



PLANNING STATEMENT

Project Number:

2026-2529

Project:

Little Cottage, Ridge Lane, Meopham, Gravesend, DA13 0DP

Proposal:

Erection of dwelling and retention of building for ancillary residential use (retrospective)

Date:

May 2026

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of my clients' planning application. This is in relation to the erection of dwelling and retention of building for ancillary residential use (retrospective).
- 1.2 First this statement will set out the details of the site description to provide a context in which the proposal has been designed. Secondly, we review the site's planning history and set out the details of the proposal, subject of this application. Next, we provide a summary of the relevant national and local planning policies. Following this we set out a detailed assessment of the proposal and the relevant material considerations. Finally we provide a short conclusion.
- 1.3 In addition to this statement the following documents have been provided;

- Application forms
- CIL Forms

Drawings

- Site Location Plan – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-Location
- Existing Block Plan – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-ExistBlock
- Existing Dwelling Plans and Elevations – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-ExistDwelling
- Proposed Block Plan – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-PropBlock
- Proposed Dwelling Elevations – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-PropDwellingElev
- Proposed Dwelling Floor Plans – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-PropDwellingFloor
- Proposed Outbuilding Floor Plans and Elevations – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-PropOutbuilding

2. Site Description

- 2.1 The application site is situated within open countryside, outside of any defined settlement boundary. The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and therefore falls within an area where national and local planning policy seek to safeguard openness and prevent inappropriate development. The site is also located within the *Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area*, as defined by the relevant Landscape Character Assessment, which identifies the area as comprising a strongly wooded and undulating landscape with a rural and tranquil character.
- 2.2 A designated Biodiversity Opportunity Area lies immediately adjacent, and a Local Wildlife Site is located to the north of the site. In addition, areas of Ancient Woodland are present to the east and south. These designations reflect the ecological value of the wider landscape and highlight the importance of ensuring that development proposals respond sensitively to their surroundings and avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity assets.
- 2.3 The site comprises a relatively generous residential plot positioned within a predominantly rural setting. Historically, the site contained a detached, single-storey, two-bedroom dwelling located within the south-western corner of the plot. The siting of the original dwelling allowed for substantial areas of open land within the remainder of the curtilage, contributing to a spacious and verdant character.
- 2.4 A replacement dwelling is currently under construction; however, the design and built form of the structure do not accord with the drawings approved under the previous planning permission. As such, the development presently on site differs materially from that which was formally approved.
- 2.5 Access to the site is taken from the existing highway via a tarmac driveway, which opens into a turning and parking area situated to the north of the dwelling. The land immediately to the north of the building functions as domestic garden. Beyond the formalised tarmac area, the eastern portion of the site is predominantly surfaced in shingle and accommodates a variety of ancillary buildings, structures and stored materials. This part of the plot has a more utilitarian appearance and contrasts with the otherwise rural and landscaped character of the wider setting.
- 2.6 In locational terms, the site benefits from reasonable proximity to local services and facilities within both Vigo Village and Meopham. Vigo Village provides a range of day-to-day amenities including a local convenience store, village hall, public house, primary school, and community facilities serving the immediate area. The village functions as a small but established rural community with access to recreational spaces and public footpaths connecting into the surrounding countryside.
- 2.7 Meopham, located to the north, offers a broader range of services and facilities consistent with its larger size and role within the borough. These include additional convenience retail provision, local shops and services, primary schools, a secondary school, healthcare facilities, places of worship, public houses and restaurants. Meopham also benefits from a mainline railway station providing regular services to London and the Kent coast, thereby offering wider connectivity for employment, education and leisure opportunities.
- 2.8 Accordingly, whilst the site is located outside defined settlement boundaries and within the Green Belt, it is not isolated in functional terms and has access to an established range of services and facilities within a short travelling distance.

3. Planning History and Proposal

Planning History

- 3.1 The site has a relatively extensive planning history which establishes a longstanding residential use and associated ancillary development.
- 3.2 Planning permission was initially sought under reference 20060528 for the erection of two detached three/four-bedroom replacement dwellings, each with rooms in the roofspace and a detached garage positioned to the front, together with the erection of a detached stable block comprising two stables and a tack room. This application was refused on 16.08.2006.
- 3.3 Subsequently, a revised scheme under reference 20100456 for the erection of two detached replacement dwellings with associated garages, alongside a detached stable block, was granted planning permission on 03.09.2010. In association with this wider redevelopment of the site, planning permission reference 20100930 was granted on 11.11.2010 for the removal of two sheds on Plots 1 and 2 and the erection of two replacement garden stores (one per plot), confirming the acceptance of ancillary domestic structures within the residential curtilage.
- 3.4 In addition, a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) was granted under reference 20060512 on 13.09.2006 in respect of the existing use for the stationing of a mobile home, thereby formally recognising the lawfulness of that use at the time.
- 3.5 More recently, an application for a Lawful Development Certificate under reference 20180655 for the continued use of the former stables building as a residential dwelling and associated curtilage (known as "Little Cottage") was withdrawn on 19.11.2018. A subsequent application under reference 20181207 for the same proposal was approved, and a Lawful Development Certificate was granted on 29.11.2019. This decision confirmed the lawful residential use of the former stables building and its associated curtilage, thereby regularising the planning status of "Little Cottage" as a dwelling.
- 3.6 Most recently, planning permission was granted under reference 20230320 in May 2024 for the demolition of the existing dwelling and associated outbuildings, the removal of lawful touring caravans from the site, and the erection of a replacement dwelling. This permission represents the most recent extant consent for residential redevelopment of the site and forms an important material consideration in the assessment of the current proposal.
- 3.7 Collectively, this planning history demonstrates the established residential character of the site, the acceptance of replacement dwellings, ancillary structures and associated residential curtilage, and the lawful use of buildings for residential purposes

Planning Proposal

- 3.8 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a detached single dwelling and the retention and change of use of the existing building to ancillary residential storage.
 - The proposed dwelling would be positioned in broadly the same footprint and orientation as the previously approved scheme, albeit set marginally further back within the plot to optimise site layout and residential amenity. This revised siting maintains the established spatial relationship with neighbouring properties while allowing for improved circulation and private amenity space.
 - The external materials palette has been carefully selected to ensure a high-quality appearance that responds appropriately to the character of the surrounding area. The dwelling would incorporate slate-effect roof tiles and timber cladding, providing a traditional yet contemporary finish that complements the site context.
 - The former dwelling on the site would be retained and repurposed for ancillary residential use incidental to the proposed dwelling, specifically as residential storage. It would not function as a separate unit of accommodation.

- Existing access arrangements into the site would remain unchanged. Two off-street parking spaces would be provided to serve the new dwelling, with adequate on-site turning space retained to ensure vehicles can enter and exit the site in a forward gear, thereby maintaining highway safety.



Figure 1 – Proposed front elevation



Figure 2 – Proposed Block Plan

4. National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- 4.1 The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies which Local Plans need to accord with. Relevant paragraphs include;

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 4.2 Para 7 of the NPPF states that 'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs⁴. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.'
- 4.3 Para 8 states that 'achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a. **An economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - b. **A social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c. **An environment objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

- 4.4 Para 11 of the NPPF states that 'plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.'

For decision-taking this means:

- c. Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission 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.

Achieving well-designed places

- 4.5 Para 131 relates to achieving good design and states that 'the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development acceptable to communities.'
- 4.6 Para 135 continues to state 'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:



- a. will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b. are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c. are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d. establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁹; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.'

5. **Local Planning Policy Summary**

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy – 2014

5.1 The Core Strategy was adopted in September 2014 and sets out the Councils long term spatial vision for the Borough. The Core Strategy covers the period from April 2011 to March 2028.

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

5.2 Policy CS01 relates to sustainable development and states that;

Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan for Gravesham will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and in this Core Strategy. It will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic social and environmental conditions in the area.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

Gravesham Local Plan First Review Saved Policies – 2014

5.3 The Local Plan was originally adopted in November 1994. In September 2007 a number of policies were saved through direction from the Secretary of State. In September 2014 the Council adopted their Core Strategy and as a result a number of saved policies were deleted. The remaining saved policy is relevant to this proposal are as follows;

- Policy T1 – Impact of development on highway network
- Policy T5 – Access to identified highway network
- Policy P3 – Vehicle parking standards

Site Allocations and Development Management Policies

5.4 A second regulation 18 consultation was carried out between October and December 2020. No further consultations have been carried out since this time. It is understood that there have been delays to the progression of the Emerging Plan due to highways modelling. As a result, we consider that the policies contained within the emerging local plan hold very limited weight and have therefore not been referenced here. Planning Assessment

6. Planning Assessment

Principle of Development – Green Belt

- 6.1 The application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy, as set out within Section 13 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF), is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Accordingly, the primary consideration in assessing the acceptability of the proposal in principle is whether it constitutes inappropriate development, or whether it falls within one of the defined exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the Framework (formerly paragraph 155 in earlier iterations).
- 6.2 One exception to inappropriate development relates to the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces; as set out in subsection d of paragraph 155 of the NPPF. We consider that this proposal would fall within this exception to inappropriate development.

Original Dwelling	Gross external floor area plus extensions existing floor area potential	Approved Scheme	Proposed dwelling
75sqm	93sqm	146sqm	132sqm

- 6.3 The proposed dwelling would have a gross external floor area of 132sqm. Whilst this represents an increase when compared to the footprint of the original dwelling (75sqm), it is materially smaller than the 146sqm replacement dwelling that has already been granted planning permission on the site. Importantly, the fall-back position established by the extant permission is a significant material consideration. The approved scheme establishes that a dwelling of 146sqm has previously been accepted by the Local Planning Authority as compliant with Green Belt policy.
- 6.4 In light of the above, it is considered that the proposal constitutes a replacement building within the meaning of paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF and would not be materially larger than the building it replaces, having regard to the extant permission. The development therefore falls within a recognised exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is acceptable in principle.
- 6.5 It is noted that the current proposal seeks to retain the original dwelling on site for ancillary residential purposes. Given this, the proposal has also been assessed against other exceptions to inappropriate development under the NPPF, specifically paragraph 149(g) (formerly paragraph 145(g) in earlier iterations), which permits:
- “...limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (brownfield 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.”*
- 6.6 This provision recognises that previously developed land can accommodate redevelopment in certain circumstances, provided that the scale, siting, and character of the proposed development does not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The policy approach is deliberately flexible to enable appropriate reuse of land while maintaining the fundamental objectives of Green Belt protection.
- 6.7 The application site contains previously developed land, including the original dwelling, associated outbuildings, and hardstanding areas. Retaining the original dwelling for ancillary purposes and constructing a replacement dwelling within the existing curtilage constitutes the redevelopment of this previously developed land. The proposed works are confined largely to areas already in residential or ancillary use and do not involve encroachment into the wider open countryside.

- 6.8 The scale, height, and massing of the proposed replacement dwelling are carefully controlled so as not to dominate or overwhelm the site. When considered in combination with the retention of the original dwelling for ancillary purposes, the development would maintain a similar visual and spatial relationship within the plot. There would be no significant increase in built form beyond the established envelope, and the proposal would not materially affect the visual openness of the Green Belt from surrounding viewpoints.
- 6.9 In this context, it is concluded that the proposal would not result in “substantial harm” to openness as referenced in paragraph 149(g) of the NPPF. The development is therefore consistent with this alternative exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, providing further policy support for the acceptability of the scheme in principle.
- 6.10 Should the Local Planning Authority conclude that the proposal does not fall within the exceptions outlined above, it is considered necessary to assess the proposal against the wider policy context of the NPPF, including the so-called “grey belt” considerations under paragraph 155 (formerly paragraph 144 in earlier versions), which requires an assessment of whether the development would conflict with the fundamental purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
- 6.11 In the context of this site, it is considered that the proposal would not conflict with purposes (a), (b), or (d):
- **Purpose (a)** – The proposal involves replacement of an existing dwelling and the retention of a modest ancillary building within the established residential curtilage which is clearly defined and surrounded by existing development. The development would not result in the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area.
 - **Purpose (b)** – The site is located in between Vigo Village and Meopham. Neither of these settlements can be considered towns for the purposes of paragraph 155.
 - **Purpose (d)** – The site is not within or immediately adjacent to a historic town, and there would be no adverse impact on the setting or special character of any designated heritage asset.
- 6.12 In addition, the Council has acknowledged in its most recent Housing Land Supply Statement that it is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. In accordance with paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, where the development plan is absent, silent, or out-of-date in terms of housing supply, permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. This context is a material consideration that weighs in favour of allowing sustainable development on suitable sites.
- 6.13 Furthermore, the site is located within a reasonable and sustainable proximity to services and facilities in both Vigo Village and Meopham, including shops, schools, healthcare provision, and public transport connections. This accessibility reduces reliance on private vehicles and contributes to the sustainability credentials of the development, aligning with the broader objectives of the NPPF to support sustainable patterns of growth.
- 6.14 In summary, even if the proposal were considered inappropriate development, the particular characteristics of the site — including its limited impact on the purposes of the Green Belt, its sustainable location, and the Council’s housing supply shortfall — ensure that the proposal meets the requirements of paragraph 155.

Landscape, character and design

- 6.15 Policy CS19 of the *Gravesham Core Strategy (2014)* requires that new development is of high-quality design and responds positively to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The application site is located within the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area, and therefore Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy is also directly relevant. This policy seeks to ensure that the overall landscape character of the Borough is conserved, restored, and enhanced, and confirms that the *Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (GLCA)* should be taken into account when determining planning applications.

- 6.16 National planning policy also supports these objectives. Paragraph 180 of the *NPPF (2023)* confirms the importance of protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising their role in contributing to local distinctiveness, scenic quality, and biodiversity.
- 6.17 The GLCA identifies the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area as comprising key characteristics including varied topography with steep valley sides, areas of ancient woodland, small paddocks, and pastoral land. The Assessment describes the area's condition and sensitivity as moderate and recommends a general guideline to conserve and create, thereby guiding development to respect and reinforce the area's distinctive landscape qualities.
- 6.18 In this context, the proposed development has been carefully designed to respect the topography, retain existing vegetation, and integrate with the surrounding rural character, demonstrating compliance with both local and national landscape and design policies.
- 6.19 When considering the previous planning application the Case Officer's report stated that:
- "The development of this site with a replacement dwelling would not have a significantly different impact to the existing property in terms of the impact on the wider landscape character of the area. The plot is set well back from the road, to the rear of other dwellings; it cannot be seen from any public vantage point. Ridge Lane is rural in nature, with dwellings set within good size plots and the proposal would be in keeping with this. The use of landscaping conditions would further help reduce any visual impact and retain the rural setting with appropriate boundary treatments and hard and soft landscaping. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of conserving the rural character of the site and surroundings."*
- 6.20 The current proposal has been designed with careful regard to scale, siting, and form, reflecting the established pattern of development along Ridge Lane. The replacement dwelling is positioned within the existing curtilage, set back from the highway and visually contained by existing vegetation, retaining the sense of openness and seclusion that characterises the site. The design approach respects the spacing, plot sizes, and rural character of the surrounding area, consistent with the assessment previously made by the Case Officer.
- 6.21 Given these factors, it is considered that the conclusions of the earlier planning assessment remain fully applicable. The proposed development would not result in a materially greater impact on the character or appearance of the wider landscape than the previously approved scheme. The use of sensitive boundary treatments, along with appropriate hard and soft landscaping, ensures that the rural setting of the site is conserved and enhanced, maintaining the visual quality and character of Ridge Lane and the wider Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area.

Residential Amenities

- 6.22 Paragraph 135(f) of the *National Planning Policy Framework (2023)* requires that planning decisions seek to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users of land and buildings. This includes ensuring that development does not result in undue impacts upon privacy, daylight, sunlight, or overall living conditions.
- 6.23 At the local level, Policy CS19 of the *Gravesham Core Strategy (2014)* similarly establishes that new development should be located, designed, and constructed to safeguard the amenity of occupants, as well as that of neighbouring properties and land. This includes careful consideration of factors such as overlooking, overshadowing, and overbearing impacts, as well as the provision of adequate private outdoor space.
- 6.24 The proposed development has been designed with these requirements in mind. The dwelling is set within a sufficiently sized plot and maintains appropriate separation distances from neighbouring properties, ensuring that privacy is preserved and that there would be no material loss of daylight or sunlight. The scale and orientation of the proposed dwelling has been carefully considered to prevent any overbearing impact, maintaining the residential amenity of adjacent occupants.
- 6.25 In addition to safeguarding neighbouring amenity, the proposal would provide a high standard of living for future occupants. The dwelling incorporates internal layouts in accordance with national space

standards, ensuring adequate room sizes and functional living spaces. Private garden and amenity areas are proportionate to the scale of the dwelling, providing sufficient outdoor space for recreational and domestic use. The retention of landscaped areas and appropriate boundary treatments further enhances privacy and contributes positively to the overall residential environment.

- 6.25 On this basis, it is considered that the proposed development would maintain and enhance residential amenity for both existing neighbours and future occupants, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the NPPF (2023) and Policies CS19 of the Core Strategy (2014).

Highways and Parking

- 6.26 The proposed development comprises a three-bedroom dwelling. In accordance with local parking standards, this size of dwelling would typically require a maximum of two car parking spaces. The site layout plan demonstrates that these spaces can be easily accommodated within the curtilage without compromising amenity, landscaping, or access. Sufficient space is also provided for vehicle turning, allowing cars to enter and exit the site in a forward gear, which promotes safe and convenient access to and from the highway.
- 6.27 The development will also provide for cycle parking, in line with *Supplementary Planning Guidance SPG4: Vehicle Parking Standards*. A minimum of one secure cycle parking space per bedroom can be provided, ensuring compliance with policy requirements. The layout allows for the provision of covered and easily accessible cycle storage, supporting sustainable travel and reducing reliance on private motor vehicles.
- 6.28 Access to the site will continue to be taken via the existing vehicular entrance. Given that the proposal involves the replacement of a dwelling, the anticipated traffic generation would be comparable to the existing use. As such, there would be no material increase in vehicular movements along the local highway network, and the proposal would not give rise to any adverse impact on highway safety.
- 6.29 Overall, the development demonstrates full compliance with relevant highways and parking policies, including Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the *Gravesham Local Plan (1994)*, and Policies CS11 and CS19 of the *Core Strategy (2014)*. The proposal ensures safe and convenient access, adequate provision for parking and turning, and sustainable travel options, consistent with national and local planning guidance.

Ecology and Trees

- 6.30 The site is located in a sensitive ecological area, adjacent to a Biodiversity Opportunity Area and a Local Wildlife Site to the north, and bordered by Ancient Woodland to the east and south. The proposed development is designed to retain existing trees and planting within the site, helping to preserve its ecological value and maintain the rural character of the area. In addition, the scheme provides for additional planting to enhance biodiversity, strengthen habitat connectivity, and improve visual screening.
- 6.31 This application is largely retrospective and has been carried out following professional guidance. The works were informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (December 2023) and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment – Briefing Note on Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW, 7 December 2023). These assessments confirmed that the development does not result in unacceptable impacts on protected habitats or species, and that existing trees and woodland buffers have been appropriately safeguarded.
- 6.32 Overall, the proposal respects the ecological sensitivity of the site and surrounding area, retaining existing vegetation, enhancing biodiversity through new planting, and ensuring that the ecological value of the site is maintained.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed development has been carefully considered against the relevant planning policy framework, including the Green Belt, landscape character, design, residential amenity, highways, and ecological considerations. The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area, and is adjacent to areas of ecological value. The proposals have been designed to respond positively to these constraints, ensuring that any impacts are appropriately managed and mitigated.
- 7.2 In terms of the Green Belt, the replacement dwelling is smaller than the previously approved scheme and falls within a recognised exception for replacement buildings. The retention of the original dwelling for ancillary purposes also complies with the provisions for redevelopment of previously developed land, without causing substantial harm to openness. Further exceptions to inappropriate development could also be applied to the proposal.
- 7.3 The design and layout of the dwelling are sensitive to the character of the site and surrounding area. The scale, form, and siting respect the established pattern of development along Ridge Lane, retain existing vegetation, and incorporate appropriate landscaping. The proposal would conserve and enhance the rural character of the site and wider landscape, consistent with the guidance of the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment.
- 7.4 The development safeguards residential amenity for both existing and future occupants. Adequate separation distances, careful orientation, and proportionate garden and amenity areas ensure that privacy, daylight, and sunlight are maintained. The internal layout meets national space standards, and boundary treatments and landscaping further enhance the living environment.
- 7.5 With regard to highways and parking, the proposal provides sufficient car parking, turning space, and secure cycle storage. The use of the existing access and the scale of development ensure that there is no material increase in traffic or adverse impact on highway safety.
- 7.6 The proposal also respects the ecological sensitivity of the site. Existing trees and planting are retained, and additional planting is incorporated to enhance biodiversity and habitat connectivity. Professional ecological and arboricultural assessments confirm that the development does not adversely affect protected habitats or species.
- 7.7 In summary, the development represents a carefully designed, sustainable, and appropriate form of replacement dwelling. It comprises an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, respects the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape, safeguards residential amenity, provides adequate parking and access, and protects the ecological value of the site. On this basis, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle and suitable for approval.