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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2021

**by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 06 October 2021.**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/21/3273975**

**Crickfield Farm, Harvel Street, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0DE**

- 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 James Cooper against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 20201173, dated 5 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2021.
  - The development proposed is the demolition of existing garage and erection of replacement building with ancillary living accommodation.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural matter

2. Crickfield Farm includes a detached dwelling, which is a Grade II listed building. For brevity, I shall refer to this listed building hereafter as 'Crickfield Farm' or 'the house'. Under section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

### Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the setting and significance of Crickfield Farm.

### Reasons

4. According to the listed building description, Crickfield Farm is a timber framed 'hall' house that dates originally from the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century. It stands in a good-sized landscaped plot within the settlement of Harvel. As a listed building of historical value, with a traditional style, generous gardens and a prominent frontage to the road, Crickfield Farm has a distinctive presence in the local area. It makes a significant and positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Harvel Conservation Area (CA) within which the site is located. Both Crickfield Farm and the CA are designated heritage assets.
5. The proposal is to erect a detached 2-storey outbuilding with an open sided structure just to one side of the listed building. A single storey double garage would be demolished and removed to make way for the new addition.

6. When considering the impact of a proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. It also advises that significance derives not only from the heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting.
7. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document, *Harvel Rural Conservation Appraisal*, (SPD) identifies Crickfield Farm as one of three highest status houses in the village and a surviving farmhouse. Its exposed timber frame, brick nogging base, prominent hipped roof and brick chimneystacks all add to the individual character of Crickfield Farm. Its significance as a designated heritage asset is therefore derived from the historic, architectural and visual merits of the building. This can be experienced and appreciated from the generous gardens that surround the listed building and along Harvel Street from where the principal and side elevations of the property and its front garden are particularly evident.
8. At present, the garage to be replaced, which stands close to a corner of the house, is clearly an ancillary building given its modest scale and height. However, it relates uneasily to the listed building given the marked contrast between them in the use of external materials, different roof pitch and lack of detailing. As such, I agree that the site presents an interesting opportunity to create a development that has a more sympathetic relationship with the listed building and one that is more in keeping with the local vernacular.
9. The main outbuilding would occupy the same footprint as the garage to be replaced and appropriate materials would be used including knapped flint panels with red brick quoins, timber cladding and timber framed windows and doors. The steep pitch of the new roof would also closely follow that of a Kent peg tile roof. However, the proposal would be noticeably taller and thus larger than its existing counterpart. Although the new ridgeline would be set well below that of the main house, the northwest and southeast elevations of the new addition would be substantial in built form. That the appeal scheme would include first floor windows would also clearly signal a 2-storey building, the effect of which would be to visually accentuate its perceived scale and height.
10. Roadside vegetation and the house would largely screen views of the proposal when seen from the adjacent highway. Nevertheless, the appeal scheme would be evident from the driveway and garden just to the southeast of Crickfield Farm. When seen from this direction, the new outbuilding would draw the eye given its substantial built form and position in the foreground to the listed building. In these views, the proposal would visually compete for attention with the listed building just beyond. In doing so, the appeal scheme would introduce visual disharmony with the listed building and detract from its setting. As a result, the significance of Crickfield Farm as a designated heritage asset would be significantly diminished.
11. In reaching this conclusion, I acknowledge that the southeast elevation of Crickfield Farm has been extended and externally altered and that the proposal would be seen primarily in that immediate context. However, the exterior of the house remains remarkably well preserved given its age and the pattern of fenestration, built proportions, roof form and detailing in the southeast elevation still form an attractive composition. When viewed from the main driveway and gardens of Crickfield Farm, the listed building is clearly legible as

a former farmhouse of some standing with features of special architectural or historic interest. Although not readily visible from the road, this part of the listed building and its setting are also sensitive to change.

12. I also recognise that farmsteads have organically evolved with buildings and structures added and removed to reflect changing needs and circumstances. However, that process of change over time does not in itself justify introducing a visually intrusive form of development.
13. Given the modest scale of the proposal, the harm caused by the proposed development on the significance of Crickfield Farm as a designated heritage asset is less than substantial. In those circumstances, the Framework states that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits.
14. The benefits arising from the appeal scheme including an improvement to the quality of life for the appellant, his family and future occupiers would be largely private. I am not persuaded that the proposal would be needed to ensure the long-term conservation of the listed building or to secure its optimal viable use given that it is already an occupied dwelling. No other public benefits would outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
15. On the main issue, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would adversely affect the setting of Crickfield Farm that would fail to be preserved. As such, it is contrary to Policies CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policy TC2 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review. These policies aim to ensure that development preserves, protects and enhances the character of the historic environment and is sympathetic to the listed building. The appeal scheme also conflicts with the Framework with regard to protecting designated heritage assets and with the statutory duty.

#### *Other matters*

16. The Officer's report raises an additional concern that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the CA. From what I saw, the CA is characterised by areas of open space and a range of buildings on either side of Harvel Street that differ in age and style. Within this developed corridor, buildings are sited and orientated differently within their plots with some closer to neighbouring buildings and the road than others. In that varied context, the proposal would not in itself be an uncharacteristic addition to the settlement.
17. Part of the new outbuilding would be seen from the road although it would not be conspicuous given its position largely behind the house and the screening provided by a new boundary fence and existing vegetation. As the appellant points out, public views of the listed building and its front garden, which are primarily from the northeast, would be largely unaffected. Consequently, the positive contribution of Crickfield Farm to the character and qualities of the CA would remain unchanged. Therefore, the proposal would have a neutral effect on the CA, with its character and appearance preserved. A lack of harm in this regard, however, does not alter my conclusion in relation to the listed building.
18. The site falls within the Green Belt. The Council raises no objection insofar as the effect of the proposal on the Green Belt is concerned and I have no reason to reach a different view. Once complete, the proposal would provide additional storage space, ancillary accommodation and a covered fuel storage

area. However, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified in relation to the main issue.

**Conclusion**

19. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Gary Deane*

INSPECTOR