



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20240155

Location: Purvil Wood Cottage Leywood Road Meopham Gravesend

Description: Demolition of existing conservatory, toilet block and storage block to proposed a rear orangery and a single storey side extension along with internal alterations.

Applicant: Mr Craig Main

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form

001 A – Location Plan, Existing and Proposed Block Plan

002 A – Existing Floor Plan and Elevations

003 A – Proposed Floor Plan and Elevation

Supplementary Document - Design Code

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20160955	Demolish existing conservatory and erection of a two storey extension to the south end of the building to form living and bedroom with en-suite at first floor level and addition of a new entrance door and open canopy to the west elevation.	Refused Dismissed on Appeal	24.08.2017 11.01.2018
20160025	Proposed demolition of existing conservatory and erection of two storey side extension.	Refused	07.03.2016
20010312	Erection of a detached double garage Permitted Extension to existing stable block to form two additional stables. Refused	Split Decision	20.06.2001
19980448	Erection of conservatory at the rear and single storey front extension to form study, utility room and hallway including canopy above front door.	Permitted	01.09.1998

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS13 – Green Space, Sport and Recreation
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 - Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C13 – Extensions to dwellings in the countryside

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) 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 (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020).
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Kent Downs AONB Management Plan

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Meopham Parish Council

Following discussion by our Planning Applications Working Group; the Council wishes to provide the following response:

We raise no objection to this application.

Ward Councillors

No comments.

GBC Highways Officer

I have no objections, there are no highway implications.

KCC Heritage

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, based on existing Historic Environment Record data for the area and the relatively limited extent of the proposed works, I consider it unlikely that these proposals would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact and have no further comments to make in this case.

Neighbouring properties

2no.surrounding properties were consulted, and a site notice was placed on 07.03.24. The final date to submit comments on the notice is shown as 29.03.24. However, public holidays including Good Friday and

Christmas day should be disregarded from the consultation period and so additional time to receive comments was allowed until 02.04.24. Two comments were received from members of the public, objecting to the scheme. The comments are summarised as follows:

- The proposed extension is out of keeping with local building design.
- A large building and a warehouse have also been erected on the site previously.
- The proposed extension would spoil the AONB as it would not be complementary to the locality.
- The small building to be demolished is some distance from the house so there is a question regarding whether the footprint would be within the original cottage.
- The development would extensively enlarge the property from its original footprint which would not be in keeping with the surrounding area in size and visuality.
- The property currently has adequate room to use existing spaces to accommodate the needs of the applicant.

Officer Note: One comment relates to different designs shown in the design code and suggest the proposal is unclear. The Design Code Document shows the evolution of the scheme from pre-application enquiry to the current proposal and the proposed plan and elevation drawings are clear on what is being proposed.

Officer's Analysis

Principle of Development

The main issues for consideration in the determination of this scheme are as follows:

- Principle of development in the Green Belt;
- Impact on openness and the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- Amenity of Future Occupiers
- Residential amenity;
- Highways.

Principle of Development in the Green Belt

The site is within the Green Belt and the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area. The site is within the Green Belt as defined on the adopted Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) policies map and this must be the starting point for determining this application.

It is therefore considered that the key issues in this case relating to the Green Belt are:

- Whether the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework and development plan policy, and
- Whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Green Belts are of great importance. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by preserving the open and permanent characteristics of Green Belts (para. 142 of the NPPF 2023). Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2023 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. '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.

The relevant exceptions to this policy are as follows:

Paragraph 154(c) identifies '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', as an exception to this policy. Paragraph 154(g) identifies another exception as;

'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'*

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014

Core Policy CS02 sets out where development should be distributed in the borough. Preference is given to those urbanised areas as sustainable locations. Outside urbanised areas, those rural settlements which are inset from the Green Belt would also be considered acceptable in principle. This site is in a rural area, in the Greenbelt **NOT** forming part of settlement inset from the Greenbelt. In this context the policy states that developments; *'will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in this plan.'*

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994

Saved Policy C13 sets out the requirements for extensions to dwellings. Of particular consideration and to assist in assessing whether the addition would be disproportionate, this policy limits the increased floorspace to one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling. However, this policy does pre-date the NPPF, and greater weight should be given where the approach is consistent with paragraph 149 the NPPF 2023.

"Original dwelling" for the purpose of Saved Policy C13 means the building in permanent residential use at 1st July 1948.

Planning approval 19980448 approved extensions to the dwellinghouse which were undertaken to the front and rear.

Purvil Wood Cottage has previously been extended with two separate extensions. A single storey front extension and a conservatory were approved under reference 19980448 at a 33% increase. Based on this figure it is clear the property has already extended up to its limit in terms of Policy C13 which allows a one third increase. However, the current proposal involves the demolition of the existing conservatory. With the conservatory removed from the scheme, the property has only been increased by 18%. The side extension would be approximately 19m² and the rear extension would be approximately 22m².

The following details the calculations for the increased floorspace:

<i>Development Stage</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Original</i>	139
<i>Existing</i>	184m ²
<i>Proposed</i>	205 m ²
Change from original	66m ²

TOTAL = 47.4% increase

This would be 14% greater than the 1/3 increase prescribed by saved Policy CS13 and significantly above the allowance. The proposed development would result in significant increase to the scale of the dwellinghouse from its original conversion, in the Green Belt.

However, in considering whether the additions would be disproportionate to the existing dwellinghouse, a

visual assessment is necessary in combination with the floorspace data.

A scheme for a two storey extension was refused and dismissed at appeal under planning reference 20160955. Whilst the proposal was different, some insights can be gained from the inspectors report as to the type of development appropriate to the area.

In the appeal decision the inspector made the following statements:

'Although an increase in floor space is a useful indicator, it is only one measure of the impact of a development. The existing conservatory is single storey and of largely glazed construction. The proposed two-storey extension would materially increase the bulk and perceived size and scale of the dwelling. Although it would be recessed behind the eastern façade of the dwelling, as a result of its size, height and form it would nevertheless be a notable addition. Whether considered by floor area or visually, as a matter of fact and degree, the cumulative impact of the proposal and previous extension would appear excessive and disproportionate to the size of the original dwelling.'

In this case, although this proposal would be a single storey addition, and the existing conservatory would be removed, the cumulative impact of the additions would be one that results in disproportional increase to the footprint of the building over and above that of the original dwellinghouse both in measurable size and visually. Whilst the extensions when considered as single additions on their own may be appropriate in terms of scale, it is the cumulative impact of successive extensions on this rural property in the Green Belt, which would result in overdevelopment of this dwellinghouses. The original building had a rectangular plan form, which as a result of this extension and previous extensions would be substantially enveloped on three sides with floorspace increases at ground floor which would exceed over half the floor space of the entire building as originally built, including first floor. It is noted that the proposed additional rooms would exceed their minimum required floor space and both the WC and dining room could be provided with a reduced floorspace.

On balance, the rear and side extension would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building visually and would be in contradiction with paragraph 154 (c) and 154(g) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and Saved Policy C13 of Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994).

Impact on openness

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF (2023) states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.

Any new built form of development is likely to impact on the openness of the Green Belt, however it is important to establish the degree of harm.

The inspector made the following assessment on openness in the 2017 appeal decision:

'The CS notes that the AONB retains a downland character, and its woodlands are also highly valued. Within this wider landscape is the Harvel Wooded Downs Character Area, and one of its characteristics noted in the associated Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment 2009 is that of the haphazard mosaic of residential plots and small holdings set within the woodland. In the context of conserving these valued landscapes, the increased size and scale of the appeal property would detract from this setting and the rural character of the area.'

Given that the development would be disproportionately large in this case too, it is considered that the increased size and scale of the appeal property would detract from this setting and the rural character of the area and would contravene the provisions of paragraph 142 and 154 (G) of the NPPF (2023) .

Design, Character, Area: National Landscape and Landscape Character Area

Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of surrounding area. It is noted that the Site in the National Landscape which feeds into the high quality character of the area. In such areas development would be expected to be of a high-quality, reflective of the design and character of the area. This application is located in a rural area. Whilst there are some areas of built form, such as this existing dwellinghouse, the landscape of the area is overwhelmingly rural and open, without built form. The dwellinghouses which form part of this cluster, are largely single storey and have limited footprints. The majority of these dwellinghouses have been converted over time from holiday chalets to become permanent residences, hence their small scale, more appropriate for the rural countryside. This site in particular forms part of the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area.

The Landscape Character Assessment described the modern development of the area as follows:

'In the mid 20th Century the land to the north of Harvel was divided into a multitude of small plots that has resulted in sporadic and piecemeal development. These plots are enclosed by a variety of boundaries including fencing, hedgerows and other materials, or defined by clearings in the woodland to create a haphazard mosaic of small-scale housing plots within the woodland. The style of properties is varied in terms of size, scale and style. Many plots accommodate derelict caravans adjacent to small brick bungalows. Security gates and fencing are dominant throughout the area. Many properties appear to have small adjoining paddocks accommodating a small amount of livestock and associated equipment.'

It continues to say:

'The uncharacteristic and sporadic settlement of small plots within coppice woodland is a dominant element within the area creating an incoherent landscape. There are many visual detractors, including derelict buildings and caravans, overgrown gardens, poor fencing, disjointed fencing materials and fly tipping. The visual unity is significantly interrupted, although the wooded nature of the area conceals much of the visual clutter from wider views.'

Given the harm caused to the landscape character from the areas of small plots such as the one referred to in this application, the condition of the landscape area is considered moderate and requiring a Conserve and Create approach, as noted in the Landscape Character Appraisal; 'The strong landscape elements within the Harvel Wooded Downs should be conserved, whilst design standards should be defined to halt the erosion of the area with inappropriate development.' Of particular relevance, the Landscape Character Assessment provides the following guidance to 'halt the erosion of the area with inappropriate development.'

- Conserve and maintain traditional and distinct buildings, materials and elements.
- Resist proposals that introduce inappropriate designs and materials.
- Improve and soften new development using characteristic landscape elements such as woodland blocks and hedgerows.
- Conserve enclosure of settlements within wooded areas.

In this instance, as has already been ascertained, the proposed development would result in a significant increase in built form to this plot. However, given the slowly changing character of the area, it is considered some non-traditional designs could be visually appropriate and proportional to the character of the area.

In this case, the flat roof design of the addition would not be viewed favourably as it is uncharacteristic for the rural area and subject dwellinghouse. A pitched addition would be more appropriate. This is particularly relevant as the rear extension is viewed openly from the road to the east of the dwellinghouse. The proposal would use rendered walls to match the existing dwellinghouse. However, given that the site is in the National Landscape and in the Harvel Downs Landscape Character Area, appropriate materials of high quality are expected. Whilst the materials would match the existing a more neutral materials such as a natural-coloured timber weatherboarding may 'break up' the additions and increase subservience.

It is also noted that The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023) public in December 2023, placed a new statutory duty was on all public bodies and statutory undertakers which requires that 'In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty'

As has been stated, the increase in built development, inappropriate in design in this rural area would harm the Landscape character of the area. The scheme is therefore not considered to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape (Previously AONB).

On balance, the proposed development would **NOT** comply with the requirements of Policy CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2023) in terms of design, character and appearance and impact on the Landscape.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The NPPF (2023) states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users. The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy, which states that new development should be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants, and those of neighbouring properties and land. The impact on neighbours will be assessed in the next section of the report.

The proposed alterations would introduce a dining room, WC and Hallway to the ground floor. The dining rooms would have an area of 19.8m² and the WC would have an area of 6.4m². The Residential Layout Guidelines (2015), identifies the minimum required space for a dining room as 9.5m² and 3.6m² for a Bathroom and WC. The proposed development would be in exceedance of the minimum required space, and would be compliant with the guidelines.

Neighbouring Amenity

As outlined above, it is important that any development safeguards the amenity of neighbouring properties and land. Following a period of consultation with neighbouring properties, no objection to the proposal was received.

Given the expansive plot of approximately 3 hectares and the secluded nature of the dwellinghouse, there would be minimal impact on the residential amenity of neighbours.

The proposal is therefore considered to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring properties in compliance with policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Parking Provision

As the proposed dwellinghouse would not have any increase to number of bedrooms and the parking arrangements are not proposed to be changed, no concerns are raised regarding parking provision. This is subject to details provided in the full planning application.

Adequate vehicle and cycle parking provision is therefore available in accordance with paragraphs 110 to 113 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Local Plan First Review (1994) and Policies CS11 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 subject to further details of cycle parking provision.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed development is considered to comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt by

virtue of its disproportional appearance in terms of its scale, and causing detriment and greater harm to the openness of the Green Belt. It would therefore would not comply with paragraph 154(c) and 154(g) of the NPPF (2023) and, Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy Local Plan (2014). No very special circumstances have been submitted which would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. As such, as per paragraph 152 of the NPPF (2023), this inappropriate development should not be approved.

The proposed development would result in non-subservient extensions which would have an incongruent appearance in this rural setting as a result of its scale, design and form and would be harmful to the National Landscape. It would not comply with the requirements of Policy CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, and Section 12 and 15 of the NPPF (2023), in terms of design, character, appearance and landscape .

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

Case Officer:	Mrs Lisa Fisher	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	12th April 2024	Dated:	15th September 2024