

Heritage and Planning Statement

Site Location: Worth Farm, The Street, Worth

Proposed: Erection of 2 Dwellings



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1 Introduction

This report will discuss the site and location, details of the proposal and justification, relevant legislation, policies and guidance, identify the significance of any heritage assets, and then evaluate the impact of the proposals on their significance.

The design of the current scheme has been an iterative process, which has been informed by the constraints and opportunities of the site, the needs of the applicant and the national and local policy guidance.

This statement takes into account the advice given by Historic England in their advice note 'Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets' 2019. Additionally, it complies with the requirement set out in paragraph 12.7 of the Draft Dover District Local Plan.

2 Site and Location

Worth Farm is located on the north side of The Street, in Worth, to the east of the village school. The application site, which currently forms part of Worth Farm, lies to the north-west of the Farmhouse. Worth Farm stopped operating as a working farm in the 1970s, and the farmhouse is now used as a single dwelling.

Access to the site is to the left-hand side of the Farmhouse, between the house and the adjoining cottages, and is bounded by a pair of timber gates. Note these would be removed as part of the current proposals to facilitate ease of access to the application site.

The site is generally flat, and contains a number of trees which are identified in the tree survey which accompanies the planning application, (see Figs: 1-6). It currently forms part of the extensive garden for Worth Farm.

Worth Farm is Grade 2 listed and the site falls within the Worth Conservation Area.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

3 Details of the Proposal and Justification

Full details of the proposals are given on the plans accompanying this application, but in summary they include;

The erection of two detached dwellings on land immediately to the north and west of Worth Farmhouse and its farmyard. The land currently forms part of the wider garden for Worth Farm and is laid to grass with a number of trees.

Vehicular access would be through the original farm entrance, between Worth Farm and 1 Worth Farm Cottages. The access is currently gated, but these gates would be removed as

part of the current proposals, in order to facilitate ease of movement both into and from the site.

The proposed houses would be two storeys, of timber frame construction, with brick ground floors, and black feather edged weatherboarding at first floor level, under steeply pitched plain clay tile roofs. The two houses would have bespoke designs but both would have a similar floor area and the provision of 4 bedrooms.

Whilst the houses would have a traditional appearance, using traditional materials, they do not replicate any existing houses in the immediate vicinity, thus adding to the rich architectural diversity in the area, which is an important part of the special character of this part of the conservation area.

Both properties would be accessed via gravel drives with adequate space for 3 parking spaces per unit.

There are a number of trees on the site, as identified by the tree survey accompanying the planning application, and these would all be retained.

The existing southern and western boundaries of the site would be retained, whilst the new eastern and northern boundaries would comprise post and rail stock fencing augmented by indigenous hedge planting.

4 Relevant Legislation, Policies and Guidance

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990: Sections 66(1) and 72(1)

Dover District Local Plan Core Strategy 2010: Policies CP1, DM1

Worth Neighbourhood Plan (Adopted 2015)

Draft Dover District Local Plan (2023)

The submission Draft Local Plan is a material planning consideration in the determination of applications. At submission stage the policies of the draft plan can be afforded some weight, depending on the nature of objections to them and consistency with the NPPF.

Draft policies PM1 (design), HE1 (heritage assets), HE2 (conservation areas), SP4 Residential Windfall Development

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Paragraphs 8, 11, 60,82,83, 126, 130, 134, 194, 195, 197, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203

The National Design Guide 2021

The National Planning Practice Guide

Dover District Heritage Strategy 2013 (updated 2020)

Making Changes to Heritage Assets, 2016: Historic England

The Kent Design Guide (2005)

5 Principle of Development

The starting point for decision making, in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, is the adopted development plan. Decisions should be taken in accordance with policies in the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of the above Acts, the development plan comprises a suite of documents including; the Local Development Framework -Core Strategy 2010 (CS), and the Worth Neighbourhood Development Plan 2014 (WNDP).

The Draft Dover District Local Plan 2023 (DLP), this is now a material consideration in the determination of this application. At this stage in the plan making process (Regulation 20) the policies in the draft plan can be afforded some weight.

The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) is also a material consideration.

Policy DM1 of the CS seeks to restrict development which does not fall within identified urban confines. Policy WDP 02 of the WNDP allows for new development within the settlement confines of Worth, as identified in the plan, however Policy DM1 of the CS would continue to apply to any proposed development outside the settlement confines.

It is acknowledged that the application site lies just outside the village confines, however it is adjacent to the boundary.

The CS is now some 14 years old and it must be acknowledged that Policy DM1 is out of date; it no longer reflects the latest advice on new development in rural areas, as set out in the latest NPPF, and as such Policy DM1 is in tension with the NPPF. In view of this, Policy DM1 of the CS can only carry limited weight.

Paragraph 60 of the NPPF confirms that it is the Governments objective to significantly boost the supply of homes, requiring that a sufficient amount and variety of land come forward to provide an appropriate mix of housing for the local community.

Paragraph 82 of the NPPF highlights the need for planning policies and decisions to be responsive to local circumstances and support housing development that reflect local needs. Paragraph 83 of the same document, highlights the fact that villages should be allowed to grow and thrive especially where this will support local services.

Draft Policy SP4 of the DLP sets out a more flexible approach for dealing with windfall residential developments in rural areas where opportunities for growth at villages are identified, which is more in line with the NPPF. Policy SP4 outlines two categories of

settlement. The first (tier 1) are settlements that are capable of meeting some or all of the daily needs of their inhabitants and are therefore identified as suitable for additional residential development either within the settlement or immediately adjoining the confines. Worth is identified as a tier 1 settlement, where residential development or infilling of a scale that is commensurate with that of the settlement is permitted within or immediately adjoining the boundaries, subject to certain criteria.

In view of the above policy context it is considered that the principle of development in this location is acceptable, subject to meeting certain criteria.

6 Heritage Assets and their Significance

The proposals would have an impact, to a greater or lesser extent, on the setting of Worth Farmhouse, and the character and appearance of the Worth Conservation Area, both of which are classed as designated heritage assets in the NPPF.

The NPPF defines significance as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from the heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting’.

Setting is defined in the Framework as follows:

‘The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.’

It should be noted that paragraph 200 of the NPPF, also states that ‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by the setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’.

Significance of Worth Farmhouse

The house is Grade 2 listed and its list description is as follows;

‘House. Dated 1675. Red brick and plain tiled roof. Two storeys on plinth with plat band. Roof with segmental Dutch gables with convex and concave segmental outline, and stacks to left and right. Regular fenestration of 3 glazing bar sashes on each floor, that to centre on ground in blocked doorway, present entry in rear elevation. Two oval recesses on front elevation, one inscribed E, the other 1675. Oval recess in right gable, GE inscribed: renovated 1928’.

It should be noted that various changes have occurred to the building since it was listed, with the construction of various extensions and the reinstatement of the main entrance door on the front elevation.

The Kent Farmsteads survey, which is referenced in the Dover Heritage Strategy, notes that the original farmstead was a 'loose courtyard' type, but little now survives of the original layout.

In summary the significance of the farmhouse lies in a number of factors including; its visual appearance; the retention of historic fabric and architectural details, particularly its Dutch gables; parts of its historic plan form, together with its location within the village, fronting The Street, on the fringe of the settlement, with open farmland to the north.

Significance of the Worth Conservation Area

The significance of the Worth Conservation Area is a function of a number of interrelated factors including:

1. The large number of historic buildings in the area, several of which are listed;
2. Generally two storey residential buildings with former farmhouses and farm buildings reflecting their links with the farming community;
3. Great variety in the built form in terms of the age of buildings and their appearance;
4. The road network and the juxtaposition of buildings arranged along the streets;
5. A high density of buildings fronting the road network, often located at the back edge of the carriageway, with no formal pavements;
6. Many buildings have large rear gardens, reflecting their rural location;
7. The use of traditional architectural details and materials;
8. The mature landscaping between and around buildings;

These features give the conservation area a strong cohesive character and are all part of its significance as a designated heritage asset, (see Figs: 7-12).



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

7 Impact of the Proposals on the Significance of Designated Heritage Assets

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Act requires that special regard must be given to preserving listed buildings and their settings. Section 72(1) of the same Act requires that special attention shall be paid to preserving the character and appearance of conservation areas.

The NPPF outlines at paragraph 205, that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets (this includes both listed buildings and conservation areas) and the more important the asset the greater weight should be given. Any harm or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. The NPPF, at paragraph 201, requires the local planning authority, when assessing an application, to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal.

Draft policies HE1 and HE2, of the emerging Dover District Local Plan, seek to protect heritage assets and conservation areas, whilst Policy PM1 promotes a high quality of design, and these policies are broadly reflective of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The National Planning Practice Guide, offers more detailed advice on conserving and enhancing the historic environment, and states that ‘The conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance is a core planning principle’. ‘Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every-day use, to as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest’.

Further national guidance is provided by Historic England in ‘Making Changes to Heritage Assets’ February 2016. This provides more detailed guidance on alterations to heritage assets, the aim of which is to ‘recognise and reinforce the historic significance of places, while accommodating the change necessary to ensure that people can continue to use and enjoy them’.

Assessment of the proposals

The overarching aim of the scheme has been to work with and to respect the character and appearance of the conservation area and the wider setting of various listed buildings.

Worth Farm is no longer a working farm, and has not been actively farmed since the 1970s. Worth Farm is now in residential use, as are the majority of the buildings in the surrounding area. The proposed new dwellings would therefore be sympathetic to the prevailing land-use of the area.

All the existing farm outbuildings would be retained, thus preserving the immediate setting of the listed farmhouse.

The grounds of Worth Farm are extensive, and the proposed plots represent a relatively modest portion of the overall area, being located in its south western corner, behind Worth Farm Cottages and Barton Cottage. Given the proposed location of the plots, the separation distance between them and the Worth Farmhouse, and the juxtaposition of buildings in this area, it is considered that the proposal would not be detrimental to the significance of Worth Farmhouse or its setting, or to the wider setting of any other listed buildings in the vicinity of the site.

It is considered that the traditional design of the proposed dwellings would compliment the rural design of buildings in the area. The form and massing of the buildings would be broken up by their ‘U’ shaped footprints; the mixture of traditional materials and the hipped roofscape. It should be noted that the two buildings will have different appearances, as their plan forms are reversed, which will add to the architectural diversity in the area.

This part of the conservation area has a very loose and organic grain, and the proposed plots have been designed to reflect this, thus ensuring that they would not detract from the existing pattern of development. It should be noted that it would be difficult to actually see the buildings from the public realm.

In terms of hard and soft landscaping, the new access drives to each dwelling will be discreetly located away from public view, and will comprise shingle for the drives and the main parking and turning areas. This will provide an appropriate finish for this rural location.

All the existing trees, as identified by the tree survey accompanying this application, will be retained. This will soften the development and aid its integration into its context. As part of the scheme, it is proposed to provide a biodiversity area, along the north-western boundary of the site, as identified on the planning application drawings. This equates to just over 10% of the overall build site and pre-empts the new net gain policy which will be implemented in April 2024. This will comprise a selection of native trees and hedgerows set in an area sown with a wild-flower seed mix.

The south eastern and south western boundaries of the site, which back onto existing development, would remain as existing, whilst the north-western and north-eastern boundaries would comprise post and rail stock fencing with native hedging. The proposed boundary would be entirely appropriate in this rural location.

8 Wider Public Benefits

The development would contribute towards the supply of housing in the district, together with the economic benefits associated with the construction and occupation of the dwellings. It would also help to support local services in the village.

9 Planning Precedents

It is appropriate to consider a similar case to the current planning application, which has recently been determined by Dover District Council, applying the same policy context.

The case is for a detached house and detached garage at Jossenblock Farm in The Street at East Langdon, (Ref; DOV/23/00473), approved on 15/12/2023.

The application site lies within the curtilage of a Grade 2 star listed farmhouse, within a conservation area, outside of, but adjacent to the defined settlement confines of the current and draft local plan.

The application raised very similar issues to the current application at Worth Farm. The planning officers report concluded that the application at East Langdon would be acceptable in accordance with draft Policy SP4 of the DLP. Additionally, that it would 'provide a modest contribution towards the housing supply in the district and modest social and economic benefits associated with the construction and occupation of the dwelling'. It also concluded that any 'disbenefits of the development would be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the benefits'.

Whilst it is accepted that no two applications on different sites are ever exactly the same, there are nonetheless some very strong parallels between the two applications, and as such

this must be considered to be a material factor in the determination of the current application at Worth Farm.

10 Conclusions

The national and local planning policy context does not try prevent all changes to historic buildings and conservation areas but seeks to recognise what is truly significant about a particular heritage asset, whilst at the same time accommodating changes which allow people to continue to use them. This approach is stressed by Historic England in their publication 'Making Changes to Heritage Assets (February 2015).

In view of the above analysis, it is considered that the proposed dwellings would integrate well with the surrounding built environment and would have an acceptable impact on the Worth Conservation Area; the surrounding countryside and the setting of adjoining listed buildings. The proposal would also contribute to the supply of housing within the district, as well as generating social and economic benefits associated with the construction of the houses and occupation of the dwellings.

It is therefore considered that the proposals would meet the requirements of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; the requirements of the NPPF with regard to design, the historic environment, the countryside and development in rural areas, together with the emerging policy guidance in the Draft Dover District Local Plan, which now carries significant weight.

The local planning authority is therefore invited to support this application.

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