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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

**by G D Jones BSc(Hons) DipTP DMS MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/16/3157007**

**1 Greenfarm Cottages, Meopham Green, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0QE**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Sherif Moftah against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
  - The application 20160422, dated 27 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2016.
  - The development proposed is the demolition of an existing lean-to garage/shed and erection of two storey side and rear extension.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

2. The main issues are the proposed development's effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the Meopham Green Conservation Area, and on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with particular regard to light and potential sense of overbearing.

### Reasons

#### *Character & Appearance*

3. Meopham Green is notable for its large village green, which lies at its heart. The Conservation Area (the CA) wraps around the good collection of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings as well as modern development that surround the Green. The Green also forms an important break in the linear development along Wrotham Road.
4. The character and significance of the CA stems in large part from its rural setting and the settlement's historical associations with agriculture including farms that were once operational within the village. Historically the eastern side of the Green, where the appeal site is located, was dominated by Green Farm and its buildings. While new housing has replaced its farmyard much of interest remains including Green Farm Cottages, which were built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to house farm workers.
5. The appeal property is the southernmost dwelling of the three cottages that form Green Farm Cottages. The original rectangular plan form of the terrace is largely unaltered. The notable exception is a single storey timber lean-to addition on the side of No 1, which has a detrimental effect on the character

and appearance of this row of cottages, largely due to its unbalancing visual effect, as well as its incongruous form and facing materials. However, the harm caused is limited given its modest height and scale and as it is readily distinguishable as a modern addition such that the original building remains clearly legible.

6. The proposed development would be considerably larger than the lean-to structure which it would replace. Although it would be set back from the front elevation with a lower ridge, the extension would have a significantly detrimental effect on the host building's character and appearance. This would be due primarily to its size, siting and height, which would further visually unbalance the row of cottages, interfere with its simple linear form and undermine its legibility as a historic building.
7. The appeal development would also reduce the extent of the gap that exists between Green Farm Cottages and the neighbouring built form to the south, particularly at first floor level. This gap assists the appreciation of the building as having once formed part of the farmstead. It also suggests a visual link to the countryside beyond the village to the east, albeit that that visual link has over the years been substantially eroded.
8. For all of the foregoing reasons, the appeal development would have a detrimental effect on the important contribution that Green Farm Cottages make to the significance of the CA and would fail to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. Consequently, in this respect, it would conflict with Policies CS19 (Development and Design Principles) and CS20 (Heritage and the Historic Environment) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Adoption Version September 2014 (the Core Strategy) and Policy TC3 (Development Affecting Conservation Areas) of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994 and with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
9. The resulting harm to the CA's significance would be less than substantial in the terms of para 134 of the Framework. Given the statutory duty<sup>1</sup> to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area, the identified harm carries substantial weight against the proposed development.

### *Living Conditions*

10. The proposed extension would bring the built form of No 1 closer to Farmstead, the neighbouring house immediate to the south. Farmstead has ground and first floor side facing windows that would be directly in line with the appeal development. Given these circumstances, combined with the reasonably narrow gap that would be left between these two, two-storey houses, the proposal has the potential to affect light and outlook to Farmstead.
11. However, based on the information before me I am not persuaded that any resultant loss of light or outlook would have a material effect on the living conditions of occupants of this neighbouring house. A number of considerations have informed this conclusion, including that the development would be largely to the north such that there would be likely to be a very limited effect on direct sunlight. The evidence also indicates that the windows concerned are secondary such that the principal outlook from the effected

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<sup>1</sup> S72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

rooms is via windows in the front/rear elevations, which are also likely to offer reasonable levels of natural light to these rooms. Moreover, although the gap between the buildings would be reasonably narrow, light would still pass through the windows concerned.

12. On this basis, therefore, the proposed development would not cause material harm to the living conditions of the occupants of Farmstead or other neighbouring properties as a consequence of its effect on light or sense of overbearing. In that regard, therefore, it would not conflict with Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) of the Core Strategy or with the Framework.

### **Other Matters**

13. Neighbouring residents have expressed other concerns regarding the effect of the development. However, these have not altered my overall conclusion.

### **Conclusion**

14. I recognise that there are matters that weigh in favour of the appeal development, notably that the existing unsympathetic lean-to structure would be removed and that it is also proposed to carry out enhancements to No 1 such as window replacement. However, the collective weight of these benefits is insufficient to outbalance the identified *less than substantial harm* to the significance of the CA bearing in mind that such harm should be given considerable importance and weight. Consequently, the proposal does not represent sustainable development and the appeal should be dismissed.

*G D Jones*

INSPECTOR