



## **HERITAGE STATEMENT**

**106 Bexley Road, Erith**

**THA Ref: 2021/5280(b)  
June 2021**

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## Introduction

**1.0**

- 1.1 The Heritage Advisory has been commissioned to undertake this Heritage Statement by Mr. P. Kang. The document addresses proposals for No. 106 Bexley Road, Erith (**Figures 1 & 2**) and turns first to the regulatory framework specific to the site and surrounding area, before going on to consider the historic and architectural evolution of both the site and wider locale. It then outlines proposals for the extension of approved submission *19/02740/FULM*, in accordance with relevant national and local policy.



**Figure 1: The Application Site**



**Figure 2: Site Location Plan (Google Maps Extract)**

- 1.2 Historically, activity in the locale is considerable, with settlement being evidenced there since at least the Saxon period, but probably earlier. Later, following a short period as a riverside resort, the emphasis of the town was to eventually shift to that of an industrial centre, this given its docks and proximity to both the sea and central London. Erith was to suffer heavily from

bombing during the Second World War however, not only due to its location on the Thames, but also its nearness to the Royal Arsenal. This war damage coupled with a decline in local trade resulted in its major redevelopment over the 1960s.

- 1.3 The planning history of the site itself is also considerable, however, more recently proposals have comprised an apartment block of seventeen units, presented in a modern idiom. Whilst recommended for approval, the scheme was refused at committee due to its contemporary design ethos, scale and massing. As a result – following further discussion with officers – a new scheme was then forwarded. This comprised a lower number of only fourteen units commensurate with significant reductions in scale, massing etc.
- 1.4 As a part of this process, no. 106 was added to the list of *Locally Listed Buildings and Structures of Architectural or Historic Interest in the London Borough of Bexley* on the 06 February 2018. The significance of the structure is principally found to reside with its *'local historical significance, primarily the historical association with Samuel Strickland, a Victorian merchant who played a significant role in the economic life of the area'* (Report to Councillor Linda Bailey, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth – 2 February 2018 re: Local List Addition – Hastings Villa).
- 1.5 The form and detailed design of the fourteen-unit scheme was therefore more referential than previously, and as such more reflective of the existing structure. This scheme was nevertheless refused in March 2018, with over development and the loss of the heritage asset being cited as the principal reasons for refusal, albeit the standard of accommodation was also a reason.
- 1.6 As a result, the fourteen-unit scheme was revised and an application for *'alterations and extensions to existing building to provide 13 apartments comprising 4 x 1 bed and 9 x 2 bed units with associated parking and amenity space'* was approved by the London Borough of Bexley on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2020. Given this recent approval, the ultimately acceptable principle of development at this site has been established, and this submission seeks approval for the minor addition of units to the rear.

- 1.7 Located on the north side of Bexley Road, no. 106 stands in distinct contrast with many - if not most - of its immediate neighbours, which comprise a wide variety of structures dating from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth. This contrast is most apparent should the more typically Victorian use of land be considered, where the parcel is large and the siting, generous.
- 1.8 Proposals have not only sought to respond directly to the narrative of the site, thereby reinforcing '*the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*' (paragraph 131, NPPF), but in view of wider planning objectives, seek a more sustainable use of land in the provision of additional housing for Bexley.
- 1.9 In accordance with *Paragraph 189* of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (March 2012), this Heritage Statement describes the significance of the heritage asset(s) with potential to be affected in a manner proportionate to both the assets' importance, and an understanding of the potential impact of proposals upon that significance.

## Regulatory Framework

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**2.0**

### Legislation

- 2.1 Legislation relating to the historic environment is contained in the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* (the *Act*). However, the application site is only locally listed and therefore no sections of the *Act* would be relevant or apply.

### National Guidance

- 2.2 The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF, March 2012) emphasises a '*presumption in favour*' of sustainable development i.e. defined by the document as '*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'.
- 2.3 This '*presumption in favour*' has been implemented to speed up decision making and encourage more development. As regards heritage assets, it is emphasised that their conservation under such circumstances is to be achieved '*in a manner appropriate to their significance*'. Key paragraphs from the document are summarised below.
- 2.4 *Paragraph 185* outlines a requirement for local planning authorities to set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, taking account of putting heritage assets to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the wider public benefits of the conservation of the historic environment; the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and draw on the overall contribution made by the historic environment to local character and a sense of place.
- 2.5 *Paragraph 192* states that in determining planning applications local authorities should take account of:

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

### **Local Policy**

- 2.6 The *London Borough of Bexley's* Development Plan includes the *Mayor's London Plan* and the *Local Plan*. Within the *Local Plan* the *Core Strategy* (adopted 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2012) sets out a number of policies that are of relevance from a heritage perspective. Relevant policies from the *Core Strategy* are summarised as follows:
- 2.7 **Policy CS01 Achieving sustainable development** states that:  
*The Council will seek to achieve sustainable development, in line with the vision set out in Bexley's Sustainable Community Strategy, to create a 'strong, sustainable and cohesive community', in order to provide people equal access to a better quality of life, protect the environment, promote the local economy and encourage an active and healthy lifestyle.*
- 2.7 **Policy CS19 Heritage and archaeology** sets out that:  
*The Council will manage its heritage and archaeological assets, whilst seeking opportunities to make the most of these assets, including adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change. This will enhance the local sense of place and underpin the revitalisation and development of the borough, including promoting the visitor economy. This will be achieved by:*
- A. *promoting the borough's heritage assets, such as Danson Mansion, Hall Place and Gardens, Crossness Beam Engine House and Red House;*



- B. reviewing the status of existing and identifying new heritage and archaeological assets;*
- C. conserving and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, their setting, and the wider historic environment, including statutorily listed buildings; locally listed buildings of architectural or historic interest, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens, and archaeological sites;*
- D. protecting heritage assets from development that is likely to adversely impact on the significance, integrity, character or appearance of an asset or its setting;*
- E. supporting historic restoration schemes through partnership working and seeking funding to enhance heritage and archaeological assets in an appropriate and sympathetic manner; and*
- F. retaining, in situ, archaeological evidence within sites, wherever possible.*
- G. Where archaeological evidence cannot be retained, the appropriate levels of archaeological investigation and recording should be undertaken prior to the redevelopment of the site.*

2.8 Within *The London Plan (March 2021)*, **Policy HC1 Heritage conservation and growth** identifies that:

- A. Boroughs should, in consultation with Historic England, local communities and other statutory and relevant organisations, develop evidence that demonstrates a clear understanding of London's historic environment. This evidence should be used for identifying, understanding, conserving, and enhancing the historic environment and heritage assets, and improving access to, and interpretation of, the heritage assets, landscapes and archaeology within their area.*
- B. Development Plans and strategies should demonstrate a clear understanding of the historic environment and the heritage values of sites or areas and their relationship with their surroundings. This knowledge should be used to inform the effective integration of London's heritage in regenerative change by:*
  - 1) setting out a clear vision that recognises and embeds the role of heritage in place-making*
  - 2) utilising the heritage significance of a site or area in the planning and design process*
  - 3) integrating the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings with innovative and creative contextual architectural responses that contribute to their significance and sense of place*

- 4) *delivering positive benefits that conserve and enhance the historic environment, as well as contributing to the economic viability, accessibility and environmental quality of a place, and to social wellbeing.*
- C. *Development proposals affecting heritage assets, and their settings, should conserve their significance, by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.*
- D. *Development proposals should identify assets of archaeological significance and use this information to avoid harm or minimise it through design and appropriate mitigation. Where applicable, development should make provision for the protection of significant archaeological assets and landscapes. The protection of undesignated heritage assets of archaeological interest equivalent to a scheduled monument should be given equivalent weight to designated heritage assets.*
- E. *Where heritage assets have been identified as being At Risk, boroughs should identify specific opportunities for them to contribute to regeneration and place-making, and they should set out strategies for their repair and re- use.*

### **Other Relevant Guidance**

- 2.9 Of equal relevance is English Heritage's (now Historic England) 2008 document *Conservation Principles: Policy and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment, 2008*. At paragraph 140, p.59, this states that "*The greater the range and strength of heritage values attached to a place, the less opportunity there may be for change, but few places are so sensitive that they, or their settings present no opportunities for change*".

## Historic Background

**3.0**

- 3.1 Prehistoric settlement at Erith is evidenced as early as the first century AD. The name Erith is traceable to the Saxon period and has been variously interpreted to mean '*old haven, muddy harbour or gravelly landing place*'. The earliest recorded reference is in a Latin charter of 695 however, which records a granting of land at Erith by the Bishop of the East Saxons. The wider locale was then known as *Lesnes* or *Lessness*, which, following the Conquest was assumed by Bishop Odo. 1315 saw a Royal Charter granted to hold a market at Erith each Thursday.
- 3.2 Emergence of the settlement must in the main be seen to be attributable to its location on the Thames and for much of its history, Erith remained a modest riverside port. Its relative increase in profile was in turn attributable to Henry VIII's opening of a naval dockyard there, where his warship the *Henri Grace a Dieu* was fitted out in 1515. The 1538 death of George Talbot, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury saw Henry grant Erith - alias *Lysnes* - to Talbot's widow, Elizabeth, '*with all its members and appurtenances, to hold in capite, by knight's service*'.
- 3.3 By 1776, the market had been discontinued and in 1797, Edward Hasted described Erith as comprising '*one small street of houses, which leads to the water side*', whilst further noting two annual fairs at Ascension and Michaelmas. In 1831, the population stood at 1533 and in 1840 as being '*composed chiefly of two streets, one leading down to the water side, the other branching off to the left towards the church*'. By 1849, the town had emerged as a riverside resort and its pier and accompanying hotel catered for the many day-trippers that visited the town on Thames pleasure boats or via the railway.
- 3.4 This coincided with the town's growth as an industrial centre, principally due to the presence of the docks and its simultaneous proximity to both the open sea and central London. It was during the Victorian era more generally that Erith was to develop

its industrial and associated residential focus. The railway allowed easy access to the City from Erith for many wealthy potential residents and local landowners were to begin developing much, if not all their land, to fulfil this need. Easy access by both river and rail brought a high number of industries to Erith and the range of manufacturers located there in the nineteenth century was both varied and extensive.



**Figure 3: Erith, 1869**

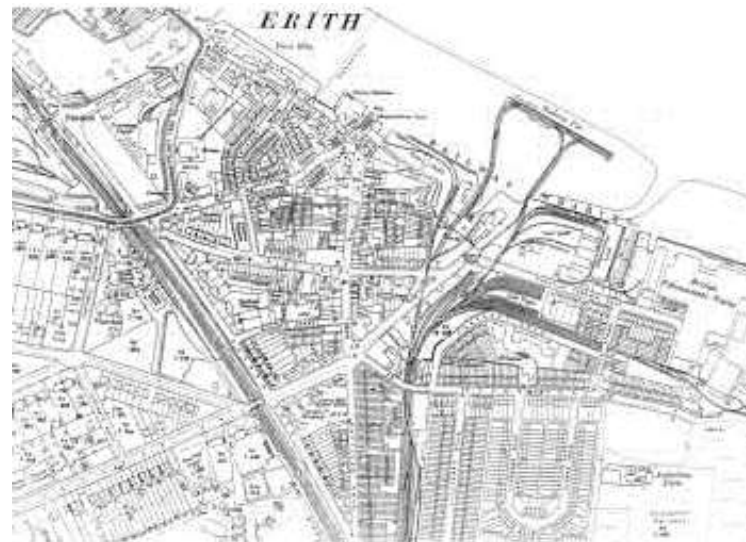
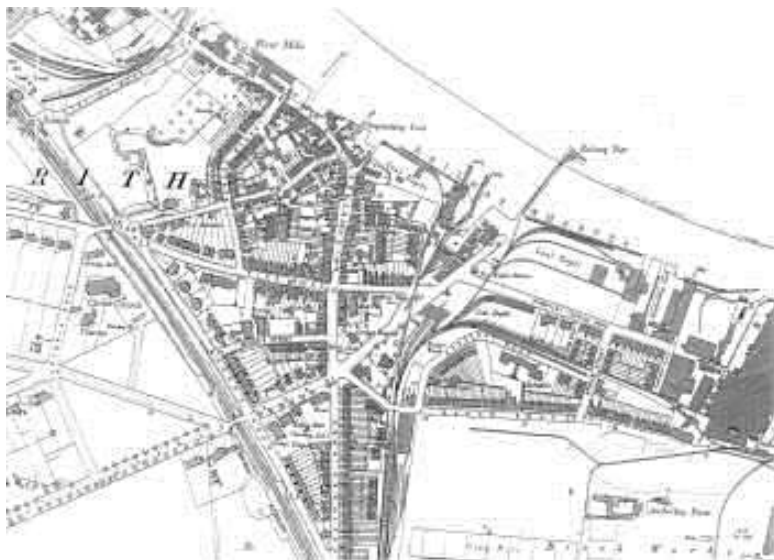


**Figure 4: Erith, 1897**

- 3.5 These included steam engines, armaments, stoneware and mining equipment, in addition to the provision of bricks and loam from local pits. In 1864, Erith Iron Works was established in Anchor Bay by William Anderson. From 1881, Erith hosted a large cable works founded by William Callender. A Local Government Act of 1894 resulted in the founding of Erith Urban District

(which in turn was to become the Municipal Borough of Erith in 1938). During the First World War, Erith was an important manufactory of guns and ammunition, principally due to the large Vickers site.

- 3.6 The Second World War saw extensive bomb damage at Erith, principally due to its location near the Royal Arsenal. 572 properties were destroyed and 10,904 damaged, 750 of these, severely. In part due to this and in part due to a tandem decline in local trade, Erith saw major redevelopment over the 1960s. Many older buildings were lost but some original townscape remains, from the White Hart in the High Street through to St. John's Church in West Street. Much of this new development was of a brutalist ethos, typifying the many other overspill estates evolved in this period as a means of clearing areas of slum.



**Figure 5: Erith, 1910****Figure 6: Erith, 1933**

- 3.7 Principal among this change, was redevelopment of the town centre under the Erith Redevelopment Plan, a controversial plan approved by the Minister for Housing and Local Government in 1964. Previous post-war decline had been attributed to poor access and a more generally poor town-centre plan and/or layout. The Redevelopment Plan's main theme was the demolition of almost the whole of the town centre and its replacement by a new, modern locus incorporating both retail and residential development.





Figure 7: Erith, 1954



Figure 8: Erith, 1961

- 3.8 In 1996, Bexley Council issued its Erith Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan which recognised that the Redevelopment Plan of the 1960s did not achieve its objectives. The new plan again seeks to revitalise the centre of Erith, particularly in terms of its commercial buoyancy.

## The Heritage Asset(s)

**4.0**

- 4.1 As indicated, the application site does not reside in a conservation area and is not a nationally listed building or designated heritage asset otherwise. Its recognition as a locally listed building is recent (February 2018) and explicitly attributable to proposals being forwarded to redevelop the site. At *para. 2 of the Report to Councillor Linda Bailey, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth – 2 February 2018 re: Local List Addition – Hastings Villa* this is confirmed in that:

*'The property was nominated by Strategic Planning and Growth as an addition to the Local List in December 2017. The nomination was made in response to a planning application (17/02255/FULM) which seeks to demolish the existing property and replace it with a part two/part three storey building comprising 14 residential units with associated parking and amenity areas'.*



Figure 9: 106 Bexley Road



4.2 Irrespective of the fact that the property was not found to be of such value previous to the emergence of proposals for its redevelopment, the site is now included on the local list; now being found by the LPA to meet the criteria for inclusion, and now considered to be of *'historic and architectural significance ... (that) ... makes a contribution to the townscape'*. The ensuing justification for its inclusion on the local list is considerable and seeks to respond to the associated criteria set by Bexley, as follows:

*'Buildings can only be included on the Local List if it demonstrates significance under any of the following criteria: age; rarity; aesthetic interest; group value; archaeological interest; historical association; designed landscape interest; landmark status; or social or communal value. A building's contribution to the townscape or landscape is also considered'*.

4.3 The background to this process in relation to no. 106 is set out as follows:

*'Historical research was undertaken by historians at the Bexley Local Studies & Archives Centre. A number of primary sources were used, including Ordnance Survey maps, property sales documents, and demographic records including the Census and local directories, amongst others. Secondary sources included a Local History Note previously produced by Bexley Local Studies & Archives Centre'*.

4.4 This research is understood by the LPA to have *'revealed local historical significance, primarily the historical association with Samuel Strickland, a Victorian merchant who played a significant role in the economic life of the era'*. At first glance, such an association is of little note, should the fact that the house would have had to have been built and inhabited by *someone*, and that this was a merchant - given the emphasis of the locale and its use in the Victorian period - is to some extent unsurprising and to be expected in a villa of this type. It is not of particularly *significant* interest however.

- 4.5 Whilst obviously endowed with some, limited interest i.e. historic interest given its mid-nineteenth century provenance; architectural interest given its 'villa' aesthetic; and evidential interest due to association with Strickland, the host structure cannot be considered so significant that it cannot accommodate change. That this is the case is evidenced by the approval of recent submission *19/02740/FULM*, whereby planning permission was granted for extensions and other alterations to the existing building.
- 4.6 Proposals for this earlier application comprise an increase in the existing building's footprint by means of both rear and side extensions. Furthermore, the existing façade was retained with extensions to the west deliberately replicating the scale, massing, features, materiality and detailing of the existing front elevation, in turn ensuring the residential use and historic approach to the site was retained. To the rear, proposed built form encroached into back garden space, however this was of a demonstrably lesser ridge height than the front elevation, thus ensuring fundamental subservience and no perceptible change in views from the wider environment.
- 4.7 Given the account set out above, it is demonstrable that the principle of development across this site is ultimately acceptable. Provision of a high-quality, considered, and referential design has ensured the long-term committed ownership and inherent preservation associated with such a scenario. Otherwise, approved proposals accord with *paragraph 185* of the *NPPF* where the site as a whole has been put to viable use, consistent with its conservation.

## Assessment of Proposals

**5.0**

- 5.1 As outlined above, an application for *'alterations and extensions to existing building to provide 13 apartments comprising 4 x 1 bed and 9 x 2 bed units with associated parking and amenity space'* was approved by the London Borough of Bexley on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2020.
- 5.2 As such, this application seeks permission for the minor addition of three units to the rear of the existing building; thus ensuring the logical continuation of proposed built form. The building's history (primarily its more recent planning history) has been assessed in order to propose appropriate design solutions, configured to ensure the application site's preservation, enhancement and continued contribution toward the wider streetscene.
- 5.3 Externally, the design, appearance and scale of proposals have responded to both the proportions of surrounding built form, and that resulting from the scheme already approved for the site. As such, it is not proposed to extend development any further into the rear of this, than already approved. Such a design approach ensures that the overall plot remains a generously configured parcel of land with respect to open space.
- 5.3 New built form is also proposed to surmount the existing rear projection, in conjunction with a minor infill, resulting in the logical, continued upward extension of built form. Although rising to 1 and 1/2 storeys above that already approved, the proposed scheme will still remain significantly lower than the ridge height of the host structure.
- 5.4 This design approach not only results in both an appropriate subservience when considered in conjunction with the host building, but also limited perceptibility from throughout the wider environs of the application site more generally, particularly from within the public realm (**Figures 10 & 11**).

- 5.5 The appearance of new built form can also be seen to have - demonstrably - taken reference from the architectural forms, detailing and materiality of the approved scheme. Therefore, the roof projection will reflect that directly extending from the centre of the host structure, with a lower ridge height that results in not merely a tiered composition, but reduction in the perception of built form and associated mass.
- 5.6 The scheme's proposed materiality (comprising brick, weatherboarding and slate roofs etc.) results in an aesthetic cohesion that - when considered against the approved scheme - will ensure an ultimately successful assimilation into the application site and an appropriate extension of built form occupying this.



**Figure 10: Approved Elevation**



**Figure 11: Proposed Elevation**

- 5.7 Internally, proposals will introduce three additional units. At basement level, access will again be provided to flats 4 & 5, with this space now providing two bedrooms, a bathroom and lounge/kitchen /dining for flat 4, and two bedrooms (one with en-

suite), bathroom and lounge/kitchen/dining for flat 5. At ground floor, access to flats 8 & 9 will be provided with flat 8 comprising one bedroom, bathroom, and lounge/kitchen/dining and flat 9 providing two bedrooms (one with en-suite), bathroom, and lounge/kitchen/dining. At first floor, an additional unit - flat 14 - will be created, with the rear extension allowing for the provision of three bedrooms (one with en-suite), bathroom, and lounge/kitchen/dining. A terrace is also proposed for flat 14.

- 5.8 Given such an account, current proposals have sought to ensure that changes in the perception of the site and its built form (particularly following the completion of the already approved scheme) would be negligible, particularly given the proposed implementation of a highly referential and ultimately subservient rear addition.
- 5.9 With respect to relevant guidance contained within the *NPPF (paragraph 185)*, proposals have therefore taken account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset, as has the potential for putting the existing structure to viable use, consistent with its conservation (*paragraph 192*).

## Summary

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**6.0**

- 6.1 Historically, activity in the locale was considerable, with settlement being evidenced there since at least the Saxon period, but probably much earlier. Later, following a short period as a riverside resort, the nineteenth century emphasis of the town was to eventually shift to that of an industrial centre, this given its docks and proximity to both the sea and central London.
- 6.2 Erith was to suffer heavily from bombing during the Second World War however, not only due to its location on the Thames, but also its nearness to the Royal Arsenal. This war damage coupled with a decline in local trade resulted in its major redevelopment over the 1960s.
- 6.3 The application site and resulting nature of this obviously derives from such an historic and/or architectural context and as such, presents an affluent mid nineteenth century villa of the merchant class or similar, although it is almost certain that development of the villa was attributable to a local merchant called Strickland. As such, it has been recognised by the LPA as a *locally listed building*.
- 6.4 The application site was recently subject to an approved scheme, comprising '*alterations and extensions to existing building to provide 13 apartments comprising 4 x 1 bed and 9 x 2 bed units with associated parking and amenity space*' (Ref: 19/02740/FULM). Given this recent approval, the ultimately acceptable principle of development at this site has been established, and as such this submission seeks approval for the minor addition of 3 units to the rear.
- 6.5 Therefore with respect to *paragraph 185* of the *NPPF*, it is considered that '*the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*' has been met, as has the need

to take into account the effect of the proposal upon the *significance of the non-designated heritage asset*, whereby a *balanced judgement* has already been made regarding the ultimate acceptability of development across this site (*paragraph 197*).

- 6.6 In sum, proposals have therefore responded positively to the site, its locale and relevant planning history, by seeking the logical extension of an existing, approved scheme. For this reason, the principle of works are not considered to be at odds with the significance inherent there and as such, no adverse impacts would result upon either the heritage asset or its setting.

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