

It is with a heavy heart that I find myself, once again, writing to present my objections in relation to an application submitted by Mr Randhawa. You will be familiar with the history of his applications, which commenced in March 2011 when he proposed the demolition of the double garage adjacent to the bungalow and erection of a three-bedroom dwelling in its place. This application was refused. An Appeal against this decision was made to the Planning Inspectorate but subsequently dismissed. Subsequent applications, which you have on record, were also refused. His appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in March 2022 against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission for the Application submitted in June 2021 was subsequently dismissed in November of that year. The following extracts are taken from the Report issued by The Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State following a site visit on 9 November 2022 :

Integrity of the SPA

- 8 The Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA supports important numbers of wintering and migrating birds. Because the appeal site is within 6K of the SPA, the proposal has the potential to affect its features of interest. In combination with other development in Gravesham, an additional dwelling would be liable to lead to increased recreational disturbance. There would therefore be a likely significant effect on the SPA.
- 9 To mitigate this impact the Council expects a financial contribution to be made. The appellant considers that this can be dealt with if the appeal were successful. However, an appropriate assessment needs to be undertaken as part of the decision-making process and there is no mechanism in place to secure the necessary financial sum. As a result, the proposal would adversely affect the integrity of the SPA and would be contrary to Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS12 which requires sites designated for their biodiversity value to be protected. Moreover, in these circumstances, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations preclude the proposal from proceeding.

Conclusion

- 15 The proposed houses would be within the urban area where development is favoured by both the Local Plan Core Strategy and the Framework. However, the design would harm the character and appearance of the area. Furthermore, the proposal would adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. This is an overriding consideration.
- 16 Overall the proposed development would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other material considerations which outweigh this finding. Therefore the appeal should not succeed.

Albeit the Appellant has submitted a revised proposal, I believe the comments cited in this document remain valid.

With a degree of naivety, I breathed a sigh of relief when a Lawful Development Certificate was granted in July 2023 in respect of the proposed erection of a single storey rear and side extension and erection of entrance canopy. I believe he made this application within the rules of Permitted Development, which meant he would not require planning permission and thus avoid the requirement to notify neighbouring properties. However, here at last was a sensible proposal, and one which involved minimal disruption in comparison with the previous

demolition-fest. However, we now find ourselves facing yet another ill-considered, intrusive planning application. In an attempt to downscale, Mr Randhawa has changed his previous proposal – the construction of a five bed and a four bed house - to the construction of two semi-detached four-bedroom houses with single garage. My comments are as follows:

Design & Access Statement

In addressing the current Design Statement dated January 2024, I consider that the points set out below have no merit and merely consist of a series of vague, nonsensical statements put forward in an attempt to justify the total over-development of the plot.

4.0 Use

‘The reuse of this previously developed land for housing would accord with paragraphs 2.23, 3.6(b) 3.8,3.9 and saved Policies H0 H2 and H3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review. Furthermore effectively reusing disused previously developed land within a key sustainable location is strongly supported by (various paragraphs quoted) of the National Planning Policy Framework’.

I cannot understand how the land can be classified as ‘disused previously developed land’ when there is currently a bungalow there - rented out to various tenants since 2007 - together with a double garage. The garden comprises the remainder of the plot.

It has been previously stated by the Planning Department that the NPPF (2021) addresses the issue of garden grabbing in Paragraph 71 and states ‘Local planning authorities should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area’. This is undeniably such a case.

5.0 Amount & Layout

‘This application seeks planning permission to construct 2 no. 4 bedroom detached dwellings within the curtilage of the site boundary. The proposal makes an effective and efficient reuse of previously developed land by providing an enhancement to the street frontage onto The Turnstones by reflecting the positioning of existing dwelling in the street scene’.

The plot is currently comfortably occupied by the existing bungalow, constructed in keeping with the rest of the development in both proportion and character and fronted by an open-plan lawn. Again, I cannot agree that squeezing two properties on to the plot constitutes an enhancement to the street frontage.

‘In terms of crime prevention, the layout increases natural surveillance onto The Turnstones with gated access to the rear garden area’.

I do not understand this point. The existing bungalow has natural surveillance onto The Turnstones and has always had gated access to the rear garden area. I cannot therefore comprehend that this provides any significant benefit in terms of crime prevention.

6.0 Scale & Appearance

‘Within the cul-de-sac the proposed properties complement the predominant architectural style and scale of detached 4 bed properties.’

Concerns were raised in the pre-app response to Mr Randhawa’s previous application regarding ‘the site’s ability to accommodate two, two-storey structures without causing harm to appearance and interrupting the current character’ and this remains a pivotal point.

On this occasion the applicant has endeavoured to replicate the design of properties 20 and 24 in the hope that they will be considered acceptable within the development. However, being of smaller scale, Nos 8 & 9 would have the appearance of being squeezed in between the proposed buildings and No 10 The Turnstones when in fact they formed part of the original development.

The application states of the properties that ‘they sit comfortably within the plot’, which, rather than complying with Paragraph 71 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS14 (Housing Type and Design) and Policy CS15 (Housing Density) is more in keeping with the ‘how many elephants can you fit in a mini’ principle of design.

In comparison with others on the development, the plot on which the bungalow stands may indeed be larger, but this is due to problems arising from the instability of the land, and subsequent subsidence issues encountered at the time of building. These issues resulted in abandonment of the planned construction of No 6 The Turnstones - also a bungalow - adjacent to No 7, a factor cited by many residents in previous objections. The fact remains that nowhere else on the estate have two properties been crammed on to one plot. Where residents have extended their properties, this has always been for their own benefit, in keeping with the original ethos of the development. I would add that residents within this neighbourhood have been united in their opposition to these repeated applications and have presented their objections accordingly.

The revised proposal certainly does not fit within the existing well laid out, low density design of the estate and would substantially adversely change the character of our long-standing and harmonious community, this in contravention of the original ethos of the development.

7.0 Landscaping

‘Opportunities exist within the front garden for soft and hard landscaping that will improve the street frontage creating a better sense of openness than the current property. The property benefits from mature tree lined screening to the North East and South East boundaries.’

The property currently has a pleasant, open-plan lawn [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I cannot see how the proposed replacement, incorporating six off-street car parking spaces -three per property - will improve the street frontage and create a better sense of openness.

In addition, I would query the statement regarding tree lined screening. There are currently trees situated on the public land side of No 7's north-east boundary fence and these are shown on the drawing posted on the Council's Planning Website. However, the remainder of the 'screening' consists of trees which have been planted **within** three sides of the perimeter fence to the rear of the bungalow. There are a lot of them, but they do not appear to have been shown on any of the drawings – existing or proposed - submitted with the application and I consider this to be misleading. As stated in previous objections, these trees have never been managed and have therefore been allowed to grow to a substantial height. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

In order to accommodate a development of the proposed scale, I would assume that the trees would have to be removed. If so, I have previously raised my concerns surrounding the effect this would have on the land, with regard to stability and subsidence [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Conversely, if the trees are to remain, I cannot comprehend that the proposal can be accommodated. Furthermore, the usable garden space would be minimal in proportion to the scale of the properties. I would question whether anyone has actually visited the site to assess this situation.

9.1

The application therefore demonstrates that whilst they are equal to the larger properties on the estate, they sit comfortably within the plot, this has been further enhanced by increased open space between the two plots and No 8 The Turnstones.

I cannot agree that the properties 'sit comfortably within the plot'. In addition, the assertion that allowing an additional 650mm between the two plots and No 8 will further enhance the area is clearly ludicrous

The following statements are taken from the Delegated Report dated 28 July 2021 issued by Gravesham Council in relation to Mr Randhawa's previous Application to demolish the bungalow and garage and build two houses – a five and a four bed.

- The proposal stands to be assessed in accordance with Paragraph 71 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS14 (Housing Type and Design) and Policy CS15 (Housing Density) which both require new development to take into account the existing character of the area and to ensure that the density of new housing development does not compromise the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated.
- Proposed development for net increase of '1' dwelling would offer minimal contribution towards meeting local needs so should be accorded minimal weight in support of application. However, this has to be balanced against other requirements of the NPPF (2021) which requires development to add to the overall quality of the

area, be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and create acceptable amenity for future occupiers.

- In addition Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) provides that new development will also be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive and should conserve and enhance the character of the local built and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding area.

It is my belief that the current proposal fails to satisfy the requirements outlined in these comments and the conclusion reached in the Report that the proposal is ‘an incongruous form of development which is cramped and out of character with the surrounding area that is characterised by open planned soft landscaping and modest family properties’ remains valid.

General

I fully support comments made by other residents regarding parking issues and possible obstruction of emergency service/large delivery vehicles which may arise from this development.

I would also put forward a case for retaining the bungalow as part of the housing stock in Gravesham. They are already in short supply and I cannot think of any new build developments that are incorporating bungalows, this at a time which would render them attractive to an increasingly ageing population, or to the disabled.

[REDACTED], I have additional and very real concerns regarding Mr Randhawa's repeated invasive planning applications. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. I have previously conceded that some of my issues do not fall within your remit, but I hope you will understand that I have no option other than to persist in raising them as there is no formal avenue through which to voice them. Should they ever be realised, I would want it to be a matter of record that my concerns had been put forward – on numerous occasions. Having lived here since [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. We have been subjected to the considerable stress of opposing these unreasonable applications since 2011 and I am informed that the appellant is apparently able to continue to submit new applications ad infinitum. Therefore, with no end in sight, we must continue to live with worry and uncertainty for as long as he chooses to exercise this right. In an age where the importance of mental health is continually promoted, I believe this situation to be patently unfair and undoubtedly detrimental to our wellbeing. Despite this, it seems the system works in a way that dictates we must simply accept the unacceptable, which I would hope you would acknowledge is wrong on any level.