

Delegated Report

Listed Building Consent Application

Planning Application No: 20230613

Location: Meopham Windmill Wrotham Road Meopham Gravesend

Description: Application for Listed Building Consent for the modifications to the existing sail (sweep) assembly to facilitate a hybrid arrangement of common and patent sweeps, with associated internal and external alterations.

Applicant: Mr Luke Bonwick, Kent County Council

Site Visit Date: Desktop

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application form;
- Block Plan;
- OS Plan;
- Drawing no. LB 09/2022 v1 – South east elevation As PROPOSED;
- Drawing no. LB 09/2022v1 – South east elevation AS EXISTING;
- Drawing no. LB 09/2022 v1 – Inner pair of sweeps AS EXISTING;
- Drawing no. LB 09/2022 v1 – Plan view at 2FL level AS EXISTING;
- Drawing no. LB 09/2022 v1 – Plan view at 2FL level AS PROPOSED;
- Drawing no. LB 11/2022 v3 – Inner pair of sweeps AS PROPOSED;
- Drawing no. LB 11/2022 v3 – Outer pair of sweeps AS PROPOSED;
- Heritage Statement; and
- Design Statement.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20020662	Application for Listed Building Consent for the replacement of failed sweeps.	Permitted	11.10.2002

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- TC2 – Listed Buildings
- TC3 – Development Affecting Conservation Areas

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

Other material considerations

The Council has a statutory requirement under Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended, states that with respect to 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.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Meopham Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009)
- Management Plan Rural Conservation Area Appraisals Supplementary Planning Document (2016)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

GBC Conservation Officer

I have reviewed the application documents, which make a fascinating and well presented case for the reversion to a hybrid sweep arrangement for Meopham Windmill.

Based on the information submitted I raise no adverse comments to the proposals, which will benefit the windmill in terms of historical accuracy as well as structural and mechanical integrity.

Providing the colour of the sweeps remain as existing (does this need to be conditioned?) there are no further comments and the proposals are fully supported.

Meopham Parish Council

No objection.

No response from

- Historic England
- National Amenity Societies

Publicity

Application advertised by way of site and press notices – overall consultation expiry date was 15.01.2024 – no responses received.

Officer's Analysis

The application site consists of a grade II* listed windmill within the Meopham Green Conservation Area and located within the Meopham Green rural settlement inset from the Green Belt.

The proposal is for Listed Building Consent for modifications to the existing sail (sweep) assembly to facilitate a hybrid arrangement of common and patent sweeps, with associated internal and external alterations.

The principle consideration is whether the proposed works would preserve the architectural or historic interest of this grade II* listed building and whether they would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Meopham Green Conservation Area.

Meopham Windmill is an early nineteenth century smock mill and one of six smock mills in the care of KCC.

The Design & Access Statement sets out how when originally, constructed Meopham mill would have had 'common' sails (or sweeps) which comprised open lattice frameworks that had to be manually spread with sheets of canvas in order to catch the wind. With technological advancements in the 19th century, one pair of the common sweeps had been replaced with a pair of patent sweeps which incorporated one or two rows of adjustable shutters; although more expensive, patent sweeps were less labour intensive. Then sometime later, possibly around 1915, a second pair of patent sweeps were fitted to replace the remaining common sweeps. In the 1920s further alterations to the sweeps were made when their working area was increased by adding extra panels and longer shutters to increase the width of the sweeps. By this time the mill had gained a set of sweeps much larger and heavier than those for which the building was originally designed. By 1930 the second pair of installed sweeps had been removed and the remaining first pair had been shortened by removing the outer bay of shutters.

There were successive repair works carried out to the mill from the 1960s onwards with modified versions of the enlarged 1920s patent sweeps being fitted to the mill. It is stated in the submission that the existing sweeps which were fitted in 2003 are so large that the outer ends pass within 50mm of the reefing stage handrail which is much less than the recommended safe clearance level.

Due to the operational and design problems associated with the existing patent sweeps and based on the historic evidence that the mill had smaller size sweeps of a combination of common and patent sweeps in the late 19th century, it is proposed to replace the existing sweeps with a hybrid arrangement of common and patent sweeps.

There are said to be a number of benefits to this including significant weight reduction on the historic timber frame, the wide reefing stage will be able to be used as originally designed, the hybrid sweeps will be less labour intensive to maintain and will allow operation in lighter winds and the traditional appearance of the windmill will be restored as it was at the turn of the 20th century (in its last years of commercial prosperity).

The proposal for a hybrid of common and patent sweeps can be seen to be based on a thorough historical assessment of how the windmill used to be at the turn of the 20th century and will resolve current issues being experienced from the existing patent sweeps including excess weight on the building and the effect on its operation. The Conservation Officer fully supports the proposal; they advise that the colour of the sweeps should remain as existing. The proposal would preserve the architectural and historic interest of this grade II* listed building and by extension would also preserve the character and appearance of the Meopham Green Conservation Area.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

None.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed works to the windmill would preserve the architectural and historic interest of this grade II* listed building and the character and appearance of the Meopham Green Conservation Area.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Rebecca Harrison	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	<i>Rebecca Harrison</i>	Signed:	
Dated:	31st January 2024	Dated:	01 February 2024