

Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No:	20230457
Location:	The Chestnuts, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend
Description:	Addition of 1no bedroom to 2nd floor and erection of outbuilding for staff accommodation.
Applicant:	Mr J Read
Site Visit Date:	Desktop assessment

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form
Design and Access Statement
Drawing no. BDS-CH-P01 (Existing Ground & First Floor Plans)
Drawing no. BDS-CH-P02 (Existing Second Floor and Roof Plans)
Drawing no. BDS-CH-P03 (Existing & Proposed Elevations Proposed Staff Accommodation)
Drawing no. BDS-CN-P04 (Proposed Floor Plans)
Drawing no. BDS-CH-P05 (Proposed & Existing Site Plans Block Plans & Site Location Plan)

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20110103	Erection of single storey side extension to form a kitchen and a day room.	Permitted	28.03.2011
19880295	Erection of 2 no three storey rear extensions each comprising of additional bedrooms, wc, laundry rms office & extension to self-contained accommodation at 2nd floor level & continued use of premises as a retirement home for the elderly and as a private registered nursing home.	Permitted	14.09.1988
19850039	Erection of two storey extension on north side to form additional old persons accommodation comprising six bedrooms and two bathrooms erection of double garage at rear and formation of car parking area	Permitted	21.03.1985
19840511	Erection of single storey extension at side to form enlarged kitchen and erection of external fire escape to elderly persons rest home	Permitted	24.09.1984
19840068	Change of use of ground floor and first floor to rest home for elderly people and second floor as owners flat requiring the erection of two external staircases	Permitted	06.04.1984

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS07 – Employment, Economy and Skills
- CS10 – Physical and Social Infrastructure
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the Identified Highway Network
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 – Making effective use of land
- 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

External Consultees

KCC Archaeology

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, I consider it unlikely that these proposals, immediately adjacent to the existing building, would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact and have no further comments to make in this case.

Dickens' Country Protection Society

The Society would wish to suggest that, if permitted, the staff building should be conditioned to be ancillary to the main building with control over any extensions or alterations.

Meopham Parish Council

No objections.

Internal Consultees

GBC Highways

Unfortunately, the applicant has not provided the information necessary to give guidance but given the size of the site this should be resolvable by a suitable condition.

No details are provided regarding car parking and indeed the application form suggests there is no car parking on site. Yet the site has obvious on-site car parking.

The current adopted vehicle parking standards are SPG4 issued by Kent and Medway Councils.

For residential institutions, such as Residential Care Homes, the car parking requirement is

Land Use Class C2: Residential Institutions

55. Use Class C2 covers development that provides residential accommodation which includes an element of care for people in need, and residential accommodation for an education establishment.

Maximum Vehicle Parking Standards

	Goods Vehicles	Car Parking	
		Employees	Residents/visitors
Nursing/Residential Care Homes	Minimum of 1 space for an Ambulance (see Note 1)	1 space per resident staff + 1 space per 2 other staff	1 space per 6 beds or residents

The reference to Maximum Vehicle Parking Standards should be ignored as these are no longer applicable given the National Planning Policy Framework.

In this case there is no compelling reason why maximum standards should be set and so the figures are taken as an absolute or minimum requirement, unless it can be demonstrated that the car parking requirements can be reduced.

Reference is made to 35 staff being employed. This requires 1 parking space for the resident staff member plus 17 for the other non-resident staff, assuming there is no other residential staff provision. With 30 bedrooms for those being cared for 5 parking spaces should be provided. This gives a car parking requirement of 23 car parking spaces and a parking plan is requested to demonstrate this is provided.

Environmental Protection

No objection to this application. It is anticipated that the extension and outbuilding will use the existing drainage/foul sewage system for the care home. The following conditions/informatives are suggested.

Code of Practice on Construction and Demolition: Please apply as appropriate.

Lighting: Artificial lighting can cause a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It is important that the applicants are not permitted to install external lighting that illuminate anything other than the ground within the curtilage of the buildings in order to assist in preventing a nuisance from occurring (which would be most likely if the bedrooms on neighbouring properties are illuminated).

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised on site. The consultation period expired on 23 June 2023 respectively.

No letters of representation have been received from neighbouring properties.

Local Ward Councillors were also consulted, and no responses were received.

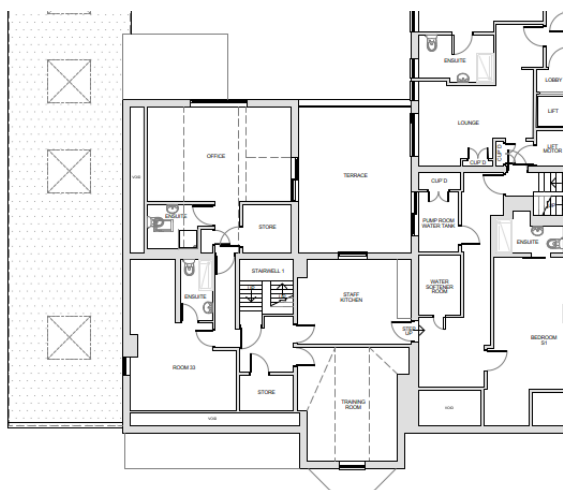
Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks permission for the addition of 1no bedroom to the 2nd floor and the erection of an outbuilding for staff accommodation.

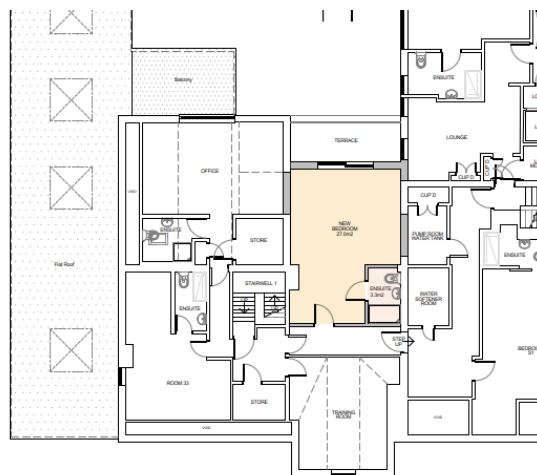
The proposal for the additional bedroom involves converting an existing roof terrace into an additional room. The wall will be clad in tile hanging to match the existing with a flat black single ply membrane with fascias to match the existing. The patio doors will also match the existing.

Existing second floor plan:



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN
1:100
GIFA = 351m²

Proposed second floor plan:



PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN
1:100
GIFA = 370m²

Existing elevation:



Existing elevation:

Proposed elevation:





Additionally, staff accommodation will be added to the site in the form of a 'garden house' containing a single bedroom and bathroom. The building will be clad in cedar with grey framed window and grey fascias to the flat roof. It will match the other existing garden house on the southern side of the site:



Principle Issues

The site comprises an established care home immediately adjoining (but outside) the Hook Green Meopham settlement boundary. As a care home and a commercial enterprise, Policy CS07 of the Core Strategy 2014 is relevant to the proposal, which supports the refurbishment and upgrading of existing commercial premises. Policy CS10 also gives support to proposals that protect, retain or enhance existing physical and social infrastructure. Specifically, Policy CS14 states that "sheltered housing and extra care housing for people with special needs will be supported on suitable sites in areas with access to a range of services that provide for the needs of future occupants". It is considered that as the site is a care home that has been in operation since the 1980s, the use has been clearly established on site and if there is an opportunity to increase the capacity of this care home, planning policy would support this, subject to there being no conflict with other local and national planning policies.

The site lies outside the settlement boundary in the countryside, in the Green Belt and in the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area. Taking these designations into account, the main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are as follows:

- Principle of development in the Green Belt
- Impact on openness
- Design
- Landscape character

Principle of development in the Green Belt

The site lies within the Green Belt. Green Belts are of great importance. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by preserving the open and permanent characteristics of Green Belts (paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021). Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. '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.

Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy 2014.

Local Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt (paragraph 149 of the NPPF 2021). However, there are exceptions to this which, as in the case of this proposal, include:

- (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;
- (g) the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development or would not cause substantial harm to openness and would contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need.

Firstly, with regards to the proposed roof extension, and the matter of whether the proposal would be a disproportionate addition, the proposed additional floorspace would amount to approximately 20m². This addition would be entirely within the existing footprint of the building. Such a minimal addition to the property would only modestly increase its size and would not significantly impact on the bulk of the property or create an extension that was disproportionate in comparison to the size of the original building. It is therefore considered that the proposal would fall within the paragraph 149 (c) exception and would therefore be an appropriate development in the Green Belt.

Turning to the second element of the proposal for staff accommodation in a detached outbuilding, as a care home site and being previously developed land, this would fall to be considered under paragraph 149 (g) and the impact on openness in terms of determining the appropriateness of this part of the proposal in the Green Belt.

Impact on Openness

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 001 of the Planning Practice Guidance 2019 on Green Belts looks to assess the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt by taking into account the spatial and visual aspects of a development, its duration and remediability, and the activity levels generated.

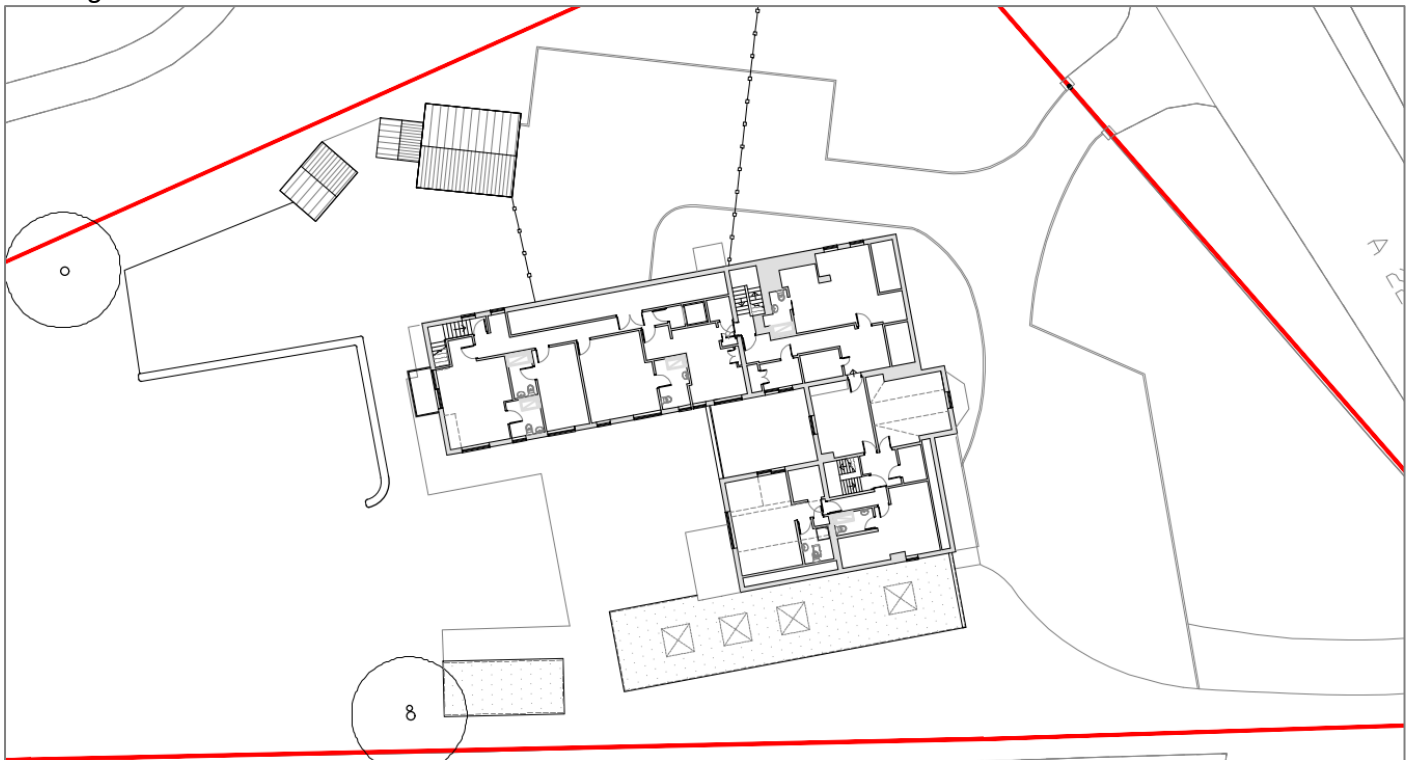
The site comprises the main care home building with detached various detached outbuildings around it to the north and a parking area to the front and side. There does not appear to be any planning history relating to the existing detached staff accommodation building adjacent the southern boundary, and this will require investigation. Wrotham Road (the A227) runs along the eastern boundary, the train line is to the south and Meopham Allotments are to the north.

Current Google Earth Image:

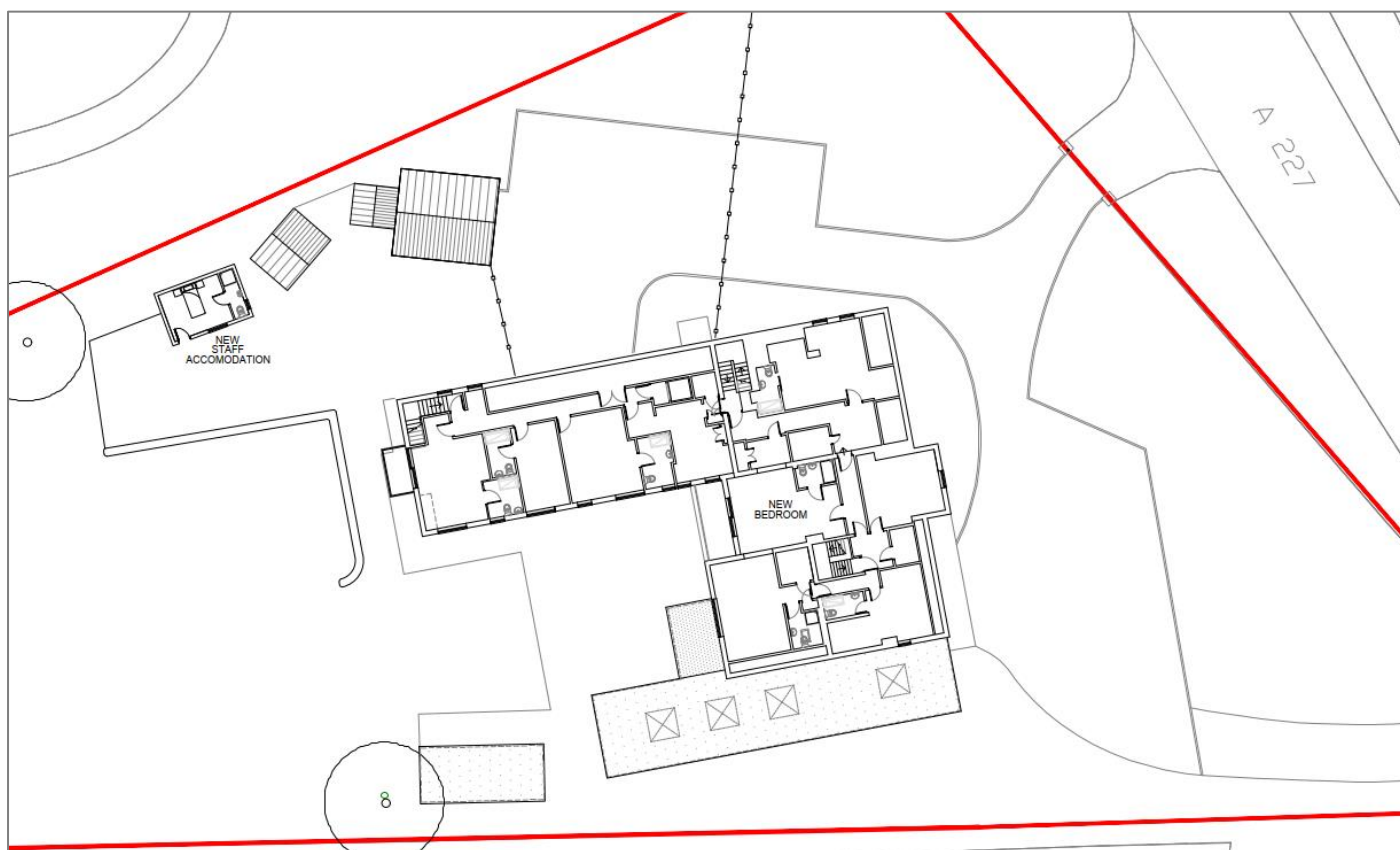


The proposed detached staff accommodation building is proposed in an area of the site that is currently void of any development:

Existing Block Plan:



Proposed Block Plan:



In both spatial and visual terms, by reason of the permanent nature of the accommodation and the increase in the spread of built development across the site, this would clearly result in a loss of openness. In addition, as the site lies outside any settlement boundary, the development would represent an encroachment into the countryside, which is contrary to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt (paragraph 138 of the NPPF 2021), and Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014, which only supports development outside settlement boundaries where it is compatible with national and local policies for protecting the Green Belt. Safeguarding the countryside by minimising the expansion of the Borough's rural settlements is a stated local purpose of the Green Belt as set out at paragraph 4.2.7 of the Core Strategy 2014.

It is recognised that the proposed outbuilding would be seen within the context of the existing buildings and boundary of the care home and would be screened from any public vantage point by its position to the rear of the main building and by landscaping. This would limit and localise the impact on openness. However, the proposed building would be away from the main existing building and would be seen as an incursion into open land. When considered spatially, the proposal would result in built form where previously no building existed. Even a limited and localised adverse effect on openness would contribute to harm to the Green Belt, and for this reason openness would be compromised and harm from the development would occur. Paragraph 148 of the NPPF 2021 states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Despite the economic and social benefits of the proposal in terms of expanding the care home, this does not amount to a case for special circumstances to outweigh such harm.

As the proposal has a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt, the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development and should be refused on this basis in accordance with the policy requirements of the NPPF 2021 and CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Landscape Character

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF 2021 aims for development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 is also relevant to this application, relating to green infrastructure. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (GLCA) 2009 will be taken into account in determining applications. The site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area, where topography is gently undulating with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland. The overall condition of the landscape is good and has moderate sensitivity. It is recommended that key landscape elements should be conserved and reinforced.

The proposed outbuilding and rear roof extension would be within the established care home grounds, and the development would be seen only within this context. Given the siting of the proposed outbuilding, any wider views from the character area would be limited and would be viewed against the backdrop of the existing development and well-established green boundaries.

The development would not therefore have an adverse effect on the rural character of the wider area, considering its care home setting. The site does not contribute to the distinctive features identified within the GLCA and is unlikely to add to those features as it would remain part of the care home grounds.

The proposals would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and would comply with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy, which seeks to conserve, restore or enhance the landscape character of areas identified within the GLCA.

Design

Development Plan policy places considerable emphasis on the importance of achieving high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places (paragraph 126 of the NPPF 2021). Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 seeks to ensure that development will add to the quality of an area, be visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character and history. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014 reflects these aims and requires that new development is well designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The design of the proposed roof extension is considered to be modest and in keeping with the character of the original building. Matching materials would also ensure this and should be conditioned.

In terms of the design of the proposed outbuilding, its appearance would be good quality and would be satisfactory for a such building in the garden.

The proposals are therefore considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the site and sympathetic to the surrounding built environment. The proposal would therefore accord with the requirements of Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 130 of the NPPF (2021).

Residential Amenity

The NPPF 2021 states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users (paragraph 130f). The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria within Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, which states that new development should be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants, and those of neighbouring properties and land, and avoid adverse environmental impacts.

Future Occupiers

The application involves the addition of a bedroom to the main building. There are no conflicts with the requirements of paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 and Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy in respect of the living conditions for future occupants. The new room will have an ensuite and will exceed the minimum room size standard of 12m² recommended by the Care Quality Commission.

The staff bedroom will be single with an ensuite. The GIFA is 14.6m², which exceeds the NDSS for a single bedroom.

Overall, it is considered that the proposals would comply with residential layout guidelines and the Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards in terms of the size of the proposed accommodation.

Neighbouring Properties

Due to the distance from neighbouring residential properties, and the small-scale intensification of the use, the proposals would not cause harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties in terms of outlook and privacy, daylight and sunlight, and environmental impacts. As such, the proposals would comply with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Highways

Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy 2014 and saved Policy P3 of the Local Plan 1994 require new development to mitigate the impact on the highway and public transport networks and provide sufficient parking in accordance with the adopted parking standards, taking account of the availability of alternative means of transport and accessibility to services and facilities. This is reflected in paragraph 111 of the NPPF 2021, which states development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or where the cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

No changes are proposed to the current vehicular access or parking arrangements. As the proposal will involve the increase in the number of bedrooms at the care home only by one, and staff numbers will not change, the impact on parking and highways would be negligible. On this basis, the proposal is deemed to be acceptable in terms of parking and highways matters.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Archaeology

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, it is considered unlikely that these proposals would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact. The proposal therefore complies with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 197 of the NPPF 2021

Conclusion and Recommendation

Despite the economic and social benefits of the proposal in terms of expanding the established care home use, and whilst the proposed roof extension would be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt, the harm from the proposed staff accommodation outbuilding renders the proposal inappropriate in the Green Belt due to its greater impact on openness than what is existing on the site. The application should be refused on the following grounds:

The proposed outbuilding for staff accommodation is considered to be inappropriate and harmful due to its greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development, which is in an area void of any built form. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 147, 148 and 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

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

Case Officer:	Mrs Katherine Parkin	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
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Signed:	<i>K. Parkin</i>	Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	13 July 2023	Dated:	13th July 2023