



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20230854

Location: The Barn East Court Farm Church Lane Gravesend

Description: Amended Description & Plans
Application for a variation of condition 2 to planning permission reference 20221313 for the creation of storage and games room within roof space, and the insertion of gable end windows, roof windows and rear door to the existing garage building; to allow an amendment to the proposals to allow a larger window to be inserted in the gable wall of the north elevation.

Applicant: Mr H Singh

Site Visit Date: Desktop including photographs provided by agent

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application form;
- Drawing no. 126 Rev. C – Floor plan and elevations.

Superseded drawings

- ~~Drawing no. 126 Rev. B – Floor plan and elevations.~~

A revised plan was submitted as the dormer windows that were originally proposed have been omitted from the application at the request of the LPA.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20221313	Creation of storage and games room within roof space, and the insertion of gable end windows, roof windows and rear door to the existing garage building.	Permitted	08.02.2023
20190265	Removal of stable building and outbuilding and replacement with an 8 bay domestic garage building with lift facility for double stacking of vehicles.	Permitted	13.06.2019
20160336	Application for Listed Building Consent for alterations in connection with the conversion of the former threshing barn and insertion of new first floor to form 2 no. two storey three bedroom units each with studio work rooms at ground floor, provision of covered parking spaces and garden store within part of southern most barn and provision of external parking spaces and formation of garden areas in accordance with the plans and details granted consent under reference 20040448 as subsequently amended and revised by application	Permitted	10.01.2017

	reference 20120632 with variations to allow the roof covering to be changed from thatch to clay plain tiles; revisions to the internal layout; amendments to the external alterations to the building including revisions to the entrance doors at the front and rear, the insertion of additional windows and doors and insertion of rooflights in the rear roof slope; revisions to and enlargement of the external garden spaces; and including the submission of details relating to external materials, joinery details, surface treatments, rainwater goods, boundary treatments and soft landscaping pursuant to the previous planning conditions.		
20151207	Conversion of the former threshing barn and insertion of new first floor to form 2 no. two storey three bedroom units each with studio work rooms at ground floor, provision of covered parking spaces and garden store within part of southern most barn and provision of external parking spaces and formation of garden areas in accordance with the plans and details permitted under reference 20040447 as subsequently amended and revised by application reference 20120631 with variations to allow the roof covering to be changed from thatch to clay plain tiles; revisions to the internal layout; amendments to the external alterations to the building including revisions to the entrance doors at the front and rear, the insertion of additional windows and doors and insertion of rooflights in the rear roof slope; revisions to and enlargement of the external garden spaces; and including the submission of details relating to external materials, joinery details, surface treatments, rainwater goods, boundary treatments and soft landscaping pursuant to the previous planning conditions.	Permitted	10.01.2017

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

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

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) 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 (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 12 - Achieving well designed and beautiful 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;
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006);
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021); and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009).

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

GBC Conservation Officer

Since conversion of the barn to residential, the site has suffered over development with additions and conversion of various buildings, the building of the large garage building being one of the most recent. At every opportunity these buildings have been converted to residential use, which has eroded the historic character of the farmstead group.

The proposed addition of dormer windows is out of character with the agricultural character of the building, creating a domestic appearance, and will adversely affect the setting of the historic barn. It is therefore contrary to local and national planning policy and cannot be supported.

No response from:

- Higham Parish Council

Neighbouring properties

8 surrounding properties were consulted plus site notice – one response received the comments of which can be summarised as follows:

- Concerned that building would become an Airbnb, they are already greatly impacted by 3 existing Airbnbs on the estate in respect of burning of smoke from log burning hot tubs so they can't open their windows in the summer, cars driving onto their drive, litter, strangers regularly knocking on our door. If this building becomes another Airbnb it will result in their quality of life being affected even more than it already is. **Officer Note – These comments are noted however, the proposal is not for an Airbnb and can only be assessed at face value. In regard to the comment that there are 3 Airbnbs operating, whether planning permission is required would depend on the scale of the Airbnbs and whether the character of the properties have changed from a residential dwelling.**

Officer's Analysis

Procedural matters

The application as originally submitted also included the installation of dormer windows in the east elevation. After an assessment the agent was advised that the proposal could not be supported as the proposed dormers would add too much bulk and massing to the building and also detract from its single storey nature. It was also considered unusual having the dormers so centrally located within the overall roof space too and none of the other stable buildings have been allowed dormers and if dormers were to be

allowed here it would be difficult to prevent other buildings in the farmstead doing the same. The Conservation Officer also agreed that the dormer windows were not acceptable. The agent was therefore asked to remove the dormers from the application with the submission of a revised plan and the agent has accordingly done this. The only amendment now sought therefore is to allow a larger window to be inserted in the gable wall of the north elevation.

Analysis

The application site is one half of a converted threshing barn which has been converted into two, three bedroom dwellings (the other half being 'The Granary') under application references 20151207 & 20160336.

The former threshing barn is one of a number of buildings from the former East Court Manor Farmstead which have been converted from farm buildings to residential use and incidental uses. The conversion and re-use of the buildings accorded with Green Belt policy.

This application relates specifically to the 8 bay domestic garage building with lift facility for double stacking of vehicles (so 16 in total) which was permitted in 2019 under application reference 20190265. The garage building measures 29.5m in length, 7.9m in width and a height to the ridgeline of 6.9m. It is constructed of blockwork walls clad in timber weatherboarding with a brick plinth and a clay plain tile roof. The garage was to replace an existing outbuilding on the site. Whilst the garage building represented an 800% increase in new built volume on the site, was a greater footprint than the dwelling (East Court Barn), was only marginally less than the entire length of the converted threshing barn (containing East Court Farm and The Granary) and that the provision of an 8 bay garage with double stacking went beyond what could reasonably be required for domestic purposes and was therefore considered to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, planning permission was granted at Planning Committee. The garage is outlined below (in red) with the host dwelling outlined in blue and showing the context of the wider site:



The permission was subject to conditions including no.2 which restricts the use of the building for the accommodation of private motor vehicles for the residential occupants of The Barn as a private dwelling house and no other purpose.

In 2022 the applicant applied for 'Creation of storage and games room within roof space, and the insertion of gable end windows, roof windows and rear door to the existing garage building' under application reference 20221313. Permission was granted as it was deemed that the development would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and would have no adverse impact on landscape character, occupier or neighbouring amenity or parking and highway safety.

The applicant has now applied in this current application for variation of condition 2 to planning permission reference 20221313 (approved plans) to allow an amendment to the proposals to allow a larger window to be inserted in the gable wall of the north elevation.

The site is within the Green Belt and in the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area.

The principle considerations are considered to be:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt including impact on openness;
- Character and Appearance including the effect on landscape character;
- Parking and Highway Safety
- Other Matters
- Whether very special circumstances exist

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt including impact on openness

Policy CS02 (LPCS) states that development in the Green Belt will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting Green Belt.

Paragraph 152 of the NPPF (2023) states that inappropriate development if, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF (2023) 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 154 of the NPPF (2023) states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt but there are some exceptions to this as follows:

- 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 it is considered point (c) is the most relevant as this is for alterations to an existing building. The principle of the development is therefore considered acceptable subject to an assessment of the impact that the development would have on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The proposal would not result in any increase in floorspace over what was already approved under previous application reference 20221313 when permission was given to use the first floor as storage and a games room rather than the first floor level of car stacking as approved in the original application for the garage building under reference 20190265.

In reference 20221313 there was already a window approved in the northern elevation. This proposal is to

increase its size but it would not increase the floorspace or bulk of the building in any way. It would result in a larger area of glazing but this would not result in any material increase in the size or prominence of the building. The use of the building would still remain as a games room and storage at first floor level and 8 bay garage at ground floor level, there would therefore be no intensification of use of the building over what was permitted in previous application reference 20221313.

As such it is considered the proposal would not be a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and would have no impact on the openness of the Green Belt and would continue to preserve it.

Paragraph 143 (NPPF, 2023) sets out that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

In respect of these it is not considered that the proposal would conflict with any of the Green Belt purposes.

As the proposal would not be a disproportionate addition. would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, the proposal would meet the exception (c) of paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2023) and as such the proposal is considered compliant with Policy CS02 (LPCS).

Character and Appearance including the effect on landscape character

Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (2023) requires development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (amongst other things) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan). Policy CS12 (LPCS) 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 site is located in the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area. The Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009) advises that the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area is characterised by very gently undulating topography, open arable farmland, views out to the marshes and the River Thames in the north, original Saxon village of Lower Higham and more recent development to the south, marsh side hamlets and settlements, isolated farmsteads and scattered properties with locally distinct styles and materials, pockets of orchards and garden nurseries, historic sites including a Priory and Gads Hill and the Thames and Medway Canal which runs to Lower Higham. Its condition is described as poor and its sensitivity as moderate. The guidelines for the character area focus on restoring landscape elements in poor condition, whilst safeguarding it as a prominent landscape feature within the wider landscape.

The area the site is located in is rural in character, with open fields to the north, south, east and west of the wider East Court Farm site.

In respect of the enlarged window in the north gable, this would be increased in height into the top of the gable and also lowered by 1m when compared to the window as permitted in previous application reference 20221313 as seen in the below comparison views:



north elevation 1:100

Approved



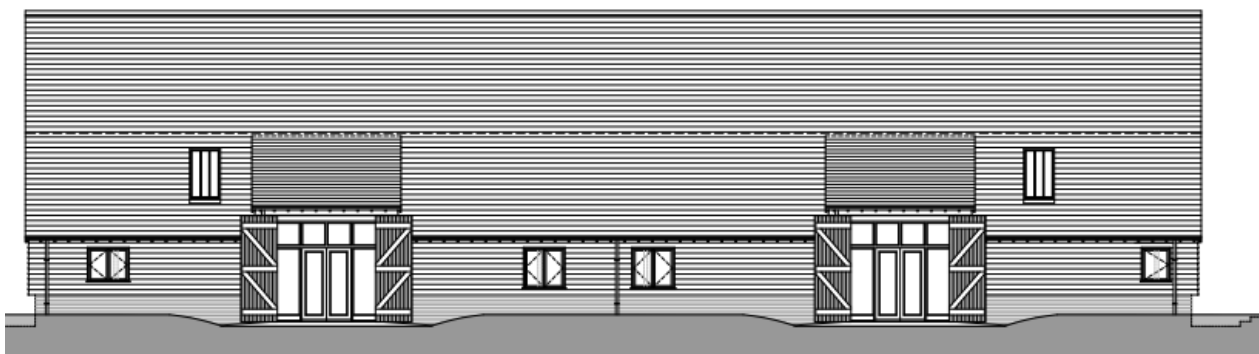
north elevation 1:100

Proposed

Although a larger expanse of glazing and a modern design it could be said to be something more of a purposely designed feature window as opposed to the previous window which does appear slightly squeezed into gable with 'cut off' top corners whereas the current proposed window would fit the gable in a better way and although a modern feature it is not in itself considered to be of 'poor design'. The proposed window would not be visible from above and would not be dissimilar in design to the large glazed openings in the host dwelling itself which was a former threshing barn and from which The Barn and The Granary have been formed (under application references 20151207 & 20160336):



west elevation



east elevation

Overall therefore, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in design terms, the character of this former farmstead and would have no adverse impact on landscape character. In respect of character

and appearance including the effect on landscape character the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policies CS12 and CS19 (LPCS).

Amenity of Occupiers

The proposed enlarged window would have no impact on the garden area or rear garden depth of the host dwelling. It would therefore have no harmful impact on the amenity of occupiers and in respect of this matter the proposal is therefore compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Neighbouring Amenity

The rooms at first floor level would be a games room and storage. The enlarged window in the north gable serving the games room would look out onto the open fields to the north and as there are no neighbouring properties to the north there would be no neighbour impact. In respect of neighbour amenity the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

None.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed amendment to increase the size of the window in the north side elevation is considered to not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would be acceptable in respect of character and appearance and landscape character and occupier and neighbouring amenity. It is therefore compliant with national and local planning policy.

Recommendation: Permission

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Rebecca Harrison	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	<i>Rebecca Harrison</i>	Signed:	
Dated:	22nd January 2023	Dated:	23 January 2024