



Planning, Design & Access Statement

PLANNING APPLICATION BY:

MR & MRS DICKENS

RELATING TO:

**EARL HOUSE
PRIESTWOOD ROAD
MEOPHAM
GRAVESEND
KENT
DA13 0DA**



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. I am instructed by my clients Mr & Mrs Dickens to prepare this Planning, Design and Access Statement in support of an application for planning permission for the following development at Earl House, Priestwood Road, Meopham:

“Demolition of artists studio, oil store and porch; erection of rear extension and porch; alteration of existing porch with internal alterations”.

- 1.2. I am familiar with the site and the surrounding area and have studied carefully the site’s planning history. I have reviewed the pre-application advice received from the Council under reference PRE20220139 and have then advised on the preparation of this application for planning permission
- 1.3. This statement should be read in conjunction with the drawing package prepared by Progetto Architectural Planning and Design Services.

2. THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA:

- 2.1. The application site is situated on the eastern side of Priestwood Road, just south of the junction with Horn's Oak Road to the south-east of Meopham village.

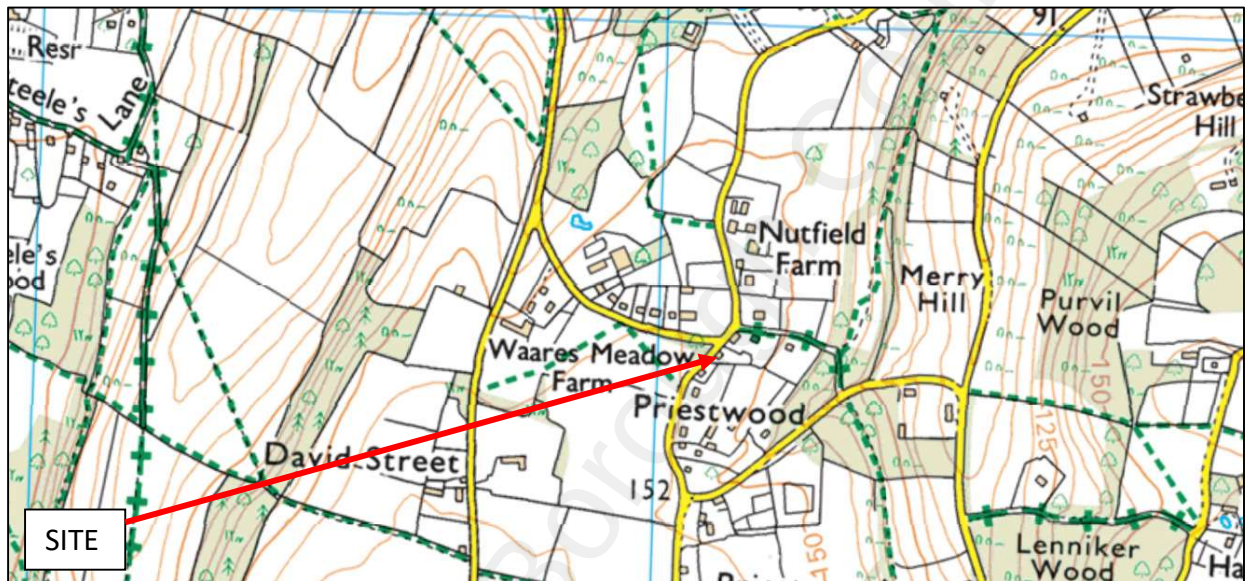


Figure 1: OS Map of site

- 2.2. The property consists of a detached dwelling set close to the public highway. It comprises ground floor white painted brickwork with first floor black timber weatherboarding. There is a tiled catslide roof at the rear of the property with small porch on the northern elevation. A detached garage, oil store and artist's studio are positioned on the southern side of the property.



Figure 2: North and eastern elevations of property with artist's studio.



Figure 3: Front elevation of property and garage.

- 2.3. There is a parking area in front of the garage and hardstanding for the parking of vehicles.
- 2.4. With regard to planning designations, the site is located in the Metropolitan Green Belt. The boundary of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is on the northern side of Horn's Oak Road. The site lies within the Luddesdown Woods Landscape Character Area. There are no heritage designations associated with the proposal.

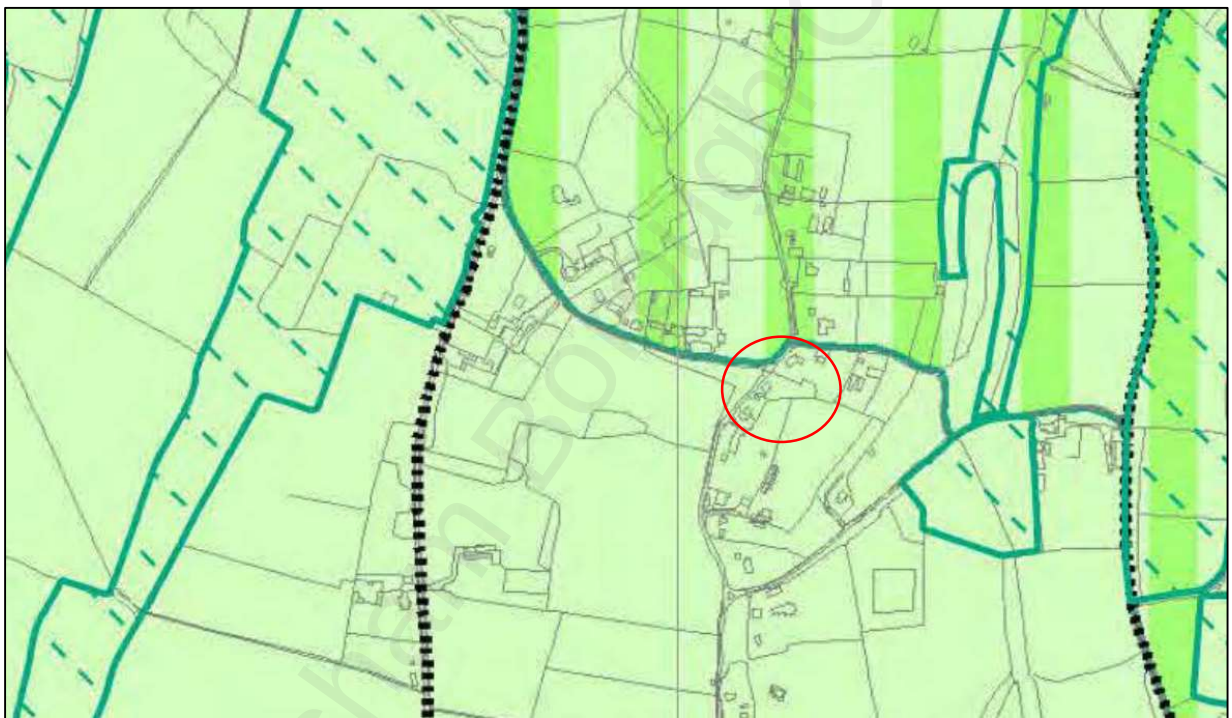


Figure 4: Extract from Proposals Map.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

(i) Historic Analysis

- 3.1. Given the nature of the proposal and the location of the application site in the Green Belt, a thorough review of the history of the property has been undertaken which has informed this application.
- 3.2. As is clear from the property's layout, the dwelling used to comprise two cottages. This is confirmed by the 1897-1900 tithe map.



Figure 5: Tithe map – 1897-1900.

- 3.3. By the late 1920s the property had been converted into one standalone dwelling. This is corroborated by the 1929-1952 tithe map which shows a large single storey extension on the southern side of the property.

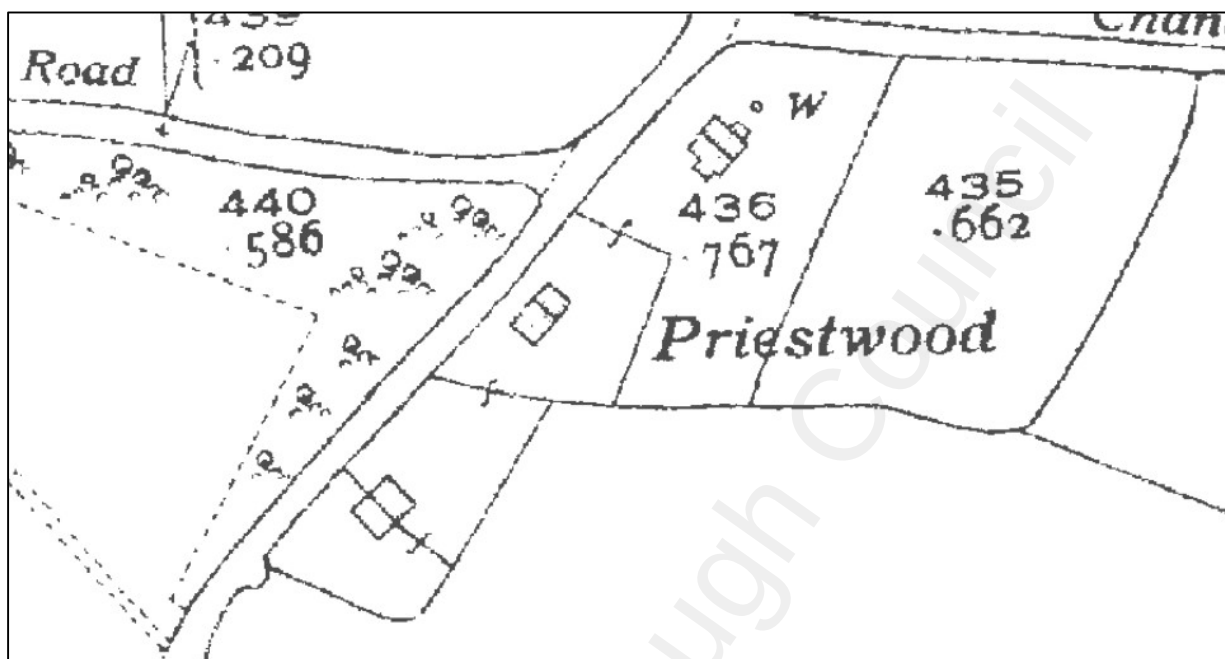


Figure 6: Tithe map – 1929-1952.

- 3.4. The below photo from 1926 shows Earl House (previously The Squirrels) with a large single storey extension.

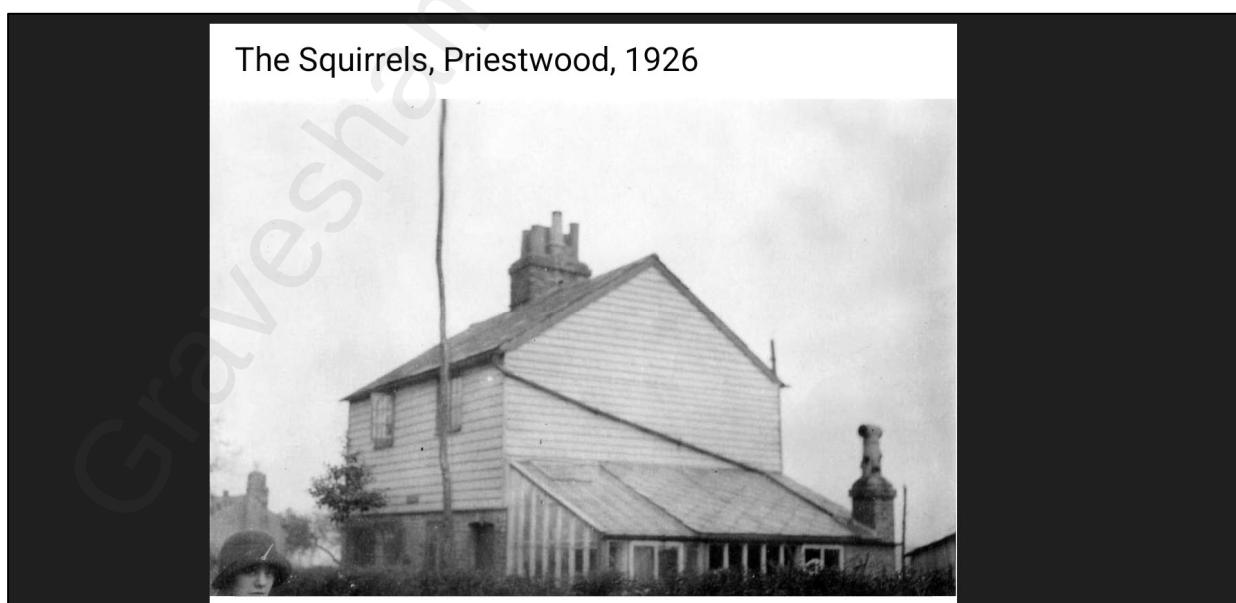


Figure 7: Historic photo of application property.

3.5. This single storey addition is present on the 1946 historic aerial photograph of the property.

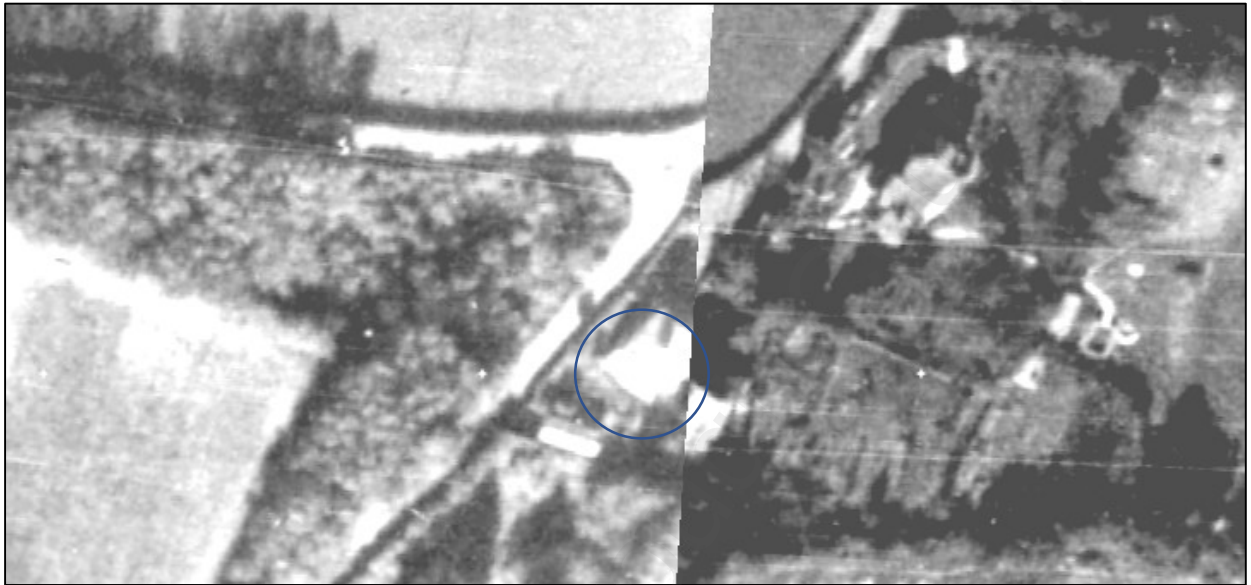


Figure 8: 1946 aerial photograph of application property.

3.6. On this basis the side extension on the southern elevation can therefore be assessed as forming part of the original property.

(ii) Planning Application History

3.7. Having reviewed the Council's website, the only formal planning history for the property is outlined below:

Erection of 2 storey side and rear extension to form wc lobby kitchen and store on ground floor and bedroom and stair case on first floor

Ref. No: 19780717 | Status: Application Permitted

Erection of a two storey rear extension to form living room with study and bathroom over.

Ref. No: 19930282 | Status: Application Permitted

3.8. Given that the existence of the single storey addition on the southern side of the property existed in 1948, it is assumed that this was demolished as part of the 1978 consent. The broad original footprint of the property is therefore outlined below:

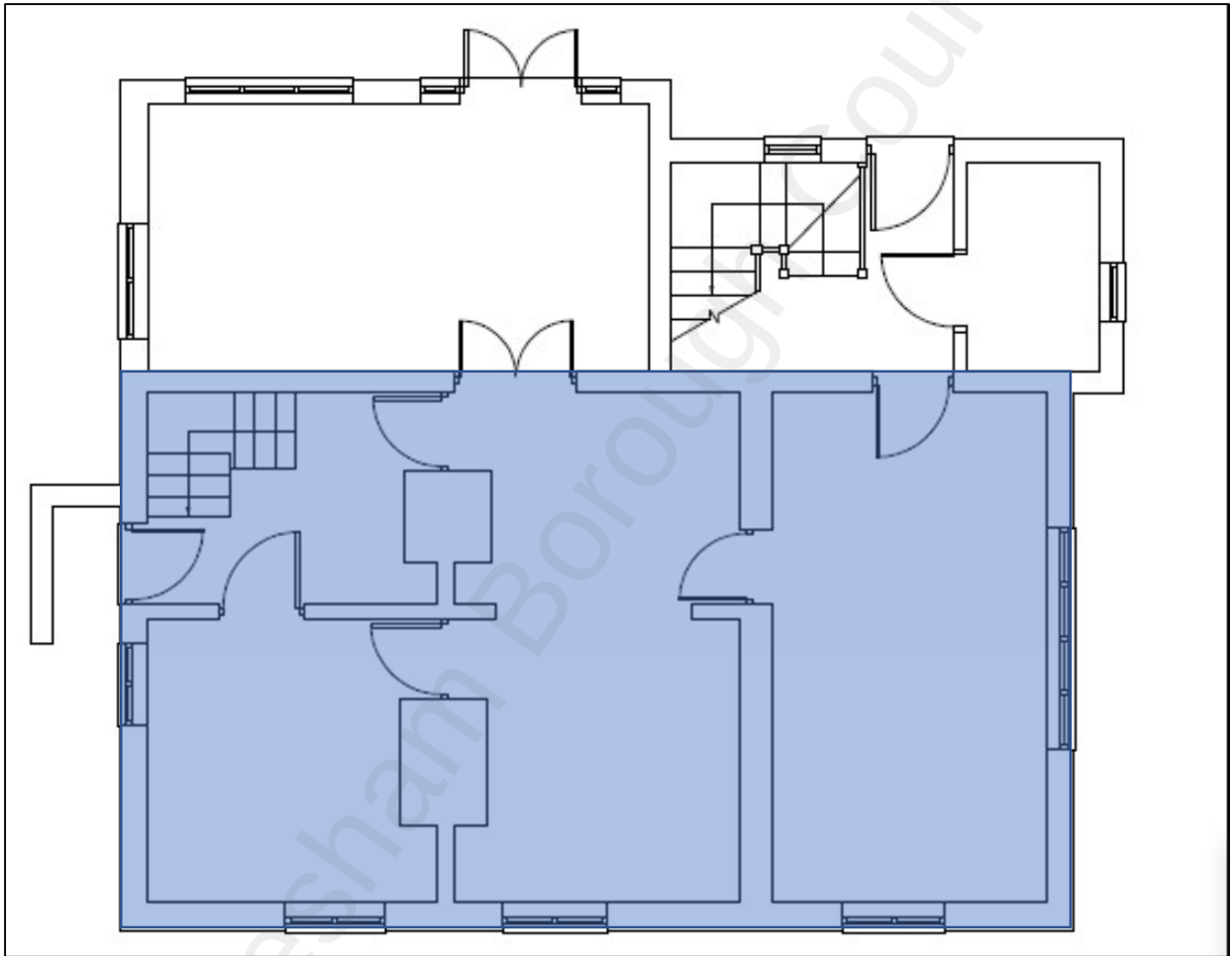


Figure 9: Original property given historic evidence.

3.9. All other additions on the southern elevation are therefore additions. The stairway on the eastern elevation also formed part of the 1978 extension.

3.10. Then in 1993 a further two storey extension was added as shown in the below plans.

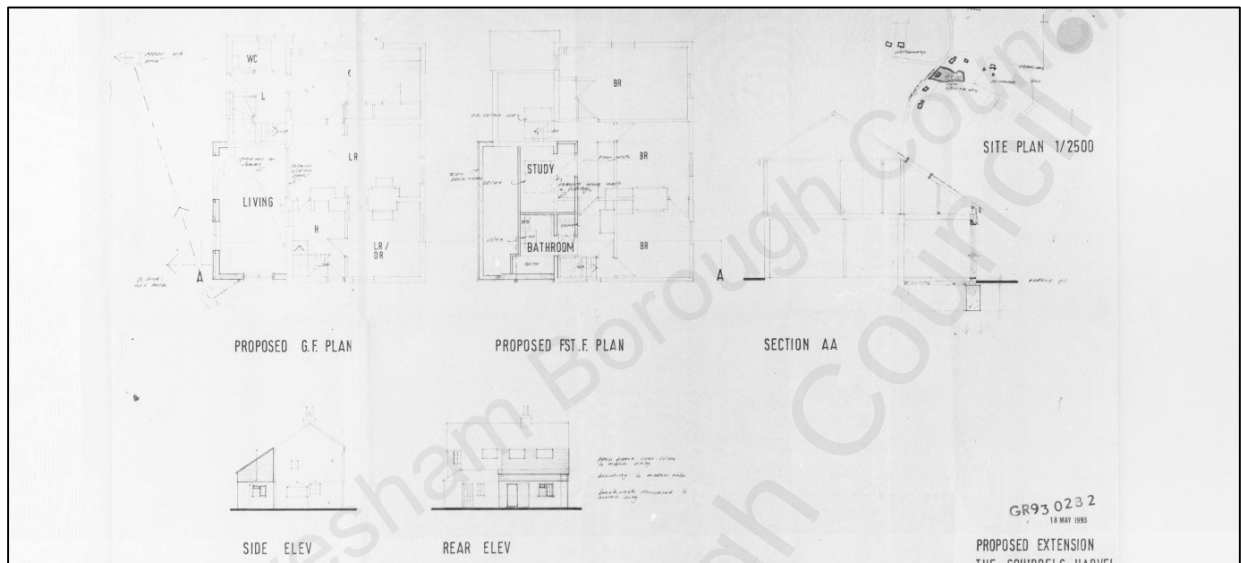


Figure 10: 1993 approved plans

(iii) Pre-Application

3.11. The applicants submitted for pre-application advice which has informed this planning application (reference PRE20220139). An extract of the pre-application plans is outlined below:

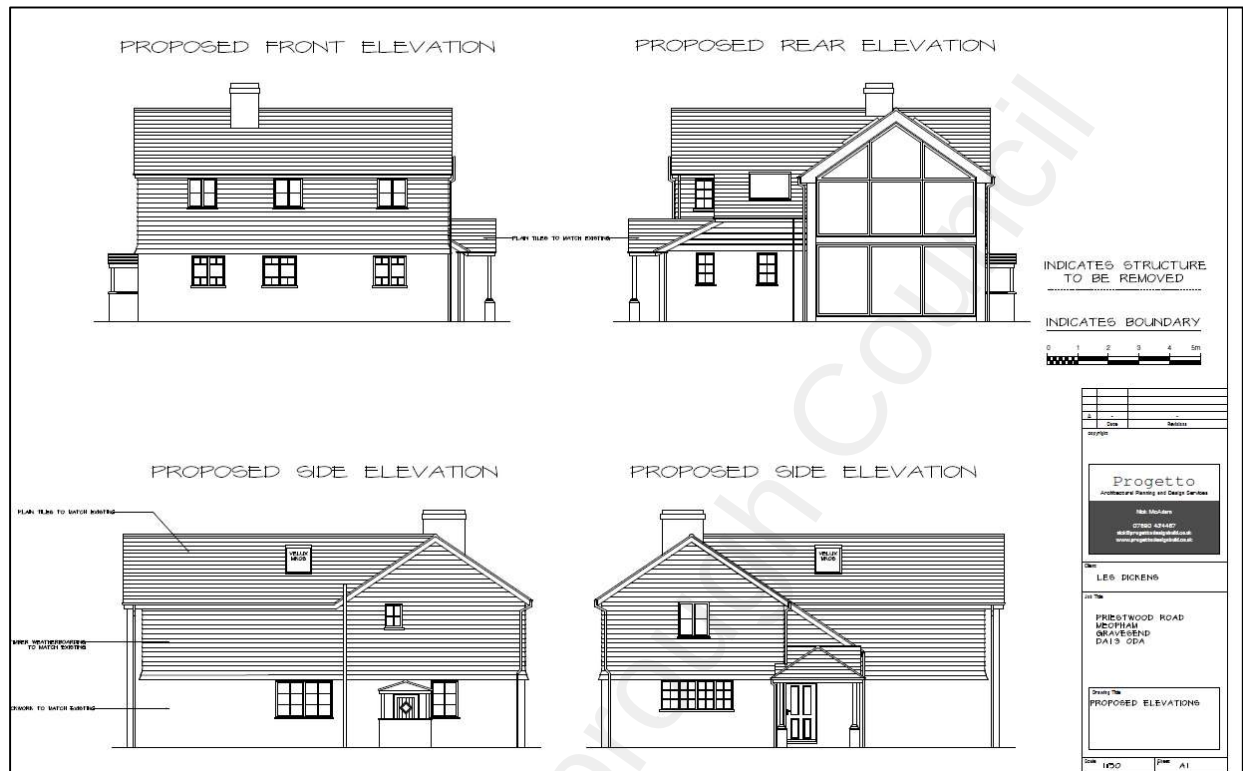


Figure 11: Pre-Application plans.

3.12. A full review of the pre-application feedback has been undertaken as part of the submission of this application.

4. THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL:

4.1. Planning permission is sought for the following development:

“Demolition of artists studio, oil store and porch; erection of rear extension and porch; alteration of existing porch with internal alterations”.

4.2. The artist’s studio and oil store to the south of the property will be removed as part of the proposal. It will also involve the demolition of the covered porch on the northern side of the property.

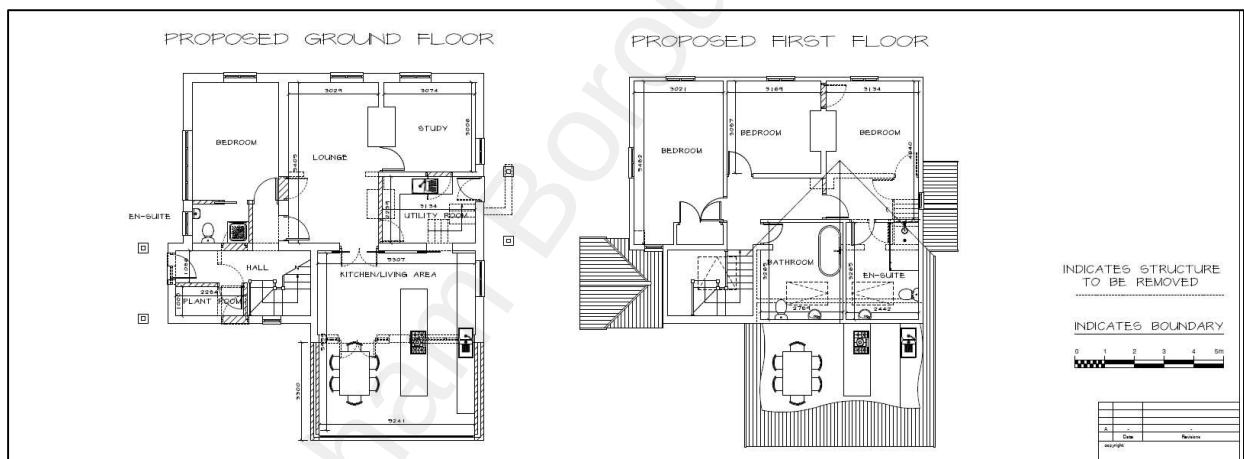


Figure 12: Proposed floor plan.

- 4.3. The objective of the proposal is to provide space for a multi-generational household for elderly parents and the applicant’s young and grown up the children. The main dwelling will be fully renovated and modernised as part of the proposals, involving changes to the internal layout.
- 4.4. The application seeks to add a rear extension which will provide a ground floor addition to create a kitchen / dining area on the eastern elevation. This will have a vaulted ceiling with gable roofscape. As part of the roofscape, it is proposed to increase the head height of the two existing first floor rooms on the eastern elevation, which will be served by roof windows to improve

accessibility for the applicant's elderly parents. A small, pitched roof is proposed on the southern elevation and replacement porch on the northern elevation.



Figure 13: Proposed side elevations.

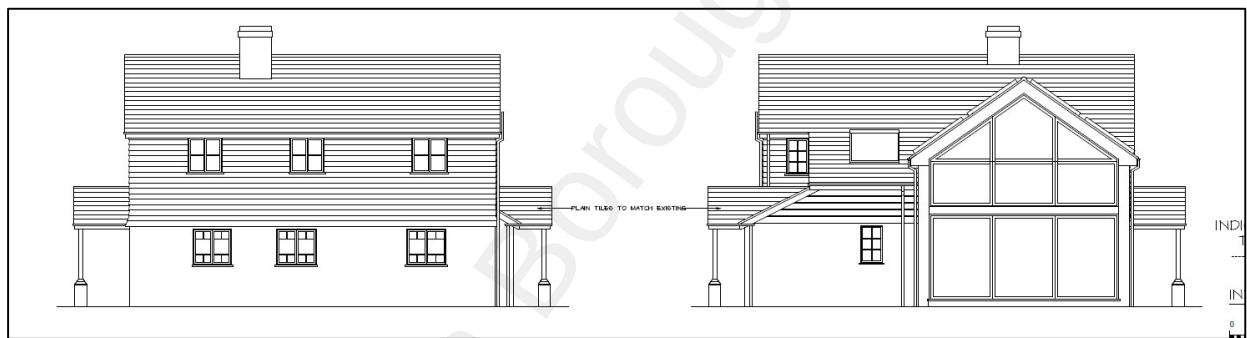


Figure 14: Proposed front and rear elevations.

4.5. There will be solar panels on the proposed roofscape.

5. PLANNING POLICY:

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Act states that applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is reinforced in paragraph 11 of the Framework (outlined below). Having reviewed relevant policy, it is my view that the proposal complies with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would indicate that planning permission should be refused. The development, therefore, benefits from the statutory presumption in favour of development that accords with the development plan.
- 5.2. For the purposes of this planning application, I have reviewed the Council's Development Plan which consists of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and the saved policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994).
- 5.3. The following documents have also been reviewed for the purposes of this planning application:
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- 5.4. The relevant sections of the NPPF (2021) are also outlined below.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development

- 5.5. Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 5.6. Paragraph 8 outlines that the planning system has three overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development:

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 environmental 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

- 5.7. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, paragraph 10 states that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Section 12 – Achieving well designed places

- 5.8. Paragraph 126 states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

- 5.9. Section 130 outlines that 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;

Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land

5.10. Paragraph 137 states 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 their permanence.

5.11. Paragraph 138 outlines that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.12. Paragraph 147 advises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

5.13. Paragraph 148 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

5.14. Paragraph 149 outlines that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

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;

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

5.15. Paragraph 176 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

Gravesham Core Strategy

5.16. Policy CS01 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.

- 5.17. Policy CS02 states that development outside those settlements, including affordable housing and proposals to maintain and diversify the rural economy, will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt.
- 5.18. Policy CS12 states that the overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced. The greatest weight will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and natural beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting
- 5.19. Policy CS18 sets out the Council's criteria relating to flood risk, water quality and carbon reduction.
- 5.20. Policy CS19 states that new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It will conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment, integrate well with the surrounding local area and meet anticrime standards. The design and construction of new development will incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques, be adaptable to reflect changing lifestyles, and be resilient to the effects of climate change.

Gravesham Saved Local Plan

- 5.21. Policy CS13 states that Extensions to dwellings will be considered on their merits but the Borough Council will expect the following criteria to be satisfied:-
- (i) The existing dwelling must be an "original dwelling"* in permanent use as a dwelling.
 - (ii) There will be an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.

- (iii) Those extensions which provide essential basic amenities such as a bathroom, toilet or kitchen, which are currently not available or are clearly inadequate, will normally be permitted.
- (iv) The extension shall not be in a form which would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential curtilage.
- (v) The dwelling to be enlarged must have sufficient curtilage to accommodate the extension without undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.
- (vi) The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting.
- (vii) Proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot.

6. PLANNING MERITS:

6.1. In light of the above planning policy review, the following main issues will be considered as part of this planning assessment:

- Design, Scale and Bulk –Street Scene/Landscape
- Green Belt
- Residential Amenity
- Other planning considerations

Design, Scale and Bulk – Street Scene/Landscape

- 6.2. The development has been carefully considered to ensure it proposes a positive piece of design which enhances both the existing property but also the surrounding street scene and landscape.
- 6.3. The proposed rear extension has been sensitively located on the eastern elevation of the property which means it will not appear prominently within the rural street scene. In addition, given the dense landscaping along the eastern and southern boundaries of the plot, it will also not be visible in the wider landscape. For this reason there will be no harmful impact on the AONB to the north or on the character of the Luddesdown Woods Landscape Character Area.
- 6.4. The extension is modest in size and will match the palette of materials of the existing property. This means that it will appear in harmony with the existing built form. The extension has been set down from the main ridge height and the gable roofscape will respect the proportions and scale of the original dwelling. The catslide roof has been retained elsewhere on the roofscape maintaining the subservience of the property on the eastern elevation.
- 6.5. The roof overhang on the existing porch on the southern elevation will be lightweight in appearance and appear subserviently against the existing built form. The proposed porch on the northern elevation will replace the existing structure on this flank.

- 6.6. The removal of the artists studio and oil store will enhance the spaciousness around the property and ensures that the proposal will not result in the overdevelopment of the plot.
- 6.7. Overall, the proposal will renovate and restore the existing property with sensitive additions which will harmonise with the existing property and will respond positively to the rural character of the area.
- 6.8. Overall, the proposed extensions will be in accordance with Sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF and policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Core Strategy.

Green Belt

(i) Appropriate Development?

- 6.9. When assessing extensions to existing buildings in the Green Belt, it is essential to analyse its impact on Openness. Openness is, to a large extent, the absence of perceived development, whether in the form of buildings, engineering or other operations or a material change of use of land.
- 6.10. When reflecting on openness, in the Court of Appeal decision of *Turner (2016) EWCA Civ 466* the court held that:

"The concept of "openness of the Green Belt" is not narrowly limited to the volumetric approach. The word "openness" is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. Prominent among these will be factors relevant to how built up the Green Belt is now and how built up it would be if redevelopment occurs (in the context of which, volumetric matters may be a material concern, but are by no means the only one) and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness which the Green Belt presents.

The openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect, and the absence of visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on the openness of the Green Belt as a result of the location of a new or materially larger building there. But, as observed above, it does not follow that openness of the Green Belt has no visual dimension.”

- 6.11. The Turner judgment asserted that the consideration of openness cannot simply depend on a quantitative assessment; rather, it is also necessary to consider the spatial implications of a proposal. In other words, a development scheme cannot rely on the volumetric assessment alone: it is necessary to take account of wider considerations, including, for example, the open rural character of a site and the spatial implications of a proposal in such a location.
- 6.12. Spatially, the previous section of this report has established that the appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of the proposed extension is appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting. On this basis the proposal is in line with the *Turner* judgement and clause vi of Policy CS13 of the Gravesham Saved Local Plan.
- 6.13. However, it is noted that quantitatively, Policy CS13 of the Saved Local Plan outlines that there is an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.
- 6.14. As has been shown in the planning history section, the original property comprised a large single storey extension, as is evident from historic maps and photos. However, even taking this into account, given additions from 1978 and 1993, the application proposal would still result in the one third allowance being breached. Therefore there is a technical breach against clause (ii) of Policy CS13 of the Saved Local Plan.
- 6.15. It is therefore important to review the very special circumstances which justifies the development.

(ii) Very Special Circumstances

6.16. An assessment of whether there are very special circumstances in any particular case involves a balancing exercise of weighing the benefits of the appeal proposal against the harm to the Green Belt which arises by definition from inappropriate development and the actual harm to the purposes and objectives of Green Belt policy. (*Pehrsson v Secretary of State for the Environment [1991] 61P.and CR266*). Such a balancing exercise necessarily involves a consideration of the weight of the planning harm in whatever form it exists. If the benefits clearly outweigh the harm, then very special circumstances exist. In addition to the notional/definitional harm, if the extent of actual harm to the Green Belt is slight then the countervailing benefits need only to be proportionate and commensurate to outweigh such harm. The weight to be given to Green Belt policy and to the benefits of a proposal is a matter for the decision maker.

6.17. In my view, the very special circumstances which I believe justify planning permission being granted are:

a. Trade-Off Proposal/Demolition of Existing Buildings

6.18. The proposal involves the demolition of the existing artists studio and oil store. The floor area of these existing structures, against the proposed floor area of the extension is outlined below:

Floor Area of Oil Store and Artists Studio	Floor Area of Extension
29.25sqm	19.29sqm

6.19. By demolishing the existing oil store and artists studio, the proposed extension will result in a net decrease in floor area by 34.05% on the site compared to what exists currently.

6.20. The proposed extensions whilst over the one third threshold will therefore not have a greater impact than the existing structures on site in terms of openness.

6.21. I attribute significant weight to this very special circumstance.

6.22. I conclude, therefore, that these other considerations, for the reasons set out above, cumulatively clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm and constitute the very special circumstances necessary to justify planning permission being granted.

Residential Amenity

6.23. The existing property is detached and set in a large plot. Given the significant separation distance from neighbouring properties, the proposal will not result in a loss of amenity to nearby occupiers in terms of loss of daylight/sunlight or loss of outlook.

6.24. In light of the above, the proposal meets the tests set out in paragraph 130 of the NPPF and Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Other Planning Considerations

(i) Community Infrastructure Levy

6.25. The relevant CIL paperwork has been completed as part of this submission.

(ii) Highways / Parking

6.26. No changes are proposed in respect of the vehicular access onto Priestwood Road.

6.27. The property benefits from off road parking for 3no. vehicles and therefore there will be no impact on highways safety or convenience as a result of the proposals.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. This Planning, Design and Access Statement has outlined that the proposed extensions will enhance the appearance of the property through high quality design. The proposed additions will appear subserviently against the existing dwelling. The scale and mass of the extensions will ensure they will not appear visually intrusive within the landscape and therefore will not have any impact on the AONB to the north or the Luddesdown Woods Landscape Character Area.
- 7.2. The applicant has forwarded a robust case for very special circumstances which clearly outweighs the harm to the openness of the Green Belt through inappropriateness and any other harm.
- 7.3. The proposed development will preserve the amenity of adjoining occupiers in terms of privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight.
- 7.4. In view of the above, it is concluded that the development proposed in this application is consistent with the aims and detailed requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and as such, should be given planning permission.