

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE FROM A WEDDING VENUE TO A DWELLING C3 AT

**LITTLE HERMITAGE
GRAVESEND ROAD
HIGHAM
KENT
ME3 7NU.**

DESIGN STATEMENT

July 2025

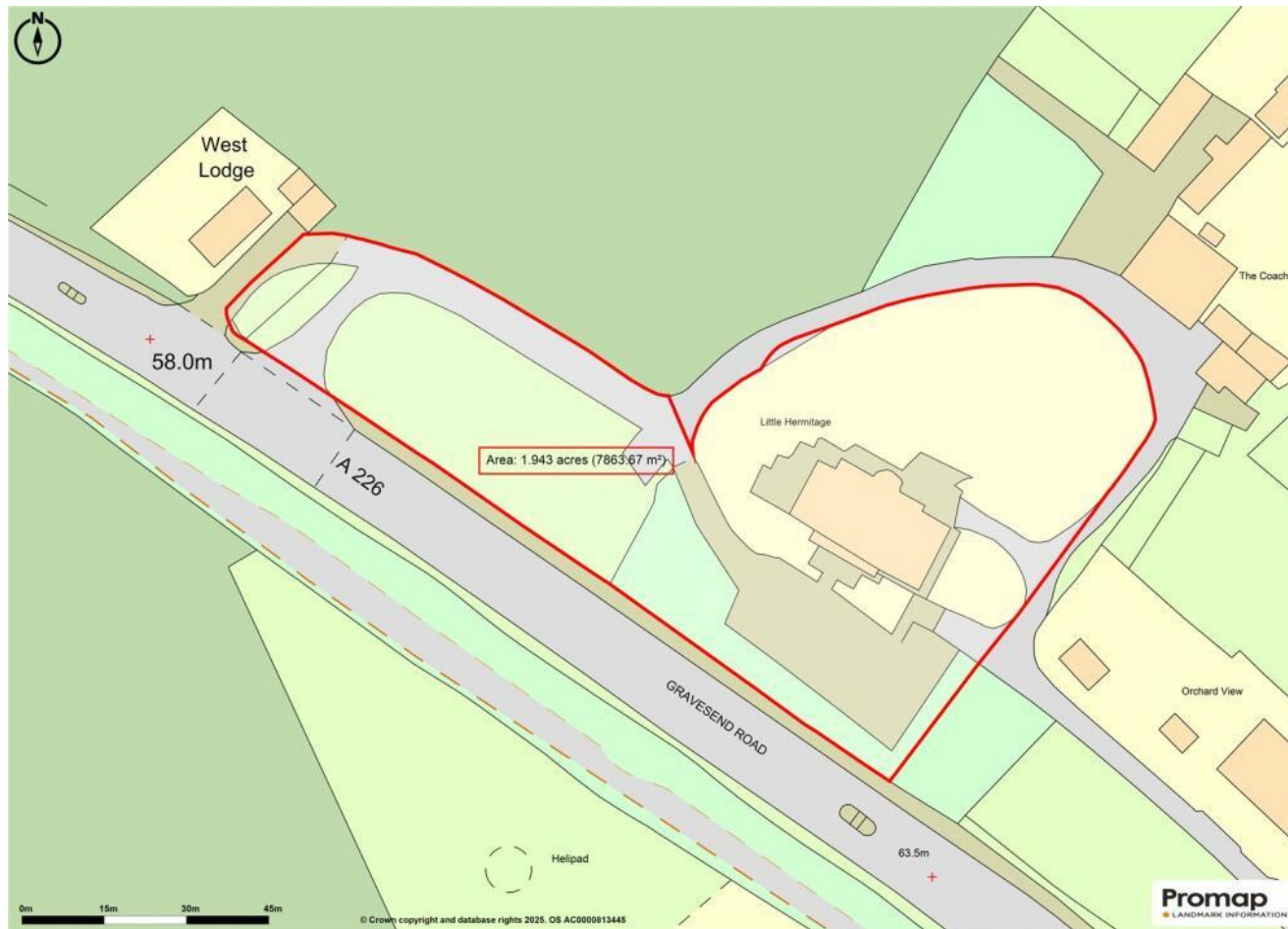
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1. EXISTING

Location Plan



2. HERITAGE

The Listing

Early C19 of stuccoed brick, this 2-storey house comprises the central block of a larger house, the side wings of which have been demolished. Low pitched slated roof with deeply overhanging eaves. A 2-storey portico extends across the whole front comprising Doric columns and simple entablature.

Sash windows, those on the ground floor extending to floor level. Glazing bars intact. Sides and rear quite plain with an irregular shaped addition to the west. Internal staircase with shaped balusters and wreathed mahogany handrail. Decorative door casings and original marble chimney pieces.

Listing NGR: TQ7207970572



Little Hermitage is a splendid Grade II listed Georgian building dated from the 18th century (1703), in a prominent position on the Gravesend Road and has a shared access off the main road.

The building, in its heyday, was a substantial house in Higham and there is evidence that the house incorporated significant wings to both sides to the east and west elevations. The foundations to these previous walls have been found and located and the recent side additions have been constructed within these original walls.

The building was saved and totally refurbished by Mr David Day, who named it Little Hermitage, and it is currently run and maintained by the same family who have operated it recently as a wedding venue.

The residence originally had 72 acres of land consisting of garden, pleasure grounds, stabling, Farmery, two entrance lodges, park-like pastures and a field of excellent arable land before being divided up and now consists of the land as indicated within this application.

IMPACT

There will be no impact on the listed building or its surrounding area by this proposal

Their history:

Little Hermitage has been owned by the Day family since 1995, originally taken on as a family residence. Extensive renovations were carried out to bring the house back to the impressive venue that exists today. After several years the family decided to venture into the wedding business to provide a high-quality service creating couples 'happy ever afters' which included their own.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- Excavation of a basement at the rear.

Ref. No: 20070446 | Status: Application Permitted

- Overhead Electric Lines.

Ref. No: 19580319 | Status: Application Permitted

- Outline application for redevelopment of land for residential purposes

Ref. No: 19560300 | Status: Application Refused

- Erection of two storey extension on the north-western elevation, in addition to the extension permitted under ref. no. GR/96/535, to form study with bedroom over.

Ref. No: 19970536 | Status: Application Permitted

- Erection of a first floor extension on the north-western elevation to form dressing room.

Ref. No: 19960535 | Status: Application Permitted

- Application for Listed Building consent for the erection of a first floor extension on the north-western elevation to form a dressing room and replacement of the kitchen window at ground floor level on the same elevation.

Ref. No: 19960528 | Status: Application Permitted

- Application for Listed Building consent for the erection of a two storey extension on the north western elevation, in addition to that permitted under ref. no. GR/96/528X, to form study with bedroom over and associated internal alterations.

Ref. No: 19970288 | Status: Application Permitted

- Application for Listed Building consent for internal alterations at first floor level to form sanitary accommodation, alterations to existing first floor bathroom and formation of lavatory in existing ground floor lobby.

Ref. No: 19950798 | Status: Application Permitted

- Change of use of existing dwelling into a mixed use of dwelling and function suites for wedding ceremonies involving alterations to the vehicular access.

Ref. No: 20040701 | Status: Application Permitted

- Retention of the two storey side extension with basement in substitution of that previously granted planning permission under ref. no. GR/2001/498 providing functions room with ancillary kitchen, bar, scullery and store room at basement level, functions room at ground floor level, bedroom, ensuite bathroom and male and female toilet accommodation at first floor level; and change of use of the existing dwelling into a mixed use of dwelling and function suites for wedding ceremonies.

Ref. No: 20010810 | Status: Application Refused

- ****AMENDED APPLICATION**** Erection of two storey extension with basement on the south eastern side elevation to form drawing room at ground floor level and two bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms at first floor level and construction of basement access steps to the side.

Ref. No: 20010498 | Status: Application Permitted

- ****AMENDED APPLICATION**** Application for Listed Building Consent for the erection of two storey side extension with basement on the south east elevation to form drawing room at ground floor level and two bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms at first floor level, construction of access steps with brick balustrade to the basement at the side and construction of external steps and balustrade at the rear to the drawing room.

Ref. No: 20010497 | Status: Application Permitted

- Application for Listed Building Consent for the retention of the two storey side extension with basement in substitution of that previously granted listed building consent under ref. no. GR/2001/497 incorporating the retention of access steps with brick balustrade at the rear, retention of alterations to the existing building for ventilation incorporating ducts within the masonry chimney flues and sundry ventilation equipment housed within the rear terrace, installation of louvre panels in the flank walls of the terrace for natural ventilation, retention of the external fire escape staircase at the side to the basement, external lighting and internal alterations in connection with the change of use of existing dwelling into a mixed use of dwelling and function suites for wedding ceremonies.

Following planning approval Ref 20040701 for the change of use of the property from a dwelling to a mix use function and wedding venue ceremonies, this proposal is now for a change of use back to the original dwelling.

4. PROPOSAL

The property has been run as a wedding venue since 2004, and has, over that time, been successful with a very good reputation based on the quality of the venue and the interior design, which has been maintained to a high standard.

Whilst the wedding venue has been successful over the years, the current high costs of running a hospitality business, and the limited number of weddings allowed a year, has meant that the family can no longer continue to run and maintain the venue, which is running at a loss, and therefore they are wanting to close the business and convert the premises back into a dwelling.

The business is not a viable one that could be sold as the cost of the property, and the ongoing financial outgoings of maintenance and staffing make it not possible to achieve a positive outcome in terms of any financial profit. Many hospitality venues are closing, and the current policies continue to raise the running costs in terms of taxation, wages, national insurance, food and catering costs which mean it is no longer a viable business.

The proposal is for a change of use to class C3 use (dwelling) which it was originally, and no elevational or internal revisions are proposed as part of this application.

The integrity and architectural quality of the building will be retained and hopefully protected for its future use, and there will also therefore be no impact on the listing and no demolition works are proposed. The character of the area and the street scene will be maintained, and no visual impacts are to be proposed in terms of scale or bulk of the building.

The change of use would have the following benefits to the surrounding area-

- Less car movements
- Reduced number of parking
- No noise created by ceremonies
- Less impact on surrounding houses
- Reduced number of visitors
- Reduced number of people that would be using the external spaces.

5. PHOTOS



6. POLICY

Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) (LPCS)

This document provides clarity that the proposed scheme conserves and enhances the character of the local built and natural environment and integrates well with the surrounding area.

Policy CS12 (LPCS) (2014) seeks to protect the green infrastructure within the Borough and states at 5.7.26 the overall landscape character and valued landscapes. The proposal will not have any effect on the existing green infrastructure or surrounding landscape characteristics.

Gravesham's **Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guidance (SPD) (2021)** states it is important to ensure that any extensions or alterations to a home are well designed, well-built, and sympathetic to their surroundings.

7. CONCLUSION

The original style of the property will be maintained and there will be no impact on the listed building, whilst the street scene and character are retained by the proposed change of use.

The property was originally designed as a dwelling and the proposal will revert to its original intention and will protect its future use and maintenance as it will not be dependent on the success of business use.

The proposed residential-only use will also have less impact in terms of traffic and volume of visitors and the noise created by a wedding venue would be removed.

We would suggest the proposed change of use to its original design would be as shown to be beneficial to the area and have no impact on the listing or architectural integrity.