

Weald & Downland Living Museum

Conserving the Wells cottages: Identifying
significance, managing challenges, and informing
future protection

REDACTED VERSION

*A dissertation submitted as part of the requirement for MSc Building Conservation
validated by the University of York*

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to gain an understanding of the heritage significance of the Wells cottages through examining their historic context and design, and exploring the notion of 'pastiche' architecture. The project will then examine the changing significance of the cottages and the key threats they face today. Testing alternative options for statutory and non-statutory protection systems will highlight the effectiveness and appropriateness of different methods in the context of current planning policy and designation criteria.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

This version of the dissertation has been edited with any personal or sensitive information redacted. This includes internal photographs of the houses, interviews and personal references. This is to accord with the terms set out in the project information sheet and participant consent form, as approved by the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee. Any publically available/visible information relating to specific houses has been retained. Furthermore, all archive images have been removed to avoid breach of copyright. All relevant archives material can be found at the West Sussex Record Office in Chichester. All external sources have been fully referenced and credited.

DISCLAIMER

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout the project (including referencing):

GPDO – The General Permitted Development Order (2015 as amended)

HDC – Horsham District Council

NPPF – The National Planning Policy Framework (2018)

NTS – Not to scale

WCPC – West Chiltington Parish Council

WCRPS – West Chiltington Rural Preservation Society

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1. Introduction

Overview

This dissertation focuses on the Wells cottages in West Chilmington, West Sussex – a large group of non-designated heritage assets in an area known as the Roundabout [figures 1-2]. The development was constructed on an area of woodland and heath during the 1920s and 30s by the studio potter, house builder and aviation designer Reginald Fairfax Wells (Salmon 1999, 138–140) [figure 3].



Figure 1 - Location map (NTS) (Ordnance Survey 2018) © Crown Copyright (2018). An Ordnance Survey supplied service

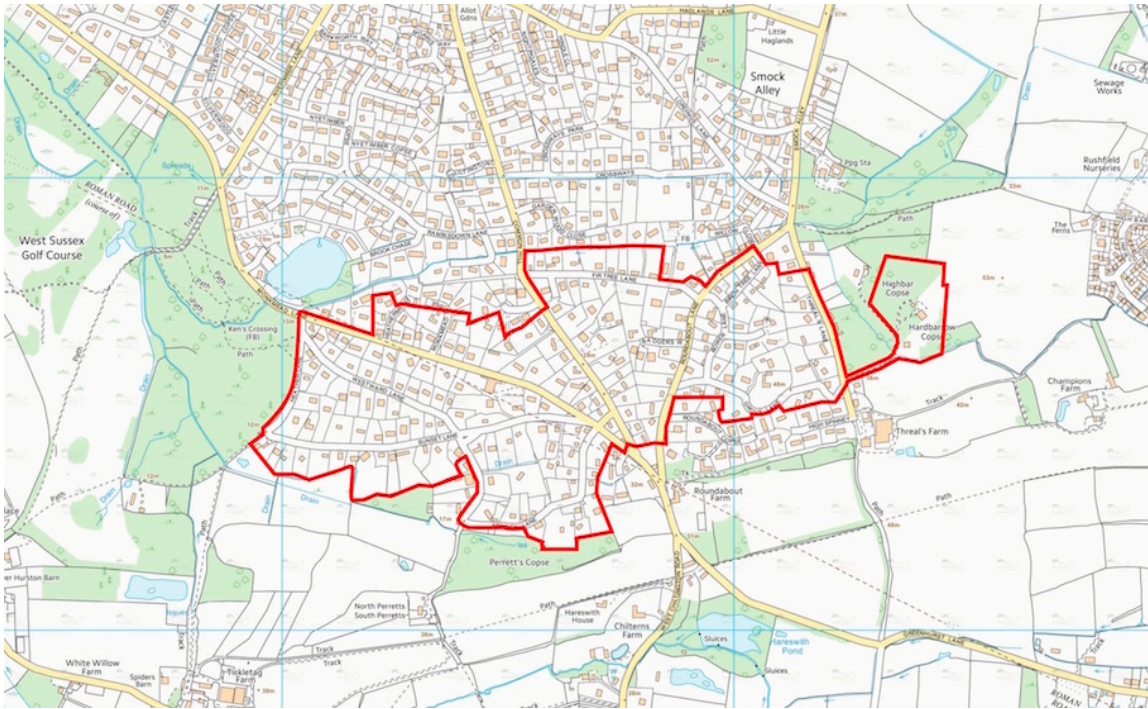


Figure 2 Roundabout development - approximate extents (NTS) (Ordnance Survey 2018) © Crown Copyright / database right (2018). An Ordnance Survey supplied service

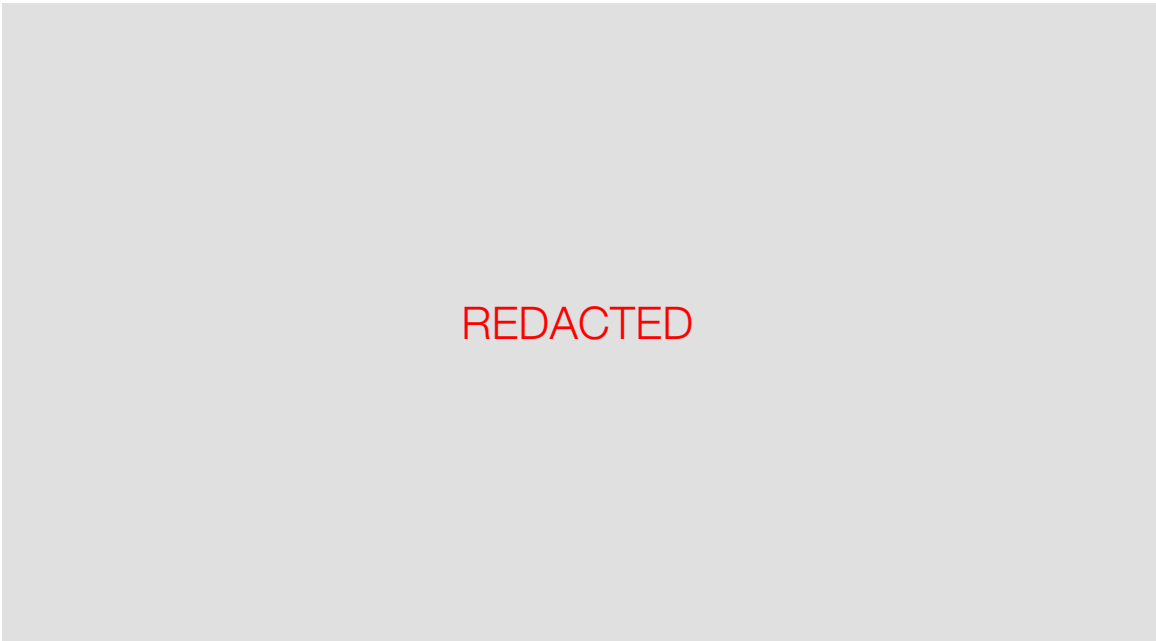


Figure 3 Recently constructed cottages in the 1930s (Anderson 2018b)

Whilst Wells built approximately 200 cottages across Sussex and Kent during this period (Moore 2016), the largest group of up to 130¹ cottages (WCPC 2017a) was built in West Chiltington as a suburb type development. The design of each cottage is unique yet they share the same quaint character, originally built to be idyllic holiday homes in the Sussex countryside (Salmon 1999, 142). The cottages were generally sold to Wells' artisan friends and other wealthy Londoners (Redwood 2002); they were not cottages for local people, nor were they intended to be permanent residences. However, over time these holiday homes have evolved into dwellings.

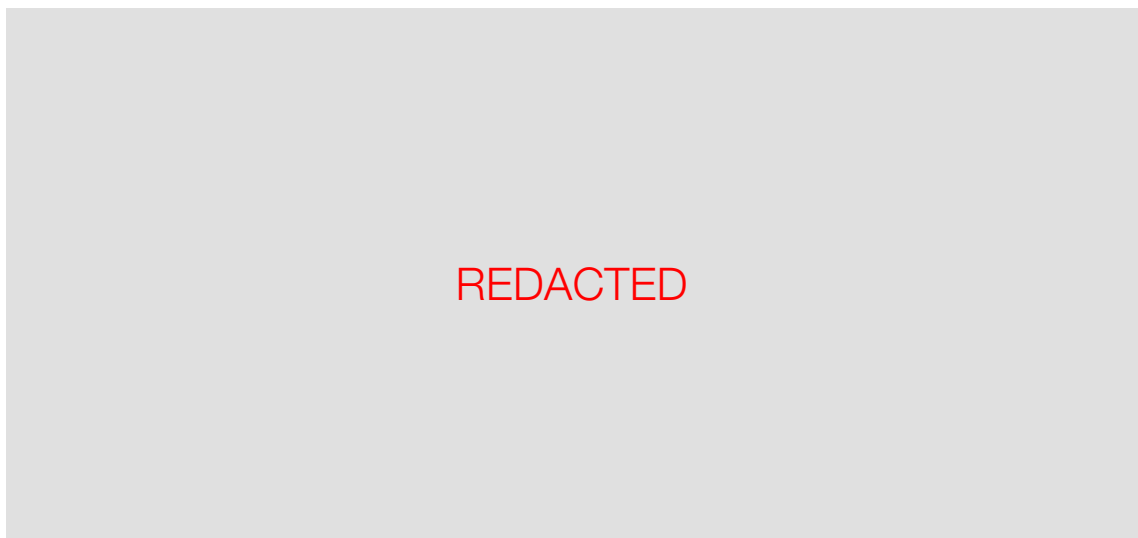


Figure 4 1930s Wells cottage photograph (Anderson 2018b)

¹ There are discrepancies among sources over the exact number of Wells Cottages in West Chiltington. Less reliable sources, such as Moore and Redwood, suggest there are around 70 cottages (2016; 2002), however this figure does not appear to be based on research. Conversely, research conducted by the WCPC would suggest there are approximately 100 cottages (2017a), whilst the WCRPS's findings suggests there are as many as 130 cottages (2006). In comparing the respective lists, it appears that there are mistakes and omissions in both cases. Without further in depth research to verify the findings, the assertion that there are up to 130 cottages is considered most inclusive and appropriate.

Wells could be described as an Arts and Crafts enthusiast, favouring local vernacular and salvaged materials, nostalgic historic forms and handcrafted features. Salmon notes the key characteristics of his cottages. These include thatched roofs, eyebrow dormer windows, standardised joinery made at Wells' workshop, miniature windows, walls constructed of locally made and salvaged bricks white washed with "Sussex Dinging", large gardens and sometimes a loggia (Salmon 1999, 143) [figures 4-5]. It has been argued that they have a historic appearance, described as "mock 17th century homes" and "pastiche" (Redwood 2002).



Figure 5 Wells cottage (Anderson 2018g)

Project aims

The cottages represent an interesting yet under researched case study of a group of heritage assets that currently have minimal formal recognition or protection.

Therefore, this research project seeks to gain an understanding of the Wells cottages and their heritage significance. The current challenges and how this impacts the cottage's significance will then be investigated, informing consideration of the appropriateness and effectiveness of different protection systems.

Objectives

1. To understand what makes a Wells cottage, including their historic context, characteristics, design and construction (chapters 4-5)
2. To explore the concept of 'pastiche' as its own building typology and its impact on the recognition of these buildings as heritage assets (chapter 6)
3. To assess the heritage significance of the cottages (chapter 7)
4. To identify development trends and changes that have occurred, addressing the reasons for change and how it has impacted the significance of the cottages (chapter 8)
5. To understand the current status of the cottages as non-designated heritage assets and the ability of the planning system to protect them (chapter 8)
6. To explore the appropriateness and effectiveness of statutory and non-statutory protection systems in light of current planning policy, guidance and designation criteria (chapter 9)
7. To recommend the most suitable protection system (chapter 9)

Relevance of the project

This project relates to the wider issues surrounding non-designated heritage assets and their recognition, management and conservation. These buildings contribute to local identity and the character of our built environment. Whilst place making and conservation of our heritage forms key aims within both the planning system and statutory bodies such as Historic England (2017b, 1), the protection afforded to these assets is often limited. This issue is evident in the Wells cottages, where a lack of formal recognition has resulted in a reduced ability to preserve their heritage significance. Hence, this case study aptly demonstrates these issues, highlighting the opportunities and challenges faced by unlisted historic buildings generally.

Outcomes

In addition to achieving the aims and objectives of this project, the findings could provide realistic options for the future recognition and conservation of the Wells cottages as heritage assets. This research could provide supplementary evidence to justify a future proposed protection system.

2. Literature review

The Wells cottages can be considered a relatively under-researched group of heritage assets. Similarly, Reginald Fairfax Wells and his contributions to the arts, construction and aviation industries are not widely known. Arguably Wells' most compelling legacy is his cottages, built as weekend retreats for London high society in a burgeoning market for countryside retreats. As West Chilton has the largest collection of these quaint yet distinctive cottages, a high level of interest, knowledge and anecdotes exist locally.

Notwithstanding this, reliable literature and research on the subject is scarce, with the primary source of published information being a chapter in Anne Salmon's book 'Voices of the Village', 1999. This book provides a general history of West Chilton throughout the 20th century, and its chapter on the Roundabout area includes details on Wells and his cottages. Salmon has included memoirs from individuals who remember the cottages when they were built. This book provides a valuable and unique source of information based on Salmon's primary research, making a key contribution to understanding the history of the development.

Other published sources of information consist of newspaper articles, such as that written by Fred Redwood for the Telegraph, 2002. This relies on Salmon's book and local opinions and perceptions, as opposed to primary research. Whilst still relevant, it carries less weight as an academic source. Additionally, Neil Moore of the local estate agents has produced a short article on the cottages in 2016. As this firm has been involved in the sale of many Wells cottages, this article is likely to be based on a good level of local knowledge and experience, albeit from a marketing perspective.

There is a distinctive gap in current research focusing on the buildings as heritage assets, both individually and as a group. Whilst some detail is published regarding their characteristics, use and construction, this has not been studied in detail. No research has been conducted on the historic context of the cottages and how this might have informed their design and function, and their heritage significance has not

yet been examined. Whilst concerns have been raised locally regarding modern development and alterations, the exact challenges facing these buildings has not yet been thoroughly examined, including issues resulting from current planning policy. Finally, minimal published research has been conducted on determining whether or not protection is suitable, and what form this might take. Whilst an attempt to designate a conservation area was explored in 2006 by the WCRPS, this study lacks detail and evidence, although the compilation of a list of Wells Cottages is helpful. It is these gaps that this project seeks to address using the research methods set out in the next chapter.

Wider reading makes a significant contribution to the project, contextualising the primary research. What little is known about the Wells Cottages from publications is supplemented by literature relating to the interwar period, as well as the Arts and Crafts, Modernist and Garden Cities movements in chapter 5. Literature relating to pastiche is addressed in chapter 6, and Historic England's Conservation Principles and other literature relating to significance shall be explored in chapter 7. Chapters 8-9 will utilise literature and legislation relating to planning policy, guidance and selection criteria.

Some of the issues discussed are the subject of copious volumes of research that is not the focus of this work, yet they play an important part in enabling the discussion of the Wells Cottages and their significance. References to supporting literature are given throughout, but are not described in depth. To maximise potential for analysis and discussion, these sources will be explored in the relevant chapter as opposed to forming part of wider literature review.

3. Method statement

The primary method of investigation comprises of fieldwork: studying the Wells cottages in terms of their construction, architectural style, planning, historic context and development. Primary research through surveys (appendix F) of a sample of individual buildings and the area as a whole will develop a deeper understanding of this case study and illustrate key issues discussed throughout the project.

It is not considered necessary to survey a large quantity of cottages internally in order to gain a suitable understanding of these buildings. Information gathered from an external viewpoint (the public highway) is considered to be sufficient for this study and avoids unnecessary intrusion of the householders' privacy. However, a small sample of internal surveys is required to highlight any internal features relevant to this study².

Other methods will supplement this primary research, such as accessing archive material and by studying historic map evidence. Additionally, interviews with the WCPC and the District Conservation Officer (appendix C, D) will provide a professional and informed opinion of the cottages, their significance and potential for protection. Other research will include assessing previous planning applications, planning policy and guidance.

Wider reading of published material will explore the context for the project. This will allow for analysis and interpretation, situating the cottages within existing literature and enabling discussion of key issues. Key literary sources and lines of enquiry have

² Participants for internal surveys were given the project information sheet and consent form, as approved by the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee.

been set out within the literature review. Further analysis of literary sources will occur throughout the dissertation where relevant.

This research will contribute to an understanding of the Wells development, as explored through chapters 4-6. It will then be possible to define the significance of the Wells cottages in chapter 7, and explore how it is changing and threatened in chapter 8. This will inform analysis of different protection systems in chapter 9, testing their benefits, challenges and appropriateness in the case of the Wells cottages.

4. Assessment of the Wells cottages

The Roundabout development was an attempt by Wells to construct his own representation of a “perfect English village” (Moore 2016), realised through arts and crafts methods, historicism and a quaint aesthetic. An idealist, artist, designer and businessman, Wells created this unusual development that appealed to the tastes of the interwar middle-upper class market (see chapter 5). This chapter analyses the design, construction and idiosyncrasies that make the development distinctive. This will form a basis for understanding the Roundabout development, which combined with chapters 5 and 6 will enable an understanding of the significance of the development.

The Roundabout development

In terms of layout and planning, the development is arranged around the historic rights of way across the land. This is particularly evident in the western half of the development, where Sunset, Spinney and Westward Lanes all follow historic routes [figures 6-7]. Whilst these narrow lanes have since been metalled, originally these were left as dirt tracks between the houses [figures 8-9]. Salmon (1999, 148) notes how residents would use their ashes to form a better road surface. This traditional repair method (Sear 2008, 1) could have contributed to the rustic character that Wells was trying to achieve. Salmon (1999, 149) also suggests that Wells “built on the cheap”, and it is therefore likely that his lack of road provision reduced build costs as well as contributed to the area’s character.

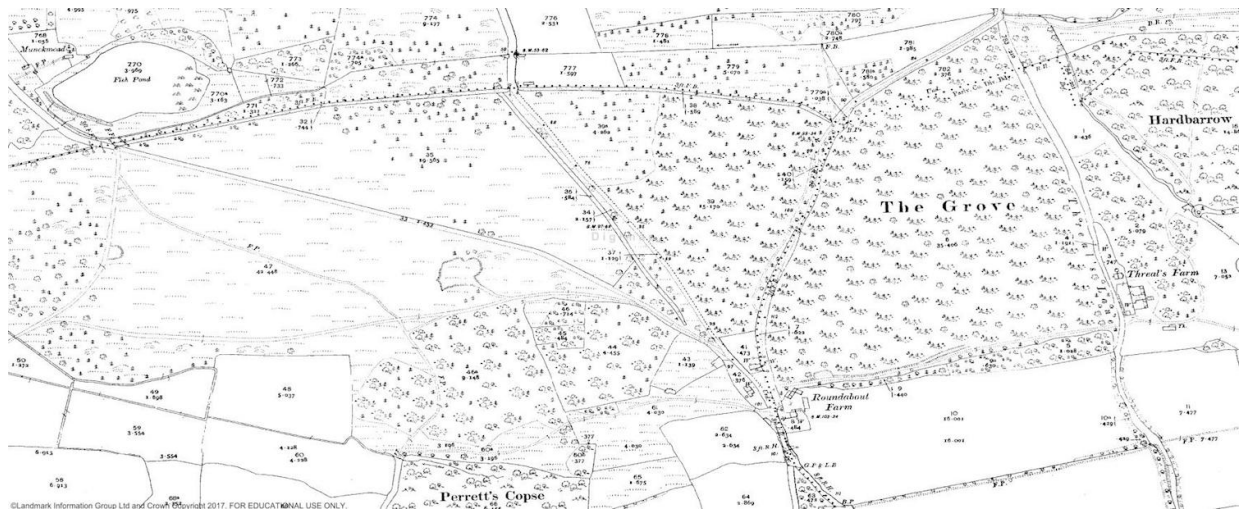


Figure 6 1911 map (NTS) (Landmark Information Group 1911) © Crown Copyright (2018). An Ordnance Survey supplied service

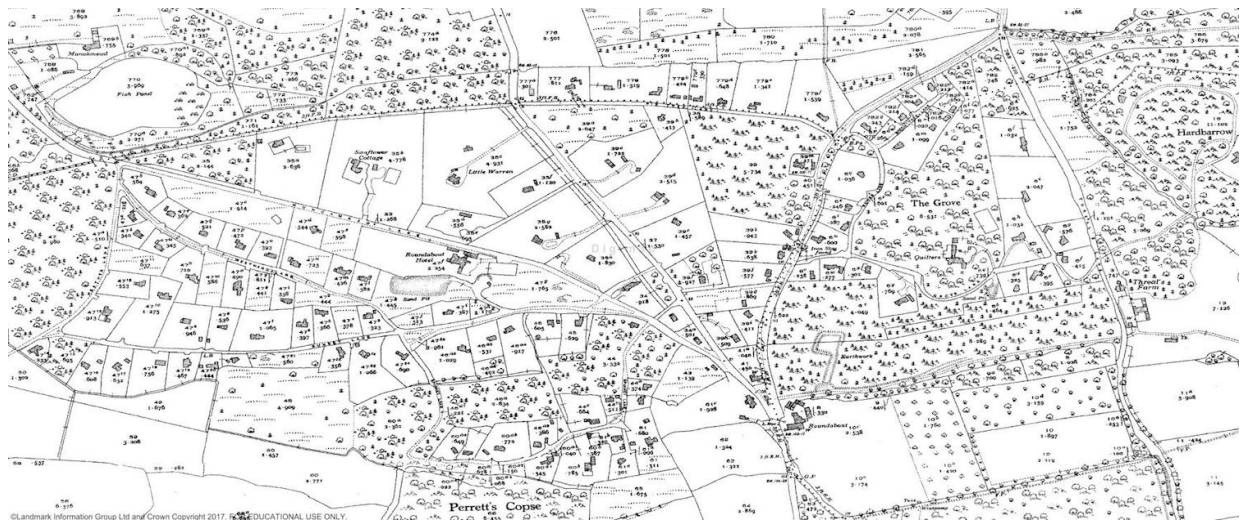


Figure 7 1937 map showing Wells' development (NTS) (Landmark Information Group 1937) © Crown Copyright (2018). An Ordnance Survey supplied service



Figure 8 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 9 (Anderson 2018c)

The Cottages tend to occupy large plots, although modern infill development has eroded this low-density character in places [figure 10]. The cottages are informally arranged around the organic layout routes with no clear logic to their exact spacing and positioning. This forms part of the semi-rustic character of the cottages and their setting.

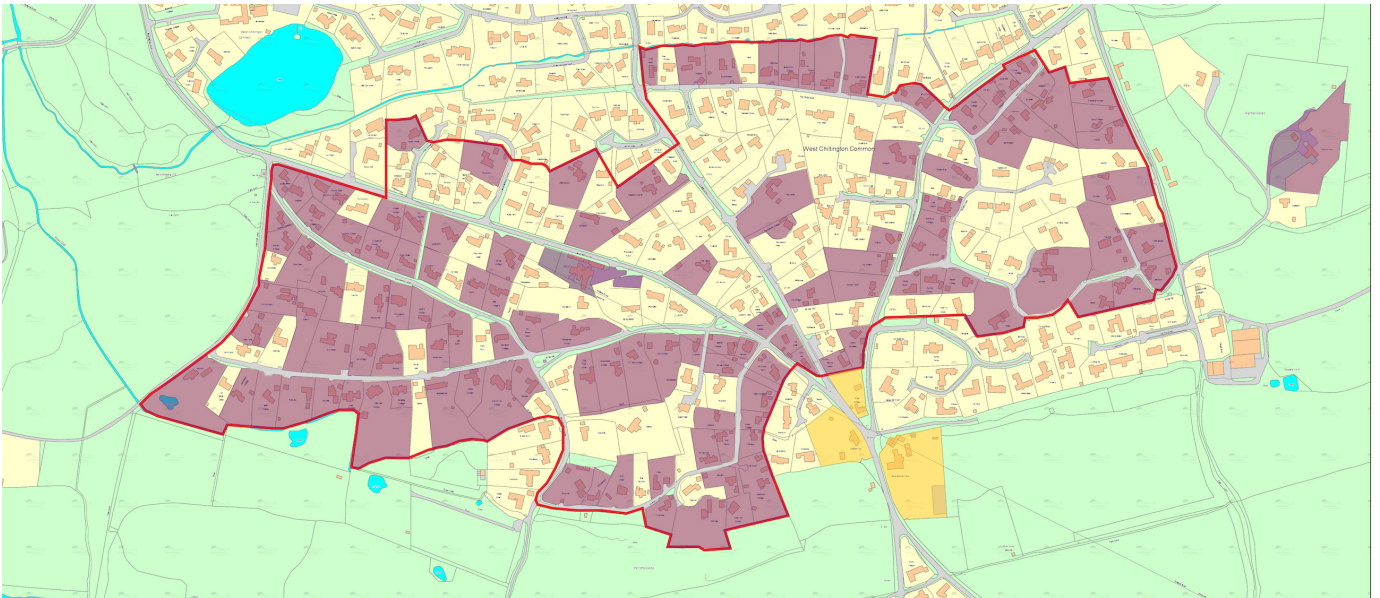


Figure 10 Map (NTS) highlighting Wells cottages (purple) and pre-Wells buildings (yellow). All remaining development is modern infill. (Anderson 2018a) © Crown Copyright (2018). An Ordnance Survey supplied service. This map is based on the lists provided by WCPC and WCRPS (2017a; 2006) and the 1937 map (Landmark Information Group 1937). See appendix for larger version.

Design and construction

Salmon (1999, 142) states that Wells created “a warped and weathered look” that appeared to have “grown out of the landscape many years before” through using second and third quality bricks and unseasoned timber. Wells believed in the Arts and Crafts ideals of using local vernacular materials and building methods, prioritising a ‘handmade’ process. As such the cottages have a rustic appearance, which is both picturesque and nostalgic.

Wells used a design framework that allowed each cottage to be bespoke yet retained the development’s group aesthetic. Each cottage was based on one of 5

key house types designed by Wells (Salmon 1999, 143). Using one of his standard designs as a baseline, Wells made changes as he saw fit. It would appear that Wells would also make creative impromptu changes as the cottage was being built, such as the eccentric brickwork at Blue Cedar (figure 11). This demonstrates Wells' ability to individualise each cottage.



Figure 11 (Anderson 2018d)

Whilst Wells took some commissions, most cottages were speculatively built (Salmon 1999, 143). Salmon (1999, 146) describes instances where buyers withdrew their offer because Wells would not compromise where he felt their request would conflict with his vision. This demonstrates how the development was more than purely a business venture, where the design and character of the buildings were highly valued by Wells.

Conversely, Salmon (1999, 150) notes examples where Wells made personal concessions, such as providing a balcony at Woodlands Cottage so that a family member with Tuberculosis could sleep outside. This balcony has not survived and,

like many of the cottages, the building has been significantly enlarged from its original design [figure 12]. This example demonstrates Wells' flexibility to make in keeping changes, as well as how a lack of recognition and protection has resulted in modern development and the loss of interesting original features.

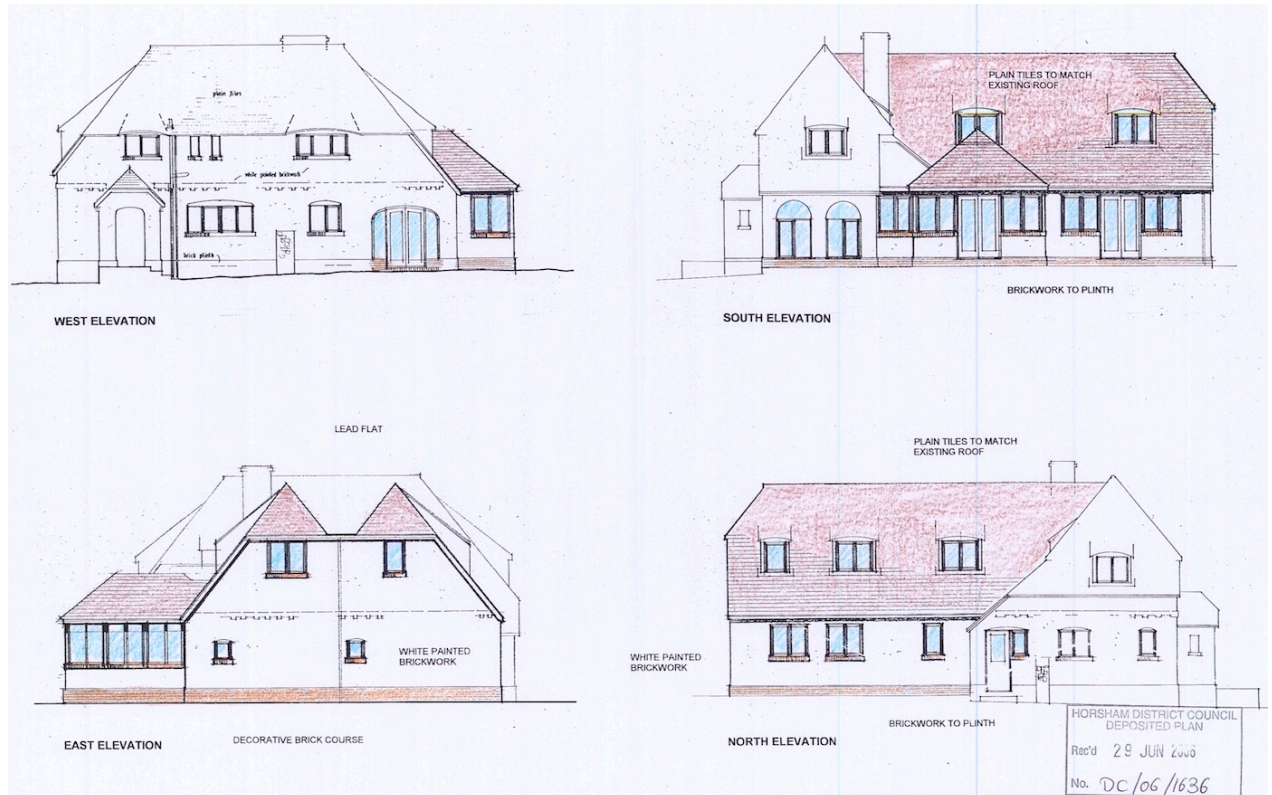


Figure 12 Woodlands cottages with modern alterations (Vinnicombe 2006)

As the cottages were not intended for permanent residence, they were generally very small and provided minimal facilities. Most cottages were designed with small kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms without modern plumbing or electricity, with services extending only to external wells and cess-pits (Salmon 1999, 143).

Key Features

The key design features that make the Wells cottages distinctive are set out in the introduction, as highlighted by Salmon. A detailed summary of key features and findings from primary research can be found in appendix B.

Wall details

Wells cottage walls are typically constructed of 2 leaves of whitewashed brickwork featuring a solid plinth (usually with rubble incorporated), a decorative dentil course, unpainted brick window sills, salvaged and varying quality bricks, and occasional faux buttresses and areas of decoration. There are also unpainted and timber framed examples. These features make a key contribution to the quaint character of the cottages, creating an impression of age. Figures 13-19 show typical details and examples.



Figure 13 (Anderson 2018d)



Figure 14 (Anderson 2018f)

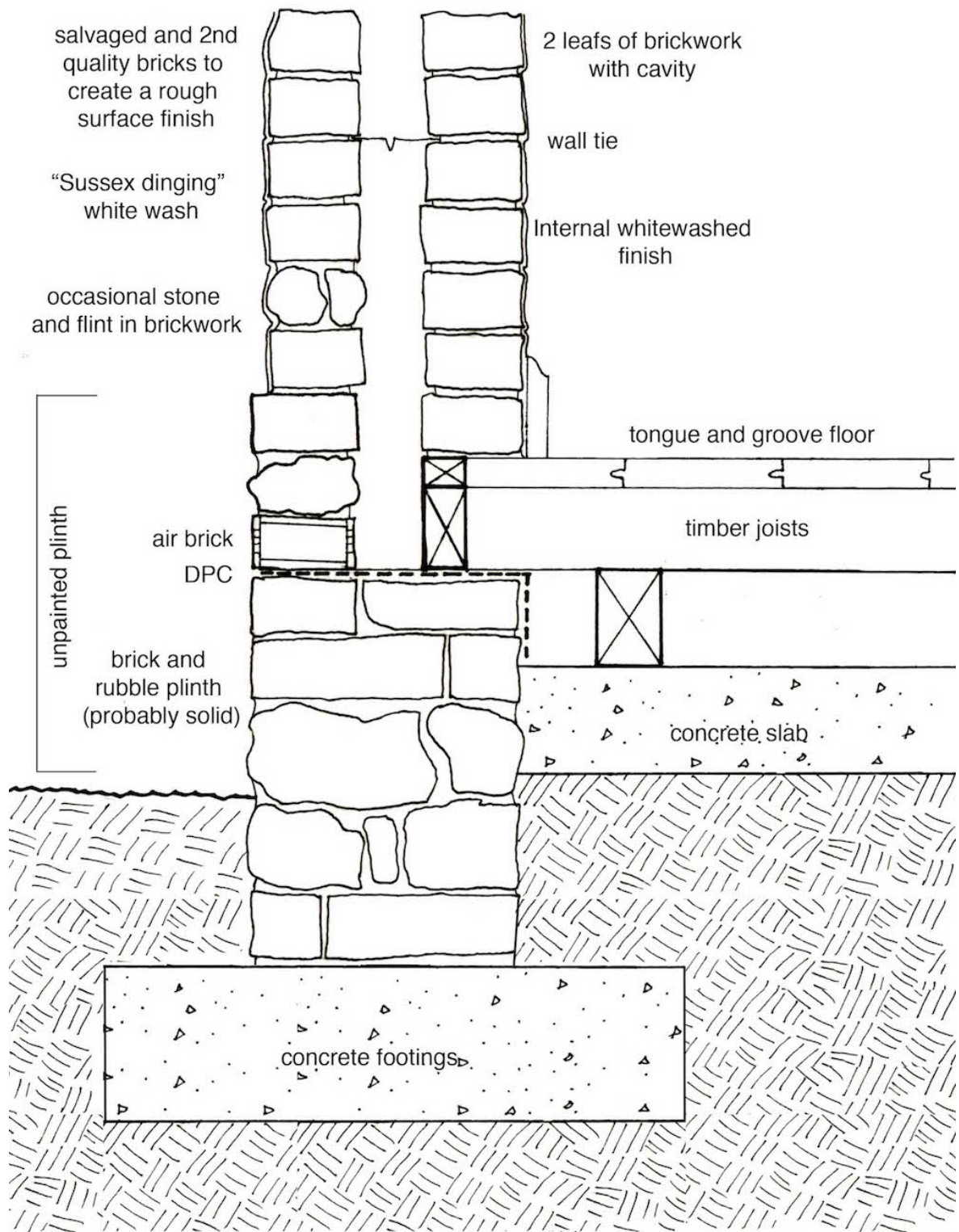


Figure 15 wall, footings and floor diagram NTS (Anderson 2018e)



Figure 16 (Anderson 2018i)



Figure 17 (Anderson 2018d)



Figure 18 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 19 (Anderson 2018c)

Roof details

Wells roofs are generally constructed of timber truss frames with a collar, ridge beam and purlins. As described by Salmon (1999, 142), thatch was the original roof covering for most cottages. Due to a lack of protection, many thatched cottages have since been reroofed in plain clay tiles, which has become part of their current character. The cottages exhibit a range of dormer types with eyebrow dormers being a prevalent design feature. Figures 20-25 show typical details and examples.



Figure 20 (Anderson 2018h)



Figure 21 (Anderson 2018f)

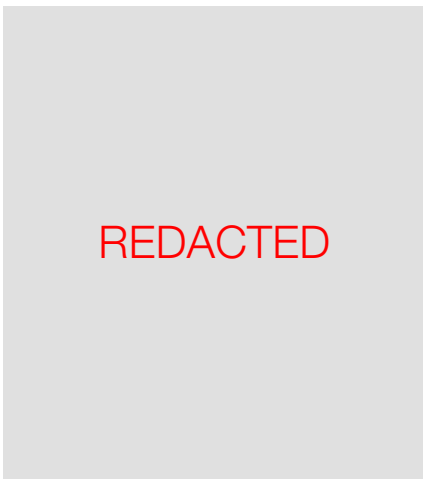


Figure 22 roof space (Anderson 2018d)

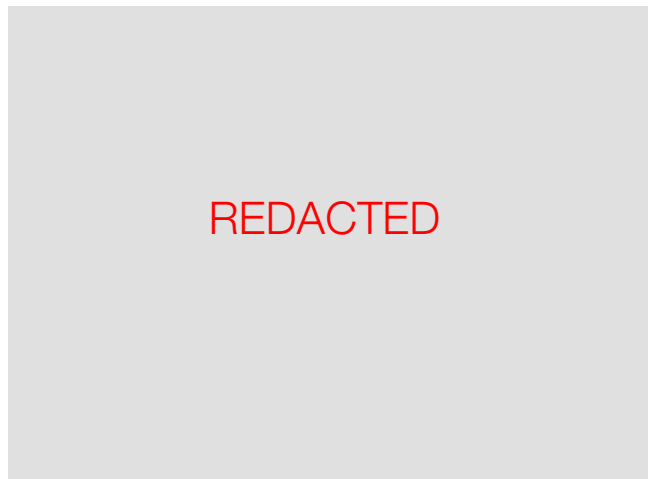


Figure 23 roof space (Anderson 2018i)

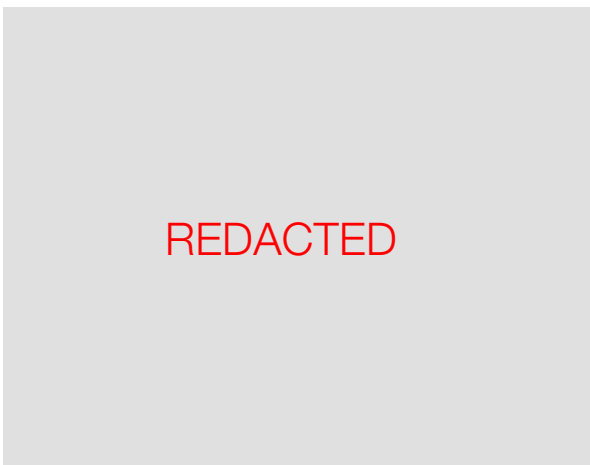


Figure 24 Wells' original section (Anderson 2018b)

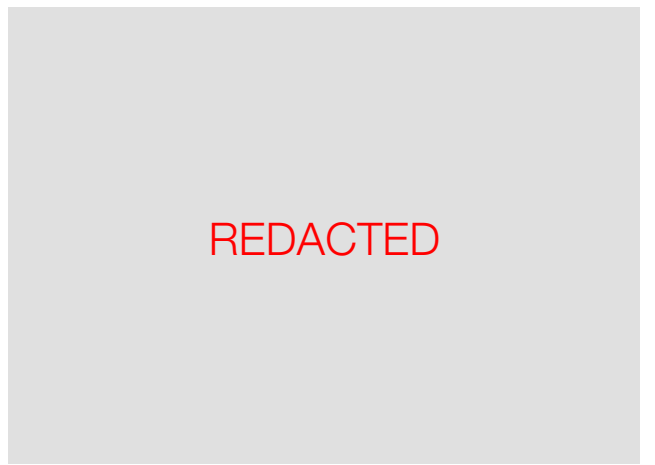


Figure 25 1930s photograph (Anderson 2018b)

Chimney details

Where they survive, chimneys and fireplaces form a prominent feature of all Wells cottages as the original primary heat source. The chimneys typically have a heavy, rustic character whilst Wells fireplaces have a simple brick design with clay hearth tiles. Figures 26-29 show typical examples and details.



Figure 26 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 27 (Anderson 2018c)

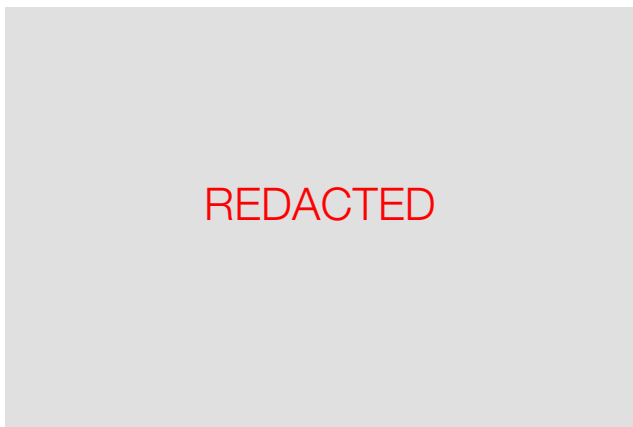


Figure 28 brick fireplace (Anderson 2018g)

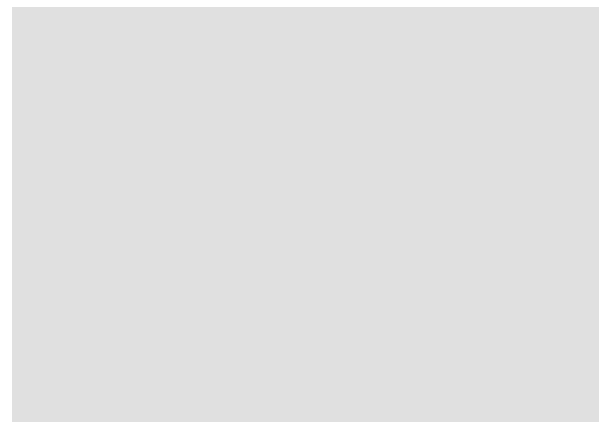


Figure 29 Wells' original section (Anderson 2018b)

Joinery details

Salmon (1999, 143) notes how Wells made his own doors and window frames at his workshop on Spinney Lane using local timber. She highlights pine as being the area's dominant tree species (1999, 139) and therefore it is logical that pine was

used for the cottages' construction and joinery work. Standardised metal windows were used in timber frames, alongside highly distinctive miniature windows. Due to a lack of protection, many windows and doors have been replaced with modern alternatives. Figures 30-35 show typical examples.



Figure 30 (Anderson 2018i)



Figure 31 window stay (Anderson 2018d)



Figure 32 (Anderson 2018i)

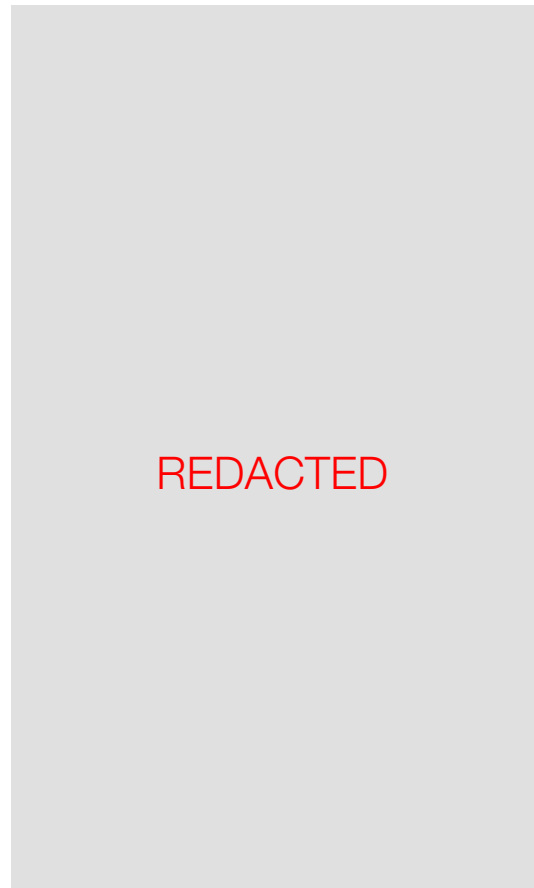


Figure 33 door (Anderson 2018d)

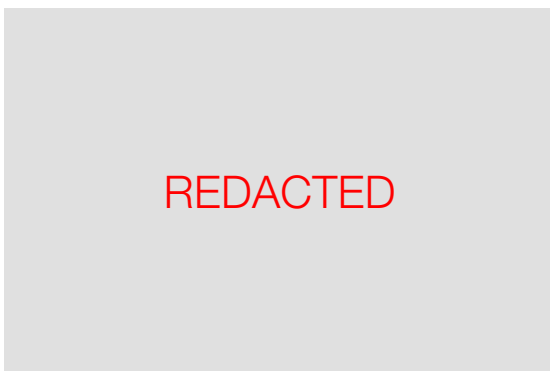


Figure 34 door hinge (Anderson 2018d)

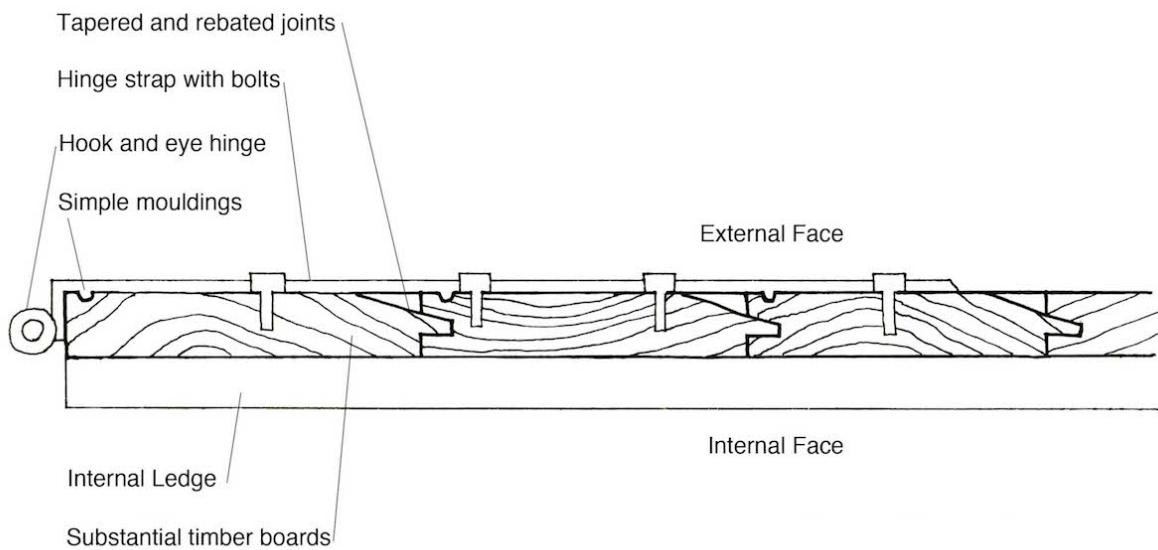


Figure 35 door cross-section NTS (Anderson 2018e)

General construction details

Wells used concrete footings and floor slabs below a timber tongue and groove floor, whilst ceilings are reported to have lateral bracing (see appendix B, F). Figures 15 and 36-37 show typical details.

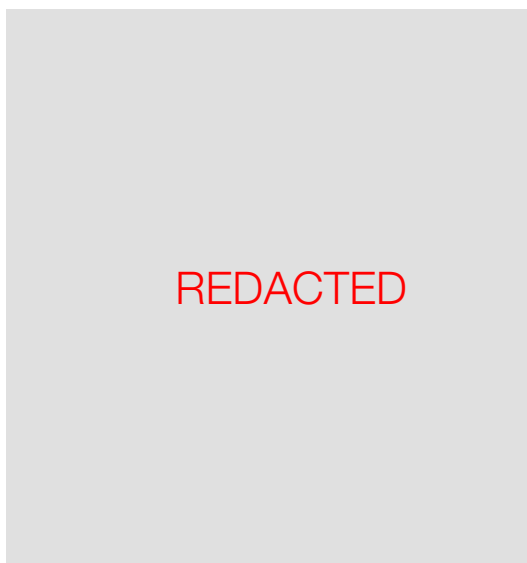


Figure 36 Wells' original section (Anderson 2018b)



Figure 37 Example of ceiling construction with bracing (Wandel n.d.)

Other details

Logias constructed of brick or timber and occasional balconies are a distinctive feature. Many cottages were built with a Wells garage, which are currently threatened by decay and replacement due to a lack of protection. Figures 38-41 show examples.

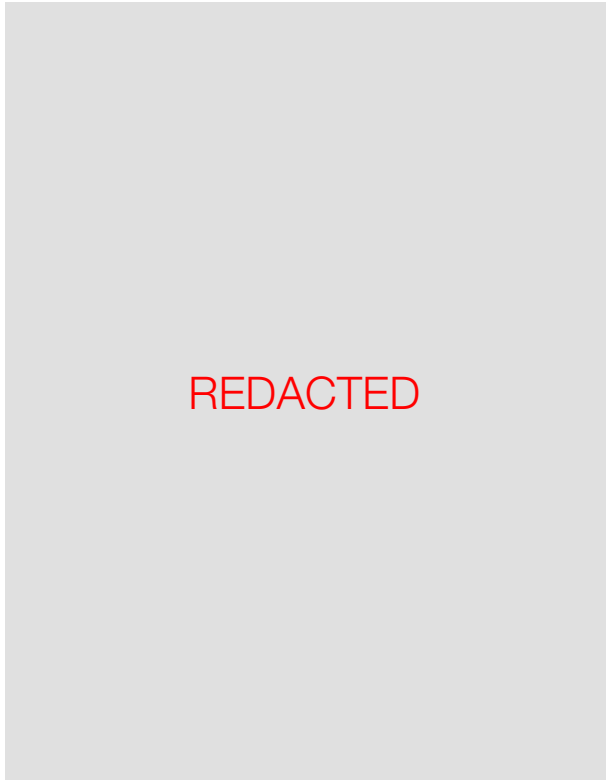


Figure 38 Wells' drawing – brick loggia (Anderson 2018b)



Figure 40 (Anderson 2018c)

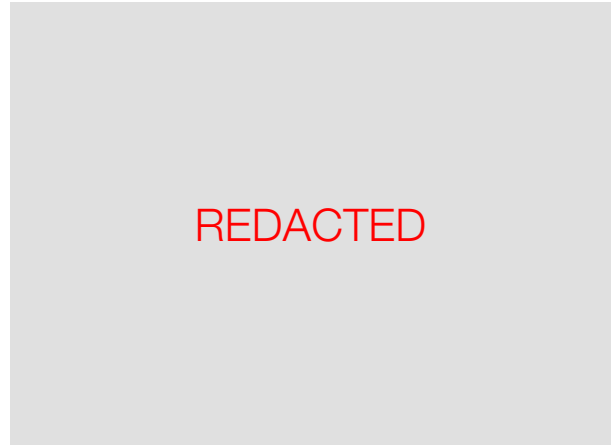


Figure 39 Wells' drawing showing timber loggia (Anderson 2018b)



Figure 41 (Anderson 2018c)

5. Context

The interwar period forms the historic backdrop of the Wells cottages. Exploring the era's architectural, social and economic changes will help to situate the development in history. This chapter seeks to explore key aspects of the cottages' interwar context and architectural influences, thus building a picture of their heritage values as discussed in chapter 7.

Interwar aspirations

The horror and loss of life experienced in the First World War would have had a profound effect on the mindset of the Nation. Thurley (2013, 2) notes how “survivors and their families wanted something different from post war Britain”. This significantly influenced the psychological backdrop to which the Wells development responded.

Thurley (2013, 3) considers that there was a new interest in the countryside and the country's heritage following the war, which coincided with the general increase in holidays and leisure time, as well as the availability of the motorcar. Combined, these factors provided new access and freedom for the middle-upper classes to explore the countryside. As a result, Thurley (2013, 4) highlights how the countryside experienced an influx of “town and city dwellers seeking something that they saw as part of their national identity”. Reflecting this social change, the principles of the young National Trust were firmly based in preservation and access of England's beautiful and historic places (The National Trust 2008, 1).

Thurley's assessment resonates with that of Pevsner (1991, 150), who notes a general “longing for fresh air and gaiety” in the early 20th century. Indeed, the Arts and Crafts movement had long been advocating a return to nature and vernacular

forms. However, Davey (2001, 11) considers that the early movement was only truly accessible to the upper middle class who could afford such practices whilst maintaining the social freedom to be individualistic. It could therefore be argued that it took the effects of the war and the advancement of transport for these ideals to be practiced by the wider population.

Built as idyllic holiday homes, the Wells cottages catered for this growing trend of rural escapism. Not only did they provide owners with a quintessentially 'English' retreat within reach of London, they represented a simpler rustic lifestyle. The cottages adopted a historic aesthetic whilst providing large gardens and a rural setting within the scenic landscape of the South Downs. They also had garages to store the motorcar, which many owners would have possessed. The Well's development took advantage of the interwar mindset and the desire to access and experience the countryside, providing an ideal escape from city life and the horrors of the recent past.

The interwar mindset also influenced the proposed lifestyle for future occupants. As part of the area's sale agreement, strict conditions prevented the keeping of pigs, stipulated a minimum plot size of half an acre, and established a building line to ensure houses were set back from the existing highway (Salmon 1999, 138). These restrictions helped to create a rural, picturesque setting without the dirt and roughness of true countryside living. This prettification of the countryside, which was a new and accessible commodity, responded to the socioeconomic changes and aspirations of the day.

Interwar housing

Whilst the Wells cottages were not dwellings but weekend retreats, this type of development bares many similarities with the construction of interwar housing and the growth of the suburbs. Despite the considerable economic struggles of the

immediate post-war period (Aldcroft 1970, 11) there was a boom in the construction of housing (Mellers and Hildyard 1989, 31).

The period saw a significant increase in the owner-occupier as better mortgages and higher build costs made new rental housing less viable (Lawrence 2009, 6).

Lawrence (2009, 1) notes how “speculative builders met this demand on an unprecedented scale”, producing designs that catered for public opinion using pattern books (Lawrence 2009, 12–13). To achieve this, speculative builders would emulate and blend popular styles and features which were often traditional, where the vernacular cottage style was particularly fashionable (Lawrence 2009, 31). Consequently, interwar housing design saw the dominance of the speculative builder, driven by public opinion and the popularity of traditional aesthetic.

Wells built most cottages speculatively using the sales profits to fund the construction of subsequent cottages (Salmon 1999, 143). Unusually, Wells played the role of an architect and a speculative builder. Whilst speculatively built, his unique designs were his own creation and not simply amalgamations of existing pattern books. Hence, the cottages are an unusual hybrid development, catering for public taste and creating a consistent aesthetic whilst allowing design creativity and individuality. The Wells cottages are an interesting manifestation of the period that took the desired traditional vernacular aesthetic to an extreme.

Stylistic influences

Prior to the outbreak of the war, the Arts and Crafts Movement was a key contributor to English architectural style. Lambourne (1980, 3) notes how Victorian industry and the machine cultivated “a deep rooted intellectual distrust of its effects on society”. Founded in the 19th century, the Arts and Crafts movement sought to re-establish the role of the craftsman, artist and architect and restore the value of good design and handcraftsmanship (e.g. Cumming and Kaplan 1995, 6). As such, the movement had

a social motive to improve the lot of the worker, craftsman or artist.

Arts and Crafts buildings tend to be constructed of local vernacular materials using traditional handcrafted techniques. Consequently, they often fit well within the local landscape and echo historic vernacular styles. Cumming and Kaplan (1995, 6) explain how Arts and Crafts architects sought individualism through their design, inspired by historic styles but avoiding imitation.

Whilst Europe more readily embraced modernism following the war, Britain took a more traditional approach that adapted previous architectural styles (Thurley 2013, 2). This acceptance of historicism suited the ideals and aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts style. However, Naylor (1989, 259–263) highlights how the economic pressures of the period strained the movement's advocacy for good design, resulting in its decline. Furthermore, the approach of the speculative builder and the popularity of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic significantly diluted the principles of the movement, which had become a fashion as opposed to a socially conscious movement.

In line with Naylor's assertion, it could be argued that Wells' development is an example of how the movement's aesthetic was commercialised. These were not 'one-off' commissions seeking to achieve the highest standards in architecture. Instead, the development was a business venture as well as a realisation of Wells' personal vision. Hence, the Roundabout cannot be considered a 'pure' Arts and Crafts development, although the movement has heavily influenced its appearance.

Modernism had some influence on later British interwar architecture (Historic England 2011, 5). However, it has been argued that "the modern movement never suited the British psyche" (University of West England 2009). At a time when people looked to the countryside and heritage as a source of comfort and national pride, it is possible that Modernism was too new and too different for the exhausted country.

As a trained studio potter, Wells was an advocate of the Arts and Crafts movement. Being a builder, craftsman and designer, his multidisciplinary background enabled

him to harmonise the roles of architect and craftsman. His love of vernacular forms and handmade, local and salvaged materials allowed his buildings to integrate with the landscape, providing the whimsical historicism that the period favoured. This aesthetic conveniently played on the popular fashions of the day and rejected the styles of his modernist contemporaries.

Garden Suburbs

The Garden City movement provides a valuable insight into the issues and social aspirations of the day. Culpin (1913, 3) claimed that the industrial revolution caused the unintended “evils” of rural depopulation, urban over-crowding and substandard living conditions. The Garden City movement sought to create a new model for housing and industry that would alleviate this, providing better living conditions for all social tiers (Culpin 1913, 1–2). ‘Garden Suburbs’ are described as the lesser cousin of the Garden City, being purely residential whilst still promoting a healthy living environment through good design (Culpin 1913, 2). The Garden Suburb influenced many new developments during the interwar era (University of West England 2009).

Completed in 1938, Hampstead Garden Suburb is a prime example of this type of development. The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust (2010, 5) claims it is “one of the finest examples of early twentieth century domestic architecture and town planning”. This residential suburb relies on the proximity of London for industry and infrastructure. Despite its present day exclusivity, it was originally built to accommodate people from a range of social and economic backgrounds.

The connection between the Garden City and Arts and Crafts movements is described as “intimate” by Frampton (2007, 47). The social consciousness of the Arts and Crafts movement complimented the philanthropic doctrine of the Garden City movement. Many Garden Cities and Suburbs, including Hampstead, display an Arts and Crafts approach (Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust 2010, 33).

The purely residential nature of the Roundabout development is akin to a Garden Suburb and shares its utopian idealism and Arts and Crafts aesthetic. It is a planned development that promotes a healthy lifestyle and connection with nature. However, being built as holiday cottages for the affluent London market, the development lacks the philanthropic ethos of a Garden Suburb. The cottages were a luxury commodity and did not seek to lift the standards of the poor.

It would appear that the new cottages were a cause for concern of local people. Salmon (1999, 138) notes how Wells was accused of “building the houses too close together and turning an unspoiled woodland into a Garden City”. This demonstrates a wary local perception of this type of development. Accordingly, a more sensitive approach was required where this perception may have encouraged the low-density planning and overall rural character of the area.

6. Pastiche

It is common practice to identify a building as belonging to a particular category, style or type. These building types are often defined by a set of stylistic parameters associated with a historic period. Labelling a building as such is often helpful in defining how it is representative of its era, contributing to its overall heritage significance. In contrast, the Wells cottages do not fit comfortably in any established style. Whilst this contributes to their distinctiveness and rarity, it also inhibits further understanding and recognition of the cottages as valued heritage assets. This chapter seeks to gain a detailed understanding of the typology of the Wells cottages, which will contribute to the analysis of their significance in chapter 7.

Meaning of pastiche

The term 'pastiche' is subject to multiple interpretations and connotations. Some are negative, some are positive and some have other meanings altogether. For example, pastiche is synonymous with parody, imitation, fake, or homage. These interpretations suggest that pastiche is not a thing in its own right; it always relies on some form of imitation and lacks authenticity. However, deeper analysis of pastiche and its true meaning reveals an interesting concept that can be considered an art form in its own right. Indeed, Hoesterrey (2001, 1) refers to pastiche as its own genre that has had limited study and recognition.

Dyer presents a valuable insight into the true meaning of pastiche. He considers it to be a conscious and intentional imitation which allows better understanding of the original subject and our emotional responses to it (Dyer 2007, 2). Therefore, the act of imitation is integral to the work, intending to evoke specific feelings, memories and experiences. There is a difference between 'imitation' associated with pastiche, and

'replication', which may be associated with a fake or copy. Dyer (2007, 56) notes that "pastiche deforms the style of its reference: it selects, accentuates, exaggerates, concentrates". As such, pastiche is not an exact copy, but is intentionally similar.

Pastiche in architecture is common. As buildings must perform functional and structural roles, architects will often draw from the existing pool of established forms, materials and details. This imitation is generally considered acceptable and part of the limitations of architecture – it is not pastiche for a building to have a hipped roof or to be made of brick. However, it is the realisation and expression of these functional forms that define a building's style. This is the subject of pastiche. New architectural styles have risen and declined throughout history, applying sets of aesthetic rules to express functional architecture. Pastiche is where these styles are imitated outside of their original historic period and out of context with contemporary styles. In addition to straightforward imitation, Golding (2001, 5) notes that architectural pastiche can result from a blend of historic styles and elements from different sources.

The Wells cottages as pastiche

As previously discussed, the cottages share many characteristics with Arts and Crafts principles and could be described as neo-vernacular. However, as set out by Cumming and Kaplan (1995, 6), it was intended that the Arts and Crafts style "would be no slavish imitation of historical models". Instead, the Wells cottages seek to imitate the appearance of a much older cottage and convince us that they are indeed 'historic'. As mentioned in chapter 4, Wells even went as far as omitting modern services such as mains plumbing, electricity and proper roads, utilising historic building methods and materials. This eccentric and archaic style of development is therefore unusual and does not fully conform to the Arts and Crafts style. Consequently, it is best defined as 'pastiche'.

Whilst the Wells cottages can be regarded as a more extreme form of pastiche, development with pastiche characteristics was common during the interwar period. Thurley (2013, 2) highlights this increased popularity for historic architectural styles and the way “millions shared in the country cottage, the countryside, the homely comfort of old England”. Interestingly, the public wanted something that looked cottage like, traditional and rustic, but didn’t mind that it had been produced speculatively or commercially. This accepted lack of authenticity shows a tolerance or even popularity for pastiche architecture during the period. Lowenthal (2009, xvii) observes that it was the aesthetic of history that was important, as opposed to history itself.

The reasoning for this acceptance of pastiche and the reluctant adoption of modernism is linked with the interwar mindset, whereby Lowenthal (2009, 9) states “city-dwellers expressed regret for idealised rural pasts”. This concurs with the general desire to reconnect with nature and experience the nation’s heritage. De Botton (2006) observes how this fascination with rustic architecture still exists today because modern people and society are so ‘unrustic’. In our world of change and innovation, pastiche provides an escape from present day problems using picturesque traditional styles (de Botton 2006). In the aftermath of World War 1, this mindset would have been highly applicable; familiar vernacular forms and styles would have provided a sense of security in a changing world.

Therefore, Thurley’s (2017, 4) assessment that “public taste never warmed to architecture built without an historical context” reaffirms the popularity of pastiche in the face of modern development. He goes on to explain how it was the public, subjected to living with new contemporary developments, who opposed modernism (Thurley 2017, 4). Whilst British modernism was not well established in the mid 1920s when Wells began building cottages, this demonstrates the public attachment to historicism. In the absence of genuine history, the heavily pastiche Wells cottages offered the promise of an idealised lifestyle that was more appealing than the expanding suburbs and urban areas. Wells capitalised on this national feeling to

attract buyers, creating a quaint, rural development separate from fast-paced modern society.

Value of pastiche

Pastiche architecture often divides opinion. Despite its interwar popularity and its common use for contemporary housing developments, pastiche is often the subject of scorn. Thurley (2017, 6) highlights the common perception that pastiche is highly unfashionable, often “greeted with horror and derision by most architects”. Arguably, this dislike for pastiche is centred on construction professionals who might prefer something contemporary, exciting and new. The argument that architecture should be a clear expression of its era makes acceptance and recognition of pastiche architecture all the more difficult. This isn’t helped by the many connotations of the word ‘pastiche’, which can lead one to assume that it lacks value through its lack of authenticity.

This belittling of pastiche through encouraging a negative perception is similar to Cooper’s (2008) concept of ‘rhetoric destruction’, whereby those with an interest against certain heritage assets will discredit them to argue their destruction (as cited in Carman 2016, 141). Similarly, the branding of the Wells cottages as ‘pastiche’ demeans their significance as heritage assets by creating a preconception that they are disingenuous and not worthy of our attention.

Thurley (2017, 6) argues that the negativity surrounding pastiche is nonsensical, noting that architecture has always reinterpreted and imitated historic styles. Indeed, we do not normally refer to Victorian neo-gothic, or Georgian neo-classicism, as pastiche. These reincarnated architectural styles have significant value as representatives of their era. The same could be said for the Wells cottages, yet they have been dismissed as ‘pastiche’ as opposed to a style in their own right.

A key issue that taints 'pastiche' architecture is its association with being poor quality. The term alone suggests fakery, which one may assume is cheap and substandard. Golding (2001, 5) highlights that "the term has come to be a generalised way of abusing architecture with any historic elements regardless of the skill or accuracy". Pastiche design does not equal poor quality, in the same way that innovation does not guarantee superiority. Indeed, many early modernist buildings, such as Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, have since proven to be technically substandard (Sully 2009).

De Botton (2006) suggests that many modern housing estates employ a pastiche style, yet they are often uninspiring, lacking design quality and individuality. Arguably, these developments have compounded pastiche's poor reputation. Had a contemporary style been used at the same budget, the same resulting poor quality and anonymity would likely apply. It is therefore unfair to blame pastiche for being poor quality, bland and repetitive. The Wells Cottages are evidence that pastiche development can be quirky, distinctive and bespoke.

When done well, pastiche architecture can benefit the user and wider setting, for it has the freedom and flexibility to harmoniously adapt to its context. Thurley (2017, 6) notes how sometimes a pastiche approach is entirely appropriate, particularly in sensitive contexts. The Wells cottages demonstrate how a pastiche vernacular style can coexist harmoniously with a rural wooded setting, where the use of vernacular materials and designs coupled with an aged aesthetic prevents the impression of urbanisation whilst remaining individualistic and rustic.

Pastiche architecture provides the user with the opportunity to experience and connect with heritage (Dyer 2007, 4). Whilst not a historic artefact in its own right, a successful pastiche house supplies us with a perception of historic context and identity, as well as comfort and security through familiar forms. These are things many of us value in a home, which the Wells cottages embody.

*

Pastiche is considered to be an interesting style of great value, albeit somewhat misunderstood and unrecognised. Whilst the term can lead one to assume that pastiche architecture is of little value, it has a purpose and a place in our built environments, so long as it is appropriate to its context and of a high standard. The Wells cottages, as a unique group example of pastiche architecture, deserve our recognition and should not be shunned as heritage assets for being 'pastiche'. Instead, the pastiche nature of the cottages is highly interesting and contributes to their heritage significance, as explored in the next chapter.

7. Assessment of significance

Understanding a heritage asset's significance forms an important part of its recognition and management by identifying how and why we value it. The previous chapters have examined the Wells cottages in terms of their physical characteristics, design and construction, their interwar context and architectural influences, and their typology as pastiche. This previous analysis enables an in-depth discussion and identification of the Wells cottages' heritage significance throughout this chapter.

When considered internationally and academically, significance is a multifaceted subject with many different ways of assessing and defining it. However, for the purpose understanding the significance of the Wells cottages in the context of current British planning policy, guidance and protection systems, Historic England's Conservation Principles (2008)³ is the most appropriate system.

Historic England utilises 4 key heritage values: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal (English Heritage 2008, 28–32). These values help to articulate a building or place's significance, which can be achieved through a 'statement of significance'. Historic England (2008, 40) define a place's statement of significance as "a summary of the cultural and natural heritage values currently attached to it and how they interrelate, which distils the particular character of the place". Decision-making and

³ It is noted that Historic England has recently published a new draft of this document, which seeks to better align its wording with the NPPF (Historic England 2017b, 1). However, as this draft has not yet been adopted and may be subject to substantial amendments following public consultation, it is more appropriate to use the adopted version of this guidance at present.

management should be informed by this statement, influencing future change and protection systems.

As discussed throughout this chapter, the Wells cottages have significant heritage value as a group. Consequently, this chapter will examine the cottages as a collective with reference to the aforementioned policies, identifying individual cottages where necessary. It is not feasible within the scope of this project to assess the significance of each cottage individually. Furthermore, as a result of their group value, an area or group based designation is more likely to be an appropriate protection system (as discussed in chapter 9). Therefore, a group assessment of the cottages is appropriate. As such, the assessment offers a general picture of significance with the caveat that some individual examples may be more or less significant than portrayed here, depending on their own unique circumstances that could form part of a future study.

Evidential value

Historic England determine that “evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity” (English Heritage 2008, 28).

As the cottages were constructed in relatively recent history (1920s-1930s), they are not considered to possess a substantial amount of archaeological evidential value, which might contribute to our understanding of the interwar period. As evidential value and archaeological potential tends to increase with age (English Heritage 2008, 28), this lower evidential value is not unexpected. Whilst some of the cottages exhibit some creative and unique examples of construction, generally the techniques and methods used are relatively common. Despite this, the cottages have a unique design in terms of their original form, scale and appearance, as well as Wells’ unusual approach to the development. It is a speculatively built business venture whilst also being a carefully designed expression of an idealised English village. This

combined with its highly pastiche design and organic layout makes the Wells cottages unusual. Whilst the age of the cottages somewhat limits their archaeological potential, their design ensures they retain evidential interest.

Wells used salvaged bricks in the construction of the cottages (Moore 2016; Redwood 2002) (appendices B, D, F). This introduces an alternative source of potential evidential interest. The walls contain a wide variety of material [figure 42], likely to be found whilst excavating the footings for each cottage. Additionally, some bricks appear to be older, heavily weathered and broken [figure 43], however the source of this material is unknown. The reclaimed bricks in particular could present a source of evidential value, especially if they were salvaged from an older building. More analysis is needed to examine the age of the individual bricks used.



Figure 42 (Anderson 2018d)



Figure 43 (Anderson 2018d)

Another potential source of evidential value comes from nearby sites associated with the construction of the cottages. They were built on an area of woodland and heath, which was previously part of the common (Salmon 1999, 138). Salmon (1999, 103) notes how this land was used by locals for grazing and collecting materials such as firewood. Additionally, the area has two known historic sites that may yield evidential value. The 1876 map [figure 44] shows a building and quarry on what is now Sunset Lane. Evidently, this land was used and worked on by locals prior to the cottages being built, providing a potential source of archaeological interest.

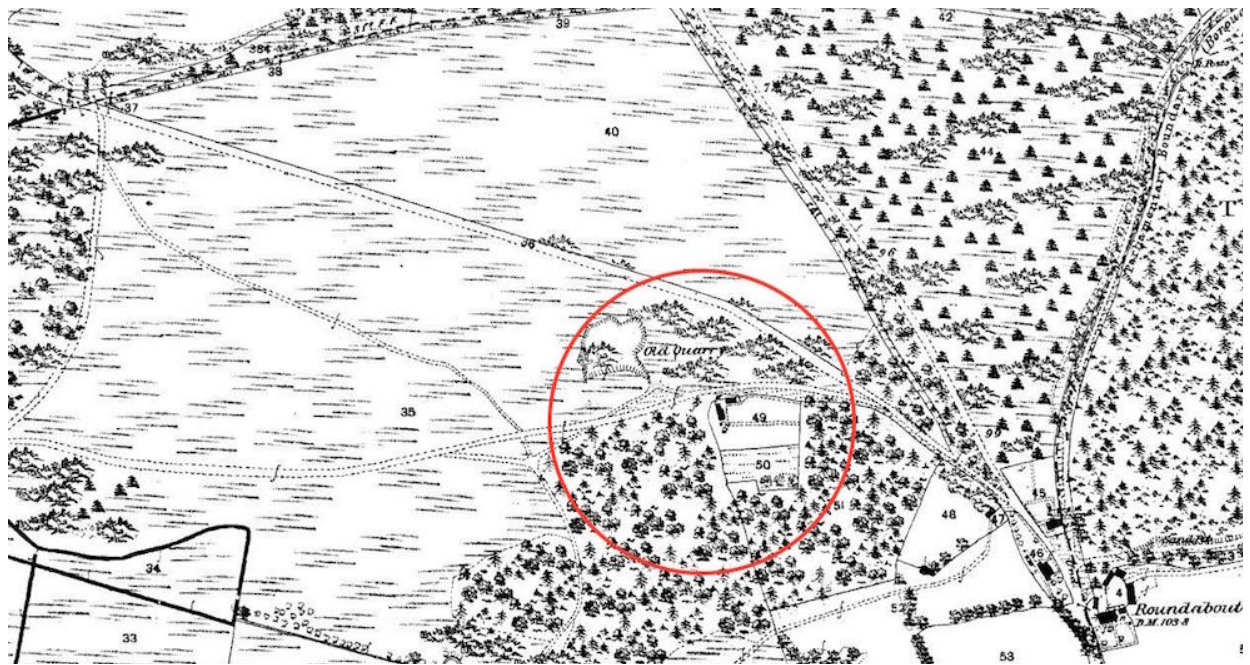


Figure 44 1876 map (Landmark Information Group 1976) © Crown Copyright (2018). An Ordnance Survey supplied service

Modern alterations and extensions have weakened the evidential value of the cottages both individually and as a collective. Evidential value is sensitive to change and replacement (English Heritage 2008, 29), and had the original designs survived intact as a time capsule for the interwar period, their evidential value would be far higher. Therefore, the cottages are considered to be of low to moderate evidential value.

Historical value

Historic England states “historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present” (English Heritage 2008, 28).

The historical value of the Wells cottages is interesting and idiosyncratic owing to their pastiche nature. As explored in chapter 6, the label of ‘pastiche’ tends to

suggest a low historical value through a perceived lack of authenticity. This conceals the fact that the cottages are an unusual manifestation of the trends and aspirations of the interwar period, thereby holding historical value. Additionally, their pastiche aesthetic, design and construction are illustrative of an earlier time period, albeit superficially. When constructed, the cottages would have had some level of perceived historicism despite being new buildings, which over time has developed into genuine historical value for the interwar period. Despite not being of historical value true to their appearance in an older style, this illusion is relevant and part of what makes these cottages interesting and distinctive.

Much of the cottages' historical value is illustrative. Historic England define this as the ability "to aid interpretation of the past through making connections with, and providing insights into, past communities and their activities through shared experience of a place" (English Heritage 2008, 29). As discussed in chapter 5, a desire for rustic, historic and familiar forms and a new interest in the countryside was highly indicative of the interwar mindset.

The Wells cottages are an extreme expression of this social aspiration, intended to be archaic and removed from modern life. This quaint retreat presented owners with the opportunity to reconnect with oneself, nature and a perception of heritage. It provided the essential facilities for a rustic holiday, including a garage to accommodate the owner's motorcar. Importantly, this facilitated access to the cottages and the growing trend for motorcar ownership. Whilst holiday cottages and 'glamping' experiences have grown in popularity over the years, the Wells cottages are an interesting and unusual early form of holiday cottage architecture. The cottages' design, scale and facilities are illustrative of interwar trends and aspirations whilst maintaining a degree of rarity and uniqueness that contributes significantly to their illustrative value.

The cottages were designed as an idealised lifestyle. They embodied the image of the 'perfect' English village; an intact 'historic' community that was visually unified, retained a highly rural character and yet was separate from the muck and dirt of true countryside living. Consequently, their collective design, character and spatial

planning have significant group value of historical interest, providing an insight into this pastiche, idealised development. The development was also exclusive, catering only for affluent outsiders. As such, the Wells cottages portray a perception of rural life in the eyes of the interwar middle-upper class city dweller, providing an insight into the social aspirations of this specific group.

Modern changes have impacted the historical and illustrative value of the cottages. In many instances, their original form, layout and features have been obscured, concealed, replaced and altered. Infill development has also impacted their rustic, low-density setting. This decreases their illustrative value, particularly for heavily altered examples. Despite this, as a collective the cottages have retained their character so that the area still resembles the original Wells development. This helps to preserve the development's historical and illustrative value, which is typically enhanced by completeness (English Heritage 2008, 29). As such, their illustrative value is stronger as a group.

Another aspect of the cottages' historic value comes from association. At the time of construction, they were considered to be inhabited by the "rich and famous" (Salmon 1999, 150). Perhaps the highest profile association is the romance between the pianist, writer and photographer Robin Douglas-Home and Princess Margret, who often visited him at Meadowbrook for parties and weekends away (Salmon 1999, 158). Other notable inhabitants include artists and actors of varying levels of success, who used the cottages as weekend retreats or permanent homes (Salmon 1999, 149–150). The eccentric Brigadier General A. F. U. Green, who wrote a number of military based publications, lived at Blue Cedar in Spinney Lane (Salmon 1999, 159; Bloomsbury 2017).

These associations with high society resonate with the intended use of the cottages as a mechanism for rustic escapism, which was still relevant after the interwar period. Their quirky yet idyllic charm and exclusive nature evidently attracted creative and eccentric personalities who suited the equally eccentric character of the cottages. These were relatively successful people who could afford to buy a ready built holiday

home that suited their personality and aspirations. The cottages catered for this niche in society – the quirky and creative members of the upper middle class who wanted to express individuality without the expense of an architect designed house.

Association with the Garden City and Arts and Crafts movements also contribute to the historical value of the cottages. The cottages were keenly influenced by both movements and exhibit an interesting amalgamation of their principles and methods. This ‘cherry picking’ of certain characteristics reflects the speculative nature of the cottages and the popularity for pastiche during the interwar period, where developers would select and combine different features as they saw fit.

As a collective, the cottages are considered to have moderate-high historical value, owing to their interesting and unique ability to illustrate the aspirations of a niche group of interwar society.

Aesthetic value

Historic England considers that “aesthetic value derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place” (English Heritage 2008, 30).

The development was orchestrated by the conscious design and planning of Wells. The cottages form a collective with a clearly defined set of characteristics in accordance with Wells’ overall vision for the area. He sought to create a ‘perfect’ English village where the cottages appeared to be a historic and organic part of the landscape. This clear design intention forms part of their aesthetic value. Whilst no two cottages are the same, each one expresses this design intention as part of the wider collective of cottages, contributing to the development’s coherent yet distinctive aesthetic. This provides the cottages with considerable group value [figure 45].



Figure 45 (Anderson 2018c)

The cottages exhibit a historic vernacular style, using traditional forms, materials and proportions. The careful use of symmetry and asymmetry creates individuality and a picturesque appearance for each cottage. The materiality of the cottages contributes to their aesthetic. For example, incorporating random pieces of rubble or areas of non-conformist brickwork provides an uneven surface and imperfections, implying the handcrafted nature of the cottages. Eccentric and decorative use of materials introduces artistic value, hinting at Wells' personality. The extreme form of pastiche is arguably unusual; whilst popular at the time, few took pastiche to the same level as Wells in achieving his idealised picturesque aesthetic. This contributes to the cottages' aesthetic (and arguably historical) value.

This organic aesthetic is enhanced by Wells' use of occasional tiny windows and niches, which create the perception that the cottages had developed over time. Eyebrow dormers also suggest the use of leftover space, reinforcing the impression that the buildings have evolved with the needs of users, imitating the evolution of a genuine historic cottage. The cottages also instil a sense of cosiness, familiarity and security through the warm layer of thatch with deep eaves and decorative ridges,

substantial chimneystacks and heavy joinery. This homely, rustic and organic aesthetic forms part of the overall vision for the development that responded to the inter war mindset [figure 46].



Figure 46 (Anderson 2018c)

Thurley (2017, 3) notes that “the effect of a building is always enhanced or diminished by its surroundings”. Therefore, the cottages’ setting forms part of their aesthetic value. Built on woodland and heath, the area’s rural quality has been somewhat retained by the low-density development and mature vegetation. Over time this greening has developed and diversified by the land’s use as residential garden, reinforcing the woodland character. This compliments the Wells development, where the mature vegetation forms an enclosed landscape providing a sense of seclusion for each individual cottage [figure 46]. This is in line with the idealised lifestyle of the development, creating a sense of rural isolation whilst remaining part of a community.

The characteristic narrow lanes, which are sometimes simple gravel tracks, are generally lined with established trees and vegetation affording glimpses of the picturesque cottages set within spacious gardens [figure 47]. This romantic image of 'cottages within the woods' may play on our childhood fascination with folklore and fairy tales [figure 48]. This aesthetic has developed over time as the cottages have aged and the planting has established.



Figure 47 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 48 Hansel and Gretel illustration (Nielsen 2012)

The impact of more recent development on aesthetic value cannot be ignored. In many instances, the cottage scale of the buildings has been lost through unsympathetic alterations and additions. Infill development has also had an adverse impact on the setting of many cottages, introducing alien styles and increasing the density of the development. Whilst this has started to erode the cottages' aesthetic value, their collective character has survived as a distinctive group.

Overall, the aesthetic value of the cottages is considered to be moderate to high as a collective. Individually, this can vary from low to high, depending on the unique development of each house and its setting.

Communal value

“Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory” (English Heritage 2008, 31).

Since their construction, the Wells cottages have presented an unusual and distinctive form of development with few comparable examples elsewhere. The eccentricity of Wells and his utopian scheme was a source of great local interest. Redwood (2002) suggests that initially this interest was dubious, with some residents responding gleefully when a cottage caught fire. Despite this early scepticism, the cottages have since remained a source of local interest and pride. Over time, the cottages have become synonymous with the image of West Chiltington, acting as a draw for tourists and visitors (WCPC 2017b, 17).

The cottages' communal value derives from the strong local identity that they contribute to the village. This identity relates to both their distinctive appearance and the stories surrounding the cottages and their creator. Whilst they do not represent a commemorative or spiritual value, or even play a role as a meeting place for cultural

events, the image and history of this group of private properties has become a key feature of West Chiltonington's heritage and architecture. This is a form of social value, where local people cherish the cottages as part of what makes the village distinctive.

Overall, the communal value of the cottages is considered to be moderate to high. However, this is a local perception that may not be felt so strongly further afield. As such, given the aesthetic and historic value of the cottages that underpins their value as a source of local identity and distinctiveness, the wider perception of their communal value is considered to be moderate.

Comparable examples

As previously mentioned, the Roundabout development has limited comparable examples, making it a distinctive heritage asset especially when considered as a collective. However, there are a small number of relatable examples that have been formally designated as heritage assets. Whilst these examples were designed as residential developments as opposed to holiday cottages, they bare many similarities to the Wells cottages.

Firstly, Blunden Shadbolt is an interesting direct comparison to Reginald Fairfax Wells. Shadbolt was an eccentric architect who followed Arts and Crafts principles and used salvaged materials to create Neo-Tudor cottages during the 1930s (Historic England 2015). His designs often have a rustic character with a warped and aged appearance. Four of Shadbolt's cottages have been listed, although it is noted that these are the grander examples of his work (Historic England 2015).

'Cobblestones' in Esher was listed for the architectural interest of its picturesque design, its interesting interior, its group value and its intactness (Historic England 2015) [figure 49]. Like that of Wells, it could be argued that Shadbolt's work is a form of pastiche where the architectural influences and design intensions are very similar.



Figure 49 Example Cottage by Blunded Shadbolt (Twentieth Century Society 2015)

The second comparison is Herbert Luck North, who designed 'The Close' in Llanfairfechan in an Arts and Crafts idiom, built 1899-1945 (Conwy County Borough Council 2007, 4) [figure 50]. The area was designated a conservation area in 1989 and many of its buildings have been listed. Conwy County Borough Council (2007, 4) consider the development to be a noteworthy example of an early 20th Garden Suburb type development that "achieves a remarkable homogeneity of style whilst the buildings have their individual differences and variations" (Conwy County Borough Council 2007, 4). This is similar to the Wells development. However, it is noted that the buildings within the Close have largely survived unaltered (Conwy County Borough Council 2007, 4), which makes the historical and aesthetic value of this development stronger, highlighting the benefits of early recognition and designation of heritage assets.



Figure 50 (BBC News 2013)

These examples lend weight to the significance of pastiche style developments, as well as homogenously designed Garden Suburb type developments. This provides validation for these less common types of development whilst still highlighting their distinctiveness and value.

Summary of significance

It is clear that the Roundabout development is an unusual example of a Garden Suburb type development, which was built in response to the interwar period. This provides the cottages with historic interest for what they are able to tell us about the niche of people who bought these quaint holiday homes, as well as their eccentric creator. Their pastiche neo-vernacular style heavily based on Arts and Crafts principles gives the cottages considerable aesthetic value, and their distinctive appearance provides the village with a unique source of local identity and pride. The unusual design and layout of the development and use of old bricks also holds some

evidential interest. Despite a lack of formal recognition or designation, the cottages are an interesting and valuable group of heritage assets, both architecturally and historically. Their key points of interest include their idiosyncratic design, character and setting, their manifestation of the interwar period, and their group value. Overall, the buildings have historic and architectural interest and can be considered 'heritage assets'.

As a collective, the cottages are considered to be more interesting than they are individually, where group value makes a substantial contribution to their historical and aesthetic value. Whilst some cottages have been individually impacted by modern changes through a lack of recognition, management and protection, collectively the cottages have better retained their character. However, the impact of changes to individual cottages is gradually eroding the character of the collective, which will ultimately degrade the development's heritage significance. Evidential, illustrative and aesthetic value are all impacted to varying degrees by loss, replacement or inappropriate alterations to the original design and fabric (English Heritage 2008, 28–31). This issue of change and its impact on significance will be explored in the next chapter.

8. Changing significance

As assessed in chapter 7, the Wells cottages possess considerable heritage significance with a particular emphasis on their historical, aesthetic and group value. However, the heritage significance of the Wells cottages is being eroded as a result of cumulative changes over time. Understanding this change, why it has occurred and its impact on heritage significance is essential to identifying the key challenges faced by the Roundabout development. This chapter will explore these issues in the context of the cottage's current status as non-designated heritage assets, which will then inform discussion of potential methods of protection in chapter 9.

Reasons for change

Since their construction, many of the Wells cottages have been altered and modernised with extensions, updated interiors and the provision of modern services (Moore 2016). This expansion and development is the result of a number of factors. An underlying reason is the cottages' intended use as holiday homes – their design was never equipped for permanent residence. The original cottages would be cramped by today's standards and unsuitable for comfortable modern living. Salmon (1999, 143) highlights how later owners who intended to use these holiday cottages as dwellings struggled with their original design. As such, most have been adapted to make permanent residence more comfortable.

Another factor that may have exacerbated modern changes was the introduction of national building regulations in 1965 (NHBC Foundation 2015, 22). This meant that new extensions and infill development had to be built according to modern standards, as opposed to the original Wells design. Similarly, the early development of the modern planning system and emerging legislation during and after the interwar

period saw increased development control (Cherry 1974, 144–145). Following the birth of British town planning, Frampton (2007, 28) suggests that its constraints (such as the provision of hygiene, infrastructure, and efficiency) resulted in contemporary developments being incompatible with the widely desired historic aesthetic. The overall impact of these legislative changes made replicating the Wells cottages difficult.

Notwithstanding the above, a key reason for change has been the lack of formal recognition or protection afforded to the cottages and area. Had some form of protection been implemented sooner (as has occurred with Herbert Luck North's 'The Close'), it is possible that more of the cottages would still resemble their original design and better retain their heritage value.

Key threats

Common changes that are considered to have an adverse impact on the significance of the Roundabout development are set out below. These issues have often occurred as part of the individual development of each cottage to varying degrees.

Materials

Many cottages have lost their original thatched roof [figures 51-52]. Thatch represents a fire risk and a substantial maintenance expense. Consequently, many of the cottages have now been reroofed in plain clay tiles, which now form part of the current character of the area. Whilst some cottages had tiles originally, this considerable loss of thatch has eroded the cosy, rustic aesthetic that Wells sought to achieve. Additionally, tiling over the eyebrow dormer is a technically difficult detail. There are some unsuccessful examples of this, including a lead covered eyebrow

dormer [figure 53]. This is an unfortunate loss of character, which is incongruous with the original design and aesthetic.

Loss of the whitewashed brickwork is also a concern, albeit less common. In some cases, the brickwork has been rendered to create a smooth finish [figure 54]. This alters the rustic and imperfect appearance of the wall surfaces that Wells had intended.



Figure 51 Cottage the thatch was removed (George Baxter Associates 2018)



Figure 52 Same cottage as that in figure 51 reroofed (Anderson 2018f)



Figure 53 lead covered dormer (Anderson 2018d)



Figure 54 rendered brickwork (Anderson 2018h)

Fenestration

In line with their antiquated character, most cottages did not have particularly large windows resulting in internal spaces appearing dark, which is not desirable by most modern expectations. As such, many cottages have had larger areas of glazing inserted, which is often incongruous with their historic character [figure 55]. Similarly, many examples have had their original windows replaced with double glazed alternatives. In some cases, timber framed replacements are relatively in keeping [figure 56], however others have used incongruous plastic alternatives [figure 57]. This has been highlighted as a key threat by the HDC Conservation Officer (2018). Replacement of the original simple timber doors has also occurred in many instances [figure 58]. This loss of original fenestration and replacement with modern alternatives not only causes a loss of original features, fabric and character, but it erodes the design unity across the development.



Figure 55 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 56 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 57 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 58 (Anderson 2018c)

Extensions

The majority of the cottages have been extended to varying degrees. Some appear to have survived with only a small discrete extension. Others have been engulfed by extensions leaving the original cottage barely discernible (figures 59-60). Many are between these extremes, with clearly defined extensions using in keeping materials. This type of extension often leaves the original part of the dwelling distinguishable or unchanged from the street [figures 60-64]. The fact that many cottages have been extended in this way has made a significant contribution in retaining the area's overall character and the group value of the cottages. Whilst the desire to make a comfortable family home is understandable, large extensions that are insubordinate and conspicuous often unbalance and over develop the cottages, undermining Well's design intentions. This adversely impacts their historical and aesthetic value, as well as conceals or harms their illustrative and evidential value.



REDACTED

Figure 59 Wells drawing of Romany (Anderson 2018b)



Figure 60 Extensive extension (Guy Leonard Estate Agents 2015)

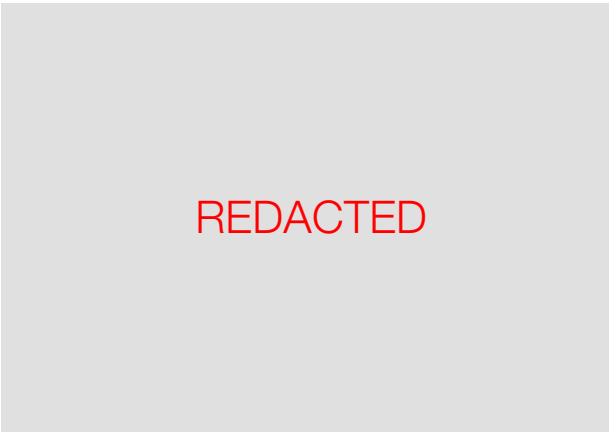


Figure 61 Wells drawing of Woodpeckers (Anderson 2018b)



Figure 62 discrete extension (Anderson 2018i)



Figure 63 discrete extension (Anderson 2018d)



Figure 64 extension confined to the rear (Anderson 2018d)

Infill Development

Given the low-density nature of the Roundabout development where many cottages originally had very large gardens, some infill development has occurred. Whilst there are some examples of new houses built in accordance with the 'Wells' style [figure 65], others are quite plain [figure 66], and others are highly contemporary [figures 67-68]. The overall affect of extensive infill development undermines the planned low-density rural nature of the area. It also dilutes the character of the area by introducing styles, forms and materials that are alien to the Wells cottages. This dilutes the development's aesthetic unity and its homogenous idealised nature as an exclusive retreat from modern life. The extent of infill development is demonstrated by the map in chapter 4 [figure 10].



Figure 65 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 66 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 67 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 68 (Anderson 2018c)

Setting

The HDC Conservation Officer (2018) identifies the lack of overt hard boundary treatments and the impression that the houses are simply “within the woods” as key characteristics. This is complimented by mature vegetation and trees, which border the narrow lanes with occasional cleft chestnut post and rail fencing. However, there are a number of examples where extensive use of close boarded fencing, high boundary walls and large solid gates have been installed [figure 69]. These security and privacy measures often appear disproportionate, overly formal and austere in the context of the quaint Wells cottages. They significantly suburbanise the character of the street scene, which is harmful to the development’s aesthetic value.

The loss of the Wells garages is also a concern. These simple timber structures are highly distinctive, however many are nearing the end of their functional life without appropriate repair and conservation work. Many have been demolished (including the garage shown in figure 70) and are often replaced with large modern alternatives. Again this has an urbanising effect of the area’s character, as well as removing a source of historic interest.



Figure 69 (Anderson 2018c)



Figure 70 photograph taken prior to demolition (Anderson 2018c)

The problem

Currently, the Wells cottages are afforded no formal protection or recognition. However, given their historic and architectural interest, they are considered to be non-designated heritage assets, as confirmed by the HDC Conservation Officer (2018). This is a building which is not formally listed but has “a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions” (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2014). This is a non-statutory informal status that should be considered as part of the planning process, but offers no additional planning control. There are no formal identification criteria, leaving identification of non-designated heritage assets open to interpretation and easily overlooked.

As such, there are two key issues facing the Wells cottages at present. Firstly, many of the aforementioned threats could be executed without planning permission. The GPDO allows for residential extensions within certain limitations, the replacement of windows, the provision or alteration of dormers, porches, outbuildings, boundary walls, fences and gates (The Secretary of State 2015, 16–25). Whilst changes under permitted development is limited by scale and position, the GPDO does not impose a character-based assessment or restrict development of non-designated heritage assets. This makes conservation of the cottages difficult to achieve in the absence of additional protection measures. It relies on owner’s good taste and custodianship to make in keeping changes. In practice, changes are often made without consideration of the impact on heritage.

Secondly, where change does require planning permission, the local authority’s ability to resist inappropriate development is restricted through the cottages’ lack of formal protection and recognition. This includes development such as large extensions, replacement dwellings and infill development. Whilst Horsham’s development plan policy 33 states that new development should be sympathetic to local character and be of a high standard (HDC 2015, 112), this does not take into account the heritage significance of the cottages and their setting. So long as

development accords with general planning policy and ‘fits in’ with the local aesthetic, it is difficult to resist on policy grounds.

The NPPF provides minimal guidance on non-designated heritage assets, stating only that the building’s significance and any impact on this significance should be taken into account when forming a “balanced judgement” (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018, 56). However, planning officers may not be trained in conservation and therefore, without formal identification of non-designated heritage assets, the NPPF’s guidance is often neglected.

The recently approved infill house adjacent to The Spinney demonstrates this. The case officer notes how the design imitates some of the features of a Wells cottage and is therefore deemed ‘in keeping’, but makes no reference to the heritage of the area or the non-designated heritage asset status of the surrounding cottages (Pettifer 2018, 4–5). Similarly, the case officer’s report for the approved substantial extensions and the replacement of thatch with tiles at Greenshaw makes no references to the cottage’s heritage interest or non-designated heritage asset status. Whilst she considers the loss of the thatch to be “regrettable”, she notes that there are no current planning controls to prevent this (Dale 2017, 4).

These cases illustrate the shortfalls of the non-designated heritage asset status, which appears to carry limited weight in practice with no restrictions on permitted development rights and little influence on planning decisions. The ambiguity and inconsistency of identifying non-designated heritage assets is a key reason for the system’s failure to protect these buildings. Their vague definition is open to interpretation, which undermines the gravitas of the status. This lack of identification criteria and supporting NPPF guidance restricts the weight of a non-designated heritage asset in planning applications, making it difficult for planning authorities to resist harmful changes. Therefore, in the case of the Wells cottages, non-designated heritage asset status alone is considered to be a cursory form of protection that offers little meaningful recognition or conservation of heritage significance.

Davies (2003) argues that “the historic environment is capable of absorbing the many personalities of our new and old buildings, and there is room for all the many different approaches to design in the appropriate place”. Whilst these cottages have not survived as pristine and intact examples of interwar cottage architecture, their aforementioned heritage values make them interesting subjects from which we can learn and enjoy. Presently, the Wells cottages have not all been so extensively altered that their heritage significance has been lost, although further erosion is likely if left unchecked. Indeed, the aforementioned threats are impacting the cottages’ aesthetic, historic and group value, harming their heritage significance as a result of a lack of formal recognition and protection.

There is concern locally regarding the cottages’ future preservation and a feeling that inappropriate change is threatening this unusual source of local identity and interest (WCPC 2018). It is therefore paramount that we act on Davies’ advice and embrace these buildings as part of our historic environment before their significance is lost entirely. As non-designated heritage asset status is insufficient, alternative methods of protection are explored in the next chapter.

9. Protection systems

The NPPF defines conservation as “the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance” (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018, 65). The Burra Charter elaborates this, stating “conservation is based on a respect for the existing fabric, use, associations and meanings. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible” (Australia ICOMOS 2013, 3). These definitions articulate the overriding aim of protection systems, where a combination of the legislative strength and appropriateness of each system influences its success.

Non-designated heritage asset status lacks formal recognition or planning controls, offering limited weight in decision-making; it falls considerably short of the Wells cottages’ conservation needs. The NPPF states that unlisted buildings of “local historic value” are classed as heritage assets, which are “an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance”(Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018, 54). The Wells cottages are deemed to be heritage assets requiring enhanced conservation, and so this chapter considers the appropriateness, benefits and challenges of alternative protection methods.

Local listing

Definition

Historic England (2016b, 3) defines local listing as “a means for a community and a local planning authority to identify heritage assets that are valued as distinctive

elements of the local historic environment”. Often, this means formal identification of non-designated heritage assets. Through creating a local list, planning authorities, developers, owners and communities are better placed to recognise heritage assets and ensure their significance and conservation are considered during the planning process.

Benefits

A key flaw of non-designated heritage asset status is its lack of formal identification, which can lead to it being overlooked. Different people and stakeholders can value different buildings for different reasons, but this doesn't automatically make them 'heritage assets'. Creation of local lists seeks to rectify this issue by identifying these buildings as 'locally listed', thereby coming to a consensus on what is a heritage asset. This avoids the ambiguity of identifying non-designated heritage assets whilst setting out their significance. This should inform future planning decisions and conservation, as a local listing is a material planning consideration where the building's significance and conservation should be taken into consideration. This is demonstrated by the recently approved extension at 194 Crawley Road in Horsham (locally listed), where the case officer assessed the impact of the proposal on the heritage interest of the building (Ollive 2017, 2–3).

Whilst a locally listed building is afforded fewer additional protections in planning terms than a listed building, it serves to highlight the status of the building to the local planning authority and other stakeholders. It therefore acts as an accolade for the building (HDC Conservation Officer 2018), providing a tangible status identifying the building as having heritage interest. When owners are aware of this, it is possible that they are more likely to consider the heritage impacts of any changes they wish to make. As explained by Mansfield District Council (2012, 6), it is believed that owning a locally listed building could be a source of pride, thus encouraging owners to better

retain its character, design and features. This is considered to be a passive form of conservation (appendix A).

Challenges

A local listing offers no statutory protection or additional planning controls, leaving permitted development rights intact. It would not require listed building consent and therefore lacks any specialist conservation oversight. As such, without the support of supplementary planning policy, local listings offer limited protection. This is demonstrated by the recent approval for partial demolition of a locally listed police station in East Molesey. Subject to parts of the facade being retained to preserve local character, the demolition of the rest of the building was found to be acceptable with no policy grounds for refusal (Lynch 2017). Whilst efforts to retain character and the façade as a result of the local listing are welcomed, loss of the rest of the building is regrettable.

Furthermore, it is not a statutory requirement for authorities to create local lists. Indeed, Horsham District does not have a local list to cover its outlying villages. In addition to being voluntary, the system for producing lists is subject to significant interpretation, meaning their quality and comprehensiveness can vary between authorities. Historic England (2016b, 2) claim this is to “remain flexible enough to respond to local needs”. It is true that different places are subject to their own unique character, however this lack of guidance and identification criteria creates a flawed system where some heritage assets may not be captured. Local lists can generate a perception that any building not included has no heritage value, however exclusion is more likely to be a result of the flawed system.

Appropriateness

The HDC conservation officer (2018) considers that the Wells cottages are “worthy” of adding to a local list. Inclusion on the list would assist their future conservation and management and help to identify them as being historically significant. Consequently, appropriate weight is more likely to be given to their conservation during the planning process and could ensure better retention of their character.

The WCPC (2018) have suggested that the local residents are largely supportive of the protection of the Wells cottages, although some are less amenable to the prospect of restricting development rights. This solution focuses on identification and recognition of the cottages as opposed to imposing planning restrictions. It is hoped that it would raise the profile of the cottages and encourage owners to make more sympathetic changes. Overall a local listing is considered to be a beneficial solution, although the cottages that have already lost their original character may not be worthy of inclusion. Despite this, a set of local listings could capture many of the Wells cottages.

Planning policy

Definition

This method of protection uses specific planning policies within local and neighbourhood plans to protect non-designated heritage assets by providing formal instructions for design and decision-making. Local Plans will often have a more generalised approach where the policy seeks to protect an area, asset type or locally listed buildings. Chichester’s local plan policy 47 does this by seeking to enhance “the special interest and settings of designated and non-designated heritage assets”, including locally listed and locally distinctive buildings, as evidenced in the local list and conservation area appraisals (Chichester District Council 2015, 197–199).

Alternatively, neighbourhood plans may adopt a more specific approach and identify a particular building or group. As such, the WCPC are already pursuing this asset specific option through their draft neighbourhood plan. Policy EH10 states that “development proposals affecting the Wells houses within the Parish will only be supported where they preserve and enhance their character, setting and appearance and in particular where proposals protect the distinctive white washed slurry (Sussex Dinging) walls, small windows and thatched roofs” (WCPC 2017b, 31).

Benefits

The presence of these heritage specific planning policies will have an effect on the way applications are determined and create a platform for the management and conservation of heritage assets. They can provide a range of mechanisms to influence decision making, including general preservation of character as seen in the Chichester example, or preservation of specific features, as seen in the WCPC example for the Wells cottages. This gives authorities increased power to resist inappropriate change whilst encouraging and instructing a more sensitive approach by owners and developers. As these policies can refer to a group of buildings, they could help to protect group value as well as the historical and architectural interest of individual assets.

Successful heritage policies in the neighbourhood plan can encourage community heritage action and awareness, as seen at Wing, Buckinghamshire. Not only does Wing neighbourhood plan policy HE1 proactively encourage conservation of non-designated heritage assets, but the plan has inspired local volunteers to form the Wing Heritage Group, who complete surveys and archaeological works to discover more about the area’s heritage (Wing Parish Council 2015, 18–19).

Local listings can be significantly strengthened by supplementary planning policy that refers to the local list, such as the aforementioned Chichester policy. These two

protection systems work well together, combining the benefits of a local listing with increased planning control.

Challenges

These policies do not provide authorities with carte-blanc refusal for any change that might result in harm to the heritage asset. This is because the NPPF states that a “balanced judgement” will need to be made (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018, 56). As such, where a scheme presents other benefits, suitable justification, or where harm is limited, the application may be found to be acceptable in conflict with the requirements of the local or neighbourhood plan policy. The demolition of the Embassy Cinema in Crawley is an example of a locally listed building being lost despite local plan policy BN16, which sought to preserve locally listed buildings (Alan Baxter Associates 2010, 3). The loss of the building was justified in light of the benefits of the proposed redevelopment (Tanner 2012, 9).

Local and neighbourhood planning policies must conform to national planning policy, meaning permitted development rights remain intact. Whilst these heritage specific policies help to resist inappropriate development requiring planning permission, they often fail to capture smaller incremental changes that can be equally harmful. Arguably, these specific policies do not act as an accolade for these buildings, as with local listings. As such, these policies may not instil the same level of pride in the building and owners may be less aware of its heritage value, making passive conservation less likely.

Finally, it is not a requirement that local and neighbourhood plans include these policies. Indeed, not all places have a neighbourhood plan and where they exist, inclusion of a heritage policy is down to the community’s priorities. This can result in inconsistent levels of heritage protection between local areas.

Appropriateness

The WCPC draft Policy EH10 seeks to offer additional protection to the Wells cottages and their features deemed to be most essential to their character. Yet, it does not identify the cottages as non-designated heritage assets. Historic England's (2017a, 2) consultation response suggests this wording should be included to ensure the cottages' heritage value is taken into account. HDC (2017, 9) have raised concerns for the soundness of this policy, and have suggested that further evidence on the Wells cottages is required to justify a specific and restrictive policy of this nature.

The Wells cottages have heritage value and make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness and identity. As such, the inclusion of a policy of this ilk is likely to be justifiable. Subject to its adoption, this would be an appropriate way of preventing harmful development requiring planning permission. Furthermore, it would help to protect the cottages as a collective, encompassing all Wells cottages as opposed to a select few. This is highly appropriate in preserving their group value.

Statutory listing

Definition

Buildings that are included on the National Heritage List for England are statutorily protected. It is a formal designation that enables protection through the planning system. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990, 1–2) states that a building could be listed for its special historic and architectural interest, taking into account the building itself, its group value, and any attached or curtilage

structures and features worthy of preservation. As such, the listing includes the building itself, any attached structures and pre-1948 curtilage structures.

Historic England (n.d.) emphasises that a listing “does not freeze a building in time” but rather seeks to preserve its special historic and architectural interest through the listed building consent process. There are 3 grades of listing that reflect the building’s relative significance: grade II, grade II* and grade I.

Benefits

Designation of a heritage asset through listing is arguably the strongest form of protection. Whilst it does not prohibit change, it implements a process whereby change can be fully assessed in order to preserve a building’s significance. It is therefore paramount that the building’s significance is fully understood, as required by the NPPF (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018, 55). This informs change by highlighting a building’s unique sensitivities and opportunities, thus encouraging works that retain or enhance significance and avoiding works which cause harm.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990, 5) states that listed building consent is required for any demolition, alterations or extensions impacting a listed building’s “character as a building of special architectural or historic interest”. Any qualifying works must first be assessed, giving local authorities the opportunity to refuse inappropriate proposals. This encompasses works not requiring planning permission, such as internal works, the removal of thatch and replacement fenestration. Listed building status preserves the entire fabric of the building, not just its external appearance.

In addition to capturing all works impacting the building’s character and special interest, listed building status also triggers restrictions on permitted development

rights. For example, planning permission is required for any outbuildings, pools or containers, and any works to boundary structures and means of enclosure, within the curtilage of a listed building (The Secretary of State 2015, 21–25). Consequently, listed building status provides a mechanism to assess the majority of works that might impact a listed building.

Challenges

Not all historic buildings are worthy of listing. The selection criteria for designation set a high test where successful candidates must be of *special* interest, not just *general* interest (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2010, 4). Usually, survival of the original design, features and fabric is important, as well as the age, rarity, group value, selectivity and national interest (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2010, 5). Buildings that are valued locally and are of historic and architectural interest, such as the Wells cottages, may not be capable of listing.

Appropriateness

In the HDC conservation officer's (2018) opinion, it is unlikely that the Wells cottages would be worthy of listing due to their speculative design and the extensive alterations that many cottages have undergone. However, this does not mean that there are no examples capable of listing and some may have survived in a state that might warrant an attempt. It is understood that no listing attempts have yet been made (WCRPS 2018) and it would therefore be premature to rule out this option before Historic England have provided an opinion.

Indeed, Historic England's (2011, 3) listing selection guide for modern houses notes the popularity for "romantic individualism in the inter-war period, creating an idealised

image of home”. It notes that Arts and Crafts style houses could be worthy of listing, subject to their age and level of innovation, as well as the quality of the design (Historic England 2011, 17) and that “later examples deserve consideration as well as earlier ones” (Historic England 2011, 18). As the style of the Wells cottages has the potential to be formally recognised, it is recommended that this option be explored for the better-preserved examples. However this option would struggle to protect the cottages as a wider collective.

Conservation area

Definition

Conservation areas are areas of special historic and architectural interest that are identified and designated by the local planning authority. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990, 42–43) states that their primary aim is “preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”. Conservation area designation imposes a number of statutory controls on development. Historic England (2016a, 2) summarise these as the requirement of planning applications to preserve and enhance the character of the area, the notification of any trees works, the need for planning permission for demolition of unlisted structures, and restriction of advertisements. In addition to these statutory controls, some authorities have an additional local plan policy that supports the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

Benefits

Historic England (2016a, 1) considers conservation areas to be an appropriate mechanism “to manage change in a way that conserves and enhances historic

areas”. They give planning authorities increased ability to resist inappropriate development in the interests of preserving the character of the area. The conservation area appraisal and management plan provide stakeholders with an understanding of the significance of the area, including any sensitivities and opportunities for improvement. This provides a set of development aims that helps to encourage positive and in keeping development.

Following their research with the London School of Economics, Historic England (2016a, 2) have found that “owners of residential properties generally consider these controls to be beneficial because they also sustain, and/or enhance, the value of property within it”. Areas that are picturesque and locally distinctive are likely to be more attractive to prospective buyers. Like a listing or local listing, conservation area status also serves as an accolade and source of local pride, encouraging passive conservation.

As previously mentioned, setting contributes to the significance of a historic building and conservation areas often encompass this. The additional protections placed on trees help to maintain the area’s character, particularly in heavily vegetated and treed areas such as the Roundabout development. Similarly, recent case law *Barton v Secretary of State for communities and local government* (2017) EWHC 573 found that partial demolition, even of unlisted boundary walls and structures, within a conservation area requires planning permission. Again, this helps to preserve the overall setting and aesthetic of an area.

Challenges

Being within a conservation area leaves many permitted development rights intact and does not require the submission of listed building consent (HDC Conservation Officer 2018). Therefore it is possible for potentially harmful changes to be made outside of planning control. The cumulative impact of incremental changes can erode

the character of an area. As such, conservation areas do not offer complete protection.

The NPPF states that conservation areas should avoid the inclusion elements that lack special interest (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018, 54). Whilst it is accepted that not every building or structure included will be of high interest, they should at least make a positive or neutral contribution to the area and the boundaries should be drawn to exclude negative or uncharacteristic elements. This makes uncharacteristic infill development problematic when designating conservation areas and can weaken the argument for designation.

Appropriateness

A conservation area would have the benefit of protecting design and character of the cottages, as well as their setting and group value. A conservation area could thus offer an appropriate solution. An attempt to gather support and evidence to designate a conservation area for part of the Roundabout development was made by the WCRPS in 2006 (see appendix E). Unfortunately the idea was dropped when the society dissolved (WCRPS 2018). As such, the potential for a new conservation area has not been fully tested.

Other similar types of development have been designated as conservation areas, such as Herbert Luck North's The Close, and multiple Garden Suburb developments, such as Hampstead. This lends weight to the relevance of a conservation area for this sort of development and its ability to secure better management and conservation.

The WCPC (2018, 2017b, 14) have indicated that there is public support among residents for the conservation of the cottages. However, no evidence of a wider residents survey has been found. If the previous enthusiasm for a conservation area

could be reignited, it is recommended that such a survey and further research be completed to support the proposal. It is unlikely that a conservation area could include every Wells cottage due to the level of infill development, which is extensive and incongruous in some areas. However, the HDC Conservation Officer (2018) has suggested that a core of Wells cottages could provide a suitable solution. Possible conservation areas worthy of investigation have been identified in figure 71.

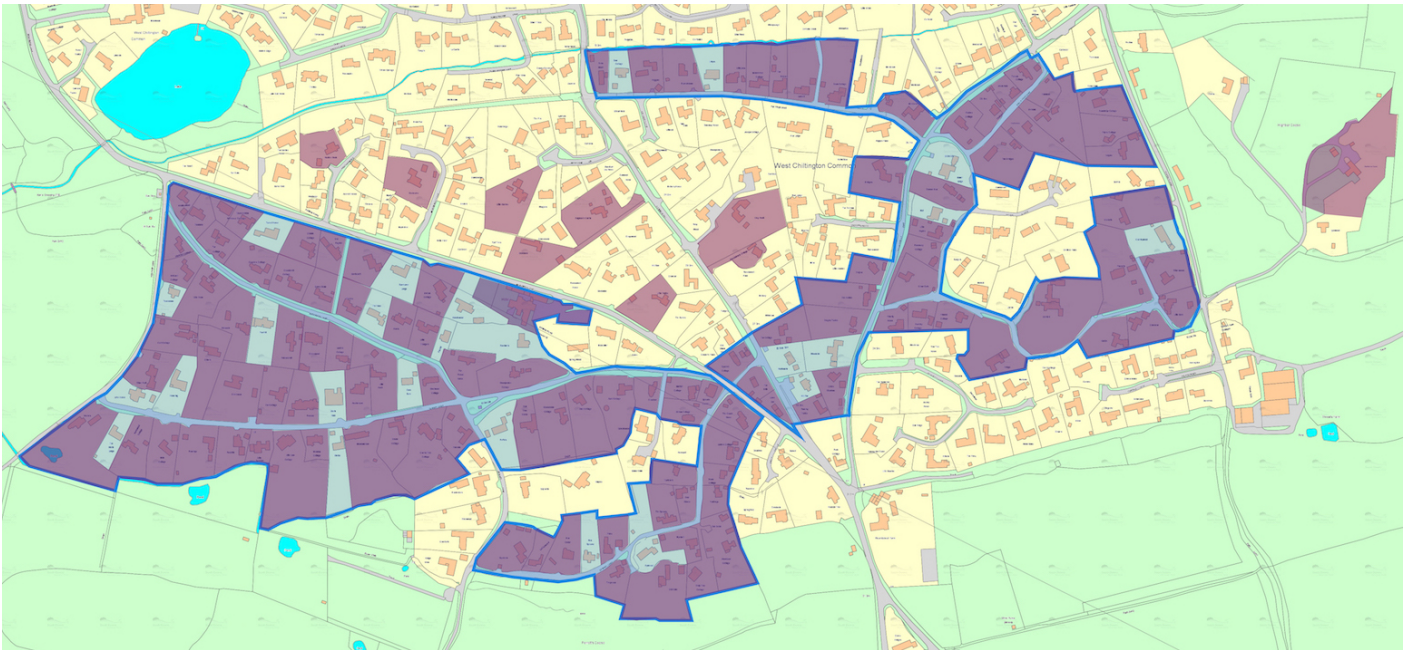


Figure 71 potential conservation area in blue, Wells cottages in purple (Anderson 2018a) © Crown Copyright (2018). An Ordnance Survey supplied service. See appendix for enlarged version.

Recommendation

Each protection system offers different constraints and benefits and should not be considered in isolation; a combination of the aforementioned options may form the best protection. The current proposal to include a Wells specific policy in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan will contribute to the future conservation and management of all Wells cottages through the planning system. However, this protection would be strengthened if supplemented with local listings to increase the

awareness of the cottages as heritage assets. Together, planning policy and local listings could make the cottages a recognised source of local heritage interest and pride, potentially inspiring passive conservation and positive community led heritage action, as seen with Wing neighbourhood plan.

The cottages draw much of their significance from their group value as a collective, which should be protected. Therefore, achieving a listing for one good example would be less beneficial than a 'core' conservation area, which would be less beneficial than a planning policy that captures all the Wells cottages. As such, a Wells specific planning policy is considered to be the most inclusive option providing all Wells cottages with enhanced protection. A set of local listings could supplement this policy, offering further protection and recognition for the better-preserved examples. These systems work well in tandem to preserve the significance of the cottages through the planning system. It is noted that these systems have less sway over preservation of the setting or permitted development rights compared to statutory forms of protection, however it is hoped that this non-statutory approach would increase awareness of the cottages' heritage significance and encourage conservation of their fabric, features, design and setting outside of planning control.

Whilst a listing or conservation area would provide more comprehensive protection and development control, these designations are harder to justify. Parts of the Roundabout development may be capable of achieving a statutory designation, but the combination of local listings and a Wells specific planning policy has the benefit of addressing the current issues whilst capturing more buildings. This dual approach is considered to be the most suitable and realistically achievable option, and could be pursued as part of a community led project. This recommendation offers an appropriate level of conservation that is consistent with the significance of these buildings, as required by the NPPF (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2018, 54).

10. Conclusion

From the outset, this dissertation sought to gain an understanding of this little-researched case study and its heritage significance, identifying the current threats and issues, and exploring possible ways that they could be better protected.

It has been found that the Wells cottages are a fascinating group of highly distinctive non-designated heritage assets that are an interesting manifestation of the interwar period. Their character and design is highly pastiche, where their creator has endeavoured to create an idealised 'perfect' English village through use of traditional materials and forms using a quaint historic aesthetic. Consequently, the cottages have considerable historical, aesthetic and group value that merits protection.

Despite this, the cottages have suffered substantial development and change due to conflict between their intended and current use and their lack of formal recognition and protection. This is eroding their character and impacting their heritage significance, where their current status as non-designated heritage assets is failing to secure their ongoing conservation. As such, it is recommended that a set of local listings alongside the emerging Wells specific planning policy could offer a realistic and achievable solution for their future protection. This could ensure their recognition as heritage assets and provide increased development control through the planning system. This proposal would not only help to protect their distinctive character and historic interest, but it would also assist in the preservation of the cottages as a group and secure their long-term recognition, management and conservation.

Throughout the research and exploration of the Wells cottages, this project has built on the limited existing base of published knowledge in defining what the Wells cottages are and their significance as heritage assets. It has also explored their current challenges regarding change, modern development and their lack of protection. This has informed the findings that they deserve enhanced protection in order to conserve their significance, leading to a recommendation for the most

suitable protection system. As such, the dissertation has addressed its aims and objectives.

This research has wider relevance as it provides evidence that could be used to support and justify a protection system for the cottages. This includes the emerging neighbourhood plan policy, as well as proposals for local listings and conservation area designation. This dissertation could form the basis of a body of work that has a real world application in assisting the protection of these distinctive cottages. This protection would be to the benefit of the community, village and further afield, for the cottages represent an interesting and valuable resource which could be enjoyed and experienced by all. Whilst the project has primarily focused on the Wells cottages, it also highlights the wider issues faced by non-designated heritage assets and the alternative options for protection, which could be applied to unlisted buildings anywhere.

This subject has extensive potential for further research and analysis that was not possible to include under the scope of this dissertation. Recommended further study includes:

- A full audit on all the cottages, referencing deeds and archives plans to determine the exact number of surviving Wells cottages and highlight those that have survived most intact.
- Individual assessments of significance for the best preserved examples. This could inform a future listing proposal.
- A more detailed study of the practical implications of the recommended dual protection approach of local listings and use of specific planning policy.
- A framework for the future conservation and management of the Wells cottages. This could inform a future conservation area proposal.
- A comprehensive residents survey to better understand local opinions on the protection of the cottages.
- Further analysis on the construction and materials of the cottages.

The Wells cottages are a valuable resource, yet they have changed and will change even further, risking irreversible loss of their heritage significance. If efforts to conserve the cottages are not made now, will they survive in a state worthy of protection in years to come? Recognition is often the first step towards conservation, and it is hoped that this work will help others to recognise the cottages as valuable heritage assets, worthy of our protection.

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Appendix

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Appendix A: Clarifications of meaning

The Wells cottages

Throughout this dissertation, the Wells cottages are also referred to as the Roundabout development, the Roundabout area, and the Wells development. 'The cottages' refers to the buildings, and 'the development' refers to the whole area including the cottages, their setting and the lanes.

Curtilage

Curtilage is a planning term that refers to the area around a building, which is associated with the building and is in the same use. For a dwelling, this is often the residential garden. However it might not include other land under the same ownership, such as adjoining areas of wasteland, woodland or fields.

Development Plans

A "local plan" is a collection of planning policies set out by a local planning authority. Local plan policies only affect planning applications within the authority's area, and may differ from the planning policy of other local authorities. Whilst it may include policies that are specific to the general area, a local plan must conform to national planning policy and guidance.

Neighborhood plans are supplementary to the local plan. They are community lead plans that take effect in a specific town or parish, and therefore may include area specific policies. Neighborhood plans seek to inform how development will look and where it might go as opposed to blocking development, and they must conform to national planning policy and guidance.

Passive Conservation

The idea of 'passive conservation' is referred to in chapter 9 and is not a generally recognised term. This concept means conservation that happens passively without the influence of the planning system. It occurs where owners take measures to conserve a building through ongoing appropriate maintenance, and through making sympathetic decisions when making changes, especially where planning permission is not required. It is a situation where owners recognise the value of a building and take measures to conserve it without being told to do so. Therefore, it refers to unlisted buildings where there is no obligation to maintain or conserve the building.

Permitted Development

Permitted development refers to the works to a building which are considered to be 'development' under section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), yet do not require planning permission, as set out in the General Permitted Development Order (2015 as amended).

Appendix B: Typical features of a Wells cottage

The following provides a summary of key design and construction features exhibited by the Wells cottages. This summary has been informed by surveys of individual buildings and the wider area, as well as archive research.

Walls

Generally the external walls are constructed of brickwork with small amounts of other materials incorporated, especially in the plinth. Additional materials include lumps of iron and sand stone, parts of broken brick and field flints. Sometimes, this is done for a decorative effect, such as that at Woodpeckers. The majority of the external walls

appear to be constructed of stretcher bond with a cavity. The plinth often exhibits random brick bond patterns are likely to be of solid construction. The plinth also contains decorative metal grilles ventilating the cavity and a DPC. Many cottages have small buttresses constructed of brick and rubble. These appear to be purely decorative as opposed to structural.

In terms of finishes, the brickwork (excluding the plinth and window sills) is nearly always white washed. Originally this is likely to have been a lime based slurry, however many cottages have since been coated with layers of standard masonry paint. A few cottages have been left with exposed brickwork, such as The Cottage on Common Hill and Fairwood on Birch Tree Lane. A variety of bricks have been used, ranging in colour, age and quality. This suggests they have come from a range of sources, with some bricks being salvaged and others being made locally.

Most Wells cottages surveyed exhibit a decorative brick dentil course to mark the floor plate, and shallow brick arches constructed in header bond across the window lintel. Some examples have a timber-framed effect at upper floor level with plaster/render infill panels. This is in a style similar to close studding, with timber sills and lintels to form window reveals. Whilst it has not been possible to gain access to any examples with this particular feature, they do not appear to be of traditional timber framed construction and are likely to have brickwork behind the outer face of timber and plaster.

Roofs

The current thatched roofs tend to use water reed with decorative ridges and eaves details, similar to the original style of thatch. Archive research suggests that many of the cottages were originally thatched, however a few were designed with plain clay tiles. Notwithstanding this, a large proportion of the cottages have been re-roofed in plain clay tiles with bonnet hips. Eyebrow dormers are a prominent feature seen on many of the Wells cottages. Originally these would have been thatched, however many retiled examples have swept ridge and valley details to neatly cover the curved form of the dormer.

In addition to eyebrow dormers, some cottages exhibit more standard gabled dormers. The majority of both types of dormer form part of the external wall surface and break the eaves line, however some are positioned independently within the roof. A range of materials are used to clad the face and cheeks of dormers, and occasionally gable ends. Where dormers form part of the wall surface, brickwork is often used as a continuation of the external wall. Commonly, waney edge boarding is used, stained dark brown or black. However, there are examples of less common alternative cladding materials, including cedar shingles and clay tiles.

In line with traditional house construction methods, the roofs are constructed with timber truss frames. According to the selection of original archived plans found and the roof spaces surveyed, it would appear that the roof trusses consist of a pair of common rafters, joined with a collar. The frames are laterally joined with a ridge beam and purlins. Where there is a second story, most cottages have skeelings through inhabiting the lower part of the roof space. Generally, the roof structure relies on a low positioned collar concealed within the ceiling of the upstairs rooms. However, one example surveyed shows a secondary collar closer to the ridge. Whilst it is possible that this is a later addition to strengthen the roof, it should be assumed that there is some variation in the roof construction across all cottages.

Chimneys

Chimneys and fireplaces are an important feature of Wells cottages, which were designed without central heating. Often chimneys are located internally, however some are located on external walls. In these cases, Wells has created a picturesque chimney with a heavy base, suggestive of historic vernacular forms. The external appearance is a pleasing feature and contributes to the vernacular cottage aesthetic. Latchetts has an impressive example with a very heavy base and multiple tiled insteps where the chimney tapers upwards. The majority of the cottages have substantial brick chimneys of a similar design with decorative courses around the top of the stack. Some examples, such as the chimney at Squirrels, have random decorative tiles protruding from the brickwork stack.

Many examples of internal chimneys are built diagonally to the rest of the house, creating a distinctive corner fireplace internally. From the cottages surveyed and archive material, these fireplaces are usually relatively modest, constructed of exposed brick with a relatively lightweight timber mantle and a clay-tiled hearth, edged with timber. The brickwork surround contains an arch of 1 or 2 courses of headers to accommodate the brick firebox. Often the fireplaces contain a small niche. Other styles of fireplace, such as inglenooks, are anticipated but require further survey work.

Windows and Doors

Originally, the Wells cottages were constructed with standardised metal windows in a timber frame with leaded lights and painted metal furniture. In addition to the standard window sizes, many cottages feature highly distinctive miniature windows of small leaded lights, often held within a timber frame with a timber or arched brick lintel. Often these tiny windows can be found in porches, but they are sometimes used for decorative effect elsewhere. A reasonable number of cottages appear to have retained their original metal windows or at least exhibit in keeping replacements, however many have since been replaced with modern double-glazed units.

Where they survive, the original doors are of timber boards, which are either ledged or ledged and braced with iron nails. Heavy external doors have long strap hinges with wrought iron eye and hook details, whilst tee-hinges are used for lighter internal doors. These doors sometimes have simple scratch mouldings along the edges of the boards with the opposite edge being slightly tapered, allowing the boards to be rebated together leaving a flat internal face. Both internal and external doors are often fitted with simple wooden latches and handles.

Interior

The internal finish of the walls tends to be white washed brickwork, where internal walls were often constructed of a single leaf of brickwork at ground floor level. Often

plastered timber stud partitions were used for first floor internal walls. It is understood that in some instances the plasterwork was constructed using a wire mesh as opposed to timber laths. However, this has not been verified for all cottages and timber laths are likely to be present in many cases.

Where they survive, a simple pine staircase is a key feature of two storey Wells cottages. These consist of undecorated joinery using timber treads and risers between timber wall strings. For balustrades, square profiled balusters are tenoned into a simple handrail and the timber wall string or trimmer, with heavier square newel posts in the corners.

Footings, Floors and Ceilings

According to Wells' original section drawings, the cottages are constructed using concrete footings 9 inches deep to provide the walls and general structure with stability. The ground floor was tongue and groove joined timber boards nailed to joists or fillets bedded in a cement or concrete raft (4 inches thick). The same drawings show the first floor to be constructed of 7x2 inch joists. Accounts from owners suggest that the floor is strengthened using diagonal timber cross braces between the joists. This type of floor construction provides lateral bracing.

Where a cottage was to be built on sloping ground, Wells often included a slight under-build that didn't necessarily include a concrete raft, as shown on the archive drawings for Romany. Others have a more substantial under-build, such as Blue Cedar. This cottage has an under-build of approximately 2m at the rear, forming a large basement level that is accessible via a low arched external door. Inside the basement level is a network of brick walls and tunnels to provide structural strength for the cottage above.

Logias

Many of the cottages have logias – a covered semi external space integrated within the design and form of the cottage. Often these are built of brick using heavy piers that flare slightly outwards at the base. Some logias were built using timber posts, such as the one at Old Oaks.

Garages and outbuildings

Most properties were built with their own ‘Wells Garage’, many of which still survive. These garages are all of a similar appearance and are generally in keeping with the rustic aesthetic of the development. They usually consist of a single bay, clad with dark stained waney edge boarding. Their typically gabled or half hipped roof is clad in plain clay tiles, although a thatched example survives. Provision of a separate garage at a time when motorcar ownership was booming was logical given the cottages were weekend retreats, allowing their owners to arrive by car.

The majority of Wells cottages would have been served by an external well. Whilst no surviving original wells have been discovered intact as part of this study, the wells are shown on the archive drawings to be located relatively close to the house whilst remaining a safe distance from the cesspit. It is possible that intact examples survive.

La Chaumiere on Spinney lane features an interesting lych-gate. This is a timber built structure with a tiled roof that appears to be contemporary with the cottage. Other similar structures include the Wells bus stop on Common Hill.

Appendix C: WCPC meeting notes

A parish meeting was held on 03/07/2018. The key questions presented to the parish were as follows:

1. Do you consider the Wells cottages to be worthy of protection? If so, why?

2. In what ways have you considered protecting the cottages? For example, have you considered applying to list the cottages, or designating a conservation area?

3. I see the draft neighbourhood plan contains a Wells specific policy. Can you tell me more about this, what stage it is at and how it might help protect the cottages?

4. What do you see as the key threats to the cottages?

Meeting notes:

- The Parish are very interested in preserving the Cottages. The cottages are considered to be part of the identity of the village and form a special part of its character and history. They are considered worthy of protection.
- The West Chilton Rural Preservation Society is a good point of contact for information about the Wells cottages' history. The society was involved with the attempt to designate a conservation area in 2006.
- An attempt to make the cottages a conservation area was also made in 2004 to no avail.
- As a result of these attempts, the Parish decided/were advised that the next best option would be to get the cottages recognised as non-designed heritage assets and protected through a specific policy within the emerging neighbourhood plan, which the parish are pursuing. This would enable better protection of the cottages and their character through the planning system. Currently, it is difficult to prevent harmful changes as there are no planning restrictions, such as the removal of thatch. This has recently happened on one of the cottages and it is very difficult to prevent until the new policy comes into force. The plan is going through consultation, however the parish have been advised that they need more evidence to support the Wells cottage policy (policy EH10).

- Key concerns include a loss of thatch and original features, however it is currently very difficult to protect the cottages and resist inappropriate changes in planning terms.
- Guy Leonard (local estate agent), have been inside the majority of the cottages over the years and may be able to provide an insight
- The post office may have historic photographs
- When last investigated, the parish found that public opinion is generally in favour of getting the Cottages listed/protected in some way. However, not all residents want the cottages to be part of a conservation area or listed, as this restricts what changes owners are able to make. Public opinion has not been tested recently.
- “Wells cottages on steroids” is the cumulative result of development over the years, which has been very difficult to resist due to lack of protection. The Wells cottages are changing into something that they were never supposed to be. Many of them are now very big houses, yet they were designed as small holiday cottages.
- The parish require further evidence regarding the Wells cottages to supplement their neighbourhood plan and Wells specific policy. They have suggested that this dissertation may assist in providing the required evidence.

Appendix D: HDC conservation officer interview transcript

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Appendix E: WCRPS meeting notes

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Appendix F: Individual cottage survey notes and photographs

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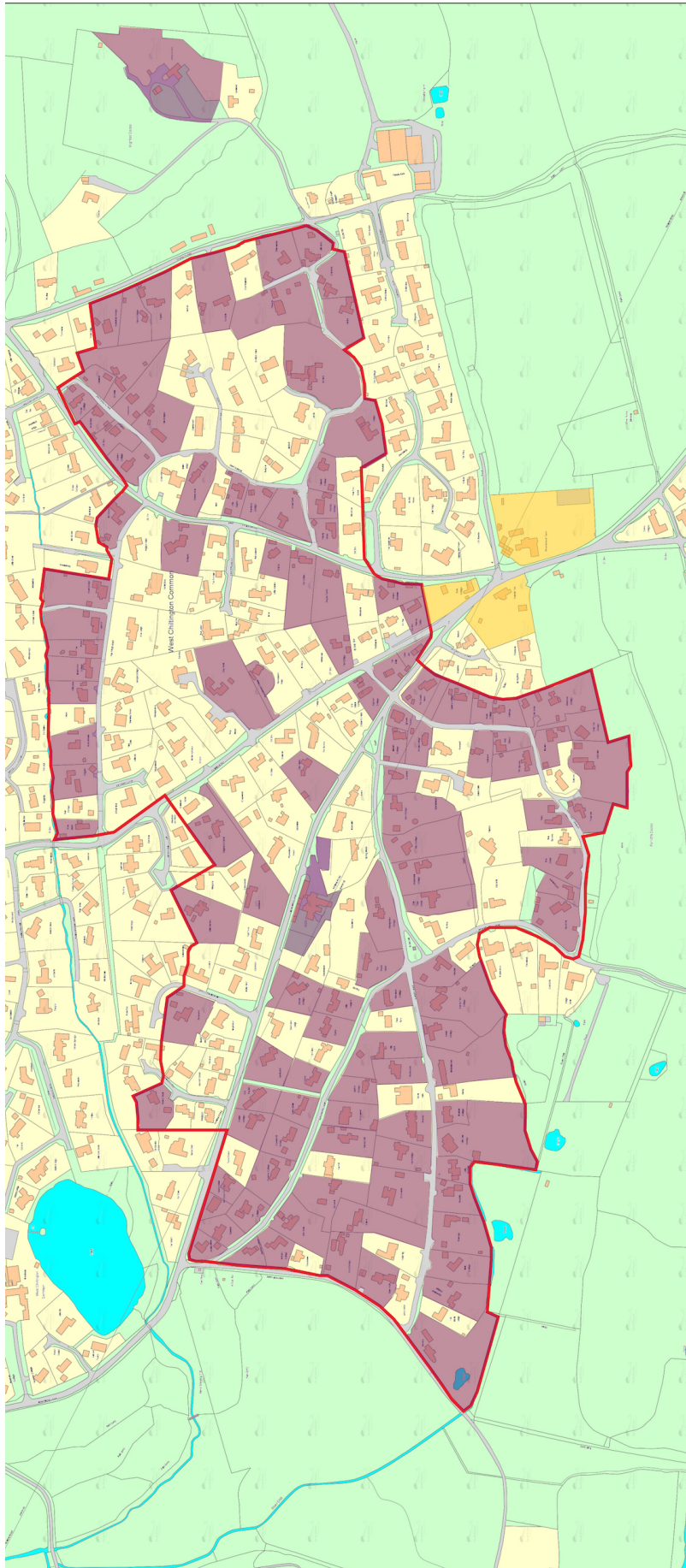
Appendix G: Enlarged map images

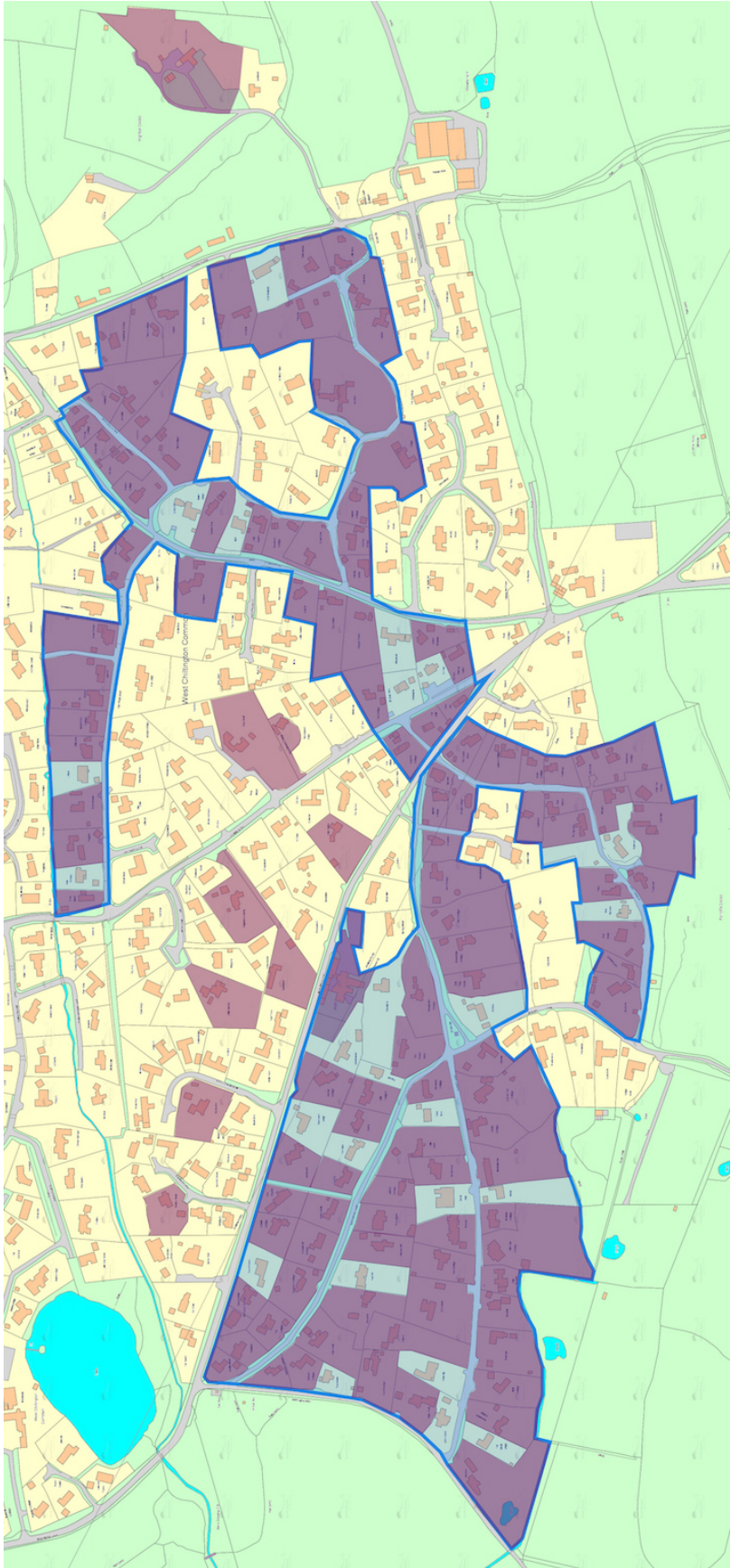
Purple: Wells cottages, as informed by WCPC and WCRPS lists and historic maps

Blue: Areas worth investigating for conservation area designation

Yellow: Historic (pre Wells) buildings

Red: Approximate extents of Wells development.





Appendix H: Contact sheets of photographic surveys

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