

## 4.2 PRESENT CONDITION & HISTORIC MERIT OF COTTAGES

### 4.2.1 Heritage Assessment Report Prepared for BWS

In 2006 British Waterways commissioned a survey of the properties to ascertain their condition and historical merit. The 2006 report by Michael Eaton of Heritage Assessments Limited summarised that Beeston Lock has been a significant nodal point on the canal system since 1796 and the Lock Cottages are the largest and most significant buildings surviving from the opening of Nottingham Canal.

The report concluded that “***because of their historic interest and their local significance, it is essential that they are retained***”.



BEESTON LOCK COTTAGES - 1900



BEESTON LOCK TODAY

### 4.2.2 Nottinghamshire County Council – Conservation Department

Nottinghamshire County Council's Heritage Conservation Department have recently identified the lock cottages as having great merit to the local community and placed them on the 'Local Interest' list. They state that the C18th century cottages (contemporary with the adjacent lock keeper's house) are an important '*undesigned heritage asset*' and have them recorded on the county Historic Environment Record. Their conservation approach and key guiding points to the recommended restoration approach is summarised as follows.

#### **Exterior:**

Although both buildings (the lock keeper's cottage and adjacent range) have been much altered in the fairly recent past and some of these modernisation are detracting/hiding the true age and architectural interest of the buildings, the plan form, roof-lines, ancillary structure (such as the tall boundary wall and attached smithy) remain clearly discernible. Many of the changes are reversible and in doing so the project would make a major contribution to the enhancement of the local historic and architectural interest of the site.



**COTTAGE EXTERIOR FRONT ELEVATIONS**

**Interiors:**

The north cottage of the range retains the most original features. The one up/one down layout with scullery on the ground floor is probably original to 1796. The first floor layout is also probably original. The ground floor quarry tiles are of considerable age, but may not be original to the C18th. On the first floor the construction of the floor suggests gypsum plaster laid onto sawn soft wood planks. This is not the usual construction of this type of vernacular feature, it is much more common to find a substrate of reeds. A relatively modern ceiling has been built below the floor but it is possible to see the underside of the gypsum plaster floor and planks which have several layers of lime wash indicating that it was originally exposed. Some of this section of floor shows signs of severe insect infestation. This will require further investigation, but if the floor is indeed gypsum plaster and the boards can be conserved in-situ, then this feature is of very considerable heritage value.

The scullery door (ledged but not braced) with scribed planks of varying width is probably original and in-situ. The door to the stairs is slightly later insertion but is also quite historic. The 1950's fireplace most probably replaced a cast iron range remnants of which may still be in place behind the C20th fireplace (although this is unlikely).



**ORIGINAL INTERNAL FEATURES**

**Restoration/conservation of the north cottage:**

The level retention of original features in the north cottage opens up the strong possibility of restoring it very closely to the original 1796 appearance. Where evidence on site or from documents is lacking there is comparable evidence from other sites along the waterways of the region.

Restoration to the C18th form of the building, or to a phase in the C19th before the kitchen and bathroom was introduced, could be the basis of a valuable and interesting small 'museum' of which there is very little similar in the area and nothing on any of the waterways in Nottinghamshire.

**Rest of the cottage range:**

The cottage next to the north cottage originally had the same layout. It retains some original features but the layout of the scullery area has been much more altered than the north cottage. The stairs are in-situ and original and the first floors may be of gypsum plaster construction. The proposed development has identified this space for location of the main 'Heritage Centre' facility, which would seem to be sensible.

The cottage next to this is presently laid out as a double fronted building which (judging by the old images that show two front doors side-by-side in the area of the present porch) was created out of two cottages identical to the others. The internal layout has been altered fairly radically, the two storey rear flat roof extension is late C19th and is in very poor condition and of very little architectural or historic interest.

The value of restoring the two bay unit into two smaller cottages would be negated by the value of retaining the layout as representative of the more recent phases of the building's history. On this basis, this end of the building is clearly the most pragmatic area for any internal remodelling that might facilitate new uses, such as the proposed café facility.

**Ancillary areas:**

The tall brick boundary wall running eastwards from the cottage range is of considerable age and may be contemporary to the original build. Its condition is such that it probably requires rebuilding and would envisage that this provides a suitable opportunity for access to the rear during construction phase of the project. It could also be rebuilt to facilitate any ground floor extension that could increase and improve the feasibility of the proposed catering facility and bike hire.

The small store building at the north end of the range connecting to the lock cottage, is used part by the lock keeper. If what is available can be put to appropriate and valuable use, I would think it reasonable to alter it slightly to accommodate this.



ANCILLARY EXTERNAL AREAS

**Summary & Heritage Statement:**

Late C18th cottages and domestic houses are often designated as listed buildings. Unfortunately, the condition and degree of recent alterations to these cottages

compromises their exterior architectural interest. The level of retention of the original interior of the north cottage is very significant and worthy of note. Although it is probably insufficient to balance in favour of listing for the whole range, it is a very significant and rare survival that provides a major opportunity for preservation and development as a heritage resource. The historic interest of the site makes a major contribution to the overall industrial heritage interest of the canal. The social heritage interest of the site and potential for exploration of local history of the C18th and C19th is very significant. These are the oldest surviving buildings in the Rylands area and they are an obvious focal point for local heritage interpretation and exploration.

### **4.2.3 Structural and Condition Survey**

In February 2011 a more detailed structural survey was undertaken for the project architects by Anthony Rudge Associates. The findings of this survey together with the recommendations of Nottinghamshire County Council's conservation guidelines as above, have been used to initially inform the proposed building restoration and development proposals summarised within this report.

### **February 2013 Update:**

#### **Conservation statement**

During the development stage of the project the detailed approach to the restoration and conversion has been explored and the following principles adopted throughout:

- The lock cottages are a significant historic building of the late C18th that are worthy of restoration but in a critically poor state of repair.
- The Beeston cut is an historic waterway that had significant impact on the development of Beeston Rylands and the economic activity along the upper stretches of the River Trent.
- The river and canal are very well used for recreational purposes by a wide variety of people and the cottages are the best opportunity along this section of the waterway for people to interact and access this heritage.

#### **Guidelines for development**

The project has been developed with these key principals in mind (above) and the designs have remained focussed throughout on the following goals:

- The careful exploration of the historic fabric of the buildings to uncover and reveal the original elements of the C18th cottages.
- Reinstatement of features known, from suitable evidence, to have been removed and/or covered up.
- The reversal of inappropriate works to the buildings, including the misuse of modern, non-traditional materials and the poorly executed extension to the rear of the cottages.
- (Northern cottage) Additional alterations to the northern lock cottage will only be acceptable if demonstrably necessary to enable best access to, and understanding of, the heritage value of the cottage.
- (Elsewhere) where it is demonstrably necessary to the enablement of the core goal of heritage conservation and access, new interventions and extensions will be designed in a manner that is both sensitive to the significance and value of the site, and distinguishable as high quality modern intervention/s.

- The best use of the building will be made during restoration work to utilise it for training opportunities and every effort made to engage with a variety of audiences to promote traditional building skills.
- The best use of the site shall be made through the introduction of appropriate landscaping to create a versatile and well used public space that enhances the setting of the lock, canal and cottages.