



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20230039

Location: Abbey Farm Church Street Higham Rochester

Description: Erection of a two storey side extension

Applicant: Mr T Love

Site Visit Date: 27 February 2023

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application form;
- Drawing no. BDS-AF-P01 – Existing Plans & Elevations;
- Drawing no. BDS-AF-P02 – Proposed Plans & Elevations; and
- Design & Access Statement.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20220739	Insertion of bi-fold doors into dining room	Permitted	01.09.2022
20201152	Application for variation of conditions 5 and 10 attached to planning permission reference no. 20130817 which was for the erection of a detached building to provide double garage and stores ancillary to residential dwelling; to allow the detached outbuilding to be used as accommodation incidental and ancillary to the host dwelling including a home gym and TV room (and including for a guest bedroom and shower-room and home office/games area within the existing open loft area) and for external alterations to the building including insertion of doors, roof lights and lean-to bin store	Permitted	25.02.2021
20130817	Erection of detached building to provide double garage and stores ancillary to residential dwelling.	Permitted	21.03.2014
20090626	Partial demolition of the roof and first floor of outbuilding; construction of new pitched roof with raised brick work to form rooms of habitable height on first floor involving installation of new first floor window and alterations to existing window.	Permitted	28.09.2009

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development

- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 - Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C13 – Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006);
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021); and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009);
- Church Street Higham Rural Conservation Area Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Management Plan Rural Conservation Area Appraisals Supplementary Planning Document (2016)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

KCC Heritage – 20/02/2023

Abbey Farm is understood to incorporate north and west walls of the frater of the west range of the medieval Benedictine Priory of St Marys. The core of the priory is a Scheduled monument (1010241) and Abbey Farm sits at the centre of the scheduled area in which most of the archaeological interest is below-ground. These structures and remains are important heritage assets and those within the Scheduled area are legally protected. The applicant, if they have not already done so, should contact Historic England to discuss the proposals and discuss the requirements for scheduled monument consent. Consideration will need to be given to any impacts to the surviving, upstanding historic fabric and to the nature and extent of all below-ground works. Further to discussions with Historic England, I would be happy to make

recommendations about the type of archaeological work that would be required to mitigate impacts.

KCC Heritage – 22/03/2023

If Historic England respond positively I would recommend the following condition:

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken by an archaeologist approved by the Local Planning Authority so that groundworks are observed and items of interest and finds are recorded, reported on and the new information made publicly accessible. The watching brief shall be in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.

Historic England may wish to comment on the WSI but may leave it to us, but they will want to see the report on the works.

Environment Agency

Thank you for consulting us on the above application. We have assessed this application and it is covered by our Flood Risk Standing Advice. This means you do not have to consult us directly and can use our standing advice to manage flood risk for this planning application.

Our standing advice can be viewed in the link below which includes step by step guidance on managing development and flood risk. <https://www.gov.uk/flood-risk-standing-advice-frsa-for-local-planning-authorities>

No response from:

- GBC Conservation Officer
- Higham Parish Council
- National Amenity Societies

Neighbouring properties

3 surrounding properties were consulted plus press and site notices – no responses received. The overall consultation date was 17th February 2023.

Officer's Analysis

Abbey Farmhouse is a two storey detached dwelling.

The site is located within the Green Belt, Church Street Higham Conservation Area, an Area of Archaeological Potential, within the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area and in Flood Zone 3. The application site also lies on the site of St Mary Priory, a Benedictine priory which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM).

The principle issues in the consideration of this application are:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- Impact on openness
- Design, Character and Appearance including Heritage
- Archaeology
- Landscape Character
- Flooding

- Amenity of Occupiers
- Neighbouring Amenity
- Parking and Highway Safety

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

The application site is located within the Green Belt where inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021).

Paragraph 148 of the NPPF (2021) states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021) states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;**
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

In this case point (c) is relevant. Any extension to the property must not result in disproportionate additions over and above the original building.

Saved Policy C13 (LPFR) states that extensions to dwellings will be considered on their merits but the Council will expect the following criteria to be satisfied:-

- (i) The existing dwelling must be an "original dwelling"* in permanent use as a dwelling.
- (ii) There will be an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.
- (iii) Those extensions which provide essential basic amenities such as a bathroom, toilet or kitchen, which are currently not available or are clearly inadequate, will normally be permitted.
- (iv) The extension shall not be in a form which would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential curtilage.
- (v) The dwelling to be enlarged must have sufficient curtilage to accommodate the extension without undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.

- (vi) The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting.
- (vii) Proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot.

Development Management Policies Document April 2018 (a document that has been subject to consultation but is not adopted) contains Proposed Policy DM 6 which relates to extensions, replacement buildings and ancillary development in the Green Belt. Although the weight that can be attached to this document/policy is limited, it does illustrate the Borough Council's most recent approach to the type of development proposed at the application site.

With regard to extensions, Proposed Policy DM 6 outlines that the following will be taken into account in determining whether an extension in the Green Belt is proportionate;

- its footprint, floorspace and volume compared to the original building; and
- whether its scale, mass and height is subservient to the original building.

In this case Abbey Farm House was built before 1948. The only relevant history in terms of alterations or extensions to the actual dwelling itself (not including outbuildings) is ref. 20090626 which added a new pitched roof with raised brick work to form rooms of habitable height on the part of the dwelling which was a former agricultural range. This permission did not increase floor area and there have been no other extensions to the property. As such the floor plans as existing are considered to constitute the original dwelling.

In terms of the floorspace calculations these are as follows:

Total original floor space (measured externally) - 132 sq. m

Proposed two storey side extension - 25.2 sq. m

Total % increase over the original floor space - **19%**

It is evident from the above calculations that the proposal would be well within the one third limit (33%).

Although an increase in floorspace is a useful indicator numerically, it is only one measure of the impact of a development and other factors that are taken into account in determining whether a proposal is proportionate are its footprint and volume compared to the original building and whether its scale, mass and height is subservient to the original building.

The proposed two storey side extension would increase the footprint and volume of the dwelling. It would however not extend beyond the existing front and north side walls as it would be built in line with them. The extension would be the same height as the existing two storey element on the northern side of the dwelling. It is therefore considered that in respect of an assessment of floorspace, volume, scale, mass and height the proposed two storey side extension would not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the original building.

The proposal would therefore not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and as such is considered compliant with Policy CS02 (LPCS), saved Policy C13 (LPFR) and section 13 (NPPF, 2021).

Impact on Openness

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

Although the proposal would add to the footprint and volume of the dwelling, given that the proposed extension would not extend beyond the front and northern side walls of the dwelling and would be the same height as the existing two storey element on the northern side of the dwelling, it is considered it would not lead to an overall increase in the prominence of the dwelling over the existing situation and there would therefore be no impact on openness.

Design, Character and Appearance including Heritage

Abbey Farm House is an attractive 19th century detached dwelling with a pitched roof. The site is located within the Church Street Conservation Area. The building is described in the Church Street Higham Conservation Area Appraisal as;

Abbey Farmhouse

The early 19th century Abbey farmhouse, disproportionately tall for its plan area, sits close up to medieval basements and incorporates very significant medieval fabric in its walls. Not quite a square in plan, the house has a low pitched and short ridged roof designed for natural slate. The chimney is at one end of the ridge. The north elevation is blank and rendered. The west elevation has two tall double hung sash window openings above and a tall front entrance and a window below. The south elevation has four windows, two up, two down and the east has one only. The house is unfortunately not listed and this has allowed its recent 'upgrading', externally with new unsympathetic plastic double glazed windows and shiny modern synthetic roofing slates. From a distance it remains important in the landscape but closer to the conservation area character is let down by these unfortunate changes. Extending from its north east corner at right angles is a single storey pitched-roof former agricultural range joined to it by a short two storey section under a mono-pitch roof. The lower part of this structure shows much re-use of medieval material. The mono-pitched part incorporates a tall and very thick flint-faced masonry wall, part of the priory buildings, with a panel of external alternating, chequerboard, stone and flint-work in one side.

The element of the dwelling which was previously a former agricultural range on the north flank of the dwelling has been altered under ref. 20090626. As stated, this involved the removal of the upper walls and mono pitched roof of the two storey section and the erection of new upper walls and a pitched roof and new roof covering over the new and single storey elements. This new roof was fully pitched and was a sympathetically designed extension which respected the character of the host dwelling.

The below images show the north flank elevation of the dwelling before and after the development permitted under ref. 20090626 was carried out. As can be seen this was a modest alteration and the pitched roof respected the main roof form of the host dwelling. It was considered a proportionate extension which did not undermine the character of the existing dwelling.



Before



After

The current proposal is for the erection of a two storey side extension which would be built in front (to the west) of the existing two storey section on the northern side of the dwelling. It would be 3.4m in depth, 3.6m

in width and built in line with the existing front and north flank walls. The extension would be the same height as the existing two storey element but with the existing pitched roof being extended over both the existing and proposed two storey elements.

The existing and proposed elevation images are as follows:

Existing Elevations:



EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION
1:100



EXISTING REAR ELEVATION
1:100



EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION
1:100

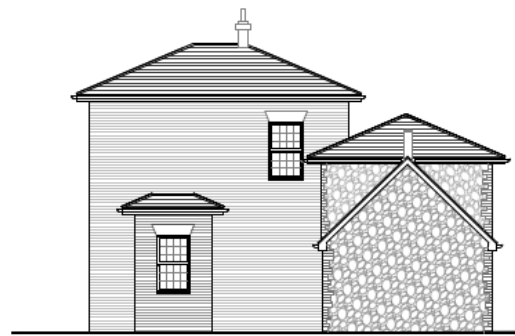


EXISTING FRONT ELEVATION
1:100

Proposed Elevations:



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION
1:100



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION
1:100



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION
1:100



PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION
1:100

The two-storey extension which would be formed on the northern flank of the dwelling, enlarging the existing first floor element with an elongated pitched roof would result in the two storey element on this side of the dwelling being deeper than the depth of the main part of the dwelling. The elongated pitched roof would be at odds and out of keeping with the pitched roof of the host dwelling, whereas the current arrangement matches the main dwelling. The lack of set back from the front wall also compounds the dominance of the extension. The two windows proposed in the front elevation would not match the level, size or style of windows in the main front elevation of the host dwelling and would only serve to increase the prominence of the proposed side extension when viewed from the front elevation. Overall the proposal would turn what is currently a subservient and attractively designed element of the dwelling on the northern flank elevation (i.e. the former agricultural range) to a disproportionate addition. The existing two storey part has been sympathetically altered with a pitched roof to match the main dwelling under ref. 20090626. The current proposal result in an overly dominant and unsympathetic two storey addition which would not respect the scale or unique character of this host dwelling.

The proposed extension due to its siting and scale would be clearly visible from the private unmade access road to the north of the dwelling but also from Church Street to the south-west as shown below:



Due to the resultant and unsympathetic mass of development on the northern side of the dwelling which would not respect the scale, character or appearance of the host dwelling and that it would be publicly visible from Church Street, it is also considered that the proposal would not preserve the character and appearance of the Church Street Conservation Area and would therefore cause harm to it.

There are also concerns at whether there would be the loss of any historic material on the northern flank elevation of the dwelling. As existing there is a rounded section of period brickwork and stonework on the north-western corner of the dwelling to the right of the kitchen window and it is not clear from the plans how this would be incorporated in the proposed development and whether any would be lost (in the proposed elevation the right part of this section is not shown). As such there are also concerns at the loss of historic fabric on the dwelling. Although not listed the property is an historic dwelling that sits on the site of an Scheduled Monument and the element that was the former agricultural range does contain a small element of an upstanding portion of the Scheduled Monument of St Mary Priory. Any extension should therefore carefully respect this historic built form whether medieval or later.

Overall in respect of design, character and appearance including heritage the proposal would be contrary to Policies CS19 and CS20 (LPCS) and saved Policy TC3 (LPFR).

Archaeology

The site is located on the site of St Mary's Priory Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The major part of the priory lies under the site as buried remains although there is some medieval fabric in the single storey element of the former agricultural range. The designation does not include the built form on the site and it states: *'Excluded from the scheduling are the occupied buildings, garden sheds, aviary, other outbuildings, gates, fences and fence posts, but the ground beneath all these features is included'*.

KCC Heritage have been consulted on the application. They advise that if Historic England respond positively then they would recommend the standard archaeological condition.

Historic England have not responded on the application. However, the applicant would need to apply for Scheduled Monument Consent for the development and as such the lack of comments from Historic England is not considered a reason to withhold determination of this planning application.

Subject to the condition as requested by KCC Heritage it is therefore considered the proposal would not impact on archaeology and in respect of archaeology the proposal would therefore be compliant with Policy

CS20 (LPCS) and saved Policy TC7 (LPFR).

Landscape Character

The application site is located in the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Areas and as such Policy CS12 (LPCS) is relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment will be taken into account in determining applications.

In relation to the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area the document highlights that the key landscape characteristics are very gently undulating topography with open arable farmland, views out to the marshes and the River Thames in the north, marsh side hamlets and settlements, isolated farmsteads and scattered properties with locally distinct styles and materials and pockets of orchards and garden nurseries. It states that the overall condition of the landscape is poor and it has moderate sensitivity. It recommends that the landscape characteristics should be restored and created.

The area the site is located is rural in character with open fields to the south and east. The site itself contains a dwelling and outbuilding. The proposed development would result in an increase in built form at the application dwelling but as this would not extend beyond the front and north flank walls and would be no higher than the existing two storey element on the northern elevation it is considered the proposal would not adversely affect the landscape character of the surrounding area. As such the proposal in respect of landscape character is considered compliant with Policies CS12 and CS19 (LPCS).

Flooding

The site is located in Flood Zone 3 which means the land has a high probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.

The Environment Agency have been consulted - they advise that their standing advice should be followed. The proposal comes under their definition of 'minor development' i.e., development of an existing dwellinghouse. The advice for minor extensions is concerning household extensions with a floor space of no more than 250 sq. m, which is the case here.

The advice for minor extensions states that the applicant needs to provide a plan showing the finished floor levels and the estimated flood levels (which needs to be measured in relation to Ordnance Datum (the height above average sea level)). The EA advise that the applicant needs to make sure the floor levels are either no lower than existing floor levels or 300mm millimetres (mm) above the estimated floor level. It also advises that flood resistant materials up to at least 300mm above the estimated flood level will need to be used.

In this case the ground and first floor levels of the proposed two storey side extension would be built in line with the ground and first floor levels of the existing dwelling; the floor levels of the extension would not be any lower. As such it is not considered necessary to request the information on floor levels and estimated flood levels and it is considered there would not be any increased flood risk issues to occupants of the dwelling as a result of the proposal. In respect of flooding the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS18 (LPCS).

Amenity of Occupiers

The property would increase from a four to a five bedroom dwelling. It would still far exceed the minimum standards for garden area and rear garden depth as set out in SPG2 for a dwelling with four or more bedrooms.

The new bedroom in the first floor of the proposed extension would be 10.6 sq. m which would meet the

minimum standard for a single bedroom as set out in the Technical Housing Standards (2015) of 7.5 sq. m.

In respect of the amenity of occupiers the proposal is considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Neighbouring Amenity

Due to the distance of the application site from the nearest neighbouring properties the proposal would not cause any impact on those properties and in respect of neighbouring amenity the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Parking and Highways

The property would increase from a four to a five bedroom dwelling – there is a large area of hardstanding in front of the outbuilding with space for a number of cars; this would therefore meet the requirements of SPG4 which states that properties with four or more bedrooms should have a maximum of three spaces per dwelling. In respect of parking and highways matters the proposal is therefore considered compliant with saved Policy P3 (LPFR).

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

None.

Conclusion & Recommendation

Whilst the proposal is considered to not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and not impact on openness and be acceptable with regards archaeology (subject to condition), landscape character, flooding, occupier and neighbouring amenity and parking and highway safety, it is considered that it would be unacceptable in respect of design, character and appearance and would not preserve the character and appearance of the Church Street Higham Conservation Area but cause harm to it. The proposal is therefore contrary to national and local planning policy.

Recommendation: Refusal

(For detailed reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Rebecca Harrison	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	<i>Rebecca Harrison</i>	Signed:	
Dated:	15th March 2023	Dated:	15 March 2023