

3rd October 2023

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Dear Planning Team

Re: West Farleigh – Ewell Manor, Ewell Lane, Maidstone ME15 0NG
Listed Building Consent for alterations to a Grade II listed building and its curtilage buildings

Background

We act on behalf of Mrs Meddemmen and have been instructed to submit a Listed Building Application which seeks consent for the following works to the above property in a similar manner to those previously approved under recent application Ref 19/503749/LBC as summarised in detail within the planning history section of this covering letter:

Conversion of the barn to a single dwelling;

Conversion of the stock shed to form a holiday let; and

Rebuilding of the attached wall, pens and stores adjoining the barn to the north.

This covering letter provides a detailed assessment of the key planning and heritage issues and should be taken into consideration in the determination of the planning application. In addition, this cover letter is supported by the following documentation:

Heritage Statement & Statement of Heritage Significance prepared By Clare Dales Ltd;
Structural Survey Report prepared by VKHP Consulting;
Historic Building Record prepared by AOC Archaeology Group;
Drawings Package prepared Sub Rosa.

Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a number of former agricultural buildings located to the south of Ewell Lane (B2163) on the site of the former Ewell Manor, a medieval manor that is believed to have been demolished in the 1960's.

The most notable of buildings subject of this Listed Building Application is the Grade II listed large, thatched barn. Whilst also of note to this application is the stock shed, Cart Lodge and Bothy all located to the north of the aforementioned barn forming a courtyard arrangement and Cattle shed located some distance to the south. Importantly, all these buildings are considered to be curtilage listed however the cartlodge and bothy were significantly damaged in circa 2014 as a result of a tree felling incident and thus form no part of this application.

Additionally, the Cattle shed has been removed from consideration of this application leaving just the thatched barn, stock shed and adjoining wall, pens and stores subject to assessment.

Planning History

The Site

A review of the Council's online records reveals that the property has been subject to a number of previous planning and listed building applications, the most important of which are summarised below:

Initially, a listed building application (Ref 03/1709) was made in 2003 for the conversion of existing buildings to a single dwelling with annexe and 2 No. holiday let units with associated parking lodge and change of use to reinstate former gardens, tennis court and new swimming pool and improvement and reinstatement of existing and former entrance – Granted 22nd December 2003.

A further application (Ref 08/2020) was made for the conversion of barn, cart lodge and bothy into a single dwelling and annexe and stock shed into a single holiday let unit - Granted 28th November 2008.

Subsequently, an application (Ref 11/1770) was made for the conversion of barn, cart lodge and bothy into a single dwelling and annexe and stock shed into a single holiday let unit – Granted 23rd December 2011.

Finally, a listed building application (Ref 19/503749/LBC) was made for the conversion of barn to a single dwelling including rebuilding lean-to and wall, conversion of cattle shed and stock shed into 2 No. holiday lets, recreation of former gardens and tennis courts, installation of swimming pool and reconstruction of cart lodge and bothy to create an annex to main barn – Granted 8th October 2019.

Surrounding Area

Furthermore, there are a number of planning applications that have been made in the surrounding area. The most relevant of these are summarised below:

Planning permission was granted by application (Ref 19/503633/FULL) for the conversion of the barn to a single dwelling including the rebuilding of the attached wall, pens and stores; conversion of cattle shed and stock shed into No. 2 holiday lets – Granted 06/11/2020.

Summary

The principle of undertaking enhancement works (both internal and external) to secure the long term future of the Grade II listed barn and associated curtilage buildings is considered acceptable provided that appropriate justification is set out within a listed building application.

The Proposal

The application seeks consent for the following works to the listed barn and buildings within its curtilage:

Conversion of the barn to a single dwelling;

Rebuilding of the attached wall, pens and stores adjoining the barn to the north (as approved and completed under 19/503749/LBC)

Conversion of the stock shed to form a single holiday let;

- Including replacement of existing sheet metal roof with plain clay tiles.

Full details of the extent of works required for the conversion of the former agricultural buildings is set out within the drawings package that accompanies this submission.

Planning Policy

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in July 2021 and sets out the Government's objectives for achieving sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

The NPPF builds upon the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and requires at paragraph 197 that local planning authorities in determining planning applications should take account of:

The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctive ness.

Paragraph 202 advises that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

At paragraph 203, it is stated that the effect on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Local Development Framework - Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017 (Adopted October 2017)

The borough of Maidstone's Development Framework currently comprises the Local Plan (adopted 2017). The policies and principles relevant to the determination of this application are set out below.

Policy SP18 (The historic Environment) states that to ensure the continued contribution to the quality of life in Maidstone Borough, the characteristics, distinctiveness, diversity and quality of heritage assets will be protected and, where possible, enhanced. This will be achieved by the Council encouraging and supporting measures that secure the sensitive restoration, reuse, enjoyment conservation and/or enhancement of heritage assets, in particular designated assets identified as being at risk, to include:

- i. Collaboration with developers, landowners, parish councils, groups preparing neighbourhood plans and heritage bodies on specific heritage initiatives including bids for funding;
- ii. Through the development management process, securing the sensitive management and design of development which impacts on heritage assets and their settings;
- iii. Through the incorporation of positive heritage policies in neighbourhood plans which are based on analysis of locally important and distinctive heritage; and
- iv. Ensuring relevant heritage considerations are a key aspect of site masterplans prepared in support of development allocations and broad locations identified in the Local Plan.

Policy DM4 (Development affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets) Applicants will be expected to ensure that new development affecting a heritage asset incorporates measures to conserve, and where possible enhance, the significance of the heritage asset and, where appropriate, its setting.

Where appropriate, development proposals will be expected to respond to the value of the historic environment by the means of a proportionate heritage assessment which assesses and takes full account of:

- i. Any heritage assets, and their settings, which could reasonably be impacted by the proposals;
- ii. The significance of the assets; and
- iii. The scale of the impact of development on the identified significance.

Where development is proposed for a site which includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, applicants must submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

The Council will apply the relevant tests and assessment factors specified in the National Planning Policy Framework when determining applications for development which would result in the loss of, or harm to, the significance of a heritage asset and/or its setting.

In the circumstances where the loss of a heritage asset is robustly justified, developers must make the information about the asset and its significance available for incorporation on the Historic Environment Record.

Planning Issues

Principle of Development

The site relates to the thatched barn building and associated curtilage buildings to the west and south west of Gardeners Cottage on the site of the former Ewell Manor Estate.

The thatched barn and associated buildings are grade II listed and surrounded by residential development in a largely rural location.

As such, listed building consent is sought for a number of internal and external alterations as previously approved by the Council a number of times over the last two decades, most recently in 2019 but historically in 2011, 2008 and 2003.

Given that the works will be undertaken to enhance the visual character and appearance of the buildings and secure their long term survival, the principle of development is acceptable provided that it can be demonstrated that there will be no harm caused to the building or its fabric.

Design and Heritage Assessment

The thatched barn building central to this application was first listed on 15th October 1995 with the list notice noting the following features:

“Barn. Probably C18. Weatherboarded timber frame the front and back walls and the lower part of the end walls are flemish bond brick. Thatched roof with half-hipped ends and swept down over aisles at front and back. Plan: 5-bay aisled barn with waggon entry at front to threshing floor in central bay. Exterior: at the centre of the front a cart entrance in a midstrey with a hipped thatched roof, the upper part now glazed and the lower part with C20 plank doors. Flanking the midstrey the main roof is swept down to the lower brick walls of the aisles. The rear wall is weatherboarded to the right and brick to the left and with two small doorways at the centre. The south west end has C20 windows in the weatherboarding at the top and the north east end has a C20 boarded door. Interior: the roof and timber framing is complete. The end walls are close-studded and with tension braces. Aisle-posts with large square jowls and straight braces to the tie beams and aisle plates. Queen-post trusses with collars, common-rafters without a ridgepiece and with staggered butt purlins. The aisle-posts are supported on large timber sole-plates which span the aisles and on which long curved braces rise from the outer ends to the tops of the aisle posts. The centre bay and the two south west bays have been lined with match-boarding to form a small theatre or hall with a stage in the south west end bay. The site of the demolished Ewell Manor House is situated immediately to the west.

As summarised above, the renovation works have been carefully considered and result in an enhancement of the listed building by the removal/sensitive replacement of dilapidated features and aspects of the building which did not contribute in a positive manner to its listed status.

Please refer to the enclosed drawings package and Heritage Assessment which provides a detailed summary of all works to be carried out together with an assessment of the impact upon the historical fabric of the building. This assessment (when read in conjunction with the listing notice) confirms that none of the works will impact or cause harm to the character, fabric or external appearance of the historic nature of the listed building.

Thereby the proposed development is in accordance with Policies SP18 and DM4 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.

Amenity

The proposed works will not give rise to any adverse impacts upon the amenity of current or future occupiers of the proposal site nor the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Next Steps

We look forward to receiving confirmation of receipt and registration of the application, however, in the meantime if you require any further information or have any queries in respect of the submitted documentation, please contact the undersigned in the first instance.

Yours faithfully



Harry Johnson

B.Sc M.Sc MRTPI

Senior Planner



