

Planning Statement

1. Introduction

- i. This planning statement has been written to support an application seeking planning permission for the change of use of a building from agriculture to residential.
- ii. In addition to the application form, the following documents are submitted:

Appendix 1 – Title plan K485774 showing entire plan;

Appendix 2 – Extract of title plan (showing area of land to which submission relates;

Appendix 3 – Photos of the building;

Appendix 4 – Existing plans;

Appendix 5 – Proposed plans.

2. Application site and surroundings

- i. The application relates to a small building ('the store'), roughly 6.5 x 4.2metres in size that occupies a small corner of an area of agriculture land. Please note that only the building and small area marked by hatched area on the plan shown in Appendix 3 is the subject of the application. The remainder of the land is to be kept as stables and grazing land.
- ii. The land and building was purchased by ourselves, Mr. and Mrs. Newnes, in December 2018 when it was put up for sale by its previous owners. There was a competitive bidding process with c20 interested parties and we were successful with our bid. The main motivation being to ensure the land and building were not developed or occupied with detriment to the surrounding area or our residential property immediately opposite the site.
- iii. It is acknowledged that the application site lies within the Green Belt and AONB and as such, policies for both these designations apply. It is accepted that this change of use may be contrary to policy as it is located within an area of Natural Beauty. However, the building has been left in a state of disrepair and we intend to restore the building in keeping with original aesthetics and unblock the old front doors and windows that have over time, been bricked in.
- iv. The land itself is neighbored by Henley Croft. Directly opposite the building is Darnley Cottage where we reside.

3. Relevant planning history

- i. In June 2004, the entire site (the area marked by the red boundary and the wider grazing and stables in Appendix 2) was subject to an application for planning permission to convert the building and associated land to residential. This

application was refused by Gravesham Borough Council in August 2004 and an appeal was made to the Secretary of State which was dismissed.

- ii. Although dismissed, this appeal concluded that 'I accept that the building is permanent and that the alterations proposed to the structure itself would have no material impact on the openness of the area. However, it is the use of the site as a whole for residential purposes which draws me to the conclusion that the development.... Would be inappropriate development within the meaning of paragraph 3.8 of PPG2'.

4. Development Proposal

- i. The proposal, subject of this application, is primarily for the refurbishment of the store to provide an annex to Darnley Cottage. There is no intention to develop and dispose of the building.
- ii. This historic development of the store is unknown, it is not known when it became vacant and unused. The previous owners did allow a family member to reside in the building for a number of years immediately prior to our acquisition. In fact, shortly after acquisition, Mr. and Mrs. Newnes received a visit from GBC Planning Enforcement team as a complaint had been received indicating that someone was living in the building. Mr. and Mrs. Newnes demonstrated that the building was only being used for storage, as it has continued to be, but discussed the previous occupancy with the enforcement officer.

5. Planning Policy

- i. Section 70 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires that, when making a determination under the Planning Acts, the determination shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Article 35 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requires that, when issuing a decision, councils must also include a statement explaining, whether, and if so how, in dealing with the application, the local planning authority have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with a planning application.
- ii. This section sets out the relevant policies of the statutory development plan and refers to any other material considerations that should be taken into account in determining this application. Policies of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and saved policies of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) were taken into consideration in the preparation of this application together with policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

- iii. National planning policy is enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that was revised in 2019 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) that accompanies it.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)

- iv. National planning policy is enshrined within the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in July 2018 and February 2019.
- v. With regards to decision-taking, the revised NPPF advises that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development and should look for solutions rather than problems. Decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible (paragraphs 186 and 187).
- vi. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that 'the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development'. It goes on further, at paragraph 8, that there are three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states that a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' which is at the heart of the Framework to ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way.
- vii. The overarching principle is contained within Paragraph 11 which states that there is a '**presumption in favour of sustainable development**'. Paragraph 12 adds that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the status of the development plan and states that where a development that is contrary to an up-to-date development plan that permission should not be granted. The NPPF emphasizes that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Councils Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- viii. The NPPF supports the protection of the Green Belt and seeks to restrict development with Paragraph 133 stating that the fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 143 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 144 further states, '*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.*
- ix. Paragraph 76 indicates that development may be permitted in a rural area where 'the development would re-use redundant or dis-used buildings and enhance its immediate setting. Paragraph 146(d) states that the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt is not inappropriate development, provided that they are of a permanent and substantial construction. It is however accepted that the proposal would also

necessitate a change of use of the land to residential use that is not supported by Paragraph 145(e).

- x. Paragraph 185 sets out the policies for preserving and enhancing the historic environment including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. Critical in this is Paragraph 185(a) which emphasis the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significant of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. Paragraph 202 goes on that council should assess the benefits of a proposal for enabling development that would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset against the disbenefits of departing from policies.

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 2014)

- xi. The following policies have been taken into consideration in the formulation of this application:
 - i. Policy CS01: Sustainable Development;
 - ii. Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development;
 - iii. Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure;
 - iv. Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles
 - v. Policy CS20: Heritage & the Historic Environment

6. Planning Considerations

- i. It is our opinion that the issues in the consideration of this application are the preservation of a non-designated heritage asset, if it would impact on the character and appearance of the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Protection of the Heritage Asset

- ii. The building is not listed, however we regard it as being an undesigned heritage asset that is worthy of preservation given its close proximity to Darnley Cottage which is adjacent to the Grade II listed Brookers Farm House. Although its exact heritage is unknown, it would appear to date from the same period as Brooker's Farm and Darnley Cottage.
- iii. The building is brick built. It has a door, window and shutters that, although are visible from outside, internally they have been bricked up and access is obtained via a side door. The roof is tiled. The building is in good condition structurally although aesthetically needs some improvements. We believe that the proposed plans would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness in line with para. 165 of the NPPF, furthermore bringing the building into viable residential use would be consistent with the conservation. Although historically the use of the building has varied from being vacant to unpermitted residential use by the previous owners, to now storage, it is a permanent and substantial building that is worthy of preservation and would warrant support.

- iv. Policy CS20 of the Council's Core Strategy 2014 state that the council will give high priority towards the preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment. Whilst it is accepted that the building is not a designated heritage asset it has a historic attachment with Brookers Farm and Darnley Cottage itself. We feel that the proposal will secure its future use and significance as a 'heritage' asset. It would therefore be in line with Policy CS20.

Character and Appearance of the Proposal

- v. The proposal would see the building refurbished and externally its scale and massing would remain unchanged. The only significant difference would be the reinstatement of the door and windows at the front of the building, which would be put into use (rather than bricked up internally as they are currently) and replacement of windows in side elevation and roof (see Appendix 5 for details). These would be in keeping with the character of the building and the local area and will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of it.

The traditional wooden doors and hay loft doors on the side elevation would be refurbished and retained.

A cess-pit would be installed, beneath the ground adjacent to the building, to deal with waste water and sewage from the building.

- vi. The proposal includes a small amount of land, insignificant in terms of the wider agricultural plot as demonstrated on the drawings, next to the building.
- vii. We are satisfied that the proposed works will result in the total refurbishment of the building and its restoration to its former appearance. It is not proposed to extend or make any major alterations to the building and therefore the character and appearance of the area will remain unaltered. Any new materials required will be in keeping with the rural character of the existing building and area, including the neighbouring properties. We are satisfied that the proposal will not have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the area and would be in accordance with policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.
- viii. We are of the opinion that the refurbishment of the building as proposed will enhance the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Impact on the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- ix. The proposal seeks merely to refurbish the existing building that is an established feature in the Green Belt and AoNB. We are satisfied that the enhancements proposed would accord with Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Management Plan and be a visual improvement to the area and ensure a beneficial use for this otherwise redundant building.

- x. We are satisfied that the proposal will have no impact on the biodiversity of the area and that no protected species will be prejudiced by the proposals. There is no conflict with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy.

7. Conclusions

- i. We believe that this this proposal brings a redundant building into use and will enhance its immediate setting with some aesthetic improvements made, in line with the character of the building and area.
- ii. It is worth noting that we purchased this land and building to help retain local character and protect our immediate area. The building under agricultural use will not have a purpose or be useful and we would like to utilize it as an annex to our existing home for incidental use.