

UTT/19/3125/LB

PROPOSAL: Conversion and extensions to stables to form 9 no. dwellings.

LOCATION: Brook End Farm Stables, Easton Lodge, Park Road, Little Easton.

APPLICANT: Landsec.

AGENT: Mr Alisdair Sherry c/o Strutt & Parker.

EXPIRY DATE: 12 February 2020 (extension of time agreed until 31 August 2020).

CASE OFFICER: Clive Theobald

1. NOTATION

1.1 Affecting setting of Grade II listed building.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

2.1 The site is located at the end of Park Road to the west of The Gardens of Easton Lodge and Little Easton Church and comprises a sizeable and impressive traditional style red brick and pantiled quadrangle stable livery complex which stands adjacent to the grade II listed Brook End Farmhouse. Stables House tower stands in the middle of the complex, whilst the eastern corner tower comprises a 1 bedroomed dwelling (Grooms Cottage) and the western corner tower contains a first floor studio flat with a tack room on the ground floor.

2.2 Internally, the building does not possess any remarkable features whereby many of the internal stable divisions are plain brick or timber partitions, whilst the roof is a plain sawn softwood queen strut type, some with lath and plaster ceiling finish (in poor condition). Many of the partitions have been repaired or replaced over time. In some areas of the building (notably those already converted into residential use), white plastic double glazed windows have been inappropriately inserted.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 This listed building application relates to works to convert and extend the existing stables complex to form 9 no. separate dwelling units.

3.2 Units 1-9 would be arranged predominately over the ground floor, with three units, namely Units 2, 5 and 8 including bedroom and bathroom space at first floor level. The extensions would be designed in contemporary style with a lightweight aluminium slim-line flat roofed decking system and would have full height glazed windows with brickwork columns to match the existing building. Fenestration would be painted timber for the existing building. A number of the internal stall partitions would be removed, as would parts of the rear brick wall to facilitate short extensions along the back and sides.

3.3 The newly created residential units through conversion would incorporate either rear or side extensions to four of the units (Plots 1, 4, 6 and 9), whilst the units created for Plots 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8 would involve the conversion of the existing

building footprint respectively without extensions. It should be noted that two of the new residential units to be formed would be created by way of refurbishment out of the two existing units of residential accommodation within the stable complex, namely Plot 5 (Stables House) and Plot 8 (Grooms Cottage).

- 3.4 The current revised listed building application represents a revised application submission to the Council following the withdrawal of application UTT/18/3316/LB for works relating to the residential conversion and extension of Brook End Stables where the withdrawn application involved its conversion to 11 no. residential units with associated extensions rather than the 9 no. units with extensions as now proposed and would increase the extent of retention and visibility of the existing rear wall, retain more of the internal walls, lower the eaves of the extensions and have a step down internally and scale back significantly the extent of extension floorspace from as originally shown under UTT/18/3316/LB.

4. APPLICANT'S CASE

- 4.1 The listed building application is accompanied by the following supporting documents:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Structural report of existing buildings (Edward Parsley Associates Ltd);
- Heritage Statement with Addendum Statement (Architectural Management);
- Strategic Overview to Scope of Work (Private Property Projects).

- 4.2 The Planning supporting statement concludes as follows with regard to the heritage aspect of this stable complex conversion proposal;

- Following the withdrawal of the previous applications, detailed liaison with the Council and various consultants has resulted in amendments to the original scheme to the overall number of units, the amount of extensions and provide for greater attention to the internal fabric. The heritage aspects are set out in an addendum of the originally submitted Heritage Statement, which concludes that the very little change will occur to the setting of the former Brook End Farmhouse, and that the neutral/slight impact caused by the proposed extension and conversion works constitute considerably less than substantial harm to the listed heritage asset. The applications are considered to meet the requirements of Paragraphs 196 and 197 of the NPPF.

- 4.3 The Strategic Overview to Scope of Work concludes as follows:

- The approach to the detailing of the existing fabric (shell) of Brook End Stables is such to maintain the historic fabric and style of the building, whilst upgrading where necessary to meet the requirements of the current Building Regulations. The processes involved are designed to repair and replace sympathetically in order to preserve and enhance the stable building into the future.

- 4.4 The submitted Addendum to the submitted Heritage Statement concludes as follows (extracted):

- The proposed revised and reduced scheme for a residential conversion will occasion a degree of change to the fabric of the stables and, to a much lesser extent, to the setting of the stables and the former farmhouse;
- This revised scheme enables a greater amount of the existing external walls to be retained, whilst the number of extensions is significantly reduced, thus reducing the overall visual impact.
- The stables make a positive contribution to the [listed building] setting, by way of their physical form and presence, evoking the former relationship between the agrarian function, the adjacent farmhouse and the stables. This relationship has been eroded over time, as the farmhouse no longer fulfils that function. However the appearance of each of the buildings and the visual relationship remains very much intact, enabling a very clear understanding of the historic setting;
- The assessment of impact and the conclusions in the body of the main report remain unchanged, although the scheme itself is much reduced. The overall impact is still neutral/slight (positive).
- This constitutes considerably less than substantial harm in the NPPF paragraph 196 test. This impact, however slight, is entirely positive, in that it supports improvements to the current condition of the stables and a viable use and future for the stables block, ensuring that they remain in use and enjoy regular and proper maintenance.
- The scheme offers an opportunity to sustain the future of the stables building via the option of an alternative use, which will safeguard the future of the form and fabric. The careful design and use of quality materials sets the level at which both the use and appreciation of the converted buildings will be gauged;
- The applicant's Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement and Assessment of Potential Re-Uses contain further information and detail on the design ethos, materials, use of building and viability of the scheme;
- This addendum to the assessment of various potential re-uses of Brook End Stables concludes that the most suitable re-use of the buildings is a conversion of the buildings to 9 units. It is in the only means of paying for the repairs recommended in the report produced by Edward Parsley Associated Ltd and generating a financially feasible return.
- For the foregoing reasons the scheme substantiates the changes to the buildings occasioned by the alterations and the change of use.

5.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

- 5.1 Listed building consent application UTT/18/3317/LB for the "Demolition of outbuildings, conversion and extensions to stables to form 9 no. dwellings and alterations and renovations to 2 no. existing dwellings, associated parking and amenity space" at Brook End Stables was withdrawn after concerns were expressed by Place Services (Heritage) that the extent of internal sub-division of the existing building and the number of extensions shown for the new residential units would be excessive and be harmful to the fabric and setting of this heritage asset.
- 5.2 Following withdrawal of this application, discussions took place between the applicant and Council Officers which resulted in revised plans being submitted for formal consideration which sought to take account of the heritage comments expressed by Place Services whereby less of the rear "spine wall" would be removed thereby increasing its retention and visibility, retention as much as possible of the internal dividing walls, lowering of the eaves line of the rear

extensions and a reduction of the amount of rear extension floorspace. Accordingly, the revised scheme was reduced to 9 no. new dwellings to include the refurbishment of the two existing residential units (Stables House and Grooms Quarter) which now forms the basis of the current revised listed building application.

- 5.2 The applicant has stated that 9 no. dwellings would provide for the viability of the proposed conversion, including the substantial capital expenditure required for the range of repairs and improvements required to be carried out to the building, but that the limit of viability as a 9 no. dwelling scheme has now been reached and, as a result, a conversion scheme with any fewer homes would not provide the necessary financial return to enable these works to happen to safeguard the future of the building.

6. POLICIES

National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2019)

Uttlesford Local Plan (2005)

ULP Policy ENV2 – Development affecting Listed Buildings

7. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 7.1 This council OBJECTS to this application on the following grounds:-

UDC 2005 Local Plan Policies

Heritage

LEPC feel that the application does not adequately address the concerns raised in the Place Services heritage comments on the previous application for this site.

8. CONSULTATIONS

ECC Place Services (Heritage)

- 8.1 This application pertains the '*Conversion of stables including alterations to the existing residential accommodation, with associated works of demolition and extensions, to form 9 no. dwellings along with associated parking and amenity space*'.

In terms of background this submission follows a withdrawn application ref: UTT/18/3317/LB; the previous scheme was unsupported by Built Heritage predominantly on the grounds of intensification and design.

The subject building for conversion is a stable block, it is a curtilage listed building. The building recently ceased as a working livery and is not from my inspection considered to be 'At Risk'.

The host listed building associated with the stable range is BROOKEND FARMHOUSE, Grade II listed (List Entry Number: 1322579. Date first listed: 26-Sep-1984 '*Farmhouse, c.1500 and late C16. Timber framed and plastered with*

gabled peg tile roof. Of two storeys and 'U' plan form with wings to the rear. Front has gabled, formerly jettied, crosswing and 20 century gabled porch..... Two storey late C16 block is replacement for former open hall' (Extract from Historic England 2020).

The U-shaped stable range of Brooke End Stables is located to the east of the host listed building. It dates from the C19th century, although this farmstead itself as an adaptation from an earlier farm complex (please refer to the County Archaeologist for further advice); its surroundings are open and predominantly consist of a flatted landscape offering long wider views of the environs; this landscape and its openness is a positive contributor to setting.

The farmstead within the stable block is sited and is accessed via a narrow track also serving Easton Park to the south east. Whilst Easton Park is nationally designated and registered as a Grade II Park, it is outside the proposed development site. However, its original boundaries survive in outline outside the area registered and in close proximity to the application site; this is evident from cartographic data.

As previously stated, the setting of the complex of buildings, both the stable range and host listed building of Brook End Farmhouse, is open and rural, most of the field parcels in the environs are registered monuments containing former WWII airfields. There is an intrinsic link between the landscape, Easton Park and this site, not only in terms of a shared landscape setting but in terms of the interrelationship of use.

It is well documented that Easton Park was a destination over centuries since its inception, the land being gifted in the late C16th by Queen Elizabeth 1st with routes to East Anglian Hunting grounds. The handful of scattered buildings and spaces (designated and undesignated) around the southern area of Easton Park are encompassed by both rural landscape and deliberately designed gardens and features. These attributes of setting are unique in their contribution to the significance of the site.

In this resubmission, an addendum to the former Heritage Assessment has been submitted; it is an oversight of the Heritage Assessment to not have examined the historical significance of this stable range, farm complex and wider environs given the highly significant context which affords an understanding behind the buildings inception and evolution.

Having carried out my assessment, I find the principle of conversion to residential can be accepted if this is demonstrated and soundly tested to be the Optimum Viable Use of the listed building. Residential has the most impact upon fabric and brings with it the greatest intensification as opposed to commercial offices. In any event, not operating as the building was intended (Livery) will undoubtedly be a level of harm in the loss of the stable use, but a sensitive conversion can be achieved (if the only viable option) in order to ensure the long term conservation of the heritage asset and its setting which includes the paddock at the frontage.

These proposals seek not only to convert the stable range, but to carry out an enlargement of the historic footprint of the courtyard range (U shaped), by way of extending the side wings; this in principle is not supported and having assessed the submission is unjustified. The fact there are haphazard lean-to and ancillary structures within the setting does not provide a robust basis. I find the Heritage Statement misleading where it states 'Overall, there are no changes which will

adversely impact upon the setting of the former farmhouse' (p. 5) as there are material changes quite clearly by elongating the U shape closer to the listed building as a minimum. No commentary or conclusion of impact on the alteration of the original floorplan is commented upon in the Heritage Statement.

Conserving floor plans in themselves is important; the established U shape plan form is a deliberate component of the architectural narrative, the modular components therein to create the stalls/stables are also relevant considerations in terms of architectural interest.

The Heritage Assessment is also silent in its assessment of how such proposed alterations to a deliberate and significant plan form will impact upon the setting of the neighbouring listed building.

The open nature of setting and spatial quality for both the application building and the Grade II listed farmhouse would result in a diminution of openness will result in a level of harm.

It is positive the car parking has been located to the rear and the spatial quality of the frontage is being retained; however the cycle stores and bin stores are incongruous additions to the considered farm complex. Conversions must take into account the needs of storage for domestic use and not seek to pepper pot additional structures. If additional structures are demonstrated to be required then the design language should be developed with regard to host the architectural narrative.

The level of subdivision is stated as being informed by the existing interiors and fabric worthy of retention, at my site assessment access was not facilitated but I have given regard to the report entitled 'Strategic Overview to Scope of Work' (SOSW) which sets out a response to the shell and spine walls.

The heritage assessment does not contain a detailed documentation of the stables, schedule of retention or how the analysis of the building and its fabric has informed the design and rationalisation of the floorplan. Nor is there evidence of other options of layout having been tested.

Notwithstanding this omission, I find the subdivision excessive, whilst it is positive that design amendments seek to retain and repair stable doors, and vents etc., there is a lack of detailed information in the LBC submission on this for example by way of schedules, methodology for repairs etc.; commentary stating broad and general assumptions e.g. *'timber joists have acquired rot (as demonstrated in image below) over the years and as such will require replacement or strengthening, which will be to a Structural Engineer's specification. In order to make the roof thermally efficient for occupation, insulation will be required in conjunction with ceilings to be installed, to meet current Building Regulations'* (SOSW p.3) are considered vague.

This report also refers to 'ceilings' and thermal upgrading in broad terms. Given there are features identified within the applicant's own information which are worthy of retention, this should be documented and translated into the design. This submission is deficient in this regard with drawings lacking annotation both the proposed and the existing.

Given the above comments, I am unconvinced with the placement and justification of the new extensions at the rear over two modules of the building; the rear

elevation can be considered as of a lesser significance, but the placement and depth of these spaces is challenging to the host structure and its linear plan form. To offer a Condition of planning for landscape (DAS p. 10) is not accepted given the recognition of landscape setting, boundaries are key to prevent urbanisation of open settings.

Summary:

Going forward, if the principle of development is acceptable in planning terms based on residential being the Optimum Viable Use, design options should be developed informed by the heritage context and the submission furnished with the correct and proportionate level of detail.

It is my professional opinion that the scheme within this application is deficient in key information and detail; the proposals would result in a high level of material harm to the curtilage listed building and the setting of the Grade II listed building, which is avoidable. For the purposes of planning, the level of harm is considered less than substantial. As such the local planning authority should weigh this harm against any public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (Para.196 NPPF 2019).

9. REPRESENTATIONS

- 9.1 None received (see planning application UTT/19/3124/FUL). Neighbour notification period expires 27 January 2020. Advertisement expires 23 January 2020. Site notice expires 27 January 2020.

10. APPRAISAL

The issue to consider in the determination of the application is:

A Heritage protection (NPPF, ULP Policy ENV2);

A Whether the proposed works would have a harmful effect on the fabric and character of this heritage asset / adjacent listed building and whether the extent of harm could be mitigated by any public benefits accruing (NPPF, ULP Policy ENV2).

- 10.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 66 states...

"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority...shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that...

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance".

Paragraph 193 states that...

"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance".

Paragraph 194 states that...

"Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification".

Paragraph 196 states that...

"Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use".

Paragraph 197 states that...

"The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset".

Paragraph 202 states that...

"Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the dis-benefits of departing from those policies".

10.2 The MHCLG Planning Practice Guidance, entitled Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment states that...

"Public benefits may include heritage benefits, such as:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation"

10.3 ULP Policy ENV2 states that development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings and that demolition of a listed building or development proposals that adversely affect the setting, and alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted. Policy ENV2 adds that in cases where planning permission might not normally be granted for the conversion of listed buildings to alternative uses that favourable consideration may be accorded to schemes which incorporate works that represent the most practical way of preserving the building and its architectural and historic characteristics and its setting.

- 10.4 Brook End Stables comprise a stable range of circa late 19th/early 20th construction which has an historical association with the adjacent Grade II listed Brook Farmhouse and also the wider Little Easton Estate, although the stables are not specifically mentioned as part of the statutory listing for the farmhouse. It may be argued that the stables form part of the historic curtilage of the farmhouse, although this point is not conclusive. Whilst the stable complex has no remarkable features internally, its greatest significance lies in its physical form and presence, being clearly a substantial stable range which has a strong relevance to the surrounding land and local landscape and its relationship with the farmhouse. It is suggested that the form of the stable building is not unusual locally, although the survival of such forms is considered rarer. As such, they make a positive contribution to the setting of their surroundings.
- 10.5 The proposed works to convert this stable building to residential use is more particularly described in the application submission. It is debatable as to whether the stable complex itself is curtilage listed and therefore a heritage asset in its own right and whether the proposed works affect the setting of the asset. However, for the avoidance of doubt, a listed building application has been submitted for the works given the impact on the adjacent grade II listed Brook End Farmhouse. As previously mentioned, the building's greatest significance lies in its physical form and presence, being a range of stables which have a relevance to the surrounding land and Brook End Farmhouse. The submitted Heritage Impact Assessment provides a comparable analysis of heritage value against the level of change which would result from the proposed conversion and associated works where the assessment concludes that neutral/slight impact arising from the conversion and extension of the stables would cause less than substantial harm, where it is noted that less than significant harm has been identified by Place Services in their consultation response, although it is the level of "less than substantial harm" which is disputed for this listed building application assessment.
- 10.6 The proposed scheme would maintain intact the overall main elevations of the building to the front stable yard, with each of the doors and windows retained in the submitted proposal. Thus, the essence and character of the stables would be much maintained with the style of the regular and numerous openings still in evidence. The original use and purpose of the building would therefore still be unmistakable through the proposal where the proposed front gable end extensions for Plots 1 and 9 would read as an extrusion of the existing building form which would simply elongate the return wing building form. The proposed flat roofed seamed extensions would have a contemporary feel in contrast to a vernacular style where it is considered that such additions to the fabric of the existing building in the form of shallow outshoots would be subservient in scale to each sub-divided dwelling unit and would respect the existing form and fabric of the building.
- 10.7 The comments from Place Services have been duly noted where the conservation officer states that

"Having carried out my assessment, I find the principle of conversion to residential can be accepted if this is demonstrated and soundly tested to be the Optimum Viable Use of the listed building. Residential has the most impact upon fabric and brings with it the greatest intensification as opposed to commercial offices. In any event, not operating as the building was intended (Livery) will undoubtedly be a level of harm in the loss of the stable use, but a sensitive conversion can be achieved (if the only viable option) in order to ensure the long term conservation of the heritage asset and its setting which includes the paddock at the frontage".

From the above assessment, it is the extent of the changes that are proposed to the building, including adding extension components to the building's side wings and parts of the removal of the rear spine wall, which causes most concerns to Place Services.

- 10.8 It is considered regrettable that the stables are no longer in livery use, a factor which has led to the current planning and listed building applications being submitted. However, notwithstanding the assertions made by the Parish Council and local residents as to why this may be so, this listed building application can only concern itself with the actual physical works to convert the building to residential use as proposed.
- 10.9 The current revised application has reduced the number of dwelling units now proposed from eleven to nine (to include the two residential units which already exist which would be subject to refurbishment) following withdrawn listed building application UTT/18/3317/LB, whilst the amount of extension floorspace shown for the building has also been reduced, and quite considerably so. The applicant has advanced the case that it would not be financially viable to reduce the number of dwelling units even further for this conversion proposal where, as stated for the accompanying planning application before you, it has been identified that residential use is the only feasible re-use for this now vacant heritage asset whereby a viable use would enable investment to be made by the applicant for the proper repair and restoration of the building whereby the important areas of repair are detailed in the submitted structural survey. Such repairs would not be carried out it is asserted by the applicant unless the submitted proposal comes forward.
- 10.10 As previously stated, the detailed analysis by Place Services of the current revised conversion scheme is duly and fully noted. However, it is considered on balance in this instance that the current revised proposal would bring about public benefits, including securing its optimum viable use for the building as is required to be assessed under paragraph 196 of the NPPF if the building is considered to be curtilage listed or paragraph 197 if it isn't, and that paragraph 202 of the NPPF is also relevant to this proposal. In the circumstances, it is considered that the balance is such that the public benefits which would accrue for this residential conversion scheme would outweigh the identified less than significant harm which would be caused as a result of the conversion works and no objections are raised under ULP Policy ENV2.

11. CONCLUSION

The following is a summary of the main reasons for the recommendation:

- A The proposed works as described for this redundant large stable complex to facilitate its residential conversion with associated extensions would lead to less than significant harm to the building and also to the setting of the adjacent grade II listed building under paragraph 196 of the NPPF should the stable building be considered to be curtilage listed whereby the proposed conversion would in assessing the balance for paragraph 196 bring about public benefits by securing its long term future use where it has been demonstrated that residential use would be the only optimum viable use. No heritage objections are raised accordingly under ULP Policy ENV2.

RECOMMENDATION – APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

Conditions

1. The development to which this consent relates shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The external roof finishes for the extensions to Plots 1 and 9 shall match the roof finishes of the existing building.

REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting in accordance with ULP Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

3. All new brickwork for all of the extensions proposed, including brick bonding, shall match the brickwork and bonding of the existing building.

REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting in accordance with ULP Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

4. All new fenestration to the new dwelling units shall be of painted/stained softwood timber.

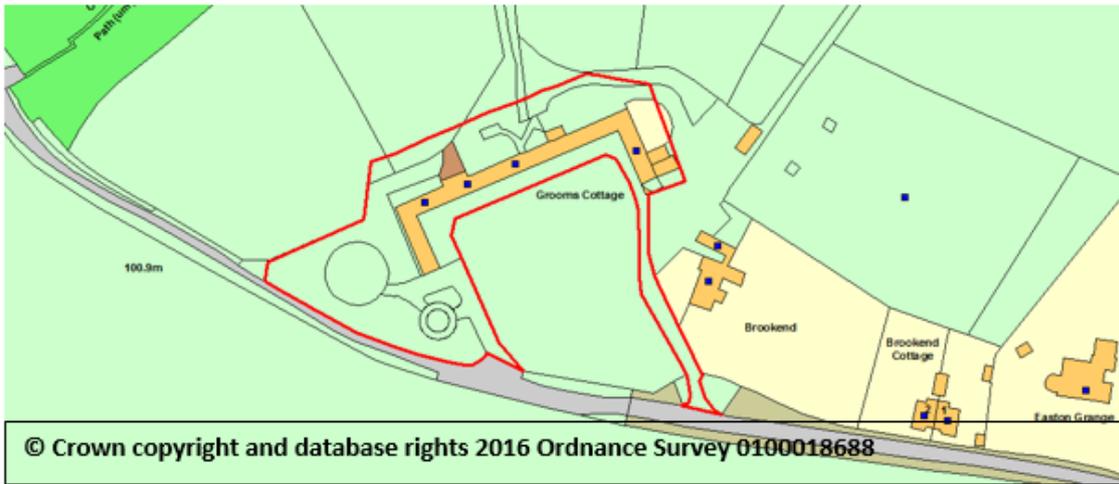
REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting in accordance with ULP Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

5. All new windows and doors introduced to the building arising from the new works shall match the form and appearance of those in the existing building.

REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting in accordance with ULP Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

6. All of the existing louvered roof ventilators for the existing building shall be retained within their existing positions as a result of the new works.

REASON: In the interests of preserving the historic character and appearance of the Listed Building and its setting in accordance with ULP Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).



Organisation: Uttlesford District Council

Department: Planning

Date: 03 August 2020