RECEPT

HERITAGE

Example Heritage Statement

Willow Cottage, Aldercombe

Replacement rear extension to an unlisted cottage within a conservation area

NOVEMBER 2026

WEBSITE EXAMPLE / HS-02

Illustrative example

The property, designations, history and proposals in this report are fictional. The report demonstrates Recept Heritage's assessment approach and is not a site-specific planning submission.

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement assesses a replacement rear extension at Willow Cottage, 12 Market Lane, Aldercombe. The cottage is an unlisted historic dwelling within Aldercombe Conservation Area. The proposal removes a modern lean-to and introduces a modest single-storey garden room.

The statement identifies the significance of the cottage and its contribution to the conservation area, explains the design response and assesses the effect of the proposed works. The assessment is proportionate to the scale of the development and the elements of heritage significance affected.

Scope of the assessment

The principal considerations are the contribution of the cottage to the historic street, the interest of its surviving fabric and form, and the effect of additional development on the rear plot. The assessment distinguishes the modern lean-to from the earlier building without assuming that the garden or rear elevation is insensitive to change.

2. The site and heritage context

Willow Cottage is a two-storey stone dwelling on the north side of Market Lane. Its principal elevation stands close to the street, with a narrow side passage providing access to an enclosed rear garden. The cottage forms part of a varied run of traditional domestic buildings with pitched roofs and restrained elevations.

The building has coursed local stone walls, a slate roof and a simple arrangement of window and door openings. The original main range remains the dominant built element. A shallow-roofed, late twentieth-century lean-to occupies part of the rear elevation.

The conservation area derives its character from the narrow street, established building lines, traditional materials and the relationship between closely developed frontages and longer rear gardens. No listed building or other designated heritage asset is affected in this example. The relevant designated asset is the conservation area itself.

3. Historic development and significance

Historic development

The cottage originated as a small early nineteenth-century dwelling. Its compact main range and direct relationship with the lane reflect the established pattern of domestic development in this part of the village. Later residential adaptations introduced new fittings and the rear lean-to without substantially changing the street elevation or principal roof.

The lean-to is a utilitarian addition of rendered blockwork with standard modern joinery and a shallow roof. It does not share the materials, proportions or construction interest of the main cottage. Its removal would not result in the loss of fabric that makes a meaningful contribution to the significance of the conservation area.

Architectural and historic interest

The interest of Willow Cottage lies in its surviving traditional form, stone construction, simple roof and modest domestic scale. It illustrates the development of the village street through small houses occupying relatively narrow plots. Its significance does not depend on elaborate decoration or an association with a notable individual.

The principal elevation and roof make the clearest contribution to the public character of Market Lane. The rear wall and overall depth of the main range also allow the earlier dwelling to be understood as a coherent building. These elements merit retention even where they are not prominent in public views.

Contribution of the plot

The rear garden forms part of the historic relationship between the roadside dwelling and its domestic plot. Its openness distinguishes the main house from ancillary structures and helps maintain the contrast between the dense street frontage and less developed land behind it.

The garden is therefore not treated as heritage-neutral simply because it is private. An extension could harm the conservation area if it overwhelmed the main range, substantially consumed the plot or disrupted the established pattern of rear gardens. The opportunity for change lies in a limited, subordinate addition, not unrestricted development behind the frontage.

4. Proposed works and design response

The scheme removes the existing lean-to and replaces it with a garden room approximately 4.0 metres wide and 3.0 metres deep. A low pitched roof remains below the first-floor window sills. The addition is set in from the side boundaries, retains the side passage and leaves most of the rear garden open.

A restrained combination of timber framing, painted joinery and slate roofing distinguishes the extension from the original stone cottage while maintaining a compatible domestic character. Glazing is concentrated on the garden elevation. The side elevations have a more solid treatment, limiting the prominence of the addition in oblique views.

The extension connects through the existing rear doorway. The historic opening is not widened, and the principal rear masonry wall is retained. Roof abutments and weathering are confined to the minimum intervention needed for a secure connection. Rainwater is collected and discharged clear of the original walls.

Design rationale

The design directs change towards the already altered part of the building, retains the original main range and avoids extending across the full width of the plot. Its roof remains clearly secondary to the cottage roof. The addition reads as ancillary accommodation rather than a new principal wing.

5. Assessment of impact

Historic fabric and architectural form

Removal of the modern lean-to does not entail loss of fabric identified as significant. Retention of the existing doorway avoids a new breach in the historic rear elevation. The original roof, external walling and main building proportions remain legible.

The garden room increases the volume of rear development, but its limited depth and low roof maintain the visual hierarchy between the cottage and its extension. This represents a change to the rear elevation without harming the qualities through which the cottage contributes to the conservation area.

Plot pattern and townscape

The side passage and a substantial open garden remain. The proposal does not merge the cottage with neighbouring development or replace the garden with continuous built form. Street-facing elevations and the principal roofscape are unchanged. Rearward views retain the main cottage as the dominant element.

6. Policy context

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area when exercising the relevant planning functions. The designated heritage asset assessed here is Aldercombe Conservation Area; listed building duties are not invoked for this unlisted cottage.

National heritage policy requires an understanding of the significance of affected assets, including the contribution made by their setting, and an assessment proportionate to the potential impact. The proposal has been assessed by reference to the qualities that make the cottage, street and plot pattern significant, rather than by visibility alone.

The conservation area assessment identifies no harm to significance. A balancing exercise between heritage harm and public benefits is therefore not required for the scheme described. No claim of compliance with a real authority’s development plan is made for this fictional settlement.

7. Conclusion

Willow Cottage contributes positively to the conservation area through its traditional form, stone construction, building line and relationship with its rear garden. The modern lean-to does not make an equivalent contribution.

The replacement extension retains the main historic envelope, uses the existing rear doorway and remains subordinate in height and footprint. It preserves the side passage and the substantial majority of the rear garden. The character and appearance of the conservation area would be preserved, with no harm to its significance identified.

The scheme is supported on heritage grounds. Retention of the existing masonry opening, the limited roof height and the defined footprint are integral to that conclusion. Materials, abutment details and protection of the original walling should be carried through into the approved design and construction.

Reference framework

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, section 72. National Planning Policy Framework, historic environment policies. Historic England, Statements of Heritage Significance, Advice Note 12 (2019). Report structure follows Recept Heritage’s established introduction, context, significance, proposal, impact, policy and conclusion format.