

The Stables
Midstone Road
Hadlow
Kent TN11 0DN

Planning Policy Unit
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Gibson Building, Gibson Drive,
Kings Hill, West Malling
Kent MW19 4LZ

Attn: Mr Brian Gates

Your ref: PTL5/14-05

24 October 2010

Dear Mr Gates,

Hadlow Conservation Area Appraisal and Review – Addition 3

Thank you for your circular letter of 10 September. As I live in the area designated to be added to the north end of the present Conservation Area (Addition 3), I have studied the proposals with interest and have a few observations.

1. The character of the buildings in Addition 3 are really not in keeping with the main frontages of the village, which are either late eighteenth century (at least in character) or rural in style. Chesfield House was a substantial late Victorian house of sound but not outstanding architectural quality. Much of the original quality and impact of the frontage was irrevocably destroyed by the subdivision, done with full planning permission in the early 1980s. The frontage is now obscured by a 6' plain fence and the backs of garages, again all done with planning permission. I attach two recent photographs to illustrate the point. I believe that the constraints imposed by normal planning rules, if wisely applied, are quite sufficient to ensure that further degradation of these frontages is not permitted.
2. The Stables is hardly visible from the road, and what can be seen holds only the most fragmentary remains of the original features. A further photograph is attached to confirm this point. The western gable end facing the road has been unsympathetically obscured by a modern garage (also constructed with planning permission in the early 1980s). The working northern frontage has been obliterated beyond restoration with a treatment that owes its appearance to the components that happened to be in the builder's yard at the time, rather than any architectural input, sympathetic or otherwise. In any event this desecration has no impact on the appearance of the village frontages as it is almost totally invisible from the main road.

3. Having a property in the Conservation Area brings no hope of improvement. In fact it is a common experience that it deters owners from making improvements as they lose control of their project budget to the Planning Department. This point is illustrated by the fate of Ousley House, the property just within the present northern border of the Conservation Area. This property has been allowed to slide into a picturesque state of disrepair and will now take a significant investment to restore. I am quite sure the Borough Planners will want to have a good deal of influence on any restoration proposals, and I venture that few of the planners' constraints are likely to make the job any more economical. However, even with the powers conferred by inclusion in the Conservation Area, the Borough remains powerless to prevent the continuance of a process towards dereliction.

In conclusion, I would welcome your views on what advantages the extension of the Conservation Area, with Addition 3, would bring to the Village in general and the owners of the properties concerned in particular. But, as far as I can see, the late inclusion of these properties in the Conservation Area, so long after the architectural damage has been done, will give no potential benefits to any of the parties involved. Finally, further extending the workload of the Planning Department, by enlarging the Conservation Area, at a time of severe budget constraint would not seem to be in the interests of Council Tax payers.

So, taking all these points into consideration, I object most strongly to the proposal for Addition 3.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan Murray