

THE MILLERS COTTAGE SHRUBBERY ROAD GRAVESEND

APPLICATION TO CONVERT FORMER PUBLIC HOUSE TO RESIDENTIAL DWELLING HOUSE

HERITAGE STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This statement is provided in support of a planning application for the conversion of a former public house to a residential dwelling house with associated amenity space, access and parking.

The purpose of this statement is to inform the development management decision making process by identifying any Heritage Assets affected by the proposal, assessing their significance and considering what impact the development proposal will have on their setting and significance

This is in accordance with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) which requires the Local Planning Authority to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of Heritage Assets and putting them to viable use consistent with their conservation, and to assess the positive contribution that conservation of Heritage Assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality together with the potential of a proposed new development for making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a non-designated asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing application that affect the heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the impact on the significance of the asset.

The NPPF also states that the level of detail to be provided by an applicant should be proportionate to the Assets importance, and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the Assets significance.

THE APPLICATION SITE, THE EXISTING BUILDING AND HERITAGE ASSETS IN THE LOCALITY

The application site is located within the Windmill Hill Conservation Area, on the west side of Shrubbery Road. The building on the site was originally the home of the millers who produced flour in the windmill which was formerly located up on the hill. Extracts from Kent Archives are attached at Appendix HS1 which include illustrations of former pub signs depicting the mill and the cottage.

The original part of the existing building is said to have been built in 1695. The archive information states that the premises were still used for grinding wheat in 1842 when the last miller (Mr Michael Slaughter) left.

At this point in time the cottage was put into use as a public house to provide refreshments for visitors to the area. Land at the hill was purchased by the Gravesend Corporation at

auction and developed as a resort with a maze, donkey rides, a fair and a camera obscura (source: Windmill Hill Conservation Area appraisal). Visitors arrived by steamboat and alighted at piers at Rosherville Gardens, along the promenade and at the Town Pier. They could take refreshments at the tea gardens, at the Tivoli and Clarence Hotels or patronise one of the 3 public houses which existed at that time which were The Windmill Tavern, The Belle Vue and The Millers Cottage.

Visitor numbers declined in the 1890's as the railway opened up the possibility of day trips to the Kent Coast to greater numbers of people than before. The attractiveness of Windmill Hill as a leisure destination declined and the windmill eventually closed. The windmill and the Belle Vue tavern became derelict and were demolished. The Millers Cottage continued to be used as a Public House, catering more to the needs of the local population, in competition with the Windmill Tavern, until it closed which is understood to have been in November 2018.

A map showing Heritage Assets in the locality (HER Map 1) is attached at Appendix HS2, and historic OS maps from 1871 showing the application site and buildings and features in the locality are attached at Appendix HS3. These identify Heritage Assets close to the application site and show changes that have occurred over time as the area was gradually developed.

To the south of the application site is a short terrace of attractive two-storey houses with basements known as nos. 25-29 Shrubbery Road. These houses were constructed in the mid-19th century. The buildings are of stock brick with rendered sides and are set back from the street frontage behind small gardens. The houses are all grade II listed buildings.

To the north of the site is a terrace of recently constructed dwelling houses which are not Heritage assets in themselves and do not make a positive contribution to the significance or setting of any heritage assets nearby.

On the east side of Shrubbery Road, opposite the application site, there is a terrace of older mid-19th century houses known as nos. 9 to 19 Shrubbery Road. This terrace is described as being "particularly attractive" in the Windmill Hill Conservation Area Appraisal which goes on to describe them as being built in a Gothic cottage orne manner, with rustic timber porches and decorative Gothic glazing to the sash windows. Here the well-stocked front gardens are described in the Conservation Area Appraisal as forming a visual connection with trees on the hill.

Nos 9-12 and nos. 17 to 19 Shrubbery Road are grade II listed buildings and nos. 13 to 16 are buildings of local interest.

It is noted that the Appraisal identifies the forecourts of the application site and the Windmill Tavern, which are both mainly hard-surfaced and used for car parking, as being negative features which could be enhanced through a well-considered landscape treatment.

It is clear that any proposals to alter or otherwise change the use of the former public house will affect the setting and potentially the significance of important designated heritage assets.

IMPACT ON SIGNIFICANCE

Significance is defined in the NPPF as “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest”. Significance is also defined as the sum of all heritage values including evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal.

Evidential value is the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. Historical value is the way in which a site can illustrate aspects of history and people’s lives. Aesthetic value is the way in which a place can give sensory or intellectual stimulation. Communal value is the value of the asset to the local community over time.

The building to be converted, although not Listed, is of historic interest. It maintains a link with the agricultural/rural activities which took place in the area in the past, and also with the later use of the Windmill Hill area as a resort and visitor destination. It also forms part of the setting of designated heritage assets located adjacent to and opposite the application site. It contributes towards the sense of place in this part of the Conservation area and is a feature in views up and down Shrubbery Road and of the terraces of Listed Buildings close by.

The high level of significance and national importance of the adjacent terrace and the terrace opposite the site is already acknowledged by virtue of their listed status. Grade II buildings are important buildings of architectural and/or historic interest.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

The proposal is to convert the former public house building to form one detached residential dwelling house. This can be achieved with limited external alteration. The proposed works will not affect the fabric of any listed assets, in particular will not affect the flank wall of number 29 Shrubbery Road, which is a grade II listed building, and which joins onto the front corner of the garage which has been built onto the southern side of the original building on the application site. There will therefore be minimal impact on the significance of any listed heritage asset in terms of impact on their fabric.

As well as examining impact on significance in terms of impact of the proposal on the fabric of a heritage asset it is also necessary to examine impact on the setting. The setting of a heritage asset comprises the surroundings within which it is experienced. The setting is therefore more extensive than the curtilage immediately surrounding the building and includes the wider locality. It is therefore necessary in assessing impact on the setting of a heritage asset to look at the experience of approaching the asset from different directions as well as visual impact and experiential impact when standing close to the asset, the application site and surrounding buildings.

A context and visual impact analysis plan is attached to this statement as appendix HS4. This shows how the setting of the Heritage Assets identified above will not be adversely affected when approaching from the north, travelling uphill along shrubbery Road past the modern housing on the right-hand (west) side of the road, the junction with South Hill Road, and approaching close to the site past the terrace of listed and locally listed buildings on the left-hand (east) side of the road (nos. 9-19 Shrubbery Road). Because the building is set well back from the street frontage residential use will not be intrusive or even immediately obvious in views from the north. On reaching the area close to the frontage improvements to the open area in front of the building will be perceived. Unattractive hard surfacing material will be

replaced soft landscaping and planting in cottage garden style will be introduced including the planting of a specimen fruit tree. Boundary treatment will be repaired and the effect will be to restore the building to its original rural cottage character and appearance. It is not considered appropriate to try to incorporate the same frontage treatment as has been preserved on the listed terraces featuring railings and steps etc. That is suitable and fitting for the townhouses but the Millers cottage is of a very different character style and appearance with weatherboarding, a picket fence and cottage style windows including a front bay.

Views looking north, taken from a point at the top of the road where it divides, to the south of the site, will also not be affected by the change of use. These views look downhill along Shrubbery Road and again, largely due to the fact that the building is set well back, will not be adversely affected by the proposed change of use. The improvements to the frontage will be perceived on walking or driving down the hill towards the site and this will enhance the setting of the listed buildings in the foreground on the left-hand (western) side of the road (nos. 25-29 Shrubbery Road), and the terrace of listed and locally listed buildings on the right-hand (eastern) side of the road (nos. 9-19 Shrubbery Road). Approaching closer to the frontage of the application site the improvements will be clearly seen and will provide a positive uplift to the immediate locality.

Ongoing good stewardship of the building and associated garden land will benefit the setting and therefore the significance of the heritage assets close to the application site.

As there will be limited external alterations views will still be achievable across the site to the open green area behind so the green backdrop afforded by the mature trees will remain unaffected.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion this statement has sought to demonstrate that the proposed change of use will not harm the significance of any listed Heritage Assets in the vicinity of the application site, or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area which will be preserved and enhanced. There will be positive benefit from the reduction in the scale of side extension at the frontage of the building which is something which was highlighted as being a negative feature in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The setting of Heritage Assets close to the site will be enhanced and the activity associated with residential use will be in keeping with the overall character of the area as a quiet attractive residential neighbourhood. The use as a dwellinghouse will reflect the original historic use of the building as a cottage.

Car parking can be accommodated within the site and the residential use will generate less demand for on street parking which again will benefit the character and appearance of the area and will enhance the setting of Heritage Assets in the locality.