



DESIGN and ACCESS STATEMENT

And

HERITAGE STATEMENT

1 Church Cottage
Wrotham Road
Meopham
Kent
DA13 0AB

INTRODUCTION

This statement sets out the proposed window replacement and new entrance canopy at 1 Church Cottages, Wrotham Road, Meopham to create improved living conditions for the property owners.

The property is a grade II listed semi-detached dwelling located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Accordingly, this proposal seeks a proportionate front elevation canopy in accordance with local and national policy requirements.

The extent and nature of the proposed works has due regard to the buildings historic significance in order to comply with national policy. It is considered that the proposal would deliver public benefits that would outweigh the 'less than substantial harm' to the listed building and The Street Meopham Conservation Area.

The property has off-street parking available.

The subject property is arranged over the Ground and first floor levels only and is subject to all standard statutory amenities.

This property is listed and also located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, The Street Meopham Conservation Area and the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area.

LOCATION

The site is located on Wrotham Road (A227), situated between the settlements of Hook Green and Meopham. It is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, The Street Meopham Conservation Area and the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area

Site Location



Front elevation view

The site consists of 1 Church Cottages, an established semi-detached dwelling

The property is Grade II Listed (Listing Number: 1054716) and was first designated in July 1983. Historic England lists the house as:

C17 timber-framed. Ground floor brick faced. First floor rendered. Tiled roof with rear pentice, but recently raised to 2 storeys with flat roof at north end. Original window openings at south end with wood first floor and cast iron ground floor casements. Modern casements to north end."

The surrounding area is semi-rural in nature, characterised by small clusters and pockets of development. The site bound by residential to the north (2 Church Cottages) and Saint John the Baptist Church is located on the opposite side of the road. A small row of detached dwellings sited behind the church accessed via a private loop road along with a modern brick-built church hall.

Hook Green and Meopham are easily accessible and provide a range services and amenities, including but not limited to; food stores, pubs/ restaurants and schools. Both settlements also offer a range of leisure opportunities and community uses.

The nearest bus stop is within 180m of the site (The George) and offers approximately 4 services an hour during the day. These provide regular services (bus no. 416, 308, 1, VIGO1, 305, 308, 416, 695 and 306) into Meopham, Vigo, Sevenoaks, Borough Green and Istead Rise

PLANNING HISTORY

Planning history indicates that several former applications have been made for development works to this property:

- [Development of land for residential use](#)
Ref. No: 19570102 | Status: Application Refused
- [Pollard one Sycamore tree.](#)
Ref. No: 20111097 | Status: Consent
- [Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the continued use of land as domestic garden ancillary to the main dwelling.](#)
Ref. No: 20180186 | Status: Certificate Refused
- [Erection of single storey side extension to form lounge.](#)
Ref. No: 19990582 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Listed Building consent for erection of single storey side extension to form lounge.](#)
Ref. No: 19990572 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Listed Building consent for erection of single storey side extension to form lounge.](#)
Ref. No: 19990113 | Status: Application Refused
- [Erection of single storey side extension to form lounge.](#)
Ref. No: 19990112 | Status: Application Refused
- [Removal of existing garage and erection of two storey side extension to form study with bedroom over and erection of detached double garage at side.](#)
Ref. No: 20000485 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Application for Listed Building Consent for removal of existing garage and erection of two storey side extension to form study with bedroom over and erection of detached double garage at side.](#)
Ref. No: 20000484 | Status: Application Permitted
- [Application for Listed Building Consent for works to existing gable wall chimney and fireplace and associated part rebuilding and repping](#)
Ref. No: 19860510 | Status: Application Permitted

ACCESS

A vehicle access exists from Wrotham Road leading onto an area of hardstanding to the south of the dwelling. This will be retained and unaltered.

The proposal does not seek any changes to the parking arrangements.

THE PROPOSAL; DESIGN & HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

The design proposal is for:

- Approval for replacement of existing windows with new Crittal style windows, whilst retaining the oak sub-frames (similar to those recently approved for the neighbouring property (2 Church Cottages))
- Creation of new entrance canopy to main front elevation entrance

Pre-application advice has not been sought in connection with this application.

From a street scene perspective, the proposals entail the removal of the existing windows, whilst retaining the oak surrounds and installation of new inset windows to match, in part those approved for the neighbouring property. The introduction of an timber/oak and tiled roof rain canopy to the main entrance. All proposed works would be undertaken in a sympathetic manner designed to retain as much historic fabric as possible. It is considered that the works will deliver significant public benefits that outweigh what is judged to be less than substantial harm to the building.

Attached to the north of the site is 2 Church Cottages. These two separate dwellings (likely originally one unit) are now in separate ownership and have been extended independently. While no.2 features a modern two storey rear extension, no.1 has been redeveloped (c.2000) and features a two-storey side extension and a catslide roof to the rear.

The purpose of this Heritage Statement is to assist with the determination of the applications by informing the decision takers on the effects of the proposed development on the historic built environment.

Value judgements on the significance of the heritage assets affected are presented and the effects of the proposals upon that significance are appraised.

Specifically, this report assesses the significance of the listed building and the effect of the proposed development on that significance. Secondary considerations are the significance of the adjacent grade I listed church and conservation area and the effect of the proposals thereon. Particular regard is given to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.



Site location plan showing the grade II listed Church Cottages, the grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist and The Street, Meopham Conservation Area

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The two dwellings of Church Cottages (nos.1 and 2) are likely to have originally started out life as a single unit which was later, likely pre 19th century, converted into two separate units. The list description describes the building as 17th century and no evidence has been sourced that disputes or verifies its age.

There is some speculation that the cottages may have originally been in use as a Church House, the (typically medieval) equivalent of a church hall for parishioners usage. There is little evidence for this bar the close proximity of the church to the cottages. Common place features often found on Church Houses, including first floor entrances and external stairs, are not present at the cottages.

The 1841 Tithe Map and associated Apportionment show that the schedule describes the buildings as plot 1021, owned by Dean & Chapter of Canterbury and occupier by Reverend William Mansfield. Reverend Mansfield is shown on the Apportionment to occupy a large number of properties in the area and as such it is likely that these buildings, including Church Cottages, were used to house the area's poor.

The building's frontage faces east, directly overlooking Wrotham Road and features a bare brick ground floor and rendered first floor with continuous tile roof across the range. The original building features two prominent end stacks and a central stack to the front elevation. No.1 differs slightly to this form with a portion of flintwork to the ground floor and the modern (c.2000) extension to the south end which is constructed from brick to both the ground and first floor.

When constructed it is possible that the building was entirely timber framed with the first floor fully jettied to the road and this has, as is common, been underbuilt to provide additional living space but resulting in the loss of the original ground floor framing.

It is recognised that not all parts of a heritage asset will necessarily be of equal significance. In some cases, certain aspects or elements could accommodate change without affecting the Government's objective, which includes the conservation of heritage assets and which seeks to ensure that decisions are based on the nature, extent and level of significance of heritage assets.

Change is only considered to be harmful if it erodes an assets significance. Understanding the significance of any heritage asset affected and any contribution made by their setting (paragraph 189 of the NPPF) is therefore fundamental to understanding the scope for and acceptability of change.

An assessment of the significance of the grade II listed Church Cottages alongside an assessment of the grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist and The Street, Meopham Conservation Area are considered below. In accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF, the descriptions are proportionate to the assets' significance and are sufficient to understand the nature of any impact the proposals may have upon that significance.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

The application site, 1 Church Cottages, and its adjacent structure, 2 Church Cottages, are a grade II listed building. The structure is of architectural, historic and archaeological interest. Architectural Interest

The building is typical of the local period vernacular displaying traditional construction, plan form and detailing. Its frame and infill are not unusual or pioneering but follow the established regional patterns for timber framed structures.

Both units have undergone alteration and extension that have brought about site specific variation. With regards to no.2, a number of these alterations have had a significant detrimental effect on the significance of the building.

Windows are largely attributable to the mid-20th century and reflect the adaptations and modernisations that are typical with continued and on-going use. Photographs demonstrate that the dwelling's historic windows comprises of both timber and cast iron casements (likely 18th century) and probably reflected what was present at 1 Church Cottages at the time of listing (the list description notes: "original window openings at south end with wood first floor and cast iron ground floor casements.").

The two cottages are of illustrative historic interest derived from their character and form and as an example of a regional period building type. The buildings also hold a degree of associative historic interest related to the village of Meopham within which the dwellings forms an important part of the historic streetscape illustrating domestic arrangements of the 17th century onwards. Further historic interest could be derived from the former use of the building as a Church House should evidence be discovered which confirms this.

As a multiphase building containing standing material and internal features from a variety of periods, Church Cottages possesses a degree of archaeological potential to yield further evidence about the past and the creators of this place which may not be reflected in other documentary sources.

Church of St John the Baptist (grade I)

The Church of St John the Baptist is a grade I listed building which was first designated in November 1966. The building's List Description states:

"1320-25 in the primacy of Simon de Mepham. Somewhat rebuilt after earthquake in 1326. Ragstone and flint. Large chancel. Lady Chapel (now vestry) 2 aisled nave. West tower, north and south porches. C19 restorations: reroofing 1858. Tower raised and chancel refurnished 1874. Interior has fine pulpit of 1682 from St Margarets Westminster. Wall tablets in chancel by R J Wyatt and E B Stephens and in north aisle to K Marten by T Beard 1750"

The grade I listed building is of high significance as demonstrated by its high grade of listing. The church is a high status medieval ecclesiastical structure. The building's architectural interest is primarily due to its external form and appearance which is in the Perpendicular style and features flint paired alongside rubblestone dressings with small areas of red brickwork.

The church dates originally from the early 14th century (thought to have been completed by 1327) and was a complete rebuild of an earlier church on the site. However, the church has been altered several times since its original construction, most notably in the 19th century. In 1858 the entire church was re-roofed and in 1874 more fundamental changes were made with the top stage of the tower being added to replace a former spire. The extended tower is a dominant and impressive aspect of the building which features in a number of both long and close range views. At this time the chancel was also refurbished and the west door and a number of windows are also 19th century replacements.

Pevsner referred to the church as “an impressive sight, with its stately west tower, matching the proportions of the clerestoried nave and chancel”.

Internally the church also contains numerous features which contribute towards its architectural and historic interest. These include a pulpit dating to 1682 (relocated from St Margaret’s Church, Westminster) and a variety of wall tablets and monuments.

As a parish church at the cultural focal point of the village the building’s historic interest as an illustrative physical reminder of the past is clear.

Overall the grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist is considered to be of outstanding interest on account of its early origins, high quality external form and appearance and internal fittings and historic illustrative interest as a medieval parish church which remains in its original use.

The setting of the grade I listed church makes a strong positive contribution to the ability to appreciate the building’s significance. Those elements of setting which most contribute can be summarised as:

- The church yard surrounding the church and its enclosing flint and red brick boundary wall. The churchyard contains numerous early graves which, alongside the raised ground level within the walls provide illustrative value. The mature trees present within the churchyard which provide it with a secluded character and cement it as a key public open space in Meopham. Overall, the churchyard allows the for the church to be seen in its original surroundings.
- The significant group which the church forms alongside Meopham Court and Church Cottages. The importance of this group is identified within the conservation area appraisal



Rear elevation of 1 Church Cottages with the grade I listed church in the backdrop

The church is best appreciated in views from within its churchyard and from along Wrotham Road where glimpsed views, amongst the mature tree coverage, are possible, typically comprising the dominant west tower. From the northwest of the cottages there is a clear view of the cottages' rear with the church tower above (this view is listed in the Conservation Area Appraisal and replicated in the image above)

Overall, the church today is experienced in a hamlet setting. While this has evolved over time (including the addition of a substantially scaled red brick church hall), change is broadly limited in the immediate surrounding of the church. The Site makes a positive contribution to the significance of the grade I listed church as a historic element of its former hamlet surroundings which has a clear and direct spatial and visual relationship with the church.

The Street, Meopham Conservation Area

The Street, Meopham was first designated as a conservation area in January 1970 and subsequently extended in 1999. The Conservation Area is centred on the historic streets of Wrotham Road, Shipley Hills Road and The Street which form the original settlement of Meopham.

A Conservation Area Appraisal, produced by GBC, was adopted in 2017 and this document provides much information on the historic development, character and significance of the conservation area. Where relevant this document has informed the below assessment.

The area has a long history demonstrated by the presence of Iron Age and Roman remains. While the present church dates to the 14th century, it is known to have replaced an earlier Saxon Church. Meopham was subsequently mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 where it was recorded as comprising 25 villagers, 71 smallholders and 17 slaves. 76. The 1840 Meopham Tithe Map is the first that shows the area in any detail. As identified by the Conservation Area Appraisal this map shows how the area can broadly be considered in two parts. The first being the aristocratic part of the settlement comprising Church and Manor House and the second being *"the more plebeian grouping of vernacular buildings around the Wrotham Road/ The Street junction"*.

While the conservation area remains broadly in its 19th century form a number of large-scale changes have taken place. Namely:

- The demolition of Manor Home Farm (adjacent to Meopham Court) in the late 19th century which has left the former manor simply as a large dwelling (now in multiple occupation but retaining its original residential use); and
- The considerable extension of the village in the 20th century to the south so that it joins up with Meopham Green.

The Conservation Area Appraisal provides a summary of the special interest of the conservation area as:

"Meopham The Street Conservation Area is of special interest for its historic buildings and for the various wall-, hedge-, and tree-enclosed spaces around and to the north, east and west of the St John's Church and Meopham Court; for the hedges, tree belts and garden spaces along the Wrotham road; and for the grouping of buildings around the junction of The Street with Wrotham Road."

It goes on to note individual positive elements of the conservation area which can be summarised as:

- The tree and hedge surroundings of the northern and central sections of the conservation area;
- The woodland area along the north edge of the conservation area;
- The hidden open space east of Meopham Court, a small part of which is within the conservation area;
- The series of separate tree/hedge bounded enclosures or semi enclosures in the northern part of the conservation area, which include, among others, gardens associated with Meopham Court Coach House and Meopham Court and the main graveyard;
- The buildings of Meopham Court, The Church, Church Cottages (the site), the South Lodge, the Old Vicarage and the former stables/ coach house (assumed) at the vehicle entry to the Old Vicarage grounds;
- The wall, tree and hedge bounded space of the modern burial ground to the west of the main road;
- The flint and brick walls to each side of Wrotham Road and Shipley Hills Road;
- The tree-and-shrub grown east bank-side of Wrotham Road from the graveyard to Well House;
- Tree, shrub and hedge growth along the west side of Wrotham Road from the north entry to the Conservation Area to the burial ground to the George Inn; and
- The grouping of historic buildings about the junction of The Street with Wrotham Road.

The effect of modern widening and straightening of Wrotham Road and the heavy traffic along this much used route are listed as both neutral and negative features within the conservation area.

Within the Conservation Area Appraisal, the designated area is divided into character areas. The application site is located within Area 1 which comprise the north part of the conservation area which extends as far south as the Lychgate to the modern graveyard on the east side of Wrotham Road and the gate lodge south of the old graveyard on the west side.

This part of the conservation area contains the aristocratic area identified above and has a spacious character with mature trees. Long views out from the graveyard and Wrotham Road west beyond Church Cottages allow glimpses of the valley, countryside and woodland beyond offering a tangible rural sense to the conservation area.

The medieval church landmark within this part of the conservation area. With its flint and brick wall and graveyard, the church possesses an enclosed character where glimpses from Wrotham Road are available. The siting of, and the relationship between, the church and Manor House were primary aspects of the original village.

The modern Wrotham Road does not sympathise with the historic surroundings however does respect the siting of Church Cottages where the road curves around the buildings. For this reason the building has spatial importance in this part of the conservation area.

Within the conservation area there is a limited palette of materials which includes flint (as seen on the church and often combined with red brickwork including on 1 Church Cottages), timber framing, rendering, brickwork (predominantly red brick) and Kent peg roof tiles.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This section appraises the impact of the proposed works on the heritage significance of the identified assets. It seeks to support the Local Planning Authority in their decision-making process.

The proposed works to the grade II listed building, for simplicity, are divided into 2 categories, as follows, which are considered in detail below:

- Introduction of rainscreen tiled canopy to the front elevation; and
- Replacement of Windows.

FRONT ELEVATION CANOPY

This comprises of the introduction of a new tiled, oak-framed canopy to the main entrance door, complete with dwarf brickwork plinths.

The simple timber canopy is proposed above the front door and to replicate in part that which was recently approved to the neighbouring property (2 Church Cottages).

Overall, this element of the development can be considered to result in a considerable enhancement to the significance of the building and the conservation area through the sympathetic symmetry the introduction of this canopy would create when viewed with the neighbouring property. (as image).

The works also have a resultant modest beneficial effect on the significance of the grade I listed church allowing it to be experienced in a context more related to its historic surroundings.



REPLACEMENT WINDOWS

All existing windows to the front range (the historic core) are modern and date to the mid to late 20th century. The List Description suggests that no.1 retains its original windows but these are no longer present.

The existing non-original windows could not be considered to contribute to the significance of the grade II listed building due to their lack of age and generally poor quality. While it is now impossible to know what the cottages' original windows were like, historic windows formerly present in no.1 are known to have included timber casements at first floor and cast iron casements at ground floor.

The proposals entail the replacement of all existing windows to all elevations. The existing structural openings will be retained and not altered in any way. Given the later date of the windows and lack of alterations proposed to structural openings etc. there will be no resultant loss of original or historic fabric and the removal of the existing windows will not result in any harm to heritage significance. Rather, their removal represents an opportunity for the enhancement of the significance of the grade II listed building.

The replacement windows will be appropriately detailed and constructed of naturally finished timber subframes and steel windows with 16mm double glazed units proposed. The windows would be of casement form, simplistically detailed and designed to match those present.

As a result of the proposals the building will be reinstated with appropriately detailed and constructed windows which better reflect the building's historic windows.

Overall the proposals are considered to result in a neutral effect on the architectural interest of the building but introduce thermally and acoustically efficient windows into the building which will provide for the longevity and continued conservation of the grade II listed building. In summary, the proposals to replace the modern windows will preserve the significance of the grade II listed building and the wider conservation area.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

This Heritage & Design Statement has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF and supports an application for planning permission and listed building consent for the alterations proposed at 1 Church Cottages, a grade II listed building in Meopham. It provides a proportionate assessment of the significance of those heritage assets affected by proposals, in this case, nos. 1 and 2 Church Cottages (together grade II listed), The Street, Meopham Conservation Area and the grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist.

The grade II listed Church Cottages comprise two separate dwellings of 17th century date. These buildings are of architectural, historic and archaeological interest. This primarily derives from the building's typical vernacular character displaying traditional construction, plan form and detailing and illustrative historic value as an example of a regional period building type.

The Street, Meopham Conservation Area was first designated in 1970 and is of special interest for its surviving historic, including Church Cottages, various wall, hedge and tree enclosed spaces and the group of historic buildings located around the junction of The Street and Wrotham Road.

The grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist is located to the east of the site within its sheltered churchyard. The ecclesiastical building is considered to be of outstanding interest on account of its early origins, high quality external form and appearance and internal fittings and historic illustrative interest as a medieval parish church which remains in its original use. Church Cottages contribute to an understanding of the significance of the church as a historic element of its former hamlet surroundings which has a clear and direct spatial and visual relationship with the church.

With regards to Church Cottages, this report concludes that while some elements of the development have the potential to result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the building, this harm is outweighed by the comprehensive benefits also secured. The proposals are also found to preserve & enhance the significance of The Street; Meopham Conservation Area and the grade I listed church.

In summary, the proposed works to the grade II listed building (within the conservation area and setting of a number of other listed buildings) are considered to be proportionate and, in accordance with the requirements of the Act and compliant with relevant policies contained within Section 16 of the NPPF and relevant local planning policy and guidance.