



Planning, Heritage and Design Statement

Parsonage Barn, Cobham

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Heritage and Design Statement has been prepared by Alder King Planning Consultants on behalf of Adrian Scripps Ltd in connection with a full planning application seeking planning permission for the conversion of the existing barn known as Parsonage Barn, Cobham to provide 1no. three-bedroom dwelling and 1no. one bedroom dwelling.
- 1.2 This planning application is a resubmission of a previous application for the same use (application reference: 20170919) that expired on 4 May 2021. This application comprises the same information that was previously submitted and approved with the exception of an updated Bat Survey.
- 1.3 This statement described the application proposal, relevant planning history and planning policy, provides an assessment of the impact on heritage assets and assesses the proposal against the development plan.
- 1.4 The planning application comprises the following documents and drawings, in addition to this statement:
- Covering letter
 - Completed application forms and certificate
 - Site Location Plan (created on Planning Portal)
 - Other application drawings
 - Existing Plans, Elevations and Sections (drawing reference: 1041003)
 - Existing Internal Elevations (drawing reference: 13/241/300C)
 - Proposed Roof and Site Plan (drawing reference: 1038972/P101 Rev A)
 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan (drawing reference: 1038972/P102 Rev A)
 - Proposed First Floor Plan (drawing reference: 1038972/P103 Rev A)
 - Proposed Plans and Elevations (drawing reference: 1038972/P110 Rev A)
 - Proposed Section 1-1 Details (drawing reference: 1041003/P300 Rev A)
 - 3D Visualisations
 - Bat Survey Report (prepared by BiOME)
 - Heritage Statement (prepared by Smiths Gore)
 - Phase 1 Environmental Assessment (Desk Study Report) (prepared by Soiltec)

2.0 Application Site, Surroundings and Planning History

Application Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises Parsonage Barn, Cobham. It is situated approximately 300m to the west of Cobham village outside of the settlement boundary but within the Cobham Conservation Area. It is located within the administrative area of Gravesham Borough Council.
- 2.2 The application site consists of a large barn with a single storey lean-to garage to the east elevation. The barn is currently unused and in need of repair. The site extends to 0.3ha.
- 2.3 The barn is not listed but it is considered to contribute to the conservation area. The site is located within the Green Belt and within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 2.4 The site is accessed directly from The Street. The Barn is set within the context of a courtyard which is used by 1-2 Parsonage Cottages and Stable Cottage on the north of the site. To the west of the site is Parsonage Farm which has a separate access.
- 2.5 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore at low risk of flooding.

Planning History

- 2.6 Previous planning applications have been made in connection with the proposed use and this application seeks to gain planning permission for the same use that expired on the 4 May 2021 due to non-implementation (application reference: 20170919). This application comprises the same information that was previously submitted and approved with the exception of an updated Bat Survey. The planning history is set out below:
- Planning application for the conversion of the existing barn to provide 1no. three-bedroom dwelling and 1 no. one bed dwelling (application reference: 20170919). Approved on 4 May 2018. This application expired on 4 May 2021 and was a resubmission of the below application.
 - Planning application for the conversion of existing barn into one, three bedroomed dwelling and one, one bedroomed dwelling incorporating the erection of a single storey extension on the west elevation and alterations to the existing lean-to on the east elevation to provide carport with associated parking and amenity space (application reference: 20140557). Approved on 12 August 2014.
- 2.7 Other related applications for the application site are set out below:
- Conversion of barn to form two residential dwellings with associated parking, access and amenity space (application reference: 20130114). Refused on 25 April 2013.
 - Application for renewal of planning permission reference number 20040421 for conversion of barn into one residential dwelling (application reference: 20090879). Approved on 11 December 2009.

- Conversion of barn into one residential dwelling (application reference: 20040421). Approved on 24 December 2004.

2.8 The adjacent property known as The Stable Cottage was approved in March 2018 to be converted to a three-bedroom dwelling with single storey rear extension and associated parking and amenity space (application reference: 20170738).

3.0 Application Proposals

- 3.1 This planning application proposes the conversion of the existing agricultural barn to two residential dwellings. It will involve the conversion of the barn into a one bed dwelling and a three-bed dwelling.
- 3.2 The proposed development is the same scheme as previously approved in application 20170919 and consists of the following:
- Conversion of barn to two dwellings including 1no. three-bedroom dwelling and 1no. one bedroom dwelling.
 - Small extension to the west of the barn to form the one-bedroom dwelling.
 - Car parking spaces located to the north of the barn and two car ports (created within existing garage area) located to east of the barn, accessed via the existing access from The Street.
 - Amenity space for both dwellings.
- 3.3 These changes ensure that the premises are suitable for residential development.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”

4.2 The application site falls within the administrative area of Gravesham Borough Council. The ‘Development Plan’ for the site consists of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) – saved Policies, Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies Map (2014),

4.3 Other material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance.

4.4 The Local Plan Core Strategy Partial Review and Site Allocations and updated Development Management Policies Plan completed their Regulation 18 consultation stage (between April and July 2018) and is awaiting the next stage of consultation (Regulation 19), anticipated in October 2023. At this stage, limited weight is given to the emerging local plans.

Gravesham Local Plan First Review

4.5 The Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) was adopted in 1987 and was replaced by the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy (2014). In September 2007, the Secretary of State issued a direction on policies to be saved and deleted. The following policies were saved and are relevant considerations for this planning application.

- **Policy TC3** sets out the approach to applications for development within or affecting conservation areas. It states that where development is acceptable in relation to other policies in the plan, it will be carefully judged for its impact and will be expected to make a positive contribution to the conservation area.
- **Policy C11** states that conversion of farm buildings to other uses will be permitted where (inter alia):
 - It can be demonstrated that the building was originally erected as an agricultural building but no longer needed for farming.
 - The building is a substantial one of permanent construction and is in an appropriate location in relation to roads and services.
 - The building is attractive in having some architectural, historic or landscape interest or being of a type representative of the Kent Countryside and the proposed alterations preserve that interest.

- The curtilage is confined to the minimum necessary to operate the use.
- The nature and intensity of the proposed use is not detrimental to amenity or traffic safety.
- **Policy P3** requires development to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with parking standards.

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy

4.6 The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in September 2014. The following policies are relevant considerations for this planning application.

- **Policy CS11** requires new development to mitigate their impact on the highway and public transport networks as required and should provide sufficient parking in new development.
- **Policy CS12** states that the overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced. The greatest weight will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting.
- **Policy CS14** sets out that the Council will expect new housing development to provide a range of dwelling types and sizes taking into account the existing character of the area and evidence of local need to create sustainable and balanced communities.
- **Policy CS19** requires new development to be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should also conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anti-crime standards. It also requires development to safeguard the amenity of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties.
- **Policy CS20** states that the Council will accord a high priority towards the preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment as a non-renewable resource, central to the regeneration of the area and reinforcement of sense of place. The policy states that proposals will be supported which preserve and enhance (where appropriate) the significance of the Borough's heritage assets, their setting where it contributes to the significance of the asset and their interpretation and enjoyment.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.7 The NPPF was published in July 2021 and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The relevant paragraphs within the NPPF are set out below.
- 4.8 At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually

supportive ways, the objectives are economic, social and environmental. Sustainable development is a consistent theme running through both plan-making and decision-taking. The NPPF advises that development proposals should be approved without delay where they accord with an up-to-date development plan (Paragraph 11c).

- 4.9 Paragraph 47 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible.
- 4.10 Paragraph 55 states that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless it can apply certain circumstances including that the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting.
- 4.11 Paragraph 180(d) states that development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported.

Residential Layout Guidelines

- 4.12 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) was amended in June 2020 and is a consideration for conversions. It builds on Core Strategy Policy CS19 and provides guidance on design and amenity. It provides details on the minimum standards for room sizes, circulation space, layout, privacy distances and garden areas.

5.0 Heritage Assessment

5.1 The site lies within the Cobham Conservation Area. The Cobham Conservation Area was designated in January 1970, with further extensions added in October 1999.

5.2 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states:

“In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in the conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”.

Cobham Rural Conservation Area Appraisal

5.3 The Cobham Rural Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted in February 2017 and describes the main features of the conservation area and the elements that help form its special character. The appraisal will be used by the Council in considering relevant applications for planning permission including alteration of buildings.

5.4 A summary of the relevant detail to the application site is set out below:

- Parsonage Farm Barn is referenced within the appraisal, which states the following:

“This building, fully two storeys in the side walls, un-aisled and structurally advanced for its time, dates from the first half of the 19th century. It awaits conversion to domestic use. It is black weatherboarded, slate roofed and with Kentish half-hips to each gable end. There is one central wagon entry without a canopy and there is an integral lean-to at one end.

- The barn is identified as having a positive contribution to the conservation area.

Heritage Assessment

Assessment of Significance

5.5 Parsonage Barn is located within the Cobham Conservation Area. As described under Section 3, the proposed development includes the conversion of the barn to form two dwellings.

5.6 The building itself is identified in the conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the conservation area. The barn will be repaired and converted to residential in a sensitive manner, the design of which has been accepted in a previous planning application (reference: 20170919). Overall, the proposals will not affect the building's significance as a result of the works.

Impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area

- 5.7 Due to the history of the application site, previously gaining planning permission for conversion, the development has already been assessed to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.8 The application makes no amendments to the existing access to the site.
- 5.9 The new application retains the same carefully considered design which ensures that the character and appearance of the conservation area will continue to be preserved. The barn is currently empty and will be converted while retaining the traditional character within the conservation area. Overall, the proposals comply with Core Strategy Policy CS20 and will make a positive contribution in compliance with Saved Policy TC3.

6.0 Planning and Design Assessment

Introduction

- 6.1 This section of the Statement assesses the principle of the conversion of the existing agricultural barn to two residential dwellings, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations. Consideration is also given to residential amenity, design, transport and access and ecology.

Principle of Development

- 6.2 The application proposes the conversion of an existing agricultural barn to two residential dwelling, the proposed external changes to the building are a like for like appearance to retain the barns traditional character. Saved Policy C11 supports the conversion of farm buildings, along with NPPF Paragraph 55 where development would re-use disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting.
- 6.3 The proposed development is the same scheme that was previously approved (application reference: 20170919) in 2018. The planning context has not materially changed since the previous consent was secured and therefore the principle of development has already been considered acceptable.

Residential Amenity

- 6.4 1-2 Parsonage Cottages and Stable Cottage are located north of the site. 1-2 Parsonage Cottages are located with a sufficient distance between the proposed development and these dwellings. Stable Cottage is located closer to the proposed development. The proposed development does not have any windows or doors that directly overlook Stable Cottage and therefore the proposed development will not cause any loss of amenity. Habitable rooms are located to the south of the proposed development to minimise any overlooking.
- 6.5 Overall, the proposed development safeguards the amenity of the occupants and neighbouring properties in compliance with Core Strategy Policy CS19 and the guidance contained within the Residential Layout Guidelines SPG.

Design

- 6.6 As shown on the accompanying drawings, the design of the proposed development remains the same as the previously submitted planning application. The proposed changes will result in an attractive building which will maintain the identity of the former farmyard within the Cobham Conservation Area. The proposed development will result in one three-bed and a one-bed dwelling providing two units. The one-bedroom dwelling is proposed on the western elevation and a lean-to extension to the barn is proposed to provide the additional space for this dwelling.
- 6.7 The proposed layout for each dwelling is set out below:

- One bedroomed dwelling – located to the west. This comprises an entrance lobby with large open plan sitting room, kitchen and dining area. There is a ground floor w/c and storage area. The first floor has one double bedroom with an en-suite bathroom.
- Three bedroomed dwelling – located to the east. This comprises one family bathroom, two en-suites, cloakroom, large open plan sitting room, kitchen and dining area. Separate w/c, utility room and storage area.

6.8 The external appearance of the development will be timber cladding to match existing, along with repair of existing brick plinths, new hardwood timber doors and new double glazing, mostly in place of existing openings, but also at high-level to provide adequate lighting to the upper floor. The existing slate roof will be repaired. Overall, the proposed development is visually attractive, mirroring the existing appearance of the barn and fit for purpose given its location outside the settlement boundary and within the conservation area. It is therefore in compliance with Core Strategy Policy CS19.

Transport and Access

- 6.9 The dwellings resulting from the proposed conversion will be accessed via the existing road from The Street. This road is already used as a vehicular access for the existing residential properties and the barn as well as the agricultural buildings to the south west. The proposed dwellings will retain the existing vehicle access and parking within the courtyard area north of the barn. Two car ports are proposed to the east of the barn, within an existing garage area. The proposed development does not involve any alteration to the surrounding/adjoining road network.
- 6.10 Overall, it is considered that there will be no impacts from the development with regards to transport and highways, in compliance with Core Strategy Policy CS11.

Ecology

- 6.11 An updated Preliminary Roost Assessment survey was undertaken for the barn on 1 February 2023 by BiOME Consulting. The survey results are consistent with previous surveys undertaken for previous planning applications in August 2012 and July 2017. The survey found no evidence of bats within the barn and it was assessed to be of low suitability for roosting bats. Therefore, no mitigation is required and the proposals comply with NPPF Paragraph 180.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The application is a full planning application seeking planning permission for the conversion of the existing barn known as Parsonage Barn, Cobham to provide 1no. three-bedroom dwelling and 1no. one bedroom dwelling.
- 7.2 The planning application is a repeat of a previous application for the same use (application reference: 20170919) that expired on 4 May 2021. The application comprises the same information that was previously submitted and approved with the exception of an updated Bat Survey.
- 7.3 The updated Bat Survey confirms that there was no evidence of bats within the barn and was assessed to be of low suitability for roosting bats.
- 7.4 The proposal is in full accordance with the pertinent policies of the Development Plan as well as guidance within the NPPF. As such, the proposals should be approved without delay in accordance with Paragraph 47 of the NPPF.