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Date: 30 September 2026 12:16:51

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F.A.O Rebecca Harrison

Our ref 222285

Your ref 20251136

Elizabeth House, The Street, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0AJ

Application for Listed Building Consent for removal of the existing modern WC/utility room rear extension, alterations to the existing modern ground floor rear kitchen extension including new rooflights, modifications to existing openings on the rear elevation of the living room at ground floor level, replacement of several windows on front, rear and side elevations, secondary glazing to selected windows and a number of other internal and external alterations and refurbishment works.

Dear Rebecca

Thank you for consulting SPAB on the revised application and for providing the additional information, including the detailed Heritage Impact Statement.

We welcome a number of aspects of the scheme. In particular, we support the proposed removal of impermeable materials and the use of breathable construction methods, including wood-fibre insulation and lime-based finishes, which have the potential to improve the building's long-term performance and condition. We also do not object in principle to the removal of modern floor finishes, provided that any surviving historic floorboards are retained and protected.

Notwithstanding this additional information, we remain concerned that a number of the proposals would result in unnecessary harm to the building's historic character and fabric.

Windows

While the Heritage Impact Statement is helpful, we remain unconvinced by the proposal to reinstate sash windows to the principal elevation. The existing arrangement reflects the building's former use as a post office and shop, with the variation in window types and openings contributing to a hierarchy that evidences this important phase of the building's history.

Although these alterations do not form part of the building's earliest phase, they are nevertheless historic and make a meaningful contribution to the building's character and evidential value. The proposed standardisation of the principal elevation would erode this

legibility and diminish clear evidence of the building's commercial past. In our view, this later phase forms an important chapter in the building's evolution and should remain readily apparent.

We note the proposal to relocate the existing metal-framed windows from the principal elevation to the rear of the building as a means of mitigating the loss of historic fabric. However, we do not consider that relocation adequately addresses the harm identified above. The significance of these windows derives not only from their survival as historic fabric, but also from their contribution to the character and appearance of the principal elevation and their relationship with the building's former commercial use. Their removal from this context would therefore still result in harm to the building's special interest.

More broadly, we are concerned that the approach seeks to recreate an earlier phase of the building's development through the reintroduction of sash windows to the principal elevation, while relocating later historic fabric elsewhere within the building. Historic buildings derive much of their significance from the way successive phases of change remain legible. The repositioning of historic elements can obscure and confuse this evolution, creating a less authentic understanding of the building's development over time. The use of secondary glazing to replicate the appearance of the earlier sash windows reinforces this concern. In our view, the later alterations associated with the building's use as a post office form an important part of its history and should remain evident in situ.

On the rear elevation, we would not object in principle to the replacement of the existing uPVC window with a more appropriate timber window, nor to the reopening of the smaller window. However, we remain concerned by the proposed enlargement of the existing door opening to accommodate double doors. This would involve the unnecessary loss of historic fabric, and we have not seen clear and convincing justification demonstrating why the opening must be enlarged.

Internal Layout

We also continue to object to the proposed removal of the partition between the dressing room and principal bedroom. This appears likely to be historic fabric and contributes to the legibility of the building's historic plan form. Historic partitions can provide important evidence of how a building was arranged and used over time, and insufficient justification has been provided to outweigh the harm arising from its loss.

Rooflights

In principle, we would not object to the introduction of rooflights. However, any works should be carefully designed to avoid harm to historic roof timbers and other significant elements of the roof structure. Subject to suitable details demonstrating that their installation can be achieved without the loss of historic fabric, this is likely to be a matter that could be addressed by condition.

Conclusion

While we appreciate the effort that has gone into the additional supporting information and welcome certain elements of the scheme, our principal concerns remain. In particular, we consider that the replacement of the front windows, the enlargement of the rear door opening, and the loss of the internal partition would result in avoidable harm to the building's special architectural and historic interest, for which insufficient justification has been provided.

We are therefore unable to support the application as currently proposed.

We hope these comments are helpful.

Best wishes



Casework Officer

Part-time hours: Monday to Wednesday

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