

PLANNING STATEMENT

Land at Stoney Wood, Wrotham Road, South Street,
Meopham, Kent DA13 0QG

Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a proposal for the change of use of land from agricultural to C3 dwellinghouse, conversion of the existing agricultural barn into a single self-build dwelling with associated hard and soft landscaping.

This application is a resubmission of a previously refused planning application (20240910), which was refused on the following grounds:

- 1 The site lies within the Green Belt where the construction of new buildings is inappropriate development unless it is for one of the exempted forms of development set out in paragraph 154 or 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024). The proposal is for a dwelling in an unsustainable location and the building of a dwelling, whether as conversion or otherwise would still by definition result in a form of encroachment in the countryside and harmful to the openness by reason of the nature of the development and the paraphernalia and associated development that goes with it. The development does not, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, fall within the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024). No very special circumstances have been put forward to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt or any other identified harm and therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy CS01 (Sustainable Development) and Policy CS02 (Scale and Distribution of Development) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (Protecting Green Belt Land).*

- 2 *The proposal would result in an unsympathetic development and inappropriate use of the land which is considered to be harmful to the open, rural character of the site and the wider designated Landscape Character Area. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Gravesham's Householder Design Guide (2021), Gravesham's design code: Design for Gravesham (2024) and Policies CS12 and CS19 of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014), and Sections 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).*
- 3 *The proposed development fails to include provision of a garden area for future occupants of the dwelling. As such, the proposal fails to safeguard the amenity of future occupiers contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) (LPCS) (2014) and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).*
- 4 *The application has failed to provide sufficient information in relation to biodiversity, specifically in regard to the ecology of the site and potential impact on protected species. As such, the application fails to demonstrate how the proposal would comply with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) (LPCS) (2014) and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024).*

Site Location and Existing Building

The site is located outside of any settlement confines, within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The site is located on the A227 Wrotham Road, between Meopham Village and Culverstone, with shops in either direction, bus stops, and Meopham railway station a short distance away. The 1.6km section of South Street in-between the two villages features multiple properties of varying plot size and design. Open fields lie to the West

of the site. To the east is lies South Street Baptist Church. The boundaries are lined by wire fencing, scrubland, hedgerows and established trees.

The site is predominantly split into two paddocks with the structures & equipment being consolidated along the Western Boundary furthest away from the A227, and due to the topography of the site, not visible from the road or site access gates. This includes a barn, stable, portable cabin, storage container, various small structures and farm equipment.

The existing barn is black timber clad, with an open frontage and metal profile roof. It is currently used for storage in association with the use of the land for keeping of horses, but much of this storage is now surplus to requirements and no longer required. The building is therefore no longer required for its original use.

Relevant Planning History

20120981 Approved 7th February 2013

Retention of the storage container for secure storage of agricultural machinery, equipment and had implements

20240910 Refused 19th March 2025

Application for the change of use of land from agricultural to C3 dwellinghouse, proposal to convert the existing agricultural barn into a single self build dwelling with associated hard and soft landscaping

Proposals

This application is a resubmission of a previously refused planning application (20240910). The proposal includes:

- Part change of use of the land from agricultural to C3 (residential);
- Conversion of the existing barn for use as a 2 bedroom dwellinghouse
- Construction of a new permeable paved patio area;

- Relocation of cabin and storage container (added approximately 2013) to a more discreet location on site;
- Erection of a new timber bin store close to the road;
- Retention of existing track and extension to the track to form a gravel driveway and turning head for the dwelling to provide two parking spaces;
- Removal of wood store and small shed;
- Associated soft landscaping

The existing barn measures 19.45 metres x 5 metres, and is constructed from vertical timber elevations and metal sheet roofing.

The proposed dwelling will measure 19.45 metres x 5 metres. It will be constructed from brickwork and black stained vertical timber cladding, and a metal roof. Aluminium low-transmission windows are proposed, which will be finished black to match the cladding.

The dwelling will be accessed by the existing track. This will be retained and extended to form a driveway and turning head, using similar material (compacted hardcore).

The proposed dwelling is a self-build dwelling, that will be occupied by the applicant to provide improved security of the site, following a number of break-ins that have taken place on site. Further details of these are provided in Appendix 1.

The proposal will allow our client to have a permanent presence, through residing on the site, which will deter vandalism, improve security and reduce crime, given that there is this history of previous break-ins on the site.

Relevant Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014):

Policy CS01 – Sustainable Development

Policy CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development

Policy CS12 – Green Infrastructure

Policy CS11 - Transport

Policy CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Analysis

Principle of Development

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF relates to proposals for isolated homes in the countryside. However, the site is accessed from a track leading from the A227 Wrotham Road, which is characterised by a number of dwellings along that stretch of road, and therefore the site is not considered to be located within an isolated location, and paragraph 84 of the NPPF does not therefore apply to this proposal (with reference to the Court of Appeal judgment *Braintree DC v SSCLG* [2018] EWCA Civ. 610).

Green Belt

The application site lies in the Metropolitan Green Belt and outside of any defined urban area. Paragraph 142 of the NPPF sets out that the “*fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence*”.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF requires LPA’s to ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.

Paragraph 154 sets out that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of a number of listed exceptions applies. The Officer Delegated Report for the previous application states “*it is considered that only paragraph 154, exceptions (g) and (h) may be relevant and should therefore be taken into account*”. The previous application was

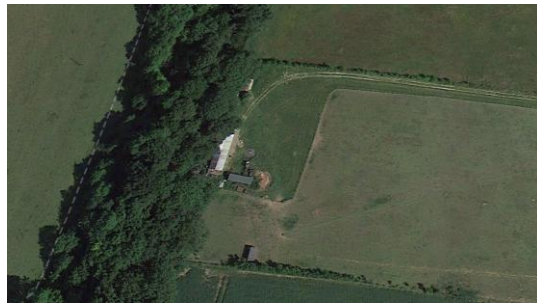
submitted as a conversion of the existing building, but concern was raised that the proposal did not represent a true conversion. It is accepted that given the change in levels that will be required, introduction of brick coursing, alterations to the openings and the amendments to flip the roof, that whilst it is proposed to retain the existing structure and the proposal will be converting the existing building, the work involved will be fairly extensive. Therefore, whilst the structure may not be considered to fall under exception (h)(iv) of paragraph 154 of the NPPF exception (g) of paragraph 154 is relevant to the application:

(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Whilst there is no planning approval for the existing barn structure, it is clear when viewing the building, along with historic aerial photographs, that the building has been in existence for over 10 years and is therefore lawful and immune from enforcement action:



July 2011



July 2013



April 2020



March 2024

It is also clear from a photo included in the planning application for the retention of the storage container (20120981), that the building was in existence in 2013:



The proposal is for the conversion of the existing building. The proposed dwelling will be the same footprint and overall height, located in the same position as the existing building. The proposal will therefore not result in substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

However, paragraph 155 of the NPPF also advises that the development of homes in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate development where the following apply:

“a) The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

b) There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;

c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and

d) Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below. “

Grey Belt land is defined within Annex 2 of the NPPF as “For the purposes of plan-

making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development”.

Assessment of whether the land is Grey Belt

As defined in the NPPF, grey belt excludes land where the application of policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 of the NPPF (other than Green Belt), would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. The site would not be covered by or affect other designations in footnote 7 of the NPPF.

Therefore, it must be considered as to whether the land strongly contributes to any of the purposes (a), (b) or (d) of paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

(a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

The site is not adjacent to or near to a large built up area, and as such, the contribution to purpose A of para 143 is weak. This concurs with the view taken by Gravesham Borough Council on the previous application.

(b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

The site is not close to a large built up area, or a town. As such, the proposal does not make a strong contribution to purpose B of para 143. This concurs with the view taken by Gravesham Borough Council on the previous application.

(d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The site does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns, and is therefore does not contribute strongly to purpose D of paragraph 143. This concurs with the view taken by Gravesham Borough Council on the previous application.

As the site does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d) the site falls under the definition of Grey Belt land as set out within the Framework.

Therefore, now that it has been established that the site meets the Grey Belt Definition, consideration needs to be made as to whether the proposal complies with paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 155(a) of the NPPF considers housing development to be acceptable where it would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan. The proposal is for the conversion of the existing building into a two bedroom dwelling, of the same scale as the existing building. It would not fundamentally undermine the purpose of the remaining Green Belt across the plan. Therefore, the proposal would comply with paragraph 155 (a) of the NPPF.

Paragraph 155(b) of the NPPF considers that housing development would be acceptable where there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. Gravesham Borough Council has published its updated 5 year housing land supply statement, which sets out that the Council can only demonstrate a supply of 3 years. Therefore, the delivery of housing is substantially below (less than 75%) the requirement of the housing delivery test and as such, the proposal complies with paragraph 155 (b) of the NPPF.

Paragraph 155(c) of the NPPF considers that housing development would be acceptable where it would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF. Paragraph 110 of the NPPF recognises that opportunities to maximise public transport solutions will vary between urban and rural locations. This site is located 0.7 miles from both Culverstone Green and Meopham Green. The A227 has a pedestrian footpath running alongside it, so that it is possible to easily walk to both locations. Bus stops lie close to the site, making it possible to travel from the site by bus to Meopham, Longfield and Gravesend, where a wider range of shops and services can be accessed.

It is also possible to walk to a range of shops and services in Meopham Green and Culverstone Green, including:

- School;
- Churches;
- Public house;
- Café;
- Village hall
- Secondary school;
- General store;
- Nursery;
- Primary school
- Leisure centre

The proposal would result in a net increase of one dwelling on the site, and therefore the volume of traffic movements associated with the development would be small. Within the context of this rural location, the proposal would be in a sustainable location as required by criterion (c) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF. This is consistent with the view taken by the Planning Inspectorate in relation to a number of recent appeals (Appendix 2).

Paragraph 155 (d) (NPPF) (2024) relates to the ‘Golden Rules’ and is not applicable for this application. The proposed development does not constitute a major development and does not trigger the requirements for affordable housing. Therefore the ‘Golden Rules’ set out in paragraphs 156 and 157 of the NPPF are not relevant to the proposal

The proposed development will utilise grey belt land, where there is a demonstrable unmet need for housing, and the development would be in a sustainable location. The Golden Rules are not applicable. The proposal would therefore satisfy criteria (a) – (d) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF, and consequently the development would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Impact on Rural Character

By re-using the barn structure, the footprint will remain the same as existing, which will minimise the visual impact on the rural locality. Timber cladding will be black stained vertical timber cladding. A low brick plinth will be added around the base of the building. It is proposed to flip the existing metal roof, but retain the existing pitch. This is in-keeping with the existing building and the surrounding locality. The proposed roof flip is not considered to be visually harmful to the surrounding landscape. It is proposed to install aluminium low-transmission windows finished black, to match the cladding. The proposed materials will be in-keeping with the rural character of the existing building and surrounding rural locality. The existing building is open to the front, and the proposed areas of glazing have been carefully thought through to minimise openings and allow the building to sit comfortably within the surrounding area. The proposed building will appear more enclosed than the existing building, whilst being sympathetic to the rural setting. It is proposed to use low-transmission glazing to minimise light pollution.

The existing wood store will be removed. The garden area associated with the proposed dwelling has been kept small (47sqm), but meets the minimum standards as set out in the Gravesham Residential Layout Guidelines 2020, to minimise encroachment of domestic paraphernalia on the countryside. The footprint of the proposed garden will be similar to the existing woodstore. The garden will be positioned to the side of the building, which is well screened due to the topography of the site and existing trees. The boundary can be defined by native hedgerow, and landscaping can be controlled by condition. Similarly, external lighting and security measures can be controlled by condition.

It is proposed to relocate the portable cabin (approved under planning permission 20120981) and the storage container south of their existing location. Whilst lawful, these structures are not considered to contribute positively to the surrounding rural locality. It is proposed to relocate them to a more discreet location, screened to the west by mature trees, and due to the topography of the land, will have less of a visual

impact upon the surrounding rural area.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposal would be in-keeping with the rural character of the site and the Landscape Character Area and complies with Gravesham's Householder Design Guide 2021, Policies CS12 and CS19 of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and Sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF.

Residential Amenity

The proposed dwelling would be located away from any neighbouring properties, and the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Policy CS19 of the LPCS requires that all development should be fit for purpose and adaptable to allow changes to meet the need of users. The design and layout of new residential development should accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (RLG 2020). In 2015 the Government produced a ministerial statement which introduced technical housing standards in England (Nationally Described Space Standards 2015). The gross internal area and rooms in the proposed dwelling comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards and Gravesham's Residential Layout Guidelines 2020. All rooms will receive sufficient natural light. The proposal includes a private garden area that complies with the minimum garden area requirements set out within the RLG 2020. The proposed conversion has been designed to meet Building Regulations, and will therefore be fit for purpose as a dwelling, and will provide a good standard of living.

Parking and Highways

It is proposed to access the dwelling using the existing vehicle access from South Street (A227). This has been in situ for a number of years. The access point is formed of hardcore material and is sufficient to accommodate traffic associated with the 2-bedroom dwelling. The proposal shows that 2no. parking spaces will be provided on the site, in accordance with the dimensions set out in the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards 2024. There is also space for vehicles to turn within the site, so that they can

enter and exit the site in a forward gear. The proposal therefore accords with saved policy T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and Policy CS11 (LPCS) and Section 9 of the NPPF 2024 and will not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been carried out in connection with the proposals. Through a desk study and site visit, the proposal was assessed in relation to its potential to support protected species. The proposed development is considered to have low ecological value within a local context as it comprises locally common habitats supporting locally abundant species typical of the wider landscape. It has been recommended that a precautionary approach and toolbox talks are carried out to avoid unnecessary impacts on bats, badgers, breeding birds, great crested newts, hedgehogs and reptiles.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain is required under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021), a Biodiversity Metric Assessment (BMA) was not necessary in this instance, as the development falls under the following exemption:

- Development is below the threshold as it 'impacts' less than 25m² of on-site habitat and less than 5m of linear hedgerow

Contamination

Policy CS19 of the LPCS indicates that new development should be located, designed and constructed to avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution and land contamination.

It is noted that with the previous planning application for the site (20240910) that the Environmental Protection Team advised that whilst a contaminated land assessment would be required, this could be secured via a condition.

Lighting

As set out above, it is accepted that a condition could be used to control any external lighting to the site, given that this is a rural location. It's unlikely that external lighting would harm the amenity of neighbouring properties, given that they are located some distance away.

Drainage/ Sewerage

It is anticipated that a cesspit would be used to deal with foul drainage. This may require prior consent of the Environment Agency under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991.

Waste

It is proposed to provide a new timber bin store adjacent to South Street. It is proposed to put out bins on the road on collection days, as they currently are.

Conclusion

The proposal for the conversion of the existing barn into a new two-bedroom house will provide our client with on-site accommodation to provide improved security of the site, which will address the on-going issue of crime on the site.

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. The proposal falls within exception (g) of paragraph 154 of the NPPF. In addition to this, the proposed development would utilise Grey Belt land. Gravesham Borough have a demonstrable unmet housing need. The site is located adjacent to South Street (the A227), and within 0.7 miles of Culverstone Green and Meopham Green, close to a range of shops and services. A bus route also runs nearby, offering a service to Gravesend, where there are a wider variety of shops and services. The Golden Rules are not applicable to the type of development proposed. In light of this, the proposal meets the criteria set out in paragraph 155 of the NPPF, and therefore the proposal constitutes an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt, within a

sustainable location. Therefore, the first reason for refusal of the previous planning application (20240910) has been addressed.

The proposed dwelling is the same scale as the existing building. It is proposed to retain the existing black timber weatherboarding. Where additional timber weatherboarding is required, it will be black, and a low brick plinth will be added. It is proposed to replace the existing metal roof with a metal roof (flipped), and black aluminium low-transmission glazed windows, which are sympathetic to the rural character of the site and the Landscape Character Area. The proposal complies with Gravesham's Householder Design Guide 2021, Gravesham's Design Guide: Guide for Gravesham 2024 and Policies CS12 and CS19 of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) 2014 and Sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF, and the second reason for refusal from the previous application has been addressed.

The proposal provides a high standard of amenity for future occupiers. The proposed development includes the provision of a garden area above the minimum size set out in Gravesham's Residential Layout Guidelines 2020, and in accordance with the requirements set out in Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and Section 12 of the NPPF. Therefore, the third reason for refusal of the previous application (20240910) has been overcome.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been carried out in connection with the proposal and demonstrates that the proposed development will not significantly harm any protected species. The Biodiversity Metric Assessment was not necessary in this instance as the proposed development falls under the following exemption: development is below the threshold as it 'impacts' less than 25sqm of on-site habitat and less than 5m of linear hedgerow. Therefore, the fourth reason for refusal of the previous application (20240910) has been addressed.

In light of the above, the proposal has addressed the reasons for refusal of the previous scheme (20240910), and represents an acceptable form of development.