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53 South Hill Road, Gravesend, Kent.

Heritage Statement

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Introduction and historical context

South Hill Road lies in the outer area to the south of Gravesend town centre, and rises to the west of Parrock Road approaching the centre from the south. South Hill Road rises up a hill known as Windmill Hill, which is a local landmark, once having a windmill at its summit. The road forks at its halfway point and the subject property, No 53 South Hill Road, (Photograph 1), is the last house in a row of eleven terraced “two up, two down” houses built C1908 along the south side of the southwest fork of the road. The houses rise as a terrace up the hillside, from a point immediately adjacent to the west face of a pre-existing pair of semi-detached houses known as Ruby Villas, (Photograph 2) opposite the fork in the road. At the top end of the road before it meets Shrubbery Road and Sandy Bank Road, there is a terrace of four 4 storey houses known as Constitution Crescent, (Photograph 4) lying on the same side of the road as No 53, and being Grade II Listed as a group. The crescent is some 50 metres away and greatly elevated from the application property, and three post-war houses Nos 58, 59, and 60, (Photograph 3) are set between the two plots, rising with the land west of an unmade section of road at the top of Constitution Hill, southwest of and behind No 53. Photographs of the road, No 53, and Constitution Crescent are appended in Appendix A.

The Proposal

The replanning of the existing rear single storey outhouse, rebuilt in the 1980s, and comprising the kitchen and bathroom, retaining the east side wall, and construction of a single storey rear and side extension with a room in the roof over. The whole extending to 0.8 metres of the open width to the west side of the plot at the rear, extending approximately 5.1 metres behind the house, and nominally 1.5 metres forward of the back wall of the house. Within this space at ground floor an open-plan living and kitchen area will be formed with bi-fold doors to the rear garden, and the existing ground floor of the house replanned to create a dining area, cloakroom, the existing stairs, and the front room as a study. On the first floor the existing front bedroom will remain, and the existing rear bedroom will be replanned as a bathroom and access to a new larger bedroom in the extension. The existing outrigger party wall to No 52 will remain, and a new cavity wall will be built on the west side of the extension for the approximate 6.5 metres construction. The whole of the new build will be in London yellow stock bricks and replicating the red stock ribbon stretcher courses, and voussoir arches to windows and doors, with brown concrete interlocking tiling to the roof to match the existing.

The proposed windows and doors will be white UPVC double glazed units to match the existing, with fenestration proportions being sympathetic to vertical sash timber windows. That said, consideration is being given to timber vertical sash windows to replace the existing UPVC units, and to be fitted in the new extension, all subject to the likely cost involved. The first-floor accommodation within the roof will have conservation style rooflights.

The applicant is also minded to replace the existing concrete post and timber panel fence along the Constitution Hill and the rear access alleyway boundaries with a 225mm nominal thickness brick wall 2 metres in height to match the extension construction. The wall to be topped off with a course of brick on edge red stocks and two single ribbon stretcher courses of red stock bricks at say 1 metre and 1.5 metres above ground. This element of the proposal is only described here and not shown on drawings.

A teacher at a local state school in Gravesend, the applicant, has been a resident at 53 South Hill Road for some years and wishes to continue living there. However, the accommodation has not been sympathetic to recuperation following three major operations after contracting cancer. For practical purposes the existing staircase is very steep, and negotiation backwards has been necessary to reach the ground floor bathroom during the night, and on occasion in the day, with personal drains in the bedroom upstairs. Also, on one occasion the sofa downstairs was required

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as a bed rather than trying to go upstairs to bed; hence a desire for a bathroom upstairs. There is a need to provide more space for working from home and living space to allow for use of the second bedroom as a bedroom rather than as an office, with desk and teaching online from home. Looking to the future there is also likely to be a need to provide facility for an aging parent.

As noted, it is wished to provide a more authentic heritage frontage and side façade, reinstating vertical sash windows and replacing the 1980s rear extension and UPVC windows with a more sympathetic design.

Character and appearance

Considering the block of houses, being Ruby Villas and the eleven houses in the terrace, these are typical of housing being built at the time. Two-storeys, with single storey rear washhouses and lavatories under mono-pitch roofs, and built in London yellow stock bricks under main duo-pitch slate roofs. The villas, as a pair of semi-detached houses, still have the original brick detailing using red stock brick voussoir arches to their windows and doors, and in double and triple ribbon course banding across the width of the road elevations, with a single ribbon course topped by a dog-tooth course at the eaves. There is also a central feature in the form of a diamond shape linking the villa façades as one.

In the terrace only No 53 retains its original brick façades like that of the villas, with red brick arches and several single red brick ribbon courses, which, as they meet No 52, step down with the ground levels to, in all probability, continue across the lower face of the next house, repeating at each house until the villas are reached to close the vista. This feature would have linked all the houses in the terrace had it remained, but unfortunately this was not to be. Of the eleven houses, ten have had the brickwork covered over, nine by render and pebble dash and one by painting. Of the nine rendered and dashed, two remain unpainted while the remainder have been painted in various pastel colours. While these do present a relatively attractive setting along the street, they are not as originally built, demonstrated by Ruby Villas and the subject house, No 53.

Generally, windows and doors would have been timber, the windows vertical sash, however, only four terrace houses retain timber sashes of which only one may be original. Otherwise, all the other houses have various types of UPVC windows including the villas and No 53. Most front doors remain in timber, very few if any original, with only two having UPVC doors fitted.

Significance

No 53 South Hill Road has some significance in that it is the only end of terrace property, with a slightly wider frontage to the road, and retains the original external appearance in the fairfaced and decorative brickwork described, replicating the earlier Ruby Villas and thus closing the run of terrace. The property has no front door to the street, the two windows facing the street are aligned one above the other, not staggered as in the other houses, and the front door is placed at the side in the double fronted west elevation. The original slate roof to the house has gone, replaced by concrete interlocking tiles, although the rear outhouse still has a slate covering. With a truncated triangular plot and nominally twice as much road frontage as others in the terrace, there is sufficient area at the west side for amenity space as well as a back garden; the front area of the side space is currently used for parking one car, and will be retained as such. The aging timber panel/concrete post fence to the west and south boundaries separates the property from the unmaintained, unkempt upper access to Constitution Hill, and the motley assortment of back yard areas visible to the east along the terrace back access alleyway.

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Statutory Obligations and relevant Policies

The whole of South Hill Road and other roads in the area west of Parrock Road lie in a Conservation Area, so designated in July 1975, extended in April 1991, and again in February 2001, with an Article 4 Direction applied in September 2007. These restrictions mean generally, that any proposed work to a property within the designated areas requires planning permission before it can be done.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires that any planning application affecting a historic asset should be accompanied by a statement of the asset's significance and any contribution made by its setting.

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy policies CS19 Development and Design Principles, and CS20 Heritage and the Historic Environment, are also relevant to how an application is considered and determined, especially in special areas that are protected.

Legislation relating to conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The section applicable in this case is Section 72 of the Act, and in relation to conservation areas states: "In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area ... special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area." Decision makers have a statutory duty to ensure that the special interest of listed buildings or conservation areas is properly taken into account when determining applications affecting their special interest, or the setting of listed buildings.

The purpose of the conservation and Article 4 designations, as well as the statutory and local government policies is not to stifle change, but to manage it to maintain preservation and enhancement of a special area's character, appearance, and heritage value.

Planning History

A schedule of most planning applications made in the locality is appended as Appendix B, taken from the Gravesham website, for years 1977 to 2021, and showing the variety of proposals including requests for installation/retention of UPVC windows replacing timber sash windows. Despite most of the terrace Nos 42 to 53 having UPVC windows there do not appear to be corresponding permissions granted for most, and in 2019 No 44 was granted permission to retain UPVC windows and front door, while No 45 was refused permission to retain UPVC windows and front door, even at appeal; there appears to be no recorded history for No 53.

Given that plastic windows and doors are alien to the conservation of the locality, it is unclear why a number have been permitted, and others simply tolerated, even after the Article 4 designation, and the option for the council to seek reversal of unsympathetic alterations under their Management Plan – Gravesend's 19th Century Suburban Conservation Areas 2009.

In January 2022, an application for a rear first floor and two storey side extension was made, reference 20211561, however, this was refused on 23rd March 2022 and is now the subject of an appeal.

The essence of the grounds for refusal was:

The proposal is too bulky and incongruous.

Out of proportion and not subservient.

Would block sunlight from No 52 in afternoon and exacerbate the existing tunnel effect in their garden. Also, loss of light and outlook to rear facing windows and garden.

Block the view of the terraces in South Hill Road and Constitution Hill, and their chimney stacks, from the top end of the link road.

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Compromise the garden area and depth to No 53 – Minimum area is 37.2 sqm; minimum depth 7.6m; the existing area exceeds minimum, and the existing depth is 5.49m (which was accepted with the existing rear extension), but the new area is only 24 sqm.

This new revised application seeks to address the objections raised.

Impact of the proposal on the property's significance, level of harm, and mitigation

The proposed extension, sited to the rear and west side of the existing house, absorbs the space currently occupied by the rear outhouse and some of the area to the west of this. Being single storey in appearance with a room within the new roof, and a small increase in height the proposal will add only a little bulk to the volume of the outhouse, which has a steep mono-pitch roof as it stands, the new roof being similar in style with a higher ridge meeting a shallow pitched roof rising from the existing east side wall. The proposal does not extend further back than the existing outhouse, so retaining the existing rear garden area. The new first floor will have conservation style rooflights rather than dormer windows to maintain the roof slope.

In terms of harm, the proposal will cover a greater part of the rear elevation of the house, and the outhouse apart from its rear wall, and to a limited extent the west side wall. Also, the setting will be altered from some western viewpoints in that the vista along the backs of the houses will be less on view.

In mitigation the proposal is set well back from the principal road frontage, designed in sympathetic style to the existing house, and sited to form a natural courtyard to the house entry. External materials will replicate those of the existing walls and roof, and decorative brick details, and window arches repeated. The roof line of the extension will be lower than, and subordinate to, the existing house roof, and the outhouse wall bordering No 52 will be retained at the same overall height as far as possible, with a pitched roof rising back to the extension gable and cats' slide roof.

There is already a precedent for two and three storeys rear/side extensions along the street, for example Nos 25 and 26, and as noted UPVC windows and doors feature heavily in the street scene, along with pebbledash and painted walls. However, as mentioned the applicant is considering the use of timber vertical sash units, including replacement of those in the existing house, subject to cost.

From all viewpoints the property will still retain its significance as the end of terrace, with its original brickwork intact and enhanced by a more attractive frontage and courtyard area.

Conclusion

The applicant needs more and better laid out space for practical living, and wishes to stay in place. The proposal answers that wish while preserving the essence of the existing house, and improving the external setting. It also answers the planners' concerns, it is in keeping with the surrounding area, and is not detrimental to other historic buildings, for example Constitution Crescent, as noted considerably elevated and some distance from the property, with 1950s housing intervening.





Appendix B Schedule of relevant planning submissions made in the area 1977 to 2021

- **Erection of a single storey ground floor wraparound extension, two storey rear extension, side porch redesign and internal alterations.**

25 And 26 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20210702 | Received: Tue 01 Jun 2021 | Validated: Wed 25 Aug 2021 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Erection of a three storey side extension forming entrance hall on ground floor, bathroom on first floor and study bedroom on second floor and the rebuilding front garden wall.**

31A South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20210005 | Received: Tue 05 Jan 2021 | Validated: Tue 05 Jan 2021 | Status: Application Refused

- **Demolition of existing rear conservatory and erection of new single storey rear and side extension.**

23 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20201351 | Received: Fri 18 Dec 2020 | Validated: Thu 07 Jan 2021 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Erection of a part single and part two storey rear extension.**

25 And 26 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20200974 | Received: Thu 24 Sep 2020 | Validated: Wed 14 Oct 2020 | Status: Application Refused

- **Erection of a two storey side extension and single storey rear extensions**

28 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20200499 | Received: Fri 29 May 2020 | Validated: Fri 29 May 2020 | Status: Application Permitted

Retention of UPVC sash vertical slider windows on the front elevation and composite front door.

45 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JXRef. No: 20190186 | Received: Fri 22 Feb 2019 | Validated: Wed 13 Mar 2019 | Status: Application Refused

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- [Retention of UPVC casement windows on the front elevation and composite front door.](#)

44 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 20190126 | Received: Tue 05 Feb 2019 | Validated: Wed 06 Feb 2019 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of single storey rear extension to form enlarged kitchen and w.c.](#)

36 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 20170207 | Received: Wed 01 Mar 2017 | Validated: Wed 01 Mar 2017 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of single storey rear extension to form enlarged kitchen.](#)

35 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 20170206 | Received: Wed 01 Mar 2017 | Validated: Wed 01 Mar 2017 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Replace wooden sash windows with white UPVC windows and replacement composite door.](#)

28 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20170033 | Received: Tue 17 Jan 2017 | Validated: Wed 25 Jan 2017 | Status: Application Refused

- [***REVISED DESCRIPTION & REVISED PLANS*** Replacement of the existing front door with a timber door.](#)

49 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 20160881 | Received: Thu 08 Sep 2016 | Validated: Mon 21 Nov 2016 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of a single storey rear extension to form kitchen/diner.](#)

45 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 20150084 | Received: Fri 30 Jan 2015 | Validated: Wed 11 Feb 2015 | Status: Application Permitted
Approval of details

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- **Refurbishment of existing dwelling including demolition and erection of a side and rear lean-to extensions. Replacement windows. Re-rendering the property and landscaping to front and rear to provide better amenity space and additional parking.**

37 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 20140655 | Received: Sat 05 Jul 2014 | Validated: Tue 15 Jul 2014 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Installation of replacement front door.**

40 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 20140058 | Received: Tue 21 Jan 2014 | Validated: Tue 21 Jan 2014 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Erection of single storey front and rear extensions to form two bedrooms, enlarged lounge and enlarged dining room and erection of a front porch.**

57 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JZ

Ref. No: 20130168 | Received: Sat 23 Feb 2013 | Validated: Wed 06 Mar 2013 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension to form an enlarged kitchen/dining room.**

31A South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20120811 | Received: Tue 25 Sep 2012 | Validated: Tue 16 Oct 2012 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension to form a living room.**

23 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 20090218 | Received: Fri 20 Mar 2009 | Validated: Fri 20 Mar 2009 | Status: Application Permitted

- **Application for Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the proposed erection of a single storey infill extension at lower ground floor level to form enlarged dining room/garden room.**

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31 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent. Ref. No: 20050910 | Received: Mon 24 Oct 2005 | Validated: Mon 24 Oct 2005 | Status: Application Refused

- [Erection of single storey rear extension to form a conservatory and single storey side extension to form entrance porch.](#)

25 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA
Ref. No: 20040863 | Received: Thu 23 Sep 2004 | Validated: Thu 23 Sep 2004 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of 2.2m high wall mounted railings and new brick piers on the front boundary.](#)

31A South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA
Ref. No: 20020141 | Received: Tue 19 Feb 2002 | Validated: Tue 19 Feb 2002 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of single storey rear extension to form enlarged kitchen and w.c./shower room.](#)

52 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX
Ref. No: 20000035 | Received: Thu 20 Jan 2000 | Validated: Mon 06 Mar 2000 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of single storey side extension to form a wc and laying out of a driveway.](#)

59 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JZ
Ref. No: 19990215 | Received: Fri 09 Apr 1999 | Validated: Fri 09 Apr 1999 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of single storey rear extension to form dining room.](#)

28 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA
Ref. No: 19960211 | Received: Wed 03 Apr 1996 | Validated: Fri 03 May 1996 | Status: Application Refused

- [Erection of single storey rear extension to form kitchen.](#)

25 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

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Ref. No: 19900248 | Received: Wed 04 Apr 1990 | Validated: Mon 26 Mar 1990 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Application for Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of the single storey kitchen extension at the rear in connection with its replacement.](#)

25 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 19900257 | Received: Wed 04 Apr 1990 | Validated: Wed 28 Mar 1990 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of single storey rear extension to form kitchen, lobby and bathroom](#)

49 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 19880289 | Received: Thu 24 Mar 1988 | Validated: Thu 24 Mar 1988 | Status: Application Withdrawn

- [Erection of a single storey extension to form kitchen and bathroom at the rear](#)

35 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1JX

Ref. No: 19790490 | Received: Mon 21 May 1979 | Validated: Mon 21 May 1979 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Erection of four three storey dwellings with integral garages](#)

19-22 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 19790217 | Received: Thu 08 Mar 1979 | Validated: Thu 08 Mar 1979 | Status: Application Permitted

- [Revised application for the erection of a block of 4 houses with integral garages](#)

19-22 South Hill Road Gravesend Kent DA12 1LA

Ref. No: 19770513 | Received: Mon 27 Jun 1977 | Validated: Mon 27 Jun 1977 | Status: Application Permitted