting pillars to two existing door canopies

Property: Grade II Listed 17th-Century Cottage, Holwell, Hertfordshire

Applicant: Gemma

Date: June 2026

1. Purpose of the Proposal

This Heritage Statement supports the proposal to install two vertical support pillars beneath each of the existing door canopies of the cottage. The purpose of the works is to provide essential structural support, prevent stress on the historic timber frame, and ensure long-term stability without altering or harming the building's historic fabric. The proposal follows conservation principles of minimal intervention, reversibility, and protection of original materials.

2. Heritage Significance of the Building

The cottage is a Grade II listed 17th-century timber-framed dwelling. Its significance derives from:

- Surviving historic timber structure
- Vernacular rural character
- Historic proportions and materials typical of Hertfordshire cottages
- Contribution to the historic settlement pattern of Holwell

The building's architectural and historic value lies in its age, authenticity, and preserved fabric.

3. Existing Door Canopies

The property has two modest timber door canopies that currently rely on fixings into the façade. These canopies:

- Are unsupported and place unwanted load on the historic frame
- Are vulnerable to sagging, weathering, and structural movement
- Lack the traditional supporting elements typical of vernacular cottages

Although the canopies themselves are not historic, their current method of support risks long-term harm to the listed structure.

4. Proposed Works

The proposal is to install two vertical timber support pillars, one beneath each canopy. The pillars will:

- Carry the canopy load directly to the ground

- Remove stress from the historic timber frame
- Be constructed from appropriate heritage timber (e.g., Douglas fir or oak)
- Sit on discreet, reversible footings
- Be finished to match existing joinery

No historic fabric will be cut, removed, or altered.

5. Justification for the Works

5.1 Protection of Historic Fabric

The primary justification is preventing structural load from being borne by the original 17th-century timber frame. The pillars will reduce strain, movement, and risk of moisture ingress.

5.2 Reversibility

The pillars are fully reversible and can be removed without permanent impact on the listed structure.

5.3 Vernacular Appropriateness

Supporting posts beneath canopies are typical of rural cottages of this period. Their addition enhances authenticity.

5.4 Minimal Visual Impact

The pillars are small-scale, sympathetic, and visually recessive. They do not alter the building's character or proportions.

6. Impact Assessment

6.1 Impact on Significance

The works will have a neutral to positive impact by:

- Preventing potential harm to the historic timber frame
- Introducing a traditional architectural element
- Improving the longevity of the canopies
- Enhancing the building's functional resilience

6.2 No Loss of Historic Fabric

No original material is removed or altered. All fixings relate only to the non-historic canopy elements.

6.3 Policy Compliance

The proposal aligns with:

- NPPF Section 16

- Historic England guidance on minimal intervention and reversibility
 - Local conservation policies supporting sensitive protective works
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7. Conclusion

The addition of two supporting pillars to the existing door canopies protects the historic timber frame, enhances long-term stability, introduces a traditional vernacular feature, and causes no harm to the building's architectural or historic significance. The proposal is conservation-led, sensitive, and appropriate for a Grade II listed building.