

REFERENCE NO - 18/506065/FULL		
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Conversion and erection of a side extension including raising the roof height of existing building to create a detached dwelling with associated garden and parking.		
ADDRESS Former Pumping Station Corner Of Dean Street And Workhouse Lane East Farleigh Kent ME15 OPR		
RECOMMENDATION REFUSE PERMISSION for the reason as set out in Section 8.		
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed alteration and extensions to the existing rural building involves major reconstruction, thus does not comply with the conversion of rural buildings policy DM31. • The application has failed to demonstrate through the provision of arboricultural information that the development will not cause immediate harm or impact upon the long term health of the row of substantial Poplar trees at the boundary of the site which make a significant contribution to the visual appearance and character of the streetscene and countryside generally. • The site is outside of any settlement as defined in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017, and the proposal would result in the creation of an unsustainable form of housing development where future occupants would be reliant on the use of the private motor car. 		
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE East Farleigh Parish Council recommends approval of the application and requested that the application is reported to the Planning Committee if Officers are minded to recommend refusal.		
WARD Coxheath And Hunton	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL East Farleigh	APPLICANT LPZ Property AGENT Designscape Consultancy Limited
TARGET DECISION DATE 28/02/19		PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 31/12/18

Relevant Planning History

App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
09/2292	Planning application for the change of use of water pumping station to office use with associated external alterations	Refused	30/06/2010
	<p>The reasons for this refusal are:</p> <p><i>1. The proposed development in its rural location, within the defined countryside away from village facilities would result in an unjustified and unsustainable form of economic development that would encourage greater dependency on the car as a mode of transport which would be detrimental to the characteristics of the surrounding countryside, contrary to policies CC1, CC6 and C4 of the The South East Plan 2009, policies ENV28 and ENV44 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 and advice given in Planning Policy Statement 4, Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, 2009.</i></p> <p><i>2. The proposed development by virtue of the introduction of conflicting traffic movements on Dean Street/Workhouse Lane junction, generated by the proposed use of the site and exacerbated by the inadequate visibility splays on either side of the vehicle access and the absence of a suitable vehicle turning area within the site to enable a vehicle to enter and leave the highway in forward gear would be detrimental to highway safety on Dean Street and</i></p>		

	<p><i>Workhouse Lane, contrary to policies CC1 and CC6 of the South East Plan 2009 and policies ENV28, ENV44 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000.</i></p> <p><i>3. In the absence of details justifying the size of the proposed insertion of the new windows in the west elevation facing Dean Street, the proposed alterations would harm the recessive character of the rural building and the character of the surrounding countryside contrary to policies CC1, CC6 and C4 of The south East Plan 2009 and policies ENV28 and ENV44 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000.</i></p>		
04/1384	Change of use of existing pumping station to residential dwelling including extension to building	Refused and dismissed on appeal (Appendix 1- Appeal Decision)	25/08/2004
	<p>The reasons for this refusal are:</p> <p><i>"1. The proposal, by virtue of the lack of off-street parking facilities, would be likely to lead to parking on the highway which would be prejudicial to highways safety and the free flow of traffic, contrary to policy ENV45 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000;</i></p> <p><i>2. The building is of insufficient architectural and/or historic merit to justify retention for residential use and the conversion of this building to a dwelling would therefore be detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to policies ENV45(b) and ENV28 of the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000".</i></p>		
02/0898	Change of use and conversion of existing pumping station to holiday cottage including an extension to the building	Refused and dismissed on appeal (Appendix 2- Appeal Decision)	30/08/2002
	<p>The reason for refusal is:</p> <p>1. The proposed would be detrimental to the free flow of traffic and general conditions of highway safety on the neighbouring highway contrary to policy DMV44(5) of the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000.</p>		

MAIN REPORT

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 1.01 The site consists of a vacant former pumping station, within a site of some 180 sq.m (0.04 acres). The site is located on the junction of Dean Street and Workhouse Lane, and approximately 500m to the north of the village settlement boundary of Coxheath.
- 1.02 The site is highly visible located on the outer side of the road bend in Dean Street and on the north east side of the Workhouse Lane/Dean Street junction. The main longest building elevation is orientated towards Dean Street with the shorter side elevation facing Workhouse Lane. With a rise in ground level, the main part of the application site and the existing building is raised above the Dean Street carriageway.

- 1.03 On the opposite (south west) corner of the Workhouse Lane/Dean Street junction there is a substantial fall in ground level with only glimpses of neighbouring house roofs visible through boundary landscaping. In the west on the opposite side of Dean Street is open land with a post and rail boundary fence. There are no pedestrian pavements on the highway close to the site.
- 1.04 The existing building is single storey with a pitched gabled roof and a roof ridge height of about 4m. The building has a footprint of 4.2m x 6.5m and is constructed in yellow stock brick with concrete rendered panels to the front and a green concrete tiled roof. High level fenestration is provided to both the end walls of the building. The existing building sits close to the rear corner of the site with a floor area of around 28 sq.m.
- 1.05 The site is within the open countryside as designated in the adopted Local Plan. The site is bounded to the side and rear by fields, separated by a 2m high close-boarded fence and a number of tall poplar trees. The site has remnants of a low hedge to its frontage along Workhouse Lane and Dean Street

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The application was described on the application form as the 'conversion' of this rural building to a single dwellinghouse. The proposed works include the erection of a 4 metre side extension, and raising the roof ridge height to provide an extra level of accommodation with an overall increased roof ridge height of 5.4m. The proposal also includes the provision of associated garden land and car parking.
- 2.02 The external changes to the building include the insertion of three sets of patio door width picture windows to the front elevation, with the middle two storey set crossing both the ground and first floor. A set of three double hung windows would be inserted on the first floor of both side elevations with a rooflight at the rear
- 2.03 The new building would provide 2-bedrooms, a living/dining room, kitchen, shower and toilet with a floor area of about 88 sq.m (existing building 28 square metres). The building would be constructed with brick and white weatherboarding on the first floor. The windows would be grey colour aluminium/uPVC.
- 2.04 The proposal would provide one off-street parking space with a turning area to the front of the property accessed via the existing access from Dean Street. The proposal would also provide a small side garden.

3. POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017: Policies SS1, SP17, DM1, DM3, DM23, DM30, DM31

4. LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

Local Residents:

- 4.01 5 representations received from local residents raising the following (summarised) issues
- The site is on a road junction and on a hazardous bend with numerous traffic accidents
 - Inadequate provision of off-street parking
 - The proposed vehicle ingress and egress is unsafe
 - The proposed development is too modern, unrecognisable from the original development, the increase in volume and mass is excessive, and not in keeping with local area

5. CONSULTATIONS

(Please note that summaries of consultation responses are set out below with the response discussed in more detail in the main report where considered necessary)

East Farleigh Parish Council

- 5.01 Wish to see this application approved and if necessary to go to Planning Committee. Members noted neighbour's concerns over access, but recognised the conditions imposed by KCC Highways in this respect.

KCC Highways

- 5.02 Raises no objection subject to conditions, and confirm a large car can successfully turn on the property to egress onto the highway in a forward gear.

6. APPRAISAL

Main Issues

- 6.01 The key issues for consideration relate to:
- Principle of development
 - Principle of conversion
 - Landscape impact
 - Parking and highways safety
 - Previous refusal for a residential development

Principle of development

- 6.02 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan states that the Maidstone urban area will be the principle focus for development with the secondary focus being rural service centres. The policy also allows for some development within some larger villages.
- 6.03 The application site is located in the open countryside (policy SP17 is considered below). The site is located outside the urban area, the rural service centres and the larger villages as designated in the adopted local plan.
- 6.04 Whilst the site is located as the crow flies about 500m away from the local plan designated 'larger village', of Coxheath, the actual route along the road would be 800 metres to a kilometre. In addition to the distance, the roads leading to the facilities in Coxheath do not have footways and so are not conducive to pedestrian use.
- 6.05 Although there is a bus stop opposite to the site, the service is infrequent. It is considered that for these reasons future occupiers of the dwelling would be reliant on the use of private vehicle for their daily needs. As such, this site does not represent a sustainable location where further residential development would readily be supported by planning policy and as the Council can demonstrate a five year housing supply it is not reliant on windfall sites in the countryside to meet current housing needs.

Principle of Conversion

- 6.06 Policy SP17 of the Local Plan deals with general development proposal within the countryside. It states that development proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless they accord with other policies in the plan and they will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.
- 6.07 One of the main issues is to consider whether the proposed development would comply with DM31 which supports the conversion of rural buildings in circumstances where the criteria listed in the policy have been met. The criteria as set out in policy DM31 are considered in turn below:

The building is of permanent, substantial and sound construction and is capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;

- 6.08 The proposal involves a 4m wide side extension, the raising of the roof height to provide an additional storey, and the insertion of a substantial amount of fenestration to the front and side elevations.
- 6.09 When taken all together, the works to the building would result in an increase in floor area by nearly 200% (from 28 sq.m to 88 sq.m) with little of the existing building fabric retained. In addition, the proposal would introduce new materials, such as grey colour aluminium window frame and weatherboarding, to the original brick building. In summary, as the proposal involves major construction works it does not comply with this criterion in policy DM31.

The building should be of a form, bulk, scale and design which takes account of and reinforces landscape character

- 6.10 The building is situated on a prominent corner at the junction of Dean Street and Workhouse Lane and is seen against a rural background. The site located on the bend is at the end of an important long vista when travelling northeast along Dean Street
- 6.11 The existing modest simple building is seen against the row of tall poplar trees and the open field opposite which provides a rural open character. Although there is housing to the south and east, these properties do not front the main roads; they are sited on lower ground and are largely screened by tall hedges and trees.
- 6.12 The proposed change in appearance from a small modest rural utility building to an extended two-storey dwelling with the inevitable domestic paraphernalia on this prominent site would have a marked and detrimental impact in views of this rural landscape.

Alterations proposed as part of the conversion should be in keeping with the landscape and building character in terms of materials used, design and form;

- 6.13 The existing former pumping station building has a modest utilitarian character with small high level windows in the two end walls. The building is of a scale and appearance that does not overly dominant the streetscene and the existing rural character.
- 6.14 The proposal involves building extensions that will increase the length of the existing 6.4 metre long front elevation by 4 metres and increase the roof ridge form 4 metres high to 5.4 metres high.
- 6.15 The proposed large windows at the front and side elevation of the building are disproportionate to the building scale. The increase in roof height, excessive increase in massing and volume and the introduction of new building materials; will change this unassuming recessive existing character to a prominent obtrusive building. It is considered that the new building will be out of character with the appearance and landscape of the area.

There is sufficient room in the curtilage of the building to park the vehicles of those will live there without detriment to the visual amenity of the countryside

- 6.16 The proposed hardstanding for the parking and turning area at the front of the building would result in the loss of the existing soft landscape fronting Dean Street. The loss of the soft landscape at this prominent location would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the countryside.

A proposal should demonstrate that every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable business re-use for the building;

6.17 With reference to planning history for the site, there have been two refused applications involving a change of use to a holiday cottage (ref:02/0898) and to an office use (ref:09/2292). These applications were refused on the grounds that the proposals were in an unsustainable location, in relation to highway safety, a lack of off-street parking (no street space for a one bedroom dwelling), and that alterations were detrimental to the character and appearance of the countryside.

6.18 Whilst the current application does not include any marketing details for an alternative business use, the refused application for a holiday let is considered to demonstrate an attempt to find an alternative business re-use.

Sufficient land around the building is required to provide a reasonable level of outdoor space for the occupants, and the outdoor space provided is in harmony with the character of its setting.

6.19 The pattern of development in the vicinity is characterised by open fields. The residential dwellings to the south are mostly contained within large plots with large front and rear garden.

6.20 In contrast, the proposal would provide a small south-facing garden with a narrow gap to the rear and the side boundaries. The frontage would be mainly hard paved for parking and turning area. The amenity/garden space that would result from the proposed development would be at odds with the general spacious character of the area, and the visual harm would be more significant given its prominent and highly visible site location. As a consequence of the prominent location any attempt at providing privacy for future occupants with higher boundary treatments would be highly visible and result in a detrimental visual impact.

Landscape impact

6.21 The proposed development, which involves side and roof extension and hard surfaces, is sited approximately 2m away from the row of poplar trees at the boundary of the site. Although these trees have no special landscape designation, they are very substantial and form an important feature in the landscape.

6.22 No details relating to these prominent trees have been submitted with the application other than the acknowledgement of their existence on the application form and plans.

6.23 In the absence of any arboricultural assessment by the applicant the council's Tree Officer has advised of the strong possibility that the proposed extensions in the Root Protection Area (RPA) of the trees could lead to the death or destabilisation of these trees.

Parking and highway safety

6.24 The site has an historical vehicle access from Dean Street, and this access is to be used to serve the proposed house. The submitted plans shows that adequate space can be provided within the site for the parking and turning of large vehicle to enable access and egress onto the highway in a forward gear.

6.25 KCC Highways has confirmed there has been no reported vehicular collisions associated within the access or the Dean Street/ Workhouse Lane junction in the past five year period. There has been a previous withdrawn application (15/502938/FULL) for a singular dwelling for this location which was deemed acceptable in term of highway safety. KCC Highways has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions.

- 6.26 The current proposal is for a two bedroom house, and includes a single off street parking space and turning area. This is considered sufficient for the proposed house in this location where the minimum standard would be for 1.5 off street spaces. Details are given below of an earlier application refused on the grounds that no off street parking was provided for a one bedroom dwelling.

Previous refusal for a residential development

- 6.27 An earlier planning application (04/1384) for the 'conversion' of the building into a one bedroom dwellinghouse included a front porch extension, and the insertion of two front windows. This proposal did not include any off street parking.
- 6.28 A subsequent appeal against the council's refusal of permission was dismissed. In assessing the visual impact of the conversion and extension, the Inspector found that the existing former pumping station had an unassuming, recessive and utilitarian character with small high level windows in the end walls and a central doorway.
- 6.29 The Inspector found that the proposed porch extension would draw attention to the building and would appear as a relatively large and somewhat incongruous addition to such a small building. Consequently, a change in appearance from a small rural utility building to a dwelling with the inevitable domestic paraphernalia would have a marked and adverse impact in views of this rural area on the edge of Coxheath.
- 6.30 Although the scheme was refused in 2005, the landscape and character of the site and its locality is relatively the same. The view of the Inspector and the dismissal of this earlier appeal is still valid and carries weight into the assessment of this current application. As such, given the extensions proposed now are substantially larger the visual harm previously identified will be significantly greater.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.01 The site is outside any settlement boundary and in an unsustainable location for new residential accommodation and there is no requirement for this single house as the Council can demonstrate a five year housing supply. The principle of the provision of a new dwelling on the site is not supported by Government guidance in the NPPF or Adopted Local Plan Policies.
- 7.02 The proposal involves major construction work with an increase in the scale, mass and height, of the building, insertion of large windows, and new external materials which would result in a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside. The proposed development would have a detrimental visual impact on the existing modest pumping station building in this prominent location, visual impact on the streetscene and the wider open rural character of the area.
- 7.03 In the absence of arboricultural details the application has failed to demonstrate that the development would not have a detrimental impact on the row of substantial Poplar trees at the boundary of the site which make a significant contribution to the visual appearance and character of the streetscene and countryside.
- 7.04 The proposal hereby submitted have are no overriding material considerations to justify approval that outweigh the harm identified. Refusal is therefore recommended.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE planning permission for the following reasons:

- 1) The proposal involving major construction works with little of the existing structure retained would destroy the character and appearance of the original former pumping station building with the excessive increase of scale, mass and height, the insertion of large windows, and introduction of new external materials resulting in a

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harmful impact on the character and appearance of the streetscene and the countryside, thereby being contrary to Policies SP17, DM1, DM30 and DM31 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017.

- 2) The application has failed to demonstrate that the submitted development including the proposed extensions and hardstanding would not result in immediate or long term harm to health of the row of trees at the eastern and northern boundary of the site that make a significant contribution to the visual appearance and character of the streetscene and countryside contrary to Policies SP17, DM1, DM3, and DM30 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017.
- 3) The site located outside of any settlement as defined in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017 would result an unsustainable housing development in the countryside where future occupants would be reliant on private vehicle use for their daily needs to gain access to goods and services and, as such, would be contrary to policies SS1 and SP17 of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2017 and guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.

INFORMATIVES

The following plans were considered in the assessment of this planning application:

Site Location Plan
Proposed Block Plan, No. 373/100
Proposed Site Layout Plan, No. 373/101
Proposed Floor and Elevation Plans, No. 373/102
Existing Block Plan, No. 373/75
Existing Site Layout Plan, No. 373/76
Existing Floor and Elevation Plans, No. 373/77
Design and Access Statement
All received on 22 November 2018

Case Officer: Michelle Kwok