



Response to Planning Department **Rev B**

Mill House

Hermitage Lane

Higham

Rochester

ME3 7ND

Planning ref:- 20250602

Thank you for the comments provided by Gravesham Planning Department. I think all stakeholders can agree that the Heritage Asset will benefit from a replacement of the Sun Room. It currently is not sympathetic to the Heritage asset and is in decline. The current owner is willing to invest, add value and build a sustainable, quality structure. The scheme is submitted for the overall benefit of the Heritage Asset. The replacement of the Sun Room is an inevitable “moment” in the life of the building and the current owner is prepared to invest in a good quality replacement that is in keeping with the HA, is more energy efficient, usable and that will last. We trust the responses and changes will satisfy the comments raised. Please see below the key comments we have identified and responses.

1.0 This statement is written in response to on going discussions with Gravesham planning regarding the above.

1.1 The responses to the submitted planning application are summarised as:-

Conservation Officer

1.2 The kitchen window is original and should be retained

1.3 The parapet wall is too high on the proposals and obscures the upper windows at the rear of the house

Planning Officer

1.4 The proposals are too large and contravene Policy C13 where a max of 1/3rd increase only is allowed to the footprint of a house in this type of location

1.5 The proposed scheme included a built in seating area and extended hard landscaping

2.0 Window

2.1 The Kitchen window is approximately 1.65m wide and 1.1m high, it is landscape in its format. It is the only window in that format on the property.

2.2 The earliest drawing available on a planning search relates to application ref GR94/342 dated 1994. That application was accompanied by the attached existing drawing that shows the kitchen window format as it exists today. However the existing drawing also shows that there were two other windows in a landscape format at that time on the property, both of which were unlikely to be original. Both were bow shaped bay windows, one to the front ground floor and one to the side ground floor. The side bow window was removed by virtue of consent to the 2 storey side extension and the front bow window was replaced with a Sash window in Portrait format to match the other 3 original Sash window openings on the front elevation under consent ref:- 20090717.

2.3 What the attached drawing also shows is that the format of windows to both the front and rear elevation was 4 windows (2 on each floor) set symmetrically to each corner of the front and rear elevation with a central door and a central window over on the first floor (to the rear elevation only). This is evident when viewing the attached existing floor plans and on both floors – the floor plans clearly show this pattern of design on both floors and this would be entirely consistent with this age of property. That the existing plan also shows some later adaptations such as the utility Room door, the wider kitchen window and the Dining room bow window doesn't change the high likelihood that this format was the original format and layout of doors and windows on the front and rear elevation. 4 portrait Sash windows over two floors with a central door or window. Much like a child would draw a house, fully traditional in layout.

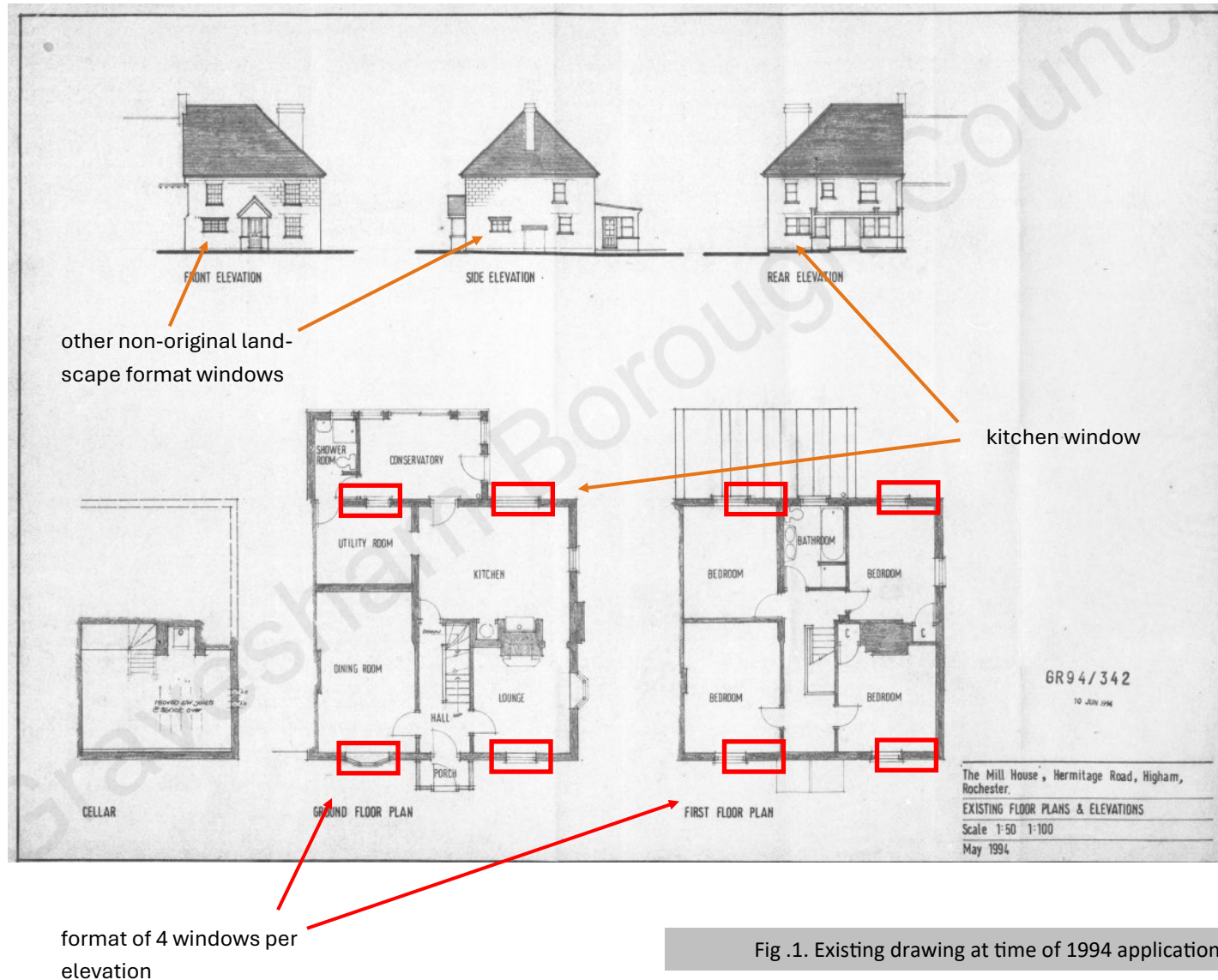


Fig .1. Existing drawing at time of 1994 application

2.4 Additionally the cill height of these original windows would be around 770 – 780- mm above floor level (at ground floor) – this is evident to all ground floor windows (see Fig 3). However the cill height of the Kitchen window(s) is higher than this (see Fig 4). And given the windows in the kitchen are the only windows with a higher cill height there is a question mark as to why they would have higher cills, the answer seems to be that it seems highly likely that these window cills were adjusted to allow a fitted kitchen to be installed in the property. The cill would have been raised above the worktop height of 900mm. Its also likely that at the same time the opening was probably widened to account for the loss of light created by a shorter window, this is probably reinforced by the fact that this window is over the kitchen sink and provides views over the garden and therefore the owners likely wanted the window to be enlarged to retain the sense of lighting in the former portrait window. There is no reason to suggest that this window format was original given all of the above.



Fig .2. Original window openings



Fig .3. Original window cill height

cill height of original windows in house



Fig .4. Original window cill height



Fig .5. Heights of Kitchen window(s) shown in red

kitchen window over height of kitchen work-top—kitchen work top is usually 900mm high

2.4 The window itself is double glazed and has spiral sashes, see attached photo. A cursory glance at the window shows that It is clearly not original. See Fig 2.

2.5 All of the above is to say that the original kitchen window has already been lost at some point in time and before 1994 and to also say that the existing window to the Kitchen cannot be seen to be contributing to the Significance of the Heritage Asset because:-

- 2.5.1 it is not in keeping with the original design direction of the elevations in terms of proportions and geometrical layout in relation to other windows
- 2.5.2 is different from every other window on the property in being landscape and having a higher cill
- 2.5.3 is not an original Sash window in that it is double glazed and uses spiral sashes, not cords. See Fig 6.

Fig .6. Close up photo of
kitchen window



Extension size

- 3.0 We note that Graveshams saved Policy C13 of the 1994 Local Plan First Review sets out that the maximum increase for a dwelling in the countryside is 1 third over the original footprint.
- 3.1 The Original footprint of the house was approx. 79.5m²
- 3.2 The Sun room has added a footprint of 20m² which is an uplift of 25%
- 3.3 The two storey side extension was added in 1994 and has added 15m² to the Footprint which is an addition of 18% so that the combination of the Sun room and the side extension has added 35m² which is an increase of 44%.
- 3.4 The submitted scheme showed a single storey rear extension with a staggered back wall that had a maximum depth from the rear of the house of 4.75m which was 1.95m deeper than the existing sun room. This scheme replaced the sun room with a net Footprint area addition of 17m² which gives a percentage uplift of 65% under the policy.
- 3.5 In considering the proposals the scheme has been reduced in size by reducing the depth of the extension by 500mm and by retaining the setting out of the side wall (by the Kitchen window) against the previous discussion when it was wider, note that the submitted scheme itself was a reduction from the scheme presented and discussed at Pre-app stage. This reduces the footprint giving an percentage uplift of 55%.
- 3.6 However, of note is the wording in policy C13 as follows:-

Policy C13

Extensions to dwellings will be considered on their merits but the Borough Council will expect the following criteria to be satisfied:-

- (i) The existing dwelling must be an "original dwelling"* in permanent use as a dwelling.***
- (ii) There will be an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.***
- (iii) Those extensions which provide essential basic amenities such as a bathroom, toilet or kitchen, which are currently not available or are clearly inadequate, will normally be permitted.***
- (iv) The extension shall not be in a form which would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential curtilage.***
- (v) The dwelling to be enlarged must have sufficient curtilage to accommodate the extension without undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.***
- (vi) The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting.***
- (vii) Proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot***

3.7 Particularly the following:-

(ii) There will be an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.

3.8 The use of the 1/3d guidance is assumed to be a way to measure what is or is not proportionate or “modest”. It is often the case that a numerical measure of what is or is not proportionate can only provide a limited appreciation of impact and appropriateness. Sub clause ii) allows for this by entertaining the notion that an addition larger than 1/3 could be allowable as long as it “has no overall effect on the bulk and appearance of the dwelling”.

3.9 It can be seen that the overall bulk and appearance of the dwelling exists wholly in the two storey elements of the building and its pitched roof over:- the square block of the original building is still discernible from all angles and the two storey side extension is clearly subordinate to that in its appearance. The existing sun room is of low scale;- it is single storey with a depth from the back wall of 2.8m and a width that is half the width of the whole dwelling (including the 2 storey side extension) or 70% of the original dwelling form. The roof slopes and is at its highest 3.15m above ground. A site visit shows that the sun room, even though it may comply numerically, would still comply under the guidance that it “has no overall effect on the bulk and appearance of the dwelling”. That the bulk of the dwelling is in the two storey parts and their pitched roof over is clear when visiting the site.

3.10 The proposed replacement to the sun room, although larger, still complies with his paragraph in that it cannot be seen to have an overall effect on the bulk and appearance of the dwelling to such an extent that it could be regarded as disproportionate except for when allowing only for a numerical consideration which is limited in its full evaluation of a proposal as above. The comparison of the new extension to the sun room shows that although bulk is added to the rear form it does not become disproportionate and in that regard should be considered “on its merits” as at the head of policy C13.

3.11 *(v) The dwelling to be enlarged must have sufficient curtilage to accommodate the extension without undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.*

3.12 The garden space associated with the application site is large at 3050m² (0.75 of an acre) meaning that the current footprint of the dwelling occupies just under 4% of the land area. Adding the garage only changes that figure to 6%. The additional change in foot print from the current layout to the proposed new layout is an uplift of just over half a percent.

3.13 The extension, like the Sun room, “hugs” the back wall of the existing dwelling. It does not protrude higher than the roof, or wider than any elevation. It is longer in depth from the back wall of the house by approx. 1.3m compared to the Sun Room but this is set against a garden depth in this location of over 22m (72 ft) so that in overall terms it cannot be seen to represent a visual intrusion into the Open Countryside.

3.14 (vi) *The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting.*

3.15 As above the appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of the extension are largely the same or similar to the existing sun room. The proposal is larger as discussed, but is smaller than represented at Pre-app and has now been reduced since making the original Planning Application (see attached). The impact of the Sun Room on the Green Belt setting is negligent, if not without impact at all. The new proposals when viewed in context against the mass, bulk and geometry of the existing building and when viewed against the character of the Green Belt at the site and around the site can be seen to have no significant impact on the setting of the Green Belt. The setting of the Green Belt in this location is that of a wide and open landscape with a pattern of dwellings along Hermitage Lane which has a low density. The Mill House itself is an intensification of that density by virtue of being on the end of a terrace of dwellings and yet the low density character remains. Neither Sun room nor its slightly larger replacement will have an effect on the openness or character of the Green Belt due to its low scale and it “hugging” the back of the house and therefore in openness terms not representing any real change to the openness or character of the Green Belt.

3.16 As well as reducing the footprint of the extension the proposal herein also re-designs the roof. Previously the scheme showed a Parapet wall to the roof edge. This is a high quality design detail used to raise the standard of the construction over the proliferation of lean-to roofs on single storey extensions that add little in the way of quality to a building. However it is understood that this is resisted by the Conservation Officer as it obscures the cills of two of the windows on the first floor. A vertical measurement shows that it would obscure these two window cills by 128mm. The parapet has therefore been lowered to 200mm.

3.17 In addition to the above it is clear that the existing Sun Room has come to the end of its life. It is also clear that the constructional quality of the Sun Room was low and so the Applicant, through this process, is seeking to improve the quality of the Heritage Asset through its replacement. It is these acts that preserve Heritage Assets and this preservation relies on the will and investment of owners such as this Applicant.

3.18 The Sun Room, by virtue of its position and overly glazed facades and lack of a proper roof was hardly used and also represented a disproportionate energy drain on the over house. Its replacement and re-use as part of the Living spaces of the house will remove the declining edifice and replace it with construction and useable space that is an enhancement to the heritage Asset.

4.0 Extended Hard Landscaping and Built in seating area

4.1 The Applicant has accepted to not include the extended hard landscaping and built in seating and these have been deleted from the proposal.

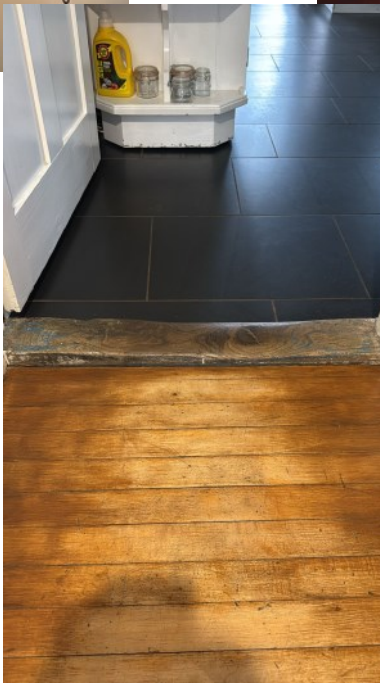
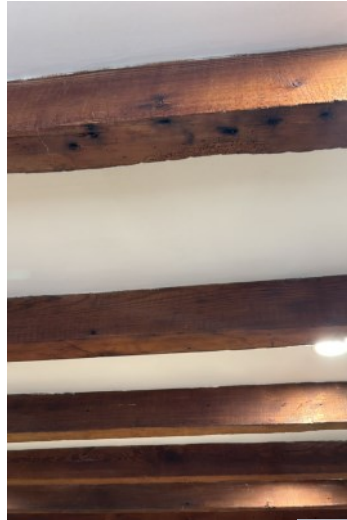
5.0 Conclusion

5.1 In conclusion therefore it is contended that the kitchen window is not original either as a window or as a window opening and that it therefore need not constrain the design of the new proposals as the new proposals do not represent any loss of fabric or disposition that would be represented by the Kitchen window being original.

5.1 Additionally this statement asserts that though the proposals do not meet the numerical guidelines of Policy C13 they do meet the intent of the policy on that they are modest and are not disproportionate.

5.2 Finally the scheme is submitted for the overall benefit of the Heritage Asset. The replacement of the Sun Room is an inevitable “moment” in the life of the building and the current owner is prepared to invest in a good quality replacement that is in keeping with the HA and that will last.

5.3 In addition to the above the Applicant is fully aware that there are many features of the house which are valued and appreciated and has an attitude of preservation and protection for the Heritage Asset. These are items such as in the photos below.

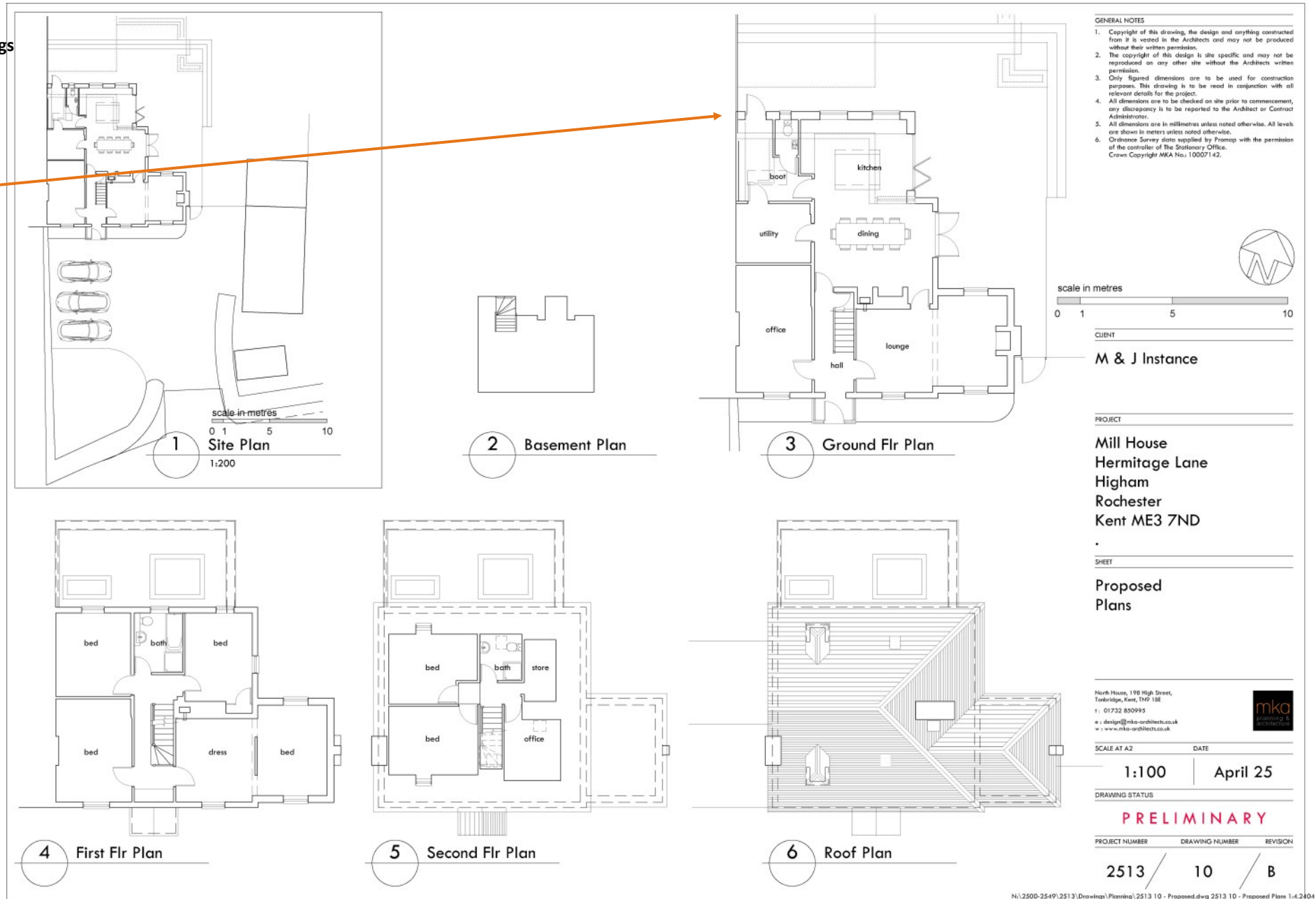


5.4 to add to the above and to emphasize; the current Sun Room is now in a state of disrepair where the roof is leaking and there is water ingress in to the building. Although this is a matter of maintenance and repair it is felt that the matter goes beyond this and that the existing Sun Room is reaching a state of dilapidation and material and fabric failure meaning that it should be replaced. It is not in the interest of the Heritage Asset to retain the existing structure and that is why this application seeks to replace it and to replace it with a more appropriate extension. Appropriate in 4 ways:-

- i) quality of construction
- ii) features of proposals in terms of physical and practical proposals (wall types, window and door proposals)
- iii) practicality of accommodation, meaning creating a room that has a practical use that will suit the family dwelling and be appropriate to Heritage Asset. Good quality space planning always promotes good quality usage and this promotes good quality maintenance. Its obvious that a room that has a low practical use receives low attention. which can, in time, have a detrimental affect on the Heritage Asset. The Sun room is one such room.
- iv) be of modern robust construction to promote matters such as longevity, thermal performance, air tightness and weather performance. All these matters help preserve a Heritage Asset.

6.0 Adjusted drawings

extension re-
duced in depth





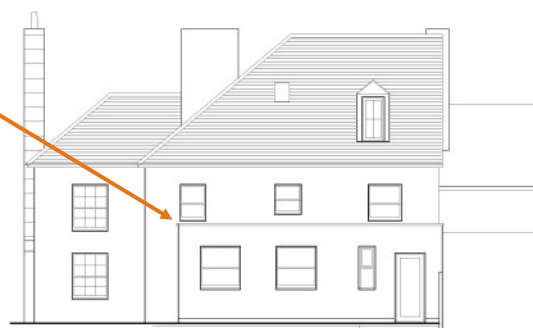
1 Font/ S Elev
no changes



2 Side/ E Elev
no changes

white painted
render to match
existing
outline of existing
extension/ Sun
Room
red brick plinth

parapet height
reduced



3 Font/ S Elev
Rear/ N Elev

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CLIENT

M & J Instance

PROJECT

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SHEET

Proposed
Elevations

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SCALE AT A2 DATE

1:100 April 25

DRAWING STATUS

PRELIMINARY

PROJECT NUMBER DRAWING NUMBER REVISION

2513 / 11 / B



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