

HERITAGE STATEMENT FOR THE CONSERVATION
AND CHANGE OF USE

Parsonage Barn,
Parsonage Farm

The Street, Cobham, Kent

for

Mr Adrian Scripps

Project No 1041003

April 2014



Prepared by:

Signed
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For and on behalf of Smiths Gore

Dated

Checked by:

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Dated

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parsonage Farm is situated to the west of the village of Cobham outside of the village boundary but within the boundary of the Cobham Conservation Area. The barn, constructed between 1846 and 1864, is not listed but is considered to contribute to the designated Conservation Area and therefore is seen as a heritage asset. It is a large barn with a single storey lean-to garage to the east elevation, all currently unused and in need of repair.

The proposed scheme seeks to convert the barn into two dwellings, a three bedroomed dwelling and an adjoining one bedroom dwelling, with the addition of a further lean-to to the west elevation providing the additional space required to support the second dwelling. Consent has already been given to an earlier scheme, but it is felt that the proposed revisions provide significant improvements to the existing in terms of design and also the sustainability of the development.

The design approach has focused on the retention of scale internally, the materials and existing structure, allowing its adaption whilst retaining the intrinsic feel of this agricultural building. Great care has been given to retain the feeling of space within the barn and although the existing roof structure is neither exceptional nor unusual, the volume and 'barn-like' quality has been retained. The large opening to the north and south sides have not been interrupted with a first floor cutting across and the accommodation has been formed with individual structures or 'pods', leaving most of the external walls free from new construction.

The scheme presents a well-considered and sustainable proposition to enable the client to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area, whilst bringing an otherwise redundant building back into use.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Parsonage Farm is situated to the west of the village of Cobham outside the village boundary but within the boundary of the Cobham Conservation Area.



Fig.1 – Google Earth Image of Cobham, Kent



Fig.2 – Google Earth Image of Parsonage Barn site, Cobham, Kent



Fig.3 – Google Street View Image of Parsonage Barn from the main entrance

The farmyard originally included additional buildings that were removed after the Scripps family purchased the farm in 1992. These comprised of five derelict pre-cast concrete buildings, two behind Parsonage Barn, two in a prominent position along The Street, and one immediately adjoining The Street. In addition, four tin sheds were demolished, one adjoining the Barn, two adjoining the old stables, and one adjoining the boundary with Owletts Cherry Orchard.

The removal of these redundant and derelict buildings formed part of the revitalisation of the farming enterprise at Parsonage Farm. Previously the land was farmed primarily with a rotation of onions and brussel sprouts. There were complaints from local residents about the smells from the cultivation of crops; there were problems with water run-off from the fields during heavy rain storms, some difficulties with maintaining public footpaths due to the rotational farming activity, and problems with the access from the farm because the entrance is located at a narrow point in the street.

When the Scripps family purchased the farm these problems became apparent. A new chapter in the agricultural activity then commenced with fruit growing replacing growing of vegetables and with extensive planting of apple and pear trees. Grass was sown in the orchards beneath the fruit trees and windbreaks were planted to deal with problems of run-off providing a landscape for the enjoyment of all.

Great efforts were made to improve and retain footpaths which could be used in all weathers. Small gates were put in instead of stiles to make it easier for persons with dogs or limited mobility to get easy access across the land. A strip of land was given to

the Council to facilitate a scheme for widening the street and constructing a footpath. All the legal costs were paid by the Scripps family. New hedges were planted along The Street and around the farmstead to create the attractive group of buildings which can be seen today.

The remaining buildings at the farmyard comprise of Parsonage Farm cottages, Parsonage Barn and the Stables. The Old Parsonage (the farmhouse) was demolished in the 1960s by previous owners and the original coach house was converted to provide accommodation for a farm manager. The farm cottages were renovated and have been successfully let to local people providing an important additional source of income for the agricultural business.

The stable is used by the farm workers as a kitchen and mess room and provides storage, washroom and WC facilities.

THE BARN

The large timber 5 bay barn has its front elevation orientated towards the north east, with the layout of the site following the same axis. The barn has a timber frame which sits on a brick plinth, with 4 large braced frames internally, along with corner posts, base, mid and wall plate beams connecting the perimeter of the structure, with intermediate studs, diagonally braced, with timber cladding fixed to the external face of the barn, some of which is rotten, with sections missing.

The roof comprises of timber rafters spanning from wall plate to ridge board, with an intermediate purlin approximately half way up. Above the rafters there is close boarding, with battens and a natural



Fig.4 Internal Image of barn structure

Penrhyn purple slate covering. There is no way of knowing at this stage whether or not the roof has either counter battens or felt/breather membrane as a high level inspection

has not been possible to date. The roof is finished with concrete hip and ridge tiles and has an inadequately sized set of rainwater gutters and downpipes.

There are two large sets of doors to both the North East and South West Elevations in a poor condition, having been patched up with ply and various other section of timber, these are the full height to the eaves.

The ground inside the barn is predominantly compacted made up ground, which is not level and with large sections of the finish missing. The Brick plinth around the perimeter has a stepped construction internally, some of which is rendered, and some painted, with spalled sections in localised areas.

Externally, the same plinth has areas where the pointing is missing or in a poor condition, The timber cladding also has localised sections that are damaged or missing.



Fig.5 – Parsonage Barn doors

The timber barn stands alone at the southern end of the farmyard adjacent to the track which leads from The Street through the heart of the village, eventually linking through to Batts Road to the south.

The Barn is empty and unused and has been so since 1989. There are new purpose-built modern agricultural barns situated to the east of the historic farmyard area and these are used to serve the needs of the agricultural fruit business.

PLANNING HISTORY

The applicants originally approached the Council with a view to re-using the Barn in the late 1990s. The Council accepted that the Barn, although not of "listable quality" contributed to the character and appearance of the Cobham Conservation Area and the North Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and was worthy of retention (letter dated 30th June 1999 from Mrs J Brooker to Mr A Scripps).

There were discussions and negotiations with the Council because the applicant and his architects considered that it was perfectly possible to convert the Barn to provide two dwellings but the then Conservation Officer considered that this would not be possible and that the Barn should be converted to form one dwelling house. A planning application was submitted in 2004 (**Ref: GR/04/421/PWP/JF**) initially for conversion into two units but the application was then amended on the advice of the applicants' previous architect/agent to a proposal to form one dwelling in order to get Planning Permission for the principle of conversion into residential use.

Planning Permission was eventually granted on 24th December 2004 subject to Conditions. This permission was then renewed in December 2009 and is still extant, expiring on 11th December 2014 because the consent was granted for a five year period. The approved scheme therefore represents the applicants' fall-back position. However, the applicants consider that it is not a viable scheme and so is unlikely to be implemented in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless it does establish what the Local Planning Authority consider to be acceptable in terms of principle, external appearance, and site layout.

List of Previous Applications and their status:

- [Conversion of barn into one residential dwelling.](#)
- Parsonage Farm Barn The Street Cobham Gravesend Kent DA12 3DG
- Ref. No: **20040421**
- Received: Fri 30 Apr 2004
- Validated: Fri 30 Apr 2004
- Status: **Application Permitted**

- [Application for the approval condition 21 of planning permission reference number 20040421](#)
- Parsonage Farm Barn The Street Cobham Gravesend Kent DA12 3DG
- Ref. No: **20080348**
- Received: Mon 14 Apr 2008
- Validated: Wed 28 May 2008
- Status: **Approval of details**

- [Application for renewal of planning permission reference number 20040421 for conversion of barn into one residential unit.](#)
- Parsonage Farm Barn The Street Cobham Gravesend Kent DA12 3DG
- Ref. No: **20090879**
- Received: Mon 02 Nov 2009
- Validated: Mon 02 Nov 2009
- Status: **Application Permitted**

- [Conversion of barn to form two residential dwellings with associated parking, access and amenity space.](#)
- Parsonage Farm The Street Cobham Gravesend DA12 3DG
- Ref. No: **20130114**
- Received: Thu 07 Feb 2013
- Validated: Mon 08 Apr 2013
- Status: **Application Refused**

THE PROPOSALS

Generally

The scheme sets out the proposal to sympathetically convert and repair the barn into two dwellings, one three bedroomed and one single bedroomed dwelling over two storeys, whilst retaining the its character and setting within the Cobham Conservation Area. A small extension is proposed to the west, this extension along with west bay of the barn will form the one bedroomed dwelling. The remainder of the barn and the existing lean-to will house the three bedroomed dwelling.

At each stage of the design development this has been discussed and agreed in principle with the planning officer, Richard Hart and the Conservation Officer Allan Cox, under the **Pre-Application advice No.: PRE 2014 0066.**

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Generally

The barn will be repaired in a like for like manner to retain its character and appearance, enhancing the finish where possible, such as replacing the existing inappropriate concrete ridge tiles with roll-top lead ridge and hips.

Unit 1 is a one bedroomed dwelling to the west. This unit comprises of an entrance lobby with a large open plan sitting room, kitchen and dining room area. A ground floor w/c and store sits next to the stairwell that leads to the first floor. The first floor has a one double bedroom with and an en-suite bathroom.

Unit 2 is a three bedroomed dwelling, with one family bathroom, two en-suites, cloakroom, utility room, separate w/c and store along with a large open plan sitting room, kitchen and dining room.

External Elevations

The external envelope to the north and east form the principle elevations when approaching from the public highway, with these remaining predominantly as the approved scheme, with the exception of the west extension to mirror the existing lean-to to the east. The new lean-to will be clad in the same material as the barn and is only a single storey addition, which will not detract from the character or the scale of the principle elevation.

The control over the level of openings, particularly to the principal north elevation, follows the approved scheme. The large existing doors will be retained and fixed in the open position but will be able to shut, if required. The doors will also screen the addition of four further downpipes to the north and south elevations as the existing rain water disposal system is insufficient. New drainage will be incorporated to ensure all rain water is taken away from the buildings fabric successfully.

The building is in an elevated position on the approach into the heart of Cobham and so the frontage has no ancillary structures. There is a bin store nestled near the hedge to the east end of the north elevation for Unit 2. The bin store for Unit 1 will sit to the west, see drawing: P100 - ROOF & SITE PLAN.

The East elevation will be greatly enhanced by the proposed scheme, removing the modern garage doors. The cladding will be repaired along with repairs to the structure beneath. There is no window shown in this elevation within the approved scheme, but internally at high level the studs are trimmed out to show an opening. We have reinstated this fixed light window to afford further light into the space for consideration.

The revised proposals for the south elevation have only deviated slightly from the approved scheme, with the ground floor windows moving to the adjacent bays. The first floor windows have been adopted to provide a less domestic fenestration. Consideration given to the position of the openings bearing in mind the constraints of the existing studs and any room or fire separation required.

The existing lean-to has an existing set of doors to the south elevation, which will be repaired and remain in an open position. The large opening will house a new timber framed glazed opening, to match the north, allowing light and access into the building. The proposed lean-to has two central double glazed doors.

The existing roof covering will be carefully repaired with matching Penrhyn purple slates, with new lead rolled hips and ridges as mentioned previously.

The revised proposals for the west elevation include the new lean-to, with two doors, and a further two fixed lights. There was previously an opening approved to the west wall of the barn within the mid-section; however, with the introduction of the new roof this can no longer be accommodated. There is (similar to the opposite side) a trimmed opening to the upper section, so this will also have a fixed light window inserted in the wall beneath the hip. The internal structure of the barn can be seen on the detailed survey drawings of the internal frame, Drawing No.: 13/241/300C.

Internally the revised scheme uses glazed panels to the upper sections of the partition walls, either side of the central bay, which will enable views to be achieved of the roof structure from this central position. The rooms are created by using a series of pods which are offset from one another, allowing the internal scale to be unhindered within Unit 2.

The construction of these pods in most instances are independent completely independent of the existing barn, however, they will only connect where necessary. All of the work is reversible and does not cut into or alter the existing structural timber frame in any way.

Unit 1 follows a more simple approach, with new floors connecting between the new party wall and the existing structure using a wall plate, surfaced fixed to the inside face of the wall studs, with the upper wall plate of the new west lean-to roof also being surfaced fixed to the racking board, which is fixed externally to the studs.

The party wall is solid masonry and is designed with a proprietary fire stop materials at the junctions between the existing frame and the party wall.

New insulated floors surveyed will be included throughout. The existing walls will retain the historic timber, as recorded on Maltby's survey of the internal timber frame, with a proprietary insulation used between the studs with an insulated plasterboard used to the internal face, providing thermal improvement, to meet modern living standards.

External Treatments

The landscaping will be minimal and not detract from the existing layout in any way. A native hedgerow and also a post and rail fence will provide the boundary to the South and east of the rear elevation and also the boundary between Unit 1 and Unit 2.

The rear gardens will generally be laid to lawn, predominantly following the existing topography, although there will be approximately a 300mm reduction in level to the south side for the first 2 meters to ensure the correct weatherproofing is possible at threshold level, with terrace areas as defined on the attached plan with hedge between the rear of the properties and the field behind the barn.

At present, the frontage is used for parking and vehicles gain access across it. This will not change the levels of the area will remain similar. Historically the farmyard would have been used by agricultural and other vehicles and would have been a busy place full of movement and activity.

The weatherboarding will be renewed to match existing. Joinery to windows and doors will be custom made in timber and the rainwater goods will be cast alloy with eaves and gutter detail to match existing. The brick plinth will be repaired and repointed and the slates to repair the roof will match the existing.

PLANNING POLICY

LOCAL & NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Dec 2012 – (GLPCS)

National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 – (NPPF)

The following policies are relevant to the proposed scheme:

GLPCS Policy CS11: Transport

NPPF Section 4: Promoting Sustainable Transport

This development already has good access from and egress onto The Street from the existing site and we see no issues with the current proposals and their impact on the existing infrastructure.

Cobham is on the 416 bus route, with the property some 200m from the bus stop outside of Cobham Church, with the train station some 7 miles away at Meopham, see *attached map*, and the A2 1.7miles from the barn which can take you west into London or east onto the M2 and Canterbury and Dover.

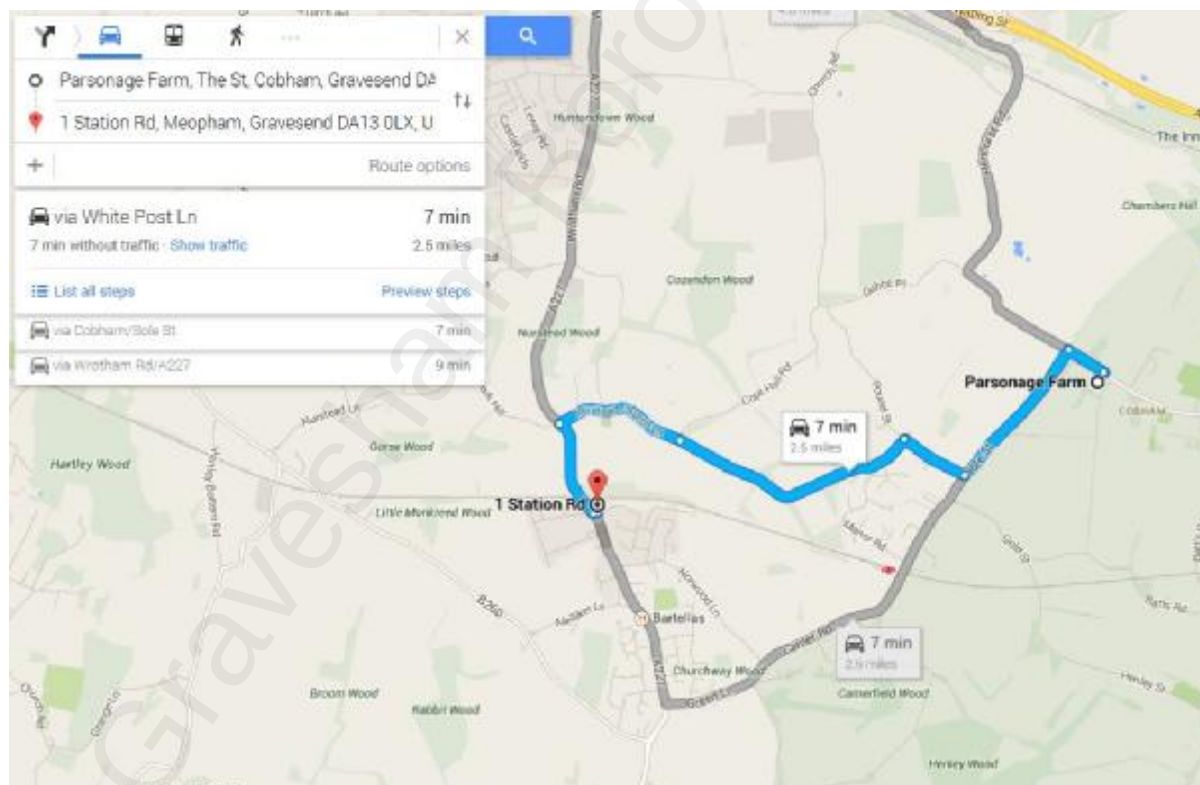


Fig.6 – Parsonage Barn Travel distance to Railway Station

Parsonage barn is essentially in a rural location with good links into the surrounding urban areas.

GLPCS Policy CS14: Housing Type and Size

NPPF Section 6: Delivering a Wide Choice of Quality Homes

This development encourages the sustainability of the village by offering both a three and a one bedroomed dwelling, with the development providing a range rather than one large, high end unit.

GLPCS Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles

NPPF Section 7: Requiring Good Design

The main considerations are the retention of the scale and design of the existing structure, both internally as well as externally, to allow Parsonage Barn to be read as a barn and not just a large dwelling unit.

The vista of the barn from The Street will chiefly remain unaltered as the large barn opening to the centre of the structure has the glazing recessed to prevent the glare and shine from the glass being seen, with a reopened window at high level to the east elevation above the garage roof. The existing hedge to the front (north) elevation has and will continue to shield the lower section of the property, including any cars that may park there and the proposed bin store.

The new lean-to to the west sits comfortably and does not over-power and contributes to the balance of the north and south elevation.

Sustainable construction methods will be used, not least with the re-use of an otherwise redundant building, but also with the products and materials that will be introduced, but also adaptable in terms of its long term use, with both units having ground floor W/C's and bathroom, with Unit 1's W/C being able to accommodate a shower at a later date.

Unlike new housing, which would have a visual impact on a village such as Cobham, this development seeks to maintain the existing structure, provide further housing need without the introduction of new buildings. The immediate neighbours are to the north within the yard but are some distance from the barn and again, with the only aspect towards the neighbours being at ground level, as there are no first floor windows to this elevation, the principle aspect is to the south, with private external amenity to the south.

Car parking, including the re-use of the existing garages and hard standing to the front will remain unaltered with the addition of some side/rear parking to the south of unit 2. Bin stores have been provided to both properties.

The construction build up has been considered to not only to preserve and enhance the internal structure of the barn but also to thermally upgrade the building, to ensure running cost are kept to a minimum, with the use of Slimlite double glazing to all the windows. The building's large roof has a south face which would make it an ideal area for the use of solar PV or hot water panels, which will be considered at building regulations stage when preparing the building energy performance specification.

GLPCS Policy CS20: Heritage and the Historic Environment

NPPF Section 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

This is a non designated heritage asset, therefore its retention, as set out in the proposed scheme, protects its future by providing it with a sustainable new use. The scheme retains its position and scale with no additional openings particularly to its principle elevation to the north.

The barns retention is a vital part of maintaining the identity of the former farm yard, which is an intrinsic part of the village of Cobham, contributing to the character and distinctiveness of the site and the village, retaining its architectural presence.

The barn has not been used for many years and there is no sustainable use for it, but the proposal set out an appropriate use of a former industrial site for domestic use, providing not only a 3 bedroom dwelling but also a generous 1 bedroom unit, contributing to the housing need locally, adjacent to other domestic buildings.

The existing fabric will be retained and repaired sensitively using like for like materials, with the integration of thermal improvements.

CONCLUSION

This scheme demonstrates that it is possible to repair and convert the barn to form two dwelling units without causing harm to its character or setting of the building from inappropriate landscaping, domestic paraphernalia or excessive vehicular parking. There is existing vehicular access which is good, with ample turning space and the main access and egress from the property will remain with good visibility.

Internally the spaces have been very carefully thought through, with the rooms having been designed without loss of views of the roof structure across the length of the 4 bays to Unit 2. There is a division between the 4th and 5th bays, but the principle has been agreed with the Planning and Conservation Officer. This new application seeks to re-evaluate and improve the approved scheme and we feel that the revised internal layout is much more acceptable both in terms of its conservation, its occupation and its use.

The structural timber framing is an important part of this building and this scheme seeks to enhance the buildings core features to good effect. The new extension mirrors the construction of the opposite end and will be replacing a lean-to previously removed.

The applicant has investigated the rental potential for the properties and the rental of one large dwelling is very difficult. The split into two units makes the scheme financially viable. Without this scheme the barn has no other viable use either on the farm or as a single dwelling.

There is no wish to sell off any of the farm buildings as stated within previous applications. If converted, the building will be well looked after for the future in the same way as the cottages at the front of the site. These have been occupied by the same tenants for many years and this has been an entirely beneficial arrangement to the farm business and the occupiers of the properties.

In terms of the local Conservation Area and Local Planning and Development Policies it is clear that the building is important as it gives great presence within the conservation area and wider landscape and contributes to the various policies which are applicable to this scheme.

The internal design now submitted has been discussed and in principle accepted by the Council's Conservation Officer, Allan Cox and Richard Hart (Senior Planner at Gravesham

BC) via an e-mail exchange during the re-design process and having met them on site, so we would hope that any real difficulties have been ironed out prior to submission.

This revised scheme presents a more viable scheme, well considered, environmentally improved and sustainable for the client and the building. Accordingly, the Council are requested to approve the application as submitted with any unresolved issues dealt with by means of condition.

NSD • Smith Gore

May 2014

**THE VALIDATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS
THE LOCAL LIST**

Proposed Change of Use and Conversion of:

Parsonage Barn, Cobham, Kent

June 2014

Biodiversity survey and report

2012 Report submitted, 2014 report underway to follow.

Flood risk assessment

Parsonage Barn is not in a flood risk area and therefore this assessment is not applicable to this application.

Foul sewerage and utilities assessment

The property in this application is currently not connected to the existing drainage system. It is the intention of the applicant to connect to a main sewer.

Tree survey/arboricultural implications

See Design and Access statement – There are no proposals to remove any trees and therefore this assessment is non applicable to this application.

APPENDIX 1

Photographs



1. Image above shows the underside of the ridge, with some staining to the timbers. The extent of any decay or damage cannot be assessed until work commences. All repairs will be carried out on a like for like basis using the same materials as existing.



2. Image above shows a recent photograph of internal structural frame and truss, next to the door. Most of the structural frame timbers are in good condition.



3. Image above shows the underside of the roof structure.



4. Image above shows the underside of the roof structure



5. Image above shows the brick plinth internally, with door frame post, base rail to timber framing and principal post.



6. Image above shows the brick plinth internally to the garage, with feathered edge cladding above.

PARSONAGE BARN, PARSONAGE FARM - COBHAM, KENT



7. Image above is taken from the south, looking due north, this is the proposed rear elevation where the garden will be situated



8. Image above is taken from the south west looking towards the south, with the proposed location of the extension the left of the image.



9. Image above is essentially the front elevation of the building.



10. Image above is taken from the south west, this is where the proposed extension will sit.



11. South West elevation, showing existing slab which will be removed. This area will house the new extension.



12. View from the West with half of the barn doors open.