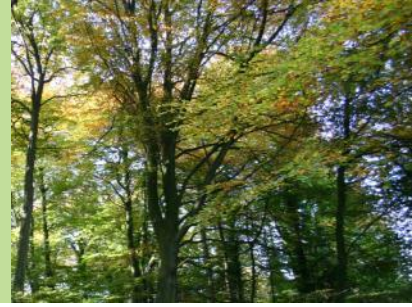


The Parade, Bearsted



***Objections to the proposed redevelopment
of The Parade, 1-4 The Green, Bearsted.***

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The Application



- Submitted on behalf of Evenden Estates, Princes Square, Hove, the proposal seeks to demolish the existing parade of three shops and replace them with three new retail shops with seven two bedroomed flats to the first and second floors.
- The application was made to Maidstone Borough Council on November 11th 2014 and the relevant details are as follows –
 - Reference - MA/14/505873/FULL.
 - Validation date - December 4th 2014.
 - Neighbour consultation expiry date - December 31st 2014.
 - Now extended to January 7th 2015.
 - Planning Officer - Andrew Jolly.
 - Target determination date - 29th January 2015.
 - Architect – gdm architects, College Road, Maidstone.
- The application is incomplete, or incorrect, for the following reasons –
 - Part 10 of the application form fails to identify the number of existing staff and commercial vehicles currently using the area to the rear of The Parade.
 - The Design and Access Statement appears to be in draft form as it contains items clearly marked for future modification.
 - Drawing 3554/p04 (elevations) is incorrect, for the following reasons -
 - The projecting frontage to the west elevation, extending from ground to roof, is not shown on the south and north elevations.
 - The roof detail above the front of flat 4 does not correspond with 3554/03 (floor plans).

The Surrounding Conservation Area



The plan shows buildings within 130 metres of the proposal, which are all within the Bearsted Conservation Area. A colour key and buildings list are included on the following pages.



The Value of Surrounding Properties



The allocated colours indicate the importance that Maidstone Borough Council has given to the structures in its "Bearsted Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2010".

Grade II listed ~ Essential
Unlisted ~ Essential
Unlisted ~ Positive

In the Appraisal the value of a property to the Conservation area is described as –

Essential - buildings/sites which, because of their high architectural or historic interest or townscape function, must be retained.

Positive - buildings/sites which contribute positively to the character and interest of the conservation area and whose retention should be encouraged wherever possible. Some buildings in this grade may have suffered from unsympathetic alteration but could be restored to their original appearance relatively easily.

Neutral - buildings/sites which do not harm the character of the area but whose retention is not necessary.

Negative - buildings/sites which harm the area's character where re-development would be advantageous.

Whilst some properties are not mentioned no property within the area of the map receives a negative rating.

In the following properties list :

* Impact is judged as the impact upon the relevant property when viewing the proposal from within its curtilage.

** Little Snowfield was listed after Maidstone Borough Council's appraisal was published.

The Properties List



Key	Location	Contribution	Description	Impact *
1	1-4 The Parade	Positive	Built in 1882 and rebuilt in 1900 following a fire.	Critical
2	Telephone kiosk	Grade II listed	A K6 telephone kiosk designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935.	Critical
3	The White Horse	Grade II listed	16 th century with later additions.	Critical
4	Snowfield Cottage	Grade II listed	Late 16 th to early 17 th century with an 18 th century facade.	Medium
5	Little Snowfield	Grade II listed	Designed in 1912 by Andrew N Prentice.	High **
6	Hill House	Grade II listed	Mid 18 th century.	Very high
7	Ivy House	Grade II listed	Late 16 th century with an early 18 th century facade.	Critical
8	Suefflé Restaurant	Grade II listed	Formerly April and Inglenook Cottages. A mid to late 18 th century facade fronting an earlier timber frame.	Critical
9	Old Timbers	Grade II listed	A mid to late 18 th century facade fronting an earlier timber frame and listed jointly with Suefflé above.	Critical
10	Old Manor House	Grade II listed	This group was originally one manor house, then four	Very high
11	Olde Manor Cottages	Grade II listed	cottages and now three properties which date from	Very high
12	Cara Cottages	Grade II listed	the 15 th , 16 th and 17 th centuries. Listed jointly.	Very high
13	1 Colegate Drive	Grade II listed	Originally 17 th century with a 19 th century addition to the north	Insignificant
14	The Limes	Grade II listed	15 th , 16 th and 17 th century.	Very high
15	The School House	Essential	Built between 1839 and 1848 and now the library	Critical
16	White Lodge	Essential	Mid to late 18 th century with later additions	Critical
17	Knowle Cottages	Positive	Early 19 th century with later additions	Critical
18	2 Colegate Drive	Positive	Mid to late 19 th century	Insignificant
19	3 Colegate Drive	Positive	Mid to late 19 th century	Insignificant
20	Invicta Villas	Positive	A late 19 th century terrace of six properties	High
21	1-3 The Green	Positive	An 19th century shop and attached cottages with 20th century additions	High
22	1 Oak Croft	Positive	Part of a group of four, and originally farm buildings on the Snowfield estate. The	Medium
23	2 Oak Croft	Positive	original 19 th century construction is positive and the 21 st century additions neutral.	Medium
24	Cliftonville & Rosherville	Positive	A pair of Edwardian cottages	Medium
25	The Retreat & Parsons Cottage	Positive	A pair of symmetrical early 19 th century cottages	Medium
26	The Haven & Fair View	Positive	A pair of late 19 th century cottages	Medium
27	The Barn	Positive	A 19 th century outbuilding converted to a property	Critical

Current Use



The following table gives relevant details of the three businesses currently occupying The Parade.

	W J Crouch incorporating Rickwood's	Bearsted Computer Solutions	Taylors
Full time staff	12 The Proprietor together with Butchers and Master Bakers	3 Computer specialists	1 The Proprietor
Part time staff	8 Sales Assistants	3 The Proprietor and Sales Assistants	19 Weekday and weekend Sales Asistants together with paper delivery staff
Staff cars	10 Parked at the rear	3 Two parked at the rear together with one parked in the village	2 One parked at the front together with one parked in the village
Commercial vehicles	1 Parked at the rear	0	0
Opening hours	7:00 - 17:00 Monday to Friday 7:00 - 16:00 Saturday	9:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday 9:00 - 18:00 alternate Saturdays	5:00 - 17:00 Monday to Saturday 5:00 - 16:00 Sunday
Catchment area	75% local trade	Broad based	90% local trade

The current parking to the rear of the shops is ad-hoc and the requirement to provide marked parking bays for the proposed residential units precludes staff or customer parking in this area.

Current Services Provided



- **W J Crouch, incorporating Rickwood's.**
 - This business is fairly unique in that it offers a wide range of high quality butchery and bakery products, together with a range of other difficult to source food items, to a discerning clientele.
 - Whilst 75% of clients are local their catchment area extends from the Weald to the Medway Towns.
 - The vast majority of their products are prepared on-site, and supplied to two other smaller village outlets under the same ownership.
 - Most of their sales are over-the-counter, and therefore the employee levels are high.
 - The Proprietor has indicated that relocation anywhere in the immediate area would be unfeasible, and that the largest of the three proposed units would not be of sufficient size for his business.
 - This business would be lost to Bearsted, and there would be implications for the smaller outlets in Staplehurst and Wadhurst.
- **Bearsted Computer Solutions.**
 - This shop supplies new computers, offers computer repairs and overhauls, sundries and technical advice to a broad customer base.
 - The Proprietor has indicated that the business, together with its six staff, could relocate to the small business park behind Bearsted Working Men's Club and Institute, if a unit were available.
- **Taylors.**
 - This long established newsagent, tobacconist and sweet shop has recently come under new ownership.
 - Local trade forms most of its business, and it offers an invaluable early morning service to commuters on their way to Bearsted Station.
 - It supports eleven paper rounds, which would be lost to other businesses during any redevelopment.
 - Relocation is not an option and the business would most likely cease to trade.

Employment



- The three units in The Parade currently offer employment to sixteen full time and thirty part-time members of staff, the majority of whom are locals.
 - It should be pointed out that nineteen part-time staff members are teenagers, and the current shops provide an exceptional local provision in this respect.
- The application is silent with regard to the type of shops envisaged. The proposed opening hours mentioned in the application form of 8am to 9pm Monday to Saturday and “Standard retail hours” for Sunday, might give some indication that the applicant hopes the units would attract forms of self-service businesses.
 - It is worth noting that the proposed extended opening hours, together with the higher levels of artificial lighting required in new developments, would lead to unacceptable light pollution within the Conservation Area.
- A concentration on self-service results in both lower staffing levels and longer customer parking times.
- Disruption caused by contractors during demolition and reconstruction is not a planning issue. However the potential loss of some thirty nine of the forty six jobs must be considered.
 - The National Planning Policy Framework, published in March 2012 states, in Section Three (Supporting a prosperous rural economy), *“Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.”*
- Due to the practical inability to provide sufficient customer and staff parking for the proposed units many of the thirty nine jobs mentioned previously would be permanently lost, and therefore have a serious detrimental effect on both the individuals concerned and the local economy.

The Submitted Design



- Whilst the west, front, elevation could be judged as architecturally pleasing in the correct location it is wholly unsuitable for a village Conservation Area. The additional raised roof to the front-centre of the block could be seen as an attempt to give the building the overall appearance of a granary, although it fails in this respect.
 - The façade is massive in form and style and would overwhelm the surrounding properties.
 - The sheer scale of the frontage, sited virtually on the edge of the carriageway and some 10.2 m high, would be critically negative to the setting of the Grade II listed White Horse Public House some 17 m to the south.
 - The Juliet balconies are totally out of keeping in a Conservation Area.
 - The use of one storey of weatherboarding above two storey's of brickwork, whilst possibly softening the elevation slightly, is incongruous with the architecture of the area.
 - The only use of boarding in the area shown on the map is to the single storey structure adjacent to the White Horse car park and to the first floor of The Barn, which is only glimpsed from the bottom of Thurnham Lane.
- The large, and virtually unbroken mass, of the south elevation would totally dominate the adjoining School House, despite the fact that this sits in an elevated location relative to the proposal.
 - Due to the skewed axis of The Parade in relation to The Street, this edifice will be clearly visible to anyone travelling westwards along The Street.
 - Equally this, together with the towering west elevation, will be intrusive from almost any position on Bearsted Green, which is rightly regarded as the “Jewel in the Crown” of the village.
 - The design is silent on the implications for the Grade II listed telephone kiosk.
- The even larger continuous north elevation will dwarf the adjoining properties.
 - The lounge and bedroom windows to flats two and seven will give direct views down into the lounge and bedroom windows of the flat above the Estate Agent's.
 - The Barn, which sits slightly further to the rear, will also be compromised in this respect.

The Scale of the Proposal

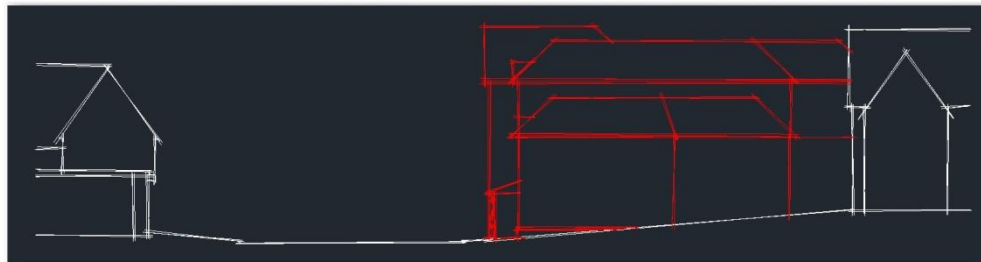


- The dimensions quoted have been obtained by scaling the submitted drawings, or by laser measurement.
- Particular reference is made to page 4 of the Design and Access Statement, where it is stated that -
 - *The scale of the redevelopment building has been informed by the site context and neighbouring properties, on both sides and opposite in the form of the “White Horse” public house.*
 - *It is proposed to keep the ridge height of the new building no higher than the ridge heights of Nos. 5-8 on the neighbouring, recently constructed residential development.*
- The front, west, elevation is some 24.5 m wide and 10.2 m high from the pavement to the topmost ridge. The main roof is some 700 mm lower whilst the subservient roof above flat 4 is some 6.8 m above pavement level. The visual mass, in elevation, is some 210 m².
- The south and north elevations, with the front elevation projection included, are some 18.6 m deep each with a visual mass of some 181 m².
- As no sectional drawing was submitted with the application it is not possible to determine if the proposal could be constructed at the shown height. However, by reference to the west elevation, it is possible to deduce the following -
 - The casement frame to the living room of Flat 2 would be at first floor level, or higher.
 - The cill of this frame is 2.7 m above the threshold, and therefore the floor level, of the shop unit below.
 - An insulated structural floor slab and finishes would require some 300 mm. In addition an absolute minimum of 150 mm would be required for electrical and mechanical services.
 - This would result in a shop unit ceiling height of some 2.25 m.
 - The Metric Handbook, Planning and Design Data, (Routledge 2008, and later) recommends from 3.2 to 3.8 m for a small shop.

The Scale of the Proposal (Continued)



- Whilst the street scene elevation (3554/p05) appears to be accurate with regard to the scale and form of the adjoining buildings it is two dimensional, and therefore takes no account of perspective.
- The following points are relevant -
 - Nos. 5-8 Chestnut Place are set back by 7.8 m from the rear of the footpath.
 - Their form is much softened by the depth of the main roof, which forms 40% of the overall height of the building and pitches away from the footpath at 45°.
 - The School House is set back 17.7 m from the rear of the footpath.
 - The form is mitigated by deep and varying roof lines.
 - The proposed redevelopment sits on the back edge of the footpath.
 - The short roof pitches, hiding the flat roofs above and pitched at 42°, do little to soften the elevations.
 - The roof is under pitched when compared to all other properties in the Conservation Area.
- The sketch below, correct to both scale and level, gives an indication of the impact of the proposal on the White Horse and The School House, and would be the view as seen by people travelling west on The Street.



The Scale of the Proposal (Continued)



- The following overlay, looking east along The Street, is an indication of -
 - The domination of the proposal over the White Horse.
 - The loss of the view of the School House.
 - The mass and scale of the proposal, particularly when compared to the existing building, which is exacerbated by short-pitched roofs.
 - The vertical cramping caused by the proposed lowering of the canopy.

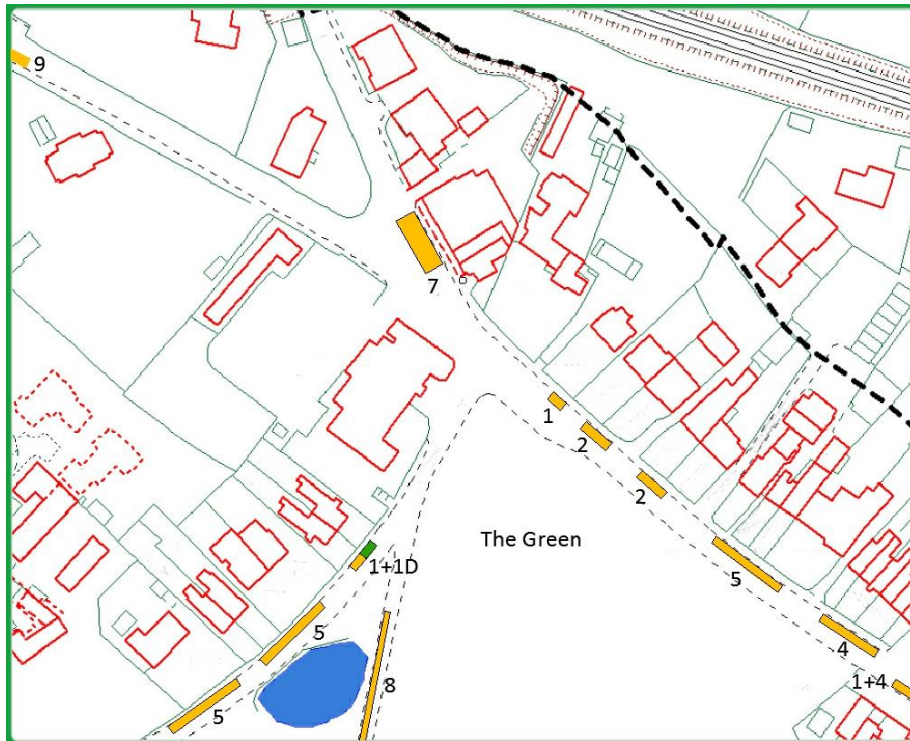


Parking Provision



- In January 2011 all Chief Planning Officers were informed by the Department of Communities and Local Government that -
 - *Local authorities will still need to set parking standards for their areas, but it will be for them to determine what that standard should be, depending on individual circumstances.*
 - Maidstone Borough Council applies the Kent County Council's vehicle and parking standards, which are extant.
- Residential parking (Land Use Class C3 - Dwellings)
 - The scheme meets the requirement for resident parking with the provision of seven parking bays to the rear of the site. (1 space per 1 or 2 bedroom flat)
 - The provision of cycle storage may meet the requirement of one space per unit, although the site plan (3554/p02) is at variance with the application form as they show 5 and 7 spaces respectively.
 - The Parking Standards note that "In Controlled Parking Zones the parking provision should result in no net loss of on-street parking." is relevant.
- Commercial parking (Land Use Class A1 - Retail Establishments)
 - The scheme fails totally in this respect as no commercial parking has been identified, apart from a text entry on the site plan (3554/p02) that indicates "Roadside Parking".
 - The site is within a B1 zone and the marked bays within the immediate area are shown on the following page.
 - The existing seven bays to the frontage are only sufficient for shop customers.
 - The applicant would need to show one parking place per 18 m² of food retailing area and one place per 25 m² of non-food retailing space, a requirement of 16 spaces for staff and customers based on one food and two non-food units.
 - In addition the applicant would need to show one goods vehicle parking bay per unit.

Available Parking



- With the exception of the nine places in Ware Street, close to Bearsted Railway Station and heavily used, the marked bays are restricted to B1 permit holders. Non-permit holders are restricted to two hours parking, with no return within two hours.
- These places do not lend themselves to use by shop staff.
- It should be noted that currently twelve staff cars, together with one commercial vehicle, use the area to the rear of The Parade for communal parking.
- The two part time staff who cannot use this space park a considerable distance from The Parade to avoid the parking restrictions.
- The seven spaces to the front of The Parade are used almost exclusively by customers of the three shops.
- The additional 38 spaces shown on the map, plus one disabled bay, are used by local residents and visitors to The Green, and it is rarely possible to find an available space on Yeoman Lane or in The Street.
- The eight spaces on The Green itself are heavily utilised, as are a further fifteen restricted spaces to the east and south of The Green.

Conclusions



- The proposal is ill-conceived and poorly presented, with missing and conflicting information.
- The Design and Access Statement is meager and pays scant regard to the Conservation Area.
- The overall design is poorly executed.
- The mass, scale and form of the proposal is unsuitable for a village environment.
- The impact of the proposal on the adjacent listed buildings and their setting, and other buildings whose contribution to the Conservation Area is either essential or positive, is unacceptably high.
- The impact on the Bearsted Conservation Area as a whole, and on The Green in particular, is unacceptable.
- The lack of commercial parking provision alone would indicate that the scheme is untenable.
- Despite the provision of seven flats the associated loss of mainly local employment makes the proposal unsustainable, and therefore unacceptable.
- Bearsted and the surrounding area is extremely well served by the three existing shops, who trade from a building which sits well with the Conservation Area.
- The loss of the building alone would be extremely damaging to the area, and the other losses would be incalculable.
 - If this application is to be determined at Officer level then it is requested that a refusal notice is issued.
 - Should the application be placed before the Planning Committee then the Elected Members will be encouraged to refuse it.