

Orchard House, Thong Lane, Shorne, Gravesend, DA12 4AD.

Proposed ground floor extension to the garage and first floor extension.

Orchard House is a modern looking detached house which was designed and built to meet the requirements of the original family that have owned and occupied the house since it's construction which we estimate was in the late 1960-70's.

This house slightly to the north side and of the large garden which is enclosed to all side by fenced or walled boundaries. The garden wall along the front boundary helps screens the house from the road as the house sits at a lower ground level than the road. The side boundaries to the garden are fenced or walled and there are established hedges along the boundaries and also mature garden trees within the ground of the house.

The proposal is to enlarge the garage by increasing it's width and depth and by extending at the rear to the line of the rear of the house to create a utility area. To bring the front door forwards so that the staircase can be repositioned from it's current position in the lounge.

The first floor extension will be over the garage.

Planning history

We were unable to locate the original approval for the house in the online records. In 1980 planning approval was granted for a first floor extension over the garage to provide a bedroom and en-suite bathroom. The approved extension has a flat roof which looks out of place against the tall gable at the front of the house.

Planning policies

The house is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and within the Thong Conservation Area. It is outside the National Landscape boundary and Shorne Woodland Landscape Character Area.

The Development Plan documents for Gravesham comprise Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Map, September 2014, Saved policies from the Local Plan First Review, November 1994 and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030.

Relevant policies include

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014:

- Core Strategy Policy CS01: Sustainable Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS11: Transport
- Core Strategy Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure
- Core Strategy Policy CS18: Climate Change
- Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994:

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network
- C13 – Policy for Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

National Planning Policy Framework 2023:

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development • Section 4 – Decision-making • Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land • Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Other Material Considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance and other Documents:

The Council has adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents, Development Briefs and Conservation Area Appraisals. These elaborate on saved policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review and policies in the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and are material considerations in determining planning applications.

In addition, the Council has adopted a number of documents that have been produced by Kent County Council also as Supplementary Guidance.

The following documents are relevant to the consideration of this enquiry:

- SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020).
- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006).
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- Design for Gravesham (2024)
- Thong Conservation Area Appraisal.

This house is within the settlement of Thong. Whilst, in planning policy terms, there isn't a village boundary around the village according to the Local Plan, there is recognition of the settlement in the Conservation Area Appraisal. This appraisal described Orchard House as having a neutral impact on the Conservation Area. Within the Appraisal there are various important views looking into the Conservation Area and from within the designated area that the writer considered to be the key views and none of these relate or are towards Orchard House.

The proposed floor area equates to an increase of about 42% over the original house. This is inline and considerably less than other approved extensions to houses within the parish of Shorne that are also within the Green Belt. By way of examples: Gardeners Cottage, Brewers Road, Shorne. has been extended from the original size of 112.3 square metres to 233.9 square metres, an increase of about 109% (see page 8 of the case officers report on application number 20210663)

Glen Hurst, Pear Tree Lane, Shorne. Application 20221100. Double storey extension, loft conversion and dormers. Approved extension from 84.9 square metres to 126.4 square metres equating to 48.9%.

Crabbles Cottage, Pear Tree Lane. Application 20240017. Two storey side extension, first floor extension and new attached garage. Increased in size from 76.3 square metres to 236.5 square metres equating to 209%.

Red Tiles, Pear Tree Lane, Shorne. Planning approval granted April 2023, planning reference 20230149 for an 82.8% floor area increase.

The above examples are within the Green Belt.

There is an Article 4 Direction on the area affecting the area covered by the Conservation Area which therefore means that planning approval is required for these alterations. Within a Conservation Area where there is not an Article 4 Direction, a single store extension 4 metres in depth is possible.

As mentioned, the house and garden are very well screened by hedging, boundary fences and walls which will reduce the visual impact on the neighbours of the alterations proposed. Whilst, a flat roof to the first floor extension is feasible, our opinion is that flat roofs are visually unattractive and inappropriate in this location where all the houses and outbuildings have pitched roofs. The barns at Cheneys Farm which are close by have fairly low pitched roofs, however, these barns are now in commercial use having formerly been developed for agricultural storage. Improvements will be made with the barn elevations reclad in dark cladding and this work is about to commence.

The house alterations are required to provide a family home that is modernised to meet current living standards. The current garage is too narrow for the size of a modern car. The current staircase rises from the lounge and is an open staircase rising close to the kitchen. The alterations to the staircase will improve fire safety as well as creating more conventional living accommodation. External changes such as the black fascia and weatherboard will be in-keeping with the Conservation Area and with the cladding used on the existing barns nearby as well as with the proposed finishes to be used on the barns at Cheneys Farm. Black weatherboarding is found on many of the original barn and oast houses, now in residential use, and the nearby houses which have a barn adjacent to them remaining from the time when plots were developed to create small holdings.

We consider the first floor extension design to be an improvement on the proposal for a flat roofed first floor extension over the garage that was approved in 1980.

The glass link provides a view through to the fields beyond and will have the effect of lightening and lifting the appearance of the house.

The house sits on lower ground than the road so the ground floor is not visible from the road due to the height of the front wall.

Access

There is limited public transport here with the nearest bus stop being on the edge of the nearby housing area of Riverview Park. The house itself is arranged with a staircase to the first floor and a step up to the front door and to the rear doors. However, the layout enables persons with disabilities to access the ground floor where these are reception rooms and toilet facilities. The layout is also adaptable for future needs for someone who becomes unable to use the stairs.

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