



Delegated Report

Outline Planning Application

Planning Application No:	20221153
Location:	Northfield House, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend
Description:	Outline application with some matters reserved for the demolition of Northfield House and outbuildings and the erection of two detached dwellings, with associated parking, access and amenity areas.
Applicant:	Mr M Rossi
Site Visit Date:	Desktop assessment

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form
Supporting Planning Statement
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (ref. 2022/03/14)
Bat Survey (ref. 2022/03/14)
Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement (Amended) (Ref. CAS/2022/128)
Drawing no. Oak_22-111 (Topographical Survey)
Drawing no. P.2781.010.A (Site Location Plan)
Drawing no. P.2781.020.A (Existing Block Plan)
Drawing no. P.2781.030.C (Proposed Block Plan)
Drawing no. P.2781.060.B (Indicative Plans Dwelling 1)
Drawing no. P.2781.061.B (Indicative Plans Dwelling 2)
Drawing no. P.2781.070.B (Indicative Elevations Dwelling 1)
Drawing no. P.2781.071.A (Indicative Elevations Dwelling 2)

Revisions to the scheme were made following concerns about the originally proposed rear dwelling. This element of the proposal was therefore removed from the scheme and the following plans have therefore been superseded/deleted:

~~Drawing no. P.2781.030.B (Proposed Block Plan)~~
~~Drawing no. P.2781.062.B (Indicative Plans Dwelling 3)~~
~~Drawing no. P.2781.072.B (Indicative Elevations Dwelling 3)~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20220823	Outline application for the demolition of Northfield House and outbuildings and the erection of three detached dwellings, with associated parking, access and amenity areas.	Refused	26.09.2022
20080188	Continued display of non-illuminated free-standing sign in front garden and wall mounted sign on side	Consent	27.03.2008

	elevation of house.		
20070988	Outline application for the demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two detached two storey dwellings each with garage.	Permitted	10.01.2008
19900346	Change of use of part of the ground floor from shop to residential and alterations to the ground floor front elevation.	Permitted	07.06.1990
19550136	Erection of a dwelling	Refused	07.10.1955
Graveney Lodge			
20220265	Application for a minor material amendment to planning permission reference no 20201100 for the erection of a single storey dwelling house; to replace drawing numbered 2160.04A (Proposed Floor Plan) with drawing numbered 21/0529/14A (Proposed Ground Floor Plan - Option 2); and the following drawing numbered 21/0529/13A (Proposed Basement Plan - Option 2); Addendum to Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement (ref-CAS/2021/127).	Permitted	05.05.2022
20201100	Erection of a single storey dwellinghouse	Permitted	25.08.2021
20170632	Erection of a two storey 5no. bedroom dwelling with associated access drive and car parking.	Appeal against non-determination dismissed	25/06/2018

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS15 – Housing Density
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Design and Development Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- T5 – New Accesses onto 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.

Given Gravesham's current inability to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, 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:

- i. 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
- ii. 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 7 (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 (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest, see NPPF 2021, footnote 68); 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 121(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.

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
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 – Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 (amended 2020)
- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Planning Guidance Note 6 Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways (2009)
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

External Consultees

Dickens Country Protection Society

The Society regrets that the application is based on the demolition of an existing house, which is of long standing and forms part of the character of the area.

The Society notes that the application is similar to application GR/2022/0823 on which the Society commented: our letter of 22nd August 2022 refers. The main difference between the two applications appears to be in the indicative design submitted for the third dwelling.

In clarification, the Society objects in principal to the third dwelling which it considers is overdevelopment. It is an undesirable form of backland development affecting the amenity of the properties around the site. In the Society's view, there may be the potential for two dwellings on the road frontage, particularly if the access road to the rear is omitted and the amenity land around each dwelling can be increased at the sides and to the rear. This, with some redesign could result in a development more in character with the area.

[No further comments have been received following the revisions to the proposal.]

Meopham Parish Council

Original comments:

Meopham Parish Council objects to this planning application on the following grounds:

1. Putting a third dwelling on the site would be an over-intensive development. The amenity of all three proposed homes will be reduced. The third dwelling may well impact on the amenity of the residents of the properties in the estate at the rear of the plot.
2. The opening of another access to Wrotham Road A227 close to the school is not appropriate given the traffic problems that already exist in this vicinity.
3. The Parish Council wishes to urge GBC to maintain the historic character of the village through the preservation of the Edwardian Villas.

Further comments following revisions

Whilst Meopham Parish Council regret the loss of this heritage asset, it raises no objection to this planning application.

Internal Consultees

GBC Highways

Original comments:

I have no highway objections, the parking and on-site turning provision complies with planning guidance and traffic generation would not be considered significant. A study of Crashmap does not show any crashes in the area for the period 2017 to 2021, the figures for 2022 are not currently available.

The applicant will have to satisfy the Building Regulation requirements for the fire appliance access to the property at the rear, but it would appear from the information available that the layout could be accommodated but perhaps not in the style shown on the submitted drawing, but layout is a reserved matter.

The applicant will need to consider their surface water drainage carefully given the fact that soakaways are not permitted within 5 metres of a road or a building and bound permeable materials may be a better approach.

2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays will be required either side of any new or widened access and there should be no detriment on the exiting provision if an existing access is to be retained or adapted.

Further comments following revisions:

This is a great improvement on the previous proposal with a new dwelling at the rear.

There are no objections but pedestrian visibility splays of 2m x 2m along the edge of the drive and the back edge of footway will have to be provided, but this can be conditioned.

Secure, covered cycle parking should be provided at the rate of one cycle space per bedroom per dwelling.

Any physical alterations to the carriage crossover will have to be agreed with Kent County Council as Highway Authority.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by individual neighbour letters to 3 properties, and on site. The original consultation periods expired on 7 and 16 December 2022 respectively. Following the revisions to the proposal, further consultations were carried out and the consultation periods expired on 6 and 17 February 2023 respectively

Originally, two letters of representation have been received from neighbouring properties, objecting on the following grounds:

- Undesirable backland development.
- Overlooking of neighbouring properties.
- Effect on quality of life.
- Reduction in privacy to gardens and properties.
- Light level to gardens and rear of neighbouring properties will be affected due to building heights.
- Increased noise and traffic and change to the quiet, rural nature of the area.
- The parking spaces will cause increased noise and vehicle fumes.
- The proposed car numbers for the development would be a safety concern, as the site is near a school, library, nursery and medical centre and parking and safety is a problem at peak times.
- Additional driveways/access will increase traffic and pose a risk to pedestrian and highway safety.
- The design of the buildings is out of keeping with the character of the village neighbouring properties.
- Loss of an historic building to facilitate development.
- The development will increase the sense of enclosure.
- The tree in the garden will be removed, damaged or may die as a result of the development and would alter the feel and ambience of the area.

The Local Ward Councillors were also consulted, and no responses were received.

Following the additional consultations, one letter of representation was received with the following comments:

- The replacement of Northfield House, whilst regrettable, would not in itself be objected to.
- The required distance from the road for two dwellings moves the house far enough back to impose on neighbouring privacy and raises concerns regarding the loss of light to neighbouring properties.
- Two houses rather than one will add to an already chaotic school pick up time every day, which causes pollution.
- One house rather than two would make more sense.

Officer's Analysis

Background

As set out in the planning history above, there has been an outline application granted for housing on this

site (20070988).

The previous outline permission was for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of two detached two storey dwellings, each with a garage. The approved drawing is not on the case file, but the following is an extract taken from the Delegated Officer's Report on the file, which clearly describes the proposed development:

Outline application for the demolition of existing dwelling and erection of two detached two storey dwellings each with a garage.

Proposal

It is proposed to demolish the existing dwelling on site and erect two detached dwellings each with a garage. The application is made in outline with layout and scale, appearance, access and landscaping to be reserved for future consideration. Illustrative layout plans are provided to demonstrate how the proposal could be appropriately accommodated on site with regard to layout. These indicate two dwellings side by side in line with the dwelling to the north (Negril). Both proposed properties have private garden space to the rear with garaging and parking space at the front.

Access is to be taken from the west side of the site running onto Wrotham Road. This proposed access way will be shared with both properties; the new formed access is envisaged to lead to a parking area in the frontage of the dwellings. Provision for two parking spaces per dwelling (one garaged, one on the drive), there are no visitor parking spaces shown on the plans.

Recently, a further outline application (20220823) for three houses on the site was refused on the following grounds:

1. The backland siting of the proposal, accentuated by the bulk, height and scale of the rear dwelling in particular, would be uncharacteristic of the development in this part of Meopham, would fail to integrate into its surroundings and would not add to the quality of the area. The poor design and appearance of the frontage dwellings would further harm the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policies CS14, CS15, and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 119, 124, 126 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
2. The proposal has insufficient space for on-site turning and manoeuvring, which would result in vehicles reversing onto the A227 Wrotham Road to the detriment of highway safety, and which is contrary to Planning Guidance Note 6 Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways, saved Policies T1 and T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994, Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
3. The proposal fails to secure a contribution towards strategic mitigation measures within the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites to resolve disturbance issues to wintering birds, and in the absence of this contribution or any evidence to inform an appropriate assessment, the development fails to comply with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations and paragraphs 174 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

The latter ground was added in error as the application site is in excess of 6km of the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites. This matter does not need to be considered further in this case.

The current revised proposal will be considered against the above refusal grounds in order to assess whether these concerns have been addressed.

Proposal

The current application is in outline, with all matters except access to be determined (appearance,

landscaping, layout and scale). The proposal is for the demolition of Northfield House and outbuildings and the erection of 2 two storey detached dwellings, with associated parking, access and amenity areas.

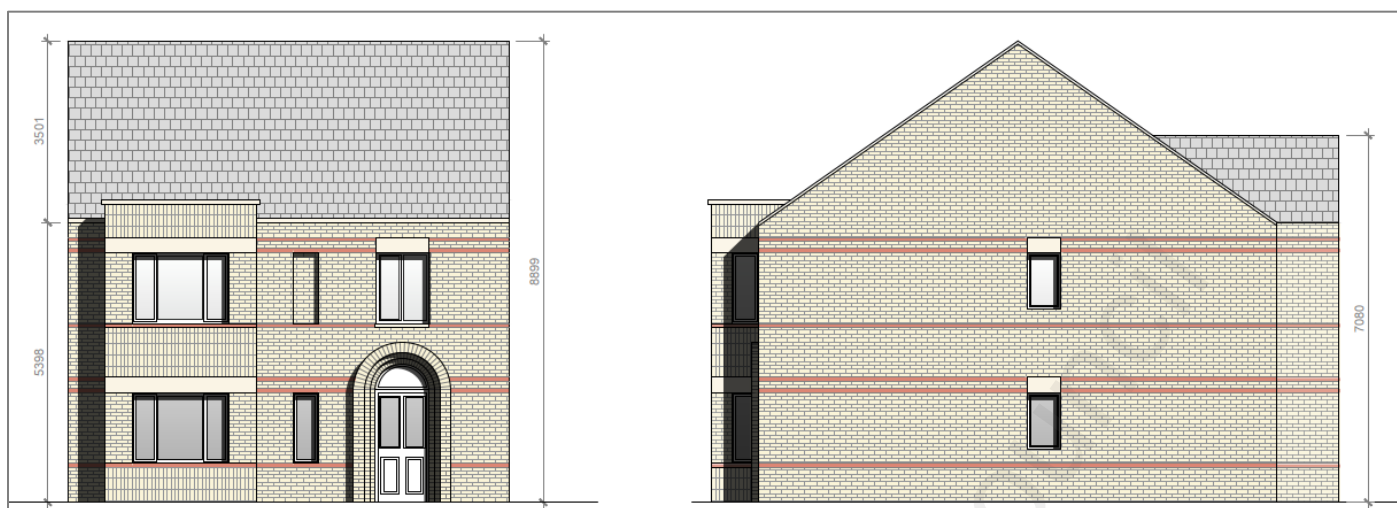
The proposed layout is as follows (*extract from proposed block plan*):



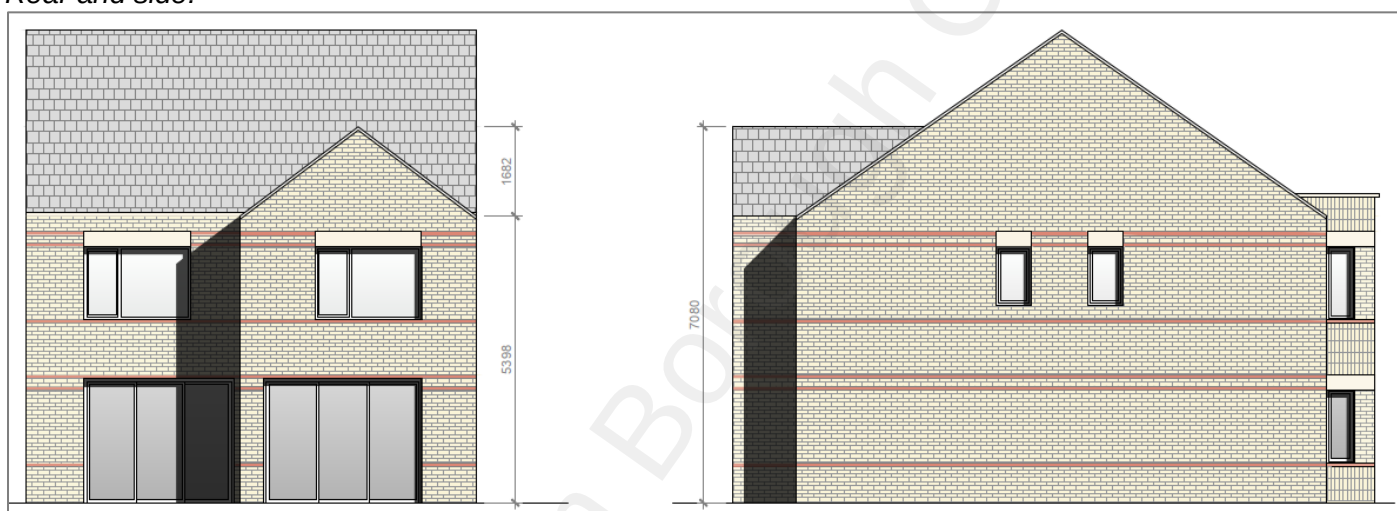
The two frontage houses would be of the same design, with four double bedrooms (one with an ensuite) and a bathroom on the first floor, and a living room, hallway and WC, open plan kitchen/dining area and a pantry and utility on the ground floor. There is a discrepancy in the drawings between the size of the footprint of the proposed houses in the above block plan and the size of the dwellings shown in the indicative elevations and floor plans, but it is accepted that the details of this would fall to be considered under a reserved matters application. The plans are therefore all taken as indicative only.

Proposed indicative elevations of frontage houses

Front and side:



Rear and side:



Parking will be accommodated to the front of each dwelling.

Principle of Development

At the heart of the NPPF 2021 there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11), which for decision-taking means that planning permission for applications involving the provision of housing should be granted, unless, in line with the requirements of paragraph 11(d):

- i. the application of policies in this Framework (the NPPF) that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. 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 this case, the application site is not protected or of particular importance. It is defined on the Policies Map of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 as lying within the rural settlement boundary of Meopham, which is inset from the Green Belt. Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 states that in the rural area, development will be supported within those rural settlements inset from the Green Belt, providing all other policy considerations and principal issues are also deemed acceptable.

As set out under application 20220823, and in light of these considerations, there is no objection to the broad principle of residential development on this site, and particularly with regards to a frontage development as previously established by the 20070988 permission, subject to the proposal being appropriate in terms of other planning issues.

Design, Character and Appearance

Whilst it is recognised that development which makes effective use of land should be supported (paragraph 119), this comes with the proviso that it should safeguard and improve the environment and not conflict with other policies in the NPPF 2021. Relevant to this proposal, paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that developments that makes efficient use of land should be supported, taking into account the identified need for different types of housing, the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, and the importance of securing well-designed places.

As under application 20220823, the application proposes the subdivision of an existing residential plot, but this time with the introduction of two dwellings at the front. The new dwelling proposed within the garden at the back of the plot was the main concern raised under the previous application, as set out in the first refusal ground above. This element of the proposal has been removed from the current scheme, and therefore this overcomes the concern raised in the previous refusal ground about the impact of a backland development on the character of the area.

Consideration of the character of the area is a continuous thread throughout the planning policies relevant to this case. Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy 2014 sets out that new housing development is expected to provide a range of dwelling types and sizes, taking into account the existing character of the area as well as evidence of local need to create sustainable and balanced communities. The proposals are for 4 bedroom detached dwellings in an area of similar sized properties and this would therefore be supported by Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy 2014, providing design and character is also acceptable.

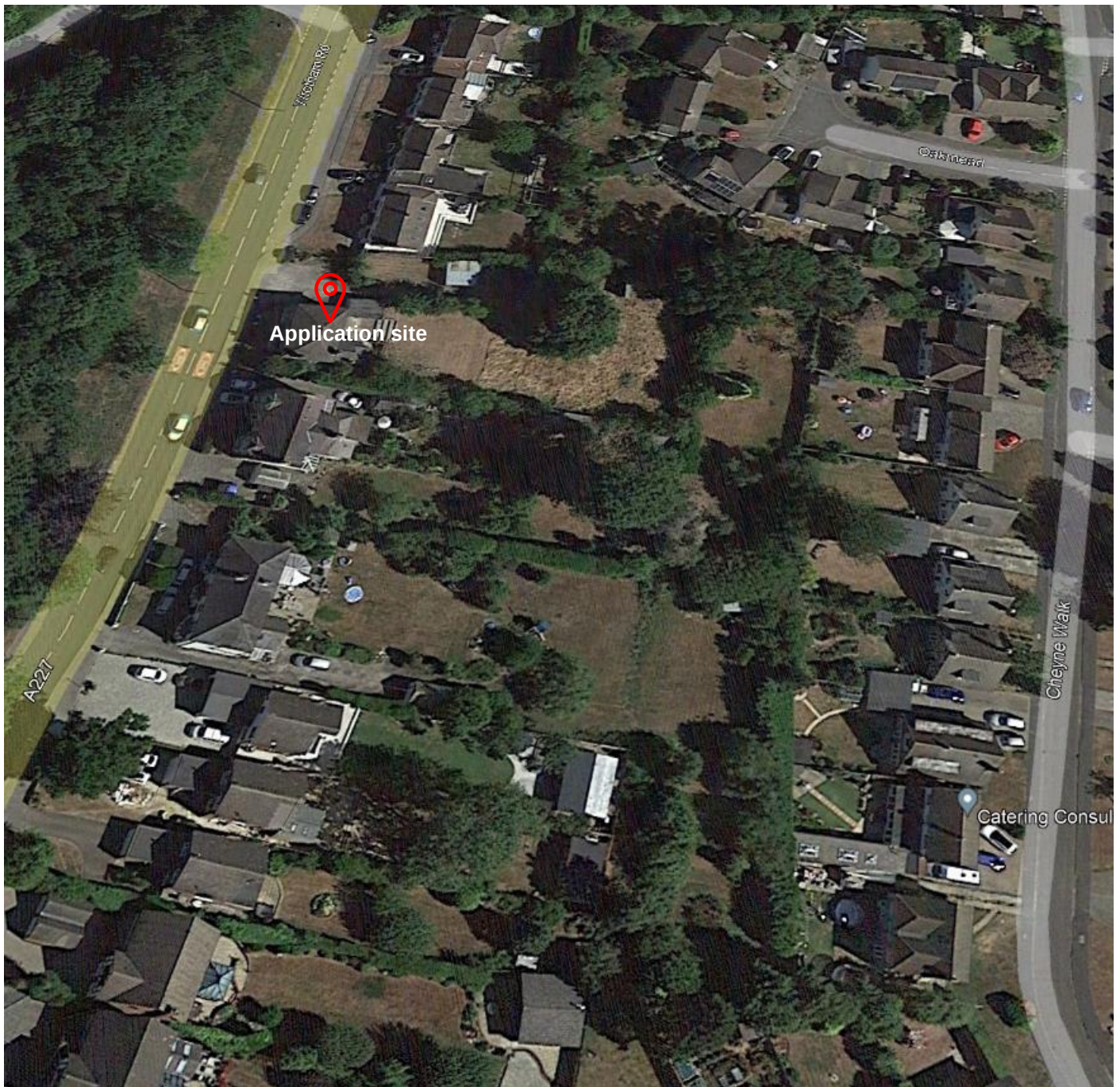
Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy seeks to achieve a minimum density for residential development in the rural area of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph), subject to the overriding consideration that it achieves good design and does not compromise the distinctive character of the area. In terms of the density of development currently proposed for this site, this would equate to 10dph; this is below the minimum requirement but given the character of the area, which is generally made up of detached houses in good size plots, a higher density would be out of keeping.

It is considered that the proposed size and density of the proposed dwellings alone could be acceptable, but their appearance and layout must be considered within the context of their surroundings. Whilst it is recognised that the details of these matters would be considered under a reserved matters application, the principle should be considered at this stage.

Section 12 of the NPPF 2021 relates to achieving well-designed places and sets out the Government's requirements in relation to design issues. Paragraph 126 emphasises the importance of achieving high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

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.

The existing site contains a detached dwelling, Northfield House, which is an historic building of some character, and though it is recognised it is not listed or within a Conservation Area, its loss remains unfortunate. However, it is accepted that this loss has previously been established. The property benefits from a large rear garden, of some 1400sqm, with a depth of at least 50m. This is characteristic of many of the houses along this part of Wrotham Road, particularly to the south of the site, where the most comparable properties are located. In terms of layout, the proposal will fit with this character of frontage properties with good sized rear gardens, albeit narrower than the existing plot.



With regards to the design of the frontage properties, the revised indicative elevations show additional detailing with some reference to the existing Northfield House on the site. The two storey flat roof 'bay' is not a particularly attractive feature; flat roofs at such a height should generally be avoided. However, it is recognised that appearance is a reserved matter and would be dealt with under such an application at a later stage. It will be important that the proposed frontage buildings add to the quality of the area, particularly considering the appearance of the existing building that is proposed to be removed.

Current indicative front elevation:

Previous indicative front elevation:



In terms of landscaping, there is a fair amount of hardstanding proposed to the front of the houses. It is noted that trees and hedging are proposed to be maintained in and around the plot, and at the front of the site there is more soft landscaping proposed than previously. It will be important to retain as much of the current verdant nature of the site as possible. There would not be a requirement for as many car parking spaces as proposed and therefore there is scope to further increase the soft landscaping at the front. This should be very carefully considered under any resultant reserved matters application and should be prioritised in the development of landscaping details, including in the consideration of surfacing types.

Overall, the revised proposal for two frontage houses would be characteristic of the development in this part of Meopham, and with a well-considered house layout, design and landscaping scheme in due course, would add to the quality of the area. This is considered to have overcome the main concern raised in the previous refusal ground. The proposal would therefore comply with the requirements of Policies CS14, CS15, and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 119, 124, 126 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 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, and avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air and odour pollution.

Future Occupiers

The Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) 2015 sets out the minimum gross internal floor area (GIFA) standard for new dwellings. The table below shows the minimum standard set out in the NDSS 2015 against the sizes of the proposed dwellings within the development:

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bedspaces (persons)	2 storey dwellings (NDSS) (m ²)	Proposed dwellings GIFA (m ²)
4b (x2)	8p	125	152

The proposal therefore complies with the national standards in terms of the size of accommodation proposed. It would also comply with the Council's residential layout guidelines for the proposed gardens. For a 4 bedroom house a minimum garden area of 100m² is required, with a minimum depth of 10m. The rear garden areas and depths would exceed this.

The layout of the proposed properties is such that sufficient distance would be maintained between proposed and neighbouring buildings so as to ensure no adverse harm from overlooking or loss of light. Similarly, the closest buildings to the east in Oakmead and Cheyne Walk are in excess of 21m so would be unlikely to have any significant effects on amenity.

There is therefore no conflict with the requirements of the SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines (2020), Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 in respect of the standard of amenity and living conditions for future occupants of the proposed dwelling on the site.

Neighbouring Properties

The main neighbouring properties likely to be affected by the proposal are those detached dwellings either side of the site to the north (Negril) and south (Blendon Villa).

In terms of the impact on Negril, the proposed frontage house next to it would be positioned much closer than the existing Northfield House. However, the proposed detached frontage buildings would be on the same building line and would not project excessively to the front or rear of this neighbouring building. There would be at least 2.5m between the existing and proposed buildings. Outlook and light for Negril would therefore not be significantly or adversely affected. Furthermore, the only windows proposed in the first floor flank elevations facing the existing dwellings to either side would serve bathrooms according to the indicative floor plans, and therefore there will be no direct overlooking of the immediately neighbouring properties, other than what would generally be expected in such a residential area.

For Blendon Villa to the south, the proposed frontage house next to it would be positioned closer than the existing Northfield House, providing less spacing between the buildings. The proposed house would be set further back than the existing building, but would be roughly in line with the rearmost building line of Blendon Villa, and the distance between the buildings would be at least 5.5m at the closest point, so again light and outlook to Blendon Villa would not be seriously affected.

The proposed dwellings would be in excess of 21m from the closest dwellings to them in Oakmead and Cheyne Walk and there would be no loss of light or privacy given the separation distances involved.

The increased pedestrian and vehicular activity associated with an additional house at the front would have the potential to generate some additional noise disturbance for neighbouring occupiers. However, the noise associated with the comings and goings to one new dwelling would be additional to the existing background levels, including traffic noise from the use of Wrotham Road, and would not be at a level that would be harmful to the living conditions of the residents of the area.

Overall, based on the indicative plans at this stage, it is considered that the design and layout of the proposed dwellings to be developed under a reserved matters scheme could adequately protect the amenities of existing and future occupiers, and the proposal is therefore acceptable in this regard and in accordance with the requirements of the SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines (2020), Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021.

Parking and Highways

Saved policies T1, T5 and P3 of the Local Plan 1994, Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 111 of the NPPF 2021 comprise the relevant highways considerations for this proposal. These policies ensure that development has an acceptable amount of parking, is not detrimental to the highway network and promotes sustainable transport methods.

More than sufficient parking for the dwellings is proposed on the site. Four spaces are proposed per house; the maximum parking standard is for 3 spaces per dwelling for houses with 4 or more bedrooms.

The applicant will also need to consider surface water drainage carefully given the fact that soakaways are not permitted within 5 metres of a road or a building. Bound permeable materials may be a better approach.

2m x 2m pedestrian visibility splays will also be required along the edge of the drive and the back edge of footway.

The plots would also be able to accommodate secure, covered cycle parking (one cycle space per bedroom per dwelling).

Any physical alterations to the carriage crossover will have to be agreed with Kent County Council as Highway Authority.

Such matters could be covered by conditions. Overall, the previous highways concerns have been addressed and the proposal is therefore acceptable in relation to a safe access and the aforementioned policies.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Biodiversity

Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 seeks to maintain important landscape features for their aesthetic and ecological benefits. This policy also states that there will be no net loss of biodiversity and that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced. The Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) 2009 will be taken into account in determining applications.

There are well-established shrubs and trees on and around the site though they are not protected. Nevertheless, it would be worth conditioning to provide for their proper protection before any development takes place (ideally this should help inform the layout of development). This should be secured by condition.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Bat Survey have been undertaken and found no expected impact on amphibians, reptiles, dormice, badgers or bats. The PEA also states that trees (habitats) should be adequately protected, and consideration should be given to the timing of clearance works in relation to nesting birds. Ecological enhancements should also be incorporated into the development. These matters could also be secured by condition.

The site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area. Concerns have been raised above in relation to the loss of soft landscaping on the site; however, as the site comprises an existing residential property within the rural settlement boundary of Meopham, the proposal is unlikely to have any adverse impact on the wider landscape character of the area.

Archaeology

The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. However, it is considered unlikely that the proposals would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact. The proposal therefore complies with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 197 of the NPPF 2021.

Environmental Protection

As an existing residential property in a residential area, the application would have a low environmental risk. A condition should be imposed relating to a watching brief and code of practice on construction and demolition. The proposal would therefore comply with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 185 of the NPPF 2021.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The proposed development would provide a net increase of 1 dwelling on the site and would offer a small contribution towards meeting general housing need in the Borough. Accordingly, this weighs in

support of the application, particularly where evidence has shown that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing supply.

This also has to be balanced against safeguarding and improving the environment, matters which are sought throughout the NPPF 2021. In this case, as discussed above, the previous main concerns about the impact on the character of the area and highway safety are considered to have been overcome. It is considered that the outline proposal is acceptable in relation to the proposed access for the development, and that an acceptable scale, layout, appearance and landscaping scheme has the potential to be developed under a reserved matters application. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

(For detailed conditions 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:	21.02.2023	Dated:	23rd February 2023