



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20221322

Location: Meadow Cottage School Lane Higham Rochester

Description: Erection of a first floor rear extension

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Graham Loft

Site Visit Date: 27/02/2023

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application form;
- Drawing no. 08.03.02 – Existing Block Plan;
- Drawing no. 08.03.02-L – Existing Location Plan;
- Drawing no. 08.03.02E – Existing Floor Plans & Elevations;
- Drawing no. 08.03.02 – Proposed Block Plan; and
- Drawing no. 08.03.02/6 – Proposed Elevations & Floor Plans; and
- Covering letter.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20180043	Erection of single storey side and rear extensions.	Permitted	05.03.2018
20141170	Change of use of ancillary outbuilding to an independent two bedroom dwelling with home office, parking, landscaping and a separate curtilage to Home Farm Cottage.	Permitted	23.03.2015
20140906	Change of use of ancillary outbuilding to an independent two bedroom dwelling with home office, parking, landscaping and a separate curtilage to Home Farm Cottage.	Permitted	27.11.2014

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)

- C13 – Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

- 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.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- 4 – Decision-making
- 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 – Making effective use of land
- 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006);
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021); and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009).

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

No response from

- Higham Parish Council

Neighbouring properties

1 surrounding property was consulted plus site notice – overall consultation expiry date was 3 February – one response received (objection) the comments of which can be summarised as follows:

Meadow Cottage was originally an ancillary out building, has had planning permission to convert to a 2 bed dwelling and has been subsequently extended. Multiple applications mean it now looks like it is made of several compartments, the site has been so overdeveloped and exploited it has completely changed the rural feel of this part of Higham.

Officer's Analysis

The application site consists of a two storey detached dwelling off of the eastern side of School Lane, Higham very close to its northern end. The dwelling was an outbuilding to Home Farm Cottage that has been converted to a self contained dwelling under ref. 20141170. The property has subsequently been extended under application ref. 20180043. The site is located in the Green Belt and the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area.

The principle issues in the assessment of the application are:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
- Effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
- Character and Appearance including the effect of the proposal on landscape character;
- Impact on Occupier Amenity
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity;
- Parking and Highway Safety;
- Whether Very Special Circumstances exist

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

The application site is located within the Green Belt where inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021).

Paragraph 148 of the NPPF (2021) states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. '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.

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021) states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;**
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

In this case point (c) is relevant. Any extension to the property must not result in disproportionate additions over and above the original building.

Saved Policy C13 (LPFR) states that extensions to dwellings will be considered on their merits but the Council will expect the following criteria to be satisfied:-

- (i) The existing dwelling must be an "original dwelling"* in permanent use as a dwelling.
- (ii) There will be an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.
- (iii) Those extensions which provide essential basic amenities such as a bathroom, toilet or kitchen,

which are currently not available or are clearly inadequate, will normally be permitted.

(iv) The extension shall not be in a form which would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential curtilage.

(v) The dwelling to be enlarged must have sufficient curtilage to accommodate the extension without undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.

(vi) The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting.

(vii) Proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot.

Development Management Policies Document April 2018 (a document that has been subject to consultation but is not adopted) contains Proposed Policy DM 6 which relates to extensions, replacement buildings and ancillary development in the Green Belt. Although the weight that can be attached to this document/policy is limited, it does illustrate the Borough Council's most recent approach to the type of development proposed at the application site.

With regard to extensions, Proposed Policy DM 6 outlines that the following will be taken into account in determining whether an extension in the Green Belt is proportionate;

- its footprint, floorspace and volume compared to the original building; and
- whether its scale, mass and height is subservient to the original building.

In this case from a review of the planning history this shows that Meadow Cottage was originally an outbuilding to Home Farm Cottage. Planning permission was granted under ref. 20140906 for 'Change of use of ancillary outbuilding to an independent two bedroom dwelling with home office, parking, landscaping and a separate curtilage to Home Farm Cottage' in November 2014. Following this the applicant submitted another application for 'Change of use of ancillary outbuilding to an independent two bedroom dwelling with home office, parking, landscaping and a separate curtilage to Home Farm Cottage' under ref. 20141170; this application was permitted in March 2015. The difference between this and the original permission was that it included additional items in the form of a chimney flue, a rotary clothes dryer, a sky dish, a television aerial and the replacement of an existing greenhouse with a shed. It is this permission which has been implemented and the original dwelling is therefore that approved under planning permission ref. 20141170.

In terms of the floorspace calculations these are as follows:

Total original floor space - 117.4 sq. m

Existing extensions (permitted under ref. 20180043) – 32.65 sq. m (which are a 27% increase)

Proposed extension (subject of this application) – 25 sq. m

Total % increase over the original floor space – **49%**

It is evident from the above calculations that the proposal would exceed the one third limit (33%) and to a significant amount.

Although an increase in floorspace is a useful indicator, it is only one measure of the impact of a development and other factors that are taken into account in determining whether a proposal is proportionate are its footprint and volume compared to the original building and whether its scale, mass and height is subservient to the original building.

The proposed first floor rear extension would not increase the external footprint of the dwelling. It would however, increase the length of the dwelling at first floor level substantially being that the extension would be 7.6m in depth. It would also increase its width at first floor being that it would extend out from the western roof slope. It would also increase the height of the dwelling at this point which is currently only

single storey with a height of 3m to two storeys with a height of 5.98m. The extension would also appear as a bulky addition which is evident from the way the extension would project out beyond the western roof slope as stated above in respect of the width. It would also increase the volume of the property. Taking into account the extensions which already exist at the property and the extension proposed, this would result in a much enlarged dwelling. Therefore, by virtue of an assessment of floorspace, volume, scale, bulk, massing and design, it is considered that the proposed first floor rear extension would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the original building.

The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS02 (LPCS), saved Policy C13 (LPFR) and section 13 (NPPF, 2021).

Effect on the openness of the Green Belt

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.

The extension would add to the built form of the dwelling, adding significant floorspace over and above the original dwelling and increase the depth of the dwelling at first floor significantly. The height of the dwelling at this point would be increased from single to two storeys. There would also be an increase in width at first floor where the extension would project beyond the western roof slope. By virtue of the scale of the proposal it would add a dominant addition to the property which would increase its prominence. The proposal is therefore considered to have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Paragraphs 147 and 148 of the NPPF (2021) state that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. It is therefore now necessary to consider whether the development causes any other harm and whether there are any other considerations that are relevant to the overall planning balance.

Character and Appearance including the effect of the proposal on landscape character

The application site is located in the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Areas and as such, Policy CS12 (LPCS) is 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.

In relation to the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area the document highlights that the key landscape characteristics are very gently undulating topography with open arable farmland, views out to the marshes and the River Thames in the north, marsh side hamlets and settlements, isolated farmsteads and scattered properties with locally distinct styles and materials and pockets of orchards and garden nurseries. It states that the overall condition of the landscape is poor and it has moderate sensitivity. It recommends that the landscape characteristics should be restored and created.

The area the site is located is rural in character with open fields to the south and to the east and north-east beyond the railway line. The site itself contains a dwelling and two outbuildings; it has no rear garden with only sections either side and a hard paved area to the front of the dwelling. The proposed development would result in an increase in built form at the first floor level of the application dwelling, which would consolidate and extend the level of built development on the plot and in the wider area. It is therefore considered that by virtue of the increased prominence of this residential development in the surrounding landscape and its visibility, there would be an adverse impact on the landscape character. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS12 (LPCS) and section 15 of the NPPF (2021).

In design terms the first floor rear extension would be a large addition being 7.6m in depth. It would also be a very bulky addition as it would project out beyond the western roof slope and this design element is not in keeping with the existing pitched gable ended roof design of the dwelling. The oddly angled pitched roof of the extension does not match the pitched roof form of the host dwelling and appears as an extremely

incongruous addition. The lack of any window in the rear elevation also means there is just a blank rear elevation. The proposal would result in an overly dominant, bulky and incongruous addition which would not be subservient and would not be in keeping with the scale or character of the host dwelling. The proposal, in combination with the extensions the property has already had, would result in the dwelling becoming a substantial building from what was a fairly modest outbuilding to Home Farm Cottage. Being that the rear elevation of the dwelling virtually comes up to the rear boundary of the site and that the first floor extension would extend out as far as the rear wall of the dwelling the extension would look even more dominant and this part of the dwelling 'squeezed in' this part of the plot.

In respect of character and appearance including landscape character it is therefore considered the proposal is contrary to Policy CS19 (LPCS) and section 12 of the NPPF (2021).

Impact on occupier amenity

The proposal would result in the dwelling increasing from a two to a three bedroom dwelling. SPG2 (2020) states that for a property with three bedrooms there should be a minimum of 60 sq. m private garden area and there should be a minimum depth from the rear wall of the house of 10m. The property has a large curtilage but it only benefits from limited private amenity space as it has no garden area to the rear of the property at all and the area to the front of the dwelling is hardstanding for a turning area and car parking; there is a long drive to the property from School Lane. There is a small grassed area to the western side of the dwelling and a small patio area to the eastern side of the dwelling. By virtue of their narrowness and individual size they are not particularly high quality garden space in the traditional sense but from the information submitted, it appears that these two sections taken together would amount to approximately 116.7 sq. m in area which does exceed the 60 sq. m minimum. As the property has no private rear garden at all the minimum 10m depth from the rear wall of the house cannot be achieved. However, as the garden area exceeds the 60 sq. m significantly, this lack of any garden depth from the rear wall of the house is considered acceptable.

The Technical Housing Standards (2015) set out that the minimum size for a double bedroom is 11.5 sq. m and at least 2.55 in width. The bedroom would be 13.3 sq. m in area and 2.7m in width and as such the proposal would meet these minimum standards.

In respect of the amenity of occupiers the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Due to the distance of the nearest neighbouring property, Home Farm Cottage to the application site and the siting of the extension, there would be no impact on this property with regards overshadowing or loss of outlook. There are two windows proposed in the west flank elevation of the extension to serve a bedroom and shower room but due to the distance from these to the centre point of the nearest window at Home Farm Cottage, some 22m, then this would exceed the minimum privacy distance of 21m as set out in SPG2 (2020); there would therefore be no overlooking to Home Farm Cottage. In respect of neighbouring amenity the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Parking and Highway Safety

As stated the property would increase from a two to a three bedroom dwelling. SPG4 (2006) states that a property with two or three bedrooms should have a maximum of two parking spaces. The application dwelling has a large area of hardstanding with space for two spaces and more therefore the proposal is considered to provide sufficient off-street parking provision for the property and in respect of parking and highways safety the proposal is therefore considered compliant with saved Policy P3 (LPFR).

Whether Very Special Circumstances exist

The proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt. In accordance with paragraph

148 of the NPPF (2021) substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. In addition, openness would be eroded. The proposal would also harm landscape character and be unacceptable in design terms.

The applicant has not put forward any very special circumstances and as such very special circumstances are not considered to exist.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

None.

Balancing Exercise/Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed first floor rear extension would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there are no very special circumstances to justify it. Whilst there would be no harm to occupier or neighbouring amenity or parking and highway safety, there would be harm to the openness of the Green Belt and landscape character and the proposal is also considered to be of unacceptable design. The proposal would not accord with the development plan and there are no other material considerations to outweigh this finding. Therefore, it is recommended that planning permission is refused.

Recommendation: Refusal

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

Case Officer:	Ms Rebecca Harrison	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	<i>Rebecca Harrison</i>	Signed:	
Dated:	1 March 2023	Dated:	01 March 2023