



Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No:	20230184
Location:	Land at Brimsole Farm, Brimstone Hill, Meopham
Description:	Conversion (change of use) of existing barn into new three bedroom dwelling with associated parking.
Applicant:	Mr Adam Thompson
Site Visit Date:	22 March 2023

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form
Drawing no. 1 (Site Plan)
Drawing no. 16807-22 (Existing block plan)
Drawing no. 16808-22A (Existing floor plan)
Drawing no. 16809-A (Existing elevations)
Drawing no. E001 (Site Location Plan)
Drawing no. P450 (Proposed Elevations)
Drawing no. P200 (Proposed Floor Plans)
Drawing no. P150 Rev. P1 (Proposed Site Plan)
Planning Statement (ref. DHA/30275 dated February 2023)
Planning Document (ref. 22098 P001 dated February 2023)
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (ref. 23_1714_Report_MF_AT dated 15/02/2023)
Structural Assessment dated Feb 2023

Superseded plan:

~~Drawing no. P150 (Proposed Site Plan)~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20150589	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the existing self-contained residential use of the outbuilding known as 'The Lodge' and the material change of the land to establish a residential curtilage.	Granted	08.10.2015
19830705	Construction of a cesspool	Permitted	17.10.1983
19590047	Erection of dwellings	Refused Appeal dismissed	03.04.1959 25.08.1959
19520171	Siting of caravan for residential purposes	Permitted	11.03.1953

19520170	Siting of caravan for residential purposes	Temporary	05.09.1952
19490023	Erection of a Dutch Barn and grain store	Permitted	25.01.1949

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

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

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C11 – Change of Use of Redundant Buildings in the Countryside
- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the identified Highway Network
- 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.

Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy sets out the Borough's objectively assessed need for housing over the Plan period (up to the year 2028) and finds that there is a need for at least 6,170 new dwellings during the period. Evidence now available shows that the Council is not able to demonstrate a five-year housing supply (a 3.27 year supply has most recently been calculated within the statement published [here](#)), and as the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) that required by the Housing Delivery Test, the housing delivery element of Core Strategy Policy CS02 must be regarded to be out of date, as required by the Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF (2021).

This requires that in regard to housing development, planning permission should be granted unless:

“the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

In the Gravesham context, the policies referred to in paragraph 11(d)(i) above are those set out in the NPPF (2021) at footnote 6 (rather than those in development plans) relating to any of the following:

- Habitats sites (and those sites listed in NPPF (2021) paragraph 181)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Green Belt,
- Local Green Space,
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- Irreplaceable habitats;
- Designated heritage assets (& other heritage assets of archaeological interest, see NPPF footnote 63); and
- Areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

In determining applications for planning permission involving housing, the Council will therefore apply a weighted balance in favour of granting planning permission in accordance with relevant case law and guidance, having regard to the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals when evaluated against development plan policy, the need to make efficient use of land (paragraph 125(c)) in context, the relative contribution the proposal makes towards the alleviation of any shortfall in housing delivery at that time and any other considerations material to the proposed development.

As part of this balancing exercise, it should be noted that paragraphs 130 and 134 of the NPPF (2021) 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.

Notwithstanding the Council's shortages in housing delivery and the consequent weight to be given in favour of the proposed development it is necessary to assess the proposals against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework and established local planning policy taken as a whole.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 – Making effective use of land
- 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 – Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020
- SPG4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)
- Kent AONB Management Plan (2021)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

External Consultees

KCC Biodiversity

We are satisfied that the site/impacted buildings has little protected species/biodiversity interest. However, given the proximity of the site to ancient woodland, we advise that a native-species only landscape plan and implementation of sensitive lighting is important to safeguard the ecology of this irreplaceable habitat. As such, we advise that Biodiversity and Ecological Enhancements and Lighting and Biodiversity conditions are attached to any granted planning permission.

KCC Heritage

The site lies within an area of general multi-period archaeological potential and the site itself is a historic farmstead recorded on historic mapping since at least the mid-19th century.

Looking at the photographs in the structural assessment report, the standing building appears to be a relatively modern replacement, possibly on the footprint of two earlier, and smaller, farm buildings which are recorded on historic mapping. On the information presented, I consider it unlikely that the proposed works would have a significant archaeological impact in relation to the standing structures. Any groundworks associated with the proposed development, might impact on archaeological evidence for the earlier history of the farmstead, and site, and I recommend that if planning permission is granted an archaeological watching brief condition is applied to any forthcoming consent.

KCC Highways

Initial comments 16.03.2023:

This development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority in accordance with the current consultation protocol arrangements. However, this particular application has been brought to the attention of the drainage team who have been asked to comment.

Raised kerbs and gullies appear to have been installed here in the past, presumably to alleviate a surface water flooding issue. Should this be lowered to facilitate a new access for smaller vehicles it could give rise to a risk of flooding which has attempted to be mitigated with those past works.

I note that the gullies drain into the pond and that this pond is proposed to be infilled. This would leave the gullies with nowhere to discharge to, giving rise to an increase in flood risk, not only to the property itself but also the public highway.

Based on the above, it is recommended that this application be refused.

Further comments 30.03.2023 following the submission of a revised plan showing attenuation tank and drainage runs:

It would appear that this development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority in accordance with the current consultation protocol arrangements. Public highway informative recommended.

Follow-up comments 06.04.2023:

Unless the site is being offered for adoption, we would not need to be involved in the drainage elements. A condition worded to agree a drainage solution would be acceptable.

Meopham Parish Council

Meopham Parish Council raises no objection to this planning application subject to the run - off pond issues being satisfactorily resolved, and a condition being attached that ensures that the materials to be used are appropriate to the location.

Internal Consultees

GBC Highways

Whilst this proposal does not fit the consultation criteria, I suggest Kent County Council Highways should be consulted on this application, as it appears to me that the property may have suffered from highway flooding in the past and may do again if the property is converted and the access adjusted to accommodate cars.

Whilst the images on Google Street View may not be the best, they show a history at this site.



February 2009, mud on the highway, no obvious vehicular access to the property, debris suggests overflowing from the carriageway towards the property.



August 2009 Recent highway works which seem to have raised the kerb line to prevent overspill of surface water from flooding the property. Note multiple gully pots that would only be there if there is a severe surface water drainage problem. Gullies also visible in February image.



October 2016 still no obvious access, the old fence line appears to be continuous and not gated.



January 2021 at some stage gates have been installed, but the kerbs have not been dropped to accommodate an access, meaning any vehicles would have to negotiate a full height kerb, not an issue for the majority of farm vehicles, but more of a problem for cars. Note the build-up of mud in front of the kerb face, which would spill onto the adjacent land if the kerb is dropped.



Looking as best as possible at the area immediately behind the gate using Google Street View images, there is little evidence to suggest the gates were in regular use.

Whilst it is not impossible to construct an access to serve this property, it will require extensive works to provide a dropped kerb, then have a paved margin at least 125mm if not 150mm above carriageway to prevent flooding before sloping back to re-join the existing access at a gradient not exceeding 10% and avoid grounding a car using the access.

As the previous use of the potential access is in some doubt in my mind. All soft/hard landscaping and any boundary treatments within the boundary of the site and within 2 metres of the highway, should not exceed 850mm above ground level. (one metre above carriageway max)

In terms of the actual conversion, I have no objections car and cycle parking complies with guidance and there is adequate space on the driveway to accommodate a tanker to empty the cesspool.

I have no objections, but would suggest the formation of the access needs to be agreed with Kent County Council to avoid flooding and as this will require engineering works to overcome flooding issues in terms of ground levels, you may consider it requires a planning condition.

Further comments:

An attenuation tank that drains to ground would I expect be an acceptable solution but would need some form of agreement with Kent County Council, as the proposal is for both the properties surface water and highway water to use the same facility.

A suitably worded condition would hopefully suffice.

GBC Environmental Protection

Environmental Protection has no objection to this application but would make the following comments.

The barn and site has been in agricultural use and as such, a contamination assessment/investigation is required. Agricultural uses can give rise to contamination through the use and storage of fuels and oils (fuel for machinery and repair/maintenance of machinery/equipment), storage and use of chemicals including pesticides and fertilisers.

To deal with this and other matters, a contaminated land condition and code of construction practice, drainage/sewerage and lighting informatives are recommended.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by individual neighbour letters to 5 properties, and on site. The consultation periods expired on 3 and 14 April 2023 respectively.

One letter of representation has been received from a neighbouring property with the following comments:

1. If the pond is due to be infilled, this may increase flooding onto neighbouring properties.
2. There is an opening to a deep well below the barn and there are concerns about potential risks to neighbouring properties with excavating the foundations.
3. Within the adjacent property, there is an open fire with a protruding chimney breast adjoining the proposed car port. The wall is brick with no cavity. There is a concern about having cars so close to the house and fireplace in terms of fumes, noise, fuel leakage and health and safety.

The agent responded to the above comments as follows:

1. This has been addressed with the new proposed site plan.
2. No major excavations are occurring as the existing structure has been deemed structurally sound for conversion.
3. The existing roof will be retained so will not impact on the flue and only minimal opening up works at the front will be carried out, and we are proposing to build out the adjoining wall within our own boundary and a new wall centrally, which will reduce any noise impact. There will be fuel filters on the drainage in this area. We would note this is in area there has been farm machinery and other vehicles using the existing driveway access to enter the farm, so it is no different to cars accessing to park at the house.

The Kent Downs AONB Management Unit, GBC Waste and Local Ward Councillors were also consulted, and no responses were received.

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

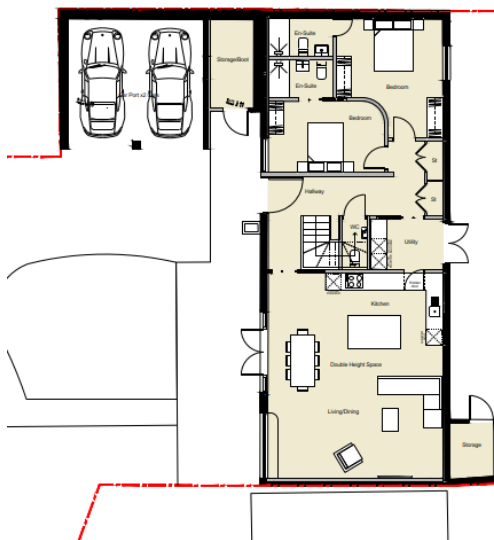
This application seeks full planning permission for the conversion (change of use) of the existing barn into a new three bedroom dwelling with associated parking.

The existing barn is an L-shaped structure comprising a large agricultural storage barn with a lower cattle store return.

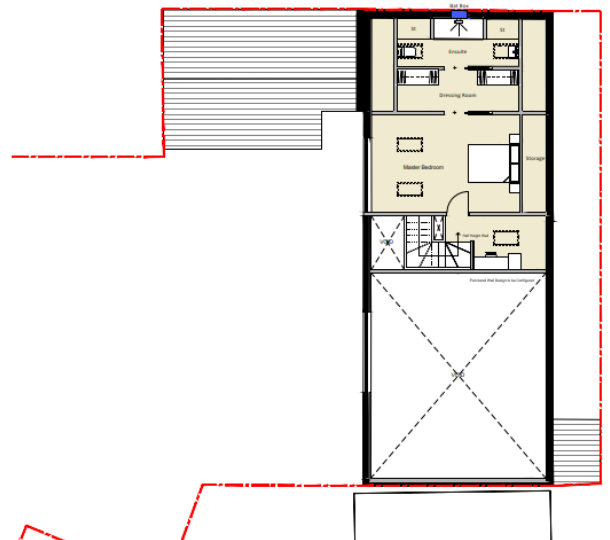
Proposed site plan

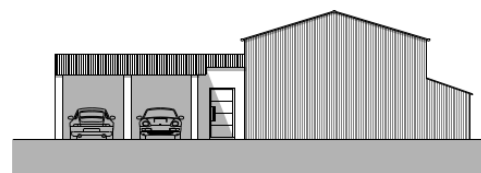
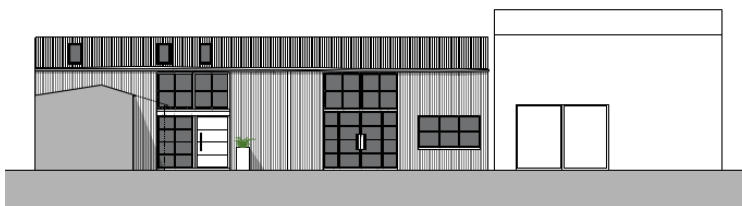


Proposed floor plans



Proposed elevations





The converted barn would contain 2 ensuite bedrooms on the ground floor, plus an open plan living/dining and kitchen space, a utility room, WC and hallway with stairs up to a master bedroom on the first floor with an ensuite and dressing room. Car parking for two cars will be provided within a car port.

New window/door openings will be inserted into the roof and front and rear elevations. Materials are to be confirmed.

A revised site plan has been submitted showing an attenuation tank and drain runs to help manage surface water drainage.

Mature boundary vegetation will be retained, and landscape and biodiversity enhancements will be included (such as a bat box on the first floor flank elevation). Specific details of these are to be confirmed.

This type of proposal is often dealt with under Part Q of Part 3, Schedule 2, Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses) but cannot be considered under this legislation due to the location of the site within an area of outstanding natural beauty (Article 2(3) land).

Main Considerations

The application site is located in the countryside in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and in the Green Belt. It is also located on the boundary of the Harvel Wooded Downs and Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Areas and is in a Biodiversity Opportunity Area.

Strategic Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 is relevant. Policy CS02 states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and that for development outside those settlements, development will only be supported where it protects the national and local planning purposes of the Green Belt.

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

- Appropriateness of development in the Green Belt, including the effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
- Impact the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the impact on the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Residential amenity; and
- Highways and parking.

Principle of development in the Green Belt

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 (paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021). Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021 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.

Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location

for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy 2014.

Local Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt (paragraph 149 of the NPPF 2021). However, there are exceptions to this which, as in the case of this proposal, and as set out in paragraph 150 of the NPPF 2021, include:

(d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.

Saved Policy C11 of the Local Plan 1994 also permits the conversion of farm buildings to other uses, subject to various criteria, including that it is of permanent construction.

The proposal would re-use the existing barn, and evidence has been provided to establish that the existing structure is sound. The submitted Structural Assessment confirms the barn is a single-storey, timber-framed structure under a pitched, sheeted roof with main frames at approximately 3.3 metre centres. The side walls are clad in metal sheeting beneath which there are brick walls in most locations. To one end there is a single storey attached enclosure formed from block walls with a simple roof installation. The report concludes that 'the proposed conversion is a viable undertaking and that the building is sound and not in need of major reconstruction and can remain standing as existing throughout the construction process. The drawings produced to date, including the existing and proposed layouts can be considered as a logical and sympathetic use of a redundant farm building without involving any major or substantial reconstruction works.'

On this basis, the proposal would re-use the barn building which is of permanent and substantial construction. It would therefore not be inappropriate development provided it would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, as also required by paragraph 150.

Impact on Openness

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021 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. Paragraph 001 of the Planning Practice Guidance 2019 on Green Belts looks to assess the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt by taking into account the spatial and visual aspects of a development, its duration and remediability, and the activity levels generated.

As established above, the application proposal would involve an appropriate form of development at the application site. The proposal should also be judged against the second part of paragraph 150 of the NPPF 2021, which seeks to ensure appropriate development preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The existing barn is a modestly sized agricultural storage building within a modest curtilage. It is sandwiched immediately between residential plots to the north and south, The Cottage and The Farmhouse respectively. To the east is a farm complex which the application site was once part of, and to the west and at a higher level than the application site is Brimstone Hill. Greenacres Farm lies on the opposite side of Brimstone Hill, which has recently had an appeal allowed for an annex to be used as an independent dwellinghouse (appeal ref. APP/K2230/W/22/3297257). Immediately adjacent to the application barn there is also a Dutch barn; this is outside the application site.

Current Google Earth Image



Application Site



The Farmhouse



The Cottage



Rear of Application Site



The site is located down from road level and between other residential plots. It is well contained and screened by existing boundary treatment and neighbouring buildings/structures. From looking at historic Google Earth images, it appears that the land to the front of the barn was originally part of the garden for The Cottage at one stage, and therefore its proposed use as a garden for the proposed barn conversion would not be significantly different to the previous use, albeit for a new residential dwelling:

Google Earth Image 2013



The proposed conversion would not increase the size of the application buildings, and though the appearance of the application buildings would alter to some extent with a change of materials and additional windows/doors, the conversion itself would not be considered to adversely impact the openness of the Green Belt. The building is already permanent, and the activity levels associated with one additional dwelling would not be excessive and would be in keeping with the surrounding uses. There may be the addition of residential paraphernalia associated with the residential use of the site but given the likely previous garden use of the area to the front of the barn, the impact on openness would not be any greater than the previous use.

Accordingly, the proposal would be unlikely to result in such an intensification of the use of the site that would adversely impact on the openness of the Green Belt either spatially or visually. Openness would therefore be preserved, and the proposal would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. As such the proposal would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would comply with the Green Belt requirements of Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 and the NPPF 2021.

Isolated homes

Paragraph 80 of the NPPF 2021 states that planning policies should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside. A recent appeal APP/K2230/W/22/3297257 at Greenacres opposite to the site concluded that this particular site was not considered 'isolated'. Given that it is in close proximity to the application site it is fair to conclude the same for the Haven. Whilst the location is not ideal due to its narrow roads and lack of pavements, it is possible to walk/cycle to local amenities.

Design, Character and Appearance

Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 seeks to ensure that development will add to the quality of an area, be visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character and history. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects these aims and requires that new development is well-designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF 2021 aims for development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The site lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Reflective of paragraph 176 of the NPPF 2021, Policy SD2 of the Management Plan 2021-2026 recognises the need to conserve and enhance the local character, qualities, distinctiveness and natural resources of the AONB. Policy SD8 states that proposals which negatively impact on the distinctive landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the AONB will be opposed unless they can be satisfactorily mitigated.

The application site is also located on the boundary of the Harvel Wooded Downs/Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and as such, Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 is also 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.

The existing application buildings are of an unexceptional, functional appearance, and not out of place in a rural area. They neither make a positive contribution to the area but nor do they detract from it either.

The proposal would change the character of the buildings from agricultural to residential, though the footprint and shape would be the same. If carefully treated, however, the resulting buildings could retain their current character. Due to the fact that the land to the front of the barn was previously used as garden and as there is already a natural subdivision of the plot because of the placement of the buildings around the boundaries, the proposal would have a limited affect on the character and appearance of the

site. The application site's position below and set back from road level and behind existing boundary screening also restricts public vantage points and a separate domestic use in this location, contained by neighbouring residential buildings and plots, would not significantly harm the rural character of the area. As such, the proposal would have a limited effect on the special landscape characteristics and qualities of the surrounding landscape, AONB and LCAs. The proposal would also be in keeping with the existing pattern of development in the area, including the recently allowed independent dwelling at Greenacres Farm.

A separate dwelling on the site could have the potential to impact additionally on the site with the introduction of further permanent extensions, curtilage buildings and fencing resulting from permitted development rights; however, the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) (England) Order 2015 (GDPO) limits the size and type of permitted development within the AONB for such converted buildings, and any further permitted development would therefore only be modest and would appear as part of the existing cluster of development. A restriction on these rights is therefore not considered necessary in this instance. This was also the case with the recently allowed Greenacres Farm development.

Accordingly, the proposal would meet the AONB and landscape character conservation aims of Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014, and the NPPF 2021, and whilst it would not necessarily enhance these valued landscapes, it would not result in any harm to them. As the proposal is for conversion, there would not be any significant changes to the existing built form, and as a conversion the opportunity for enhancement is limited. The proposal would be sympathetic to the local character, including the landscape setting, and the quality of the development can be secured by conditioning materials, boundary treatment and landscaping. On this basis, the proposal would comply with the requirements of Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 130, 174 and 176 of the NPPF 2021.

Residential Amenity

The NPPF 2021 states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users (paragraph 130f). The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria within Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, 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.

Future Occupiers

The proposed conversion would result in a floorspace of approximately 178m². There would be three bedrooms.

In the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) 2015 a 3 bedroom, 6 person dwelling requires a minimum gross internal floor area (GIFA) of 95m². The GIFA area for the conversion therefore exceeds the minimum required space standard. On this basis, the size of accommodation would be acceptable for future occupiers to live in independently on a long-term basis.

The proposed conversion would allow for adequate natural light to all habitable rooms. The outlook for the ground floor bedroom at the rear may not be ideal given that it will likely face on to a boundary fence but this would not warrant significant concern. There are no other windows that would be adversely affected in terms of privacy or outlook.

The proposed outside space amounts to some 575m², and therefore well exceeds the minimum 60m² garden space required under the Council's Residential Layout Guidance.

There are two bedroom windows in The Cottage at the rear facing over what will be the garden area of the proposed converted barn, but according to sales particulars for The Cottage found online ([document-0.pdf \(onthemarket.com\)](#)), these are secondary bedroom windows, and are at high level. Privacy for future

occupiers is therefore unlikely to be significantly affected.

The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of occupier amenity and would comply with the requirements of SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines (2020), Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 in respect of providing a high standard of amenity and living conditions for future occupants.

Neighbouring Properties

The main property that would be affected by the proposal would be The Cottage, to the north of the application site, and immediately adjacent the proposed car port, which is attached to the side of the property, as seen in the images above and below.

Front view of The Cottage



As the size of the barns will not change, there would be no additions to the buildings that would cause any overbearing or dominant impact on The Cottage. The Cottage and the proposed barn conversion are detached and are at right angles to one another, which would prevent any direct or mutual overlooking between windows in the properties. The ground floor rear windows at The Cottage are obscured by boundary treatment.

The Cottage is not adversely affected by a loss of garden as this land has already been sold off and it has plenty of garden space to the north regardless.

A separate, single residential use of the barn would be unlikely to cause any significantly amenity issues for The Cottage.

There was a neighbour concern raised with regards to the proposed car port, with having cars close to the house and a nearby fireplace in terms of fumes, noise, fuel leakage and health and safety. This has been addressed by the agent, who has confirmed that the existing roof will be retained so will not impact on the flue for the chimney, and only minimal opening up works at the front of the proposed car port will be carried out. It is also proposed to build out the adjoining wall with The Cottage within the application boundary, which will reduce any noise impact. There will also be fuel filters on the drainage in this area. This addresses the neighbour concerns.

Overall, it is considered the proposal would have an acceptable impact on neighbouring properties in terms of outlook, privacy, light, noise and activity levels. As such, the proposal complies with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Parking and Highways

A 3 bedroom dwelling would require a maximum of 2 car parking spaces, which can easily be accommodated on the site. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with parking standards. Cycle spaces would also be able to be adequately accommodated.

The site would accommodate space for turning, including for larger vehicles, such as a tanker to empty the cesspool.

In terms of visibility at the access, it has been recommended that boundary treatments exceeding 850mm above ground level, or 1m above the carriageway, should not be put within 2m of the highway.

An issue was initially raised about possible highway flooding at the access to the application site. There were raised kerbs and gullies on the road that would indicate a surface water drainage problem. It has been noted that the gullies drain into the pond on the site that has been proposed to be infilled, and KCC Highways raised a concern about this giving rise to an increase in flood risk, not only to the property itself but also the public highway.

However, a revised plan has been submitted that indicates the introduction of an attenuation tank on the site and additional drain runs, and KCC and GBC Highways have both indicated this would be acceptable subject to details, which can be conditioned. This would overcome the concerns raised.

Due to the proposed use for a single dwelling and the low and slow traffic levels, there would not be a significant impact on highway safety from the proposal, which would comply with Saved Policies T1, T5 and P3 of the Local Plan 1994 and Policies CS11 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Suitability of Location

This matter was addressed in the appeal for the independent dwelling at Greenacres Farm and the Inspector determined that the proposal would not result in an isolated home in the countryside with regards to paragraph 80 of the NPPF 2021 due to the proximity to other residential properties along Brimstone Hill. Whilst it was recognised that the country lanes serving the property are narrow, with no formal pavements or lighting, as traffic levels are low and slow and there are bus stops, services and facilities all within walking distance on Wrotham Road to the west of the site (less than a mile away), which would provide a reasonable degree of accessibility from the site by means other than the car, and contribute to the rural community in line with paragraph 79 of the NPPF. As the circumstances of the current application are similar to this appeal, the same stance is taken, and the site is deemed to be accessible and not isolated, and therefore a sustainable housing development in this rural area.

Biodiversity

The NPPF 2021 in paragraph 180(a) states that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects this stance and states that sites designated for their biodiversity value will be protected. There will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been submitted. KCC Biodiversity are satisfied that the site/impacted buildings have little protected species/biodiversity interest. However, given the proximity of the site to ancient woodland, it is advised that a native-species only landscape plan and implementation of sensitive lighting is important to safeguard the ecology of this irreplaceable habitat. This should be secured by condition.

Archaeology

The site lies within an area of general multi-period archaeological potential and the site itself is a historic

farmstead recorded on historic mapping since at least the mid-19th century.

Looking at the photographs in the structural assessment report, the standing building appears to be a relatively modern replacement, possibly on the footprint of two earlier, smaller, farm buildings which are recorded on historic mapping. On the information presented, it is considered unlikely that the proposed works would have a significant archaeological impact in relation to the standing structures. Any groundworks associated with the proposed development might impact on archaeological evidence for the earlier history of the farmstead, and site, and it is therefore recommended that an archaeological watching brief is conditioned on any forthcoming planning permission. On this basis, the proposal would therefore comply with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 197 of the NPPF 2021.

Environmental Protection

The barn and site have historically been in agricultural use and as such, a contamination assessment/investigation is required. Agricultural uses can give rise to contamination through the use and storage of fuels and oils (fuel for machinery and repair/maintenance of machinery/equipment), and storage and use of chemicals including pesticides and fertilisers.

To deal with this, a contaminated land assessment should be conditioned as part of any forthcoming permission, as well as informatives relating to the code of practice on construction and demolition, drainage/sewerage and lighting. On this basis, the proposal would therefore comply with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 185 of the NPPF 2021.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Overall, the proposed barn conversion would be an appropriate development that would not harm the openness of the Green Belt and would conserve the rural landscape context and character of this site within the Kent Downs AONB and Harvel Wooded Downs/Luddesdown Downs Landscape Character Areas.

Subject to conditions, the proposal would also be acceptable in terms of design, amenity, parking and highways, environmental protection, biodiversity and archaeology impacts. As such, the proposal would comply with the requirements of Policies CS02, CS11, CS12, CS19 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, saved Policies C11, T1, T5 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan 1994 and paragraphs 111, 126, 130, 137, 138, 147, 148, 150, 174, 176, 180, 185 and 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

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

Case Officer:	Mrs Katherine Parkin	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:	<i>K. Parkin</i>	Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	27 April 2023	Dated:	28th April 2023