

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Application No:	20211165
Location:	60 Whitehill Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5PQ
Description:	Creation of a vehicular access.
Applicant:	Mr Mark West
Site Visit:	N/A Desktop Assessment

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form - dated 27/09/2021
Drawing no. MW/01 A - Existing Site Location Plan and Proposed Block Plan;
Drawing no. MW/02 A - Existing Frontage Plan and Elevation; and
Drawing no. MW/03 B - Proposed Frontage Plan and Elevation.

Relevant Planning History

No relevant planning history

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 - Sustainable Development
- CS02 - Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 - Transport
- CS12 - Green Infrastructure
- CS18 - Climate Change
- CS19 - Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 - Vehicle Parking Standards
- Policy T1 – Impact of Development in the Highway Network
- T5 - Access to the Identified Highway Network

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)

- Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 - Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 - amended June 2020;
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- SPD4 - Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- SPG 6 - Vehicular Accesses to Classified Highways (1992).

In addition to the Local Plan policies, the Council has adopted supplementary guidance ***“Planning Policy for vehicular accesses to classified highways”*** (Planning Guidance Note No 6). Although Aspin Road is not a classified highway, the document still provides useful design criteria for vehicular crossovers, as outlined below;

The Council's policy and guidance for controlling the formation of vehicular accesses to classified highways is long established dating from the mid 1970's and reaffirmed in November 1980. It was established as a planning policy through the original Gravesham Local Plan in 1987. The policy guidance was revised in September 1991 following which an explanatory leaflet was produced. In November 1992 the policy guidance was reappraised. The policy guidance was modified only in its interpretation concerning accesses to local distributor routes subject to a 30mph speed limit. This had the effect of deleting on such roads the requirement for the provision of a vehicle turning area within the site to enable vehicles to enter and leave in a forward direction.

The current guidance makes it clear that whilst each application for a new vehicular access to a classified road will be considered on its individual merits, certain standards will apply throughout:-

- There should be a minimum depth of 5.0 metres available from the rear edge of the highway or path, to ensure a car can be parked wholly off the road (increased to 5.5 metres where the driveway leads to a garage door);
- Visibility splays should be provided appropriate to the class of road and the speed of passing traffic. Typical standards are 2 x 2 metres (measured along back of footway) for pedestrians and 2 x 45 metres (measured along kerb line) for vehicles. Where these cannot be provided within the applicant's land-holding, the agreement of a neighbouring landowner may be required to comply;
- There should be sufficient width on the public road to ensure that vehicles may turn in and out safely with no lateral damage or over-running of verges or private property;
- Excessive gradients which would cause dangers to road users in wet/icy conditions should be avoided;
- The access should not create a hazard by virtue of its close proximity to other entrances, road junctions, pedestrian crossings and traffic islands;
- In conservation areas and in the grounds of listed buildings, there will be a presumption against paving over the entire forecourt for the benefit of parking. New proposals should seek to retain at least half of the garden as soft landscaping.

Other Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Kent County Council Vehicle Crossing: - Guidance and Self-Assessment (2018)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

GBC - Highways Officer - Proposals close to junction always require very careful consideration, as there are risks with drivers misreading the situation believing a vehicle is about to turn into a road, when in fact the intention is to turn into a property.

Kent County Council have an absolute minimum requirement of a distance of 10 metres between junction and access, but in certain instances this may increase to 15 metres.

It should also be noted that the property appears to benefit from parking spaces at the rear, but as the access is blind it would be dangerous to use them.

The distance between access and junction exceeds the 10 metre requirement and the parking area is deep enough to safely accommodate a vehicle, although access to the second parking space appears to be constrained by the positioning of the carriage crossover and this should be rectified by widening the crossing.

In the interests of highway safety I would recommend that the vehicular accesses to the rear of the property should be removed upon completion of this proposal and the garage door and vehicle gates be changed to pedestrian access door/gates only or completely removed and replaced with an alternative boundary treatment.

Neighbouring properties

Nine surrounding properties were consulted and no representations were received. The consultation period expired 03 November 2021.

Preliminary Matters

The agent was contacted regarding the placement of the dropped kerb in relation to the driveway. Initially the dropped kerb was off centre and positioned closer to the junction with Laurel Avenue. It was requested that the dropped kerb was moved central to the driveway, which also served to increase the distance to the junction.

The revised plans were received 8th November 2021 and considered acceptable.

Further negotiations were taken on the application regarding biodiversity and soft landscaping. The development, as constructed was considered to be harsh and harmful to the street scene by virtue of limited soft landscaping. The agent was contacted and an additional area of planting will be introduced on the northern side of the frontage. A revised frontage plan was received 4th December 2021.

Officer's Analysis

Design, Character and Appearance

60 Whitehill Road is a detached property located on the eastern side of the highway, on the junction with Laurel Avenue. The property has no relevant planning history, but has created a driveway on the frontage without planning consent which is being used informally for vehicular parking. Due to Whitehill Road being a classified highway consent is required to install a dropped kerb and formalise the driveway. The property benefits from a rear access and garage at the rear.

The works to the front garden were undertaken within the last 3 years and have significantly changed and urbanised the street scene, removing green screening and soft landscaping (see images below).

2018



2021



While it is acknowledged that two planters have been installed along the entrance to the property, this is a minimal contribution to biodiversity and soft landscaping. As part of negotiations with the agent, a new area of planting on the northern part of the frontage has been included on the proposed plans, which serves to increase biodiversity and soften the impact on the street scene.

It is acknowledged that the development fails to deliver a net gain of biodiversity and is contrary to Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021), however the changes to the landscaping is considered beneficial in highway terms (see Parking and Highway section).

Overall, the development is considered acceptable in terms of design. The boundary walls have been improved and planters of soft landscaping will be introduced which soften the impact of the development on the street scene. These planting areas will be conditioned to ensure adequate planting is introduced and is retained in perpetuity. As such, the proposal is in accordance with Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014) and Section 12 (NPPF) (2021).

Residential Amenity

The development hereby proposed will have no detrimental impact on the residential amenity of future occupiers or neighbouring properties. As such, the proposal is in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Section 12 (NPPF).

Parking and Highways

There are no parking or highway issues related to this proposal. The dimensions of the driveway are sufficient to park two vehicles in accordance with Kent County Council's parking standards (SPG 2) (2006). Even though the driveway is in close proximity to the junction with Laurel Avenue, it is sufficient distance to comply with guidance. Kent County Council vehicle crossing guidance (2018) states that a crossover should be minimum distance of 10m from a junction, in this case the edge of the crossover is 11.3m from the junction. The visibility splays are acceptable with the low-level walls not exceeding height of 0.9m.

The Council's Highway Officer registered no objection to the proposal.

As discussed previously in this report, the hedging along the front boundary prior to the development would have impeded the visibility splays and increase risk of injury for both pedestrians and road users. Moreover, the hedging reduced visibility for traffic egressing from Laurel Avenue onto Whitehill Road. Therefore, the removal of the hedging along the front boundary is considered to improve and increase safety of road users. Given the location of the property careful consideration must be made to the potential impact that increase landscaping would have on the highway.

As such, the proposed crossover and formalisation of the hardstanding as a driveway is considered acceptable in terms of highway policy and guidance.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Impact on Biodiversity - as aforementioned within this report, the development has significantly reduced the soft landscaping within the front garden and therefore resulted in a loss of biodiversity. Section 15 of the NPPF states that development should result in a biodiversity net gain. Although the development results in a loss of biodiversity, there are sections of planting included in the proposal that softens the impact and the removal of hedging has improved visibility for vehicles. As such the development is considered acceptable in terms of biodiversity.

Conclusion and Balancing Exercise

The application has been fully considered and it is in accordance with local and national planning policy.

Although the development results in a net loss of biodiversity, the removal of the pre-existing hedgerow improves highway visibility and reduces the potential for vehicular collisions. Moreover, the quality of the boundary walls has been improved and the development includes the reintroduction of planting which will soften the impact on the street scene. There are no impacts on residential amenity and the development accords with highway policy.

As such, it is recommended that planning permission is granted.

Recommendation

Permission - subject to conditions.

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mr Ethan Bonthron	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	9 th December 2021	Dated:	10 December 2021