

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20250412

Location: 278 Lower Higham Road Gravesend Kent DA12 2NR

Description: Formation of vehicular access on to 'C' classified road and provision of two off-street parking spaces in front garden with associated hard standing.

Applicant: Ms Tina Coston

Site Visit Date: 14.05.25

Preliminary Matters and Context

Vehicle crossovers that interrupt grass verges are often found to be unacceptable and detrimental in terms of design character and appearance, impact on the street scene, and biodiversity, amongst other reasons. However, each case has to be assessed on its own merits, with consideration to the surrounding context.

Consideration has been given to a dismissed appeal located near to the application site at 274 Lower Higham Road, Gravesend (APP/K2230/W/21/3281145 -for a driveway and dropped kerb to provide vehicular access).

The Inspector stated the following:

'The existing grass verge is a particular feature of the street scene as it runs to the front of several of the dwellings located on the southern side of Lower Higham Road. The appeal property is at a point where the grass verge is on rising land above the carriageway and as such it is a prominent feature of the street scene which adds considerably to the visual amenity and character and appearance of the area. The appeal site is one of several dwellings that are located towards the edge of the urban area, with the Green Belt beyond'.

The Inspector suggested that the proposed crossover would be '*particularly prominent*' in the street scene as it would be across a more elevated section of grass verge. Ultimately, the Inspector found '*the hardsurfacing associated with the vehicle crossover, together with the hardsurfacing of most of the front garden of the property, would have an adverse effect on the soft landscaped quality of the street scene and would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area*'.

However, during the course of the Inspectors' assessment, the appellant had highlighted other applications permitted along Lower Higham Road. The Inspector states; '*two applications for vehicle crossovers that have been allowed by the Council at 144 Lower Higham Road and 280 Lower Higham Road. Of these, 280 Lower Higham Road is close to the appeal site. Whilst I have not been provided with any further details of the application at 280 Lower Higham Road, the crossover that has been constructed is across land that is at a similar level to the highway and is towards the start of the grass verge. In my view, this crossover does not have the same effect on the character and appearance of the area as the appeal proposal which is across a more elevated verge*'.

The application site is the neighbouring property to 280 Lower Higham Road. Based on consideration of the topography, context of the area and the Inspectors view that a crossover in this position would not be

as harmful, it was considered that in this instance, the proposed crossover at 278 Lower Higham Road could be acceptable, in principle. However, there were concerns with the proposal in terms of insufficient planting provision, given the extensive loss of the grass verge and soft landscaped garden, and also with consideration to the proximity of the existing hardstanding area and crossover at No.280 (which would be considered to result in cumulative visual harm to the dwelling and street scene). As such, the agent was invited to review the proposal and incorporate further planting into the design to soften the appearance of the proposed development, and expand biodiversity opportunity. In addition, the plans appeared to show a section of grass verge would be retained post-development, which was considered desirable, and would replicate the existing situation outside of No.280, whereby a strip of verge is retained. As such, the agent was asked to clearly reflect this on the plans. In addition, the agent was requested to clarify the proposed permeable material to be used in the construction of the hardstanding area and to address some small discrepancies in the planning statement.

Revised plans/documents were received from the agent on 18.06.2025 and accepted by the Local Planning Authority with an extension of time agreed until 18.07.25. In this instance, re-consultation was not considered to be necessary.

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application Form;
 Supplementary Information – REVISED Planning Statement;
 Drawing No. 01 Rev. B – Site Location Plan and Block Plan – Existing;
 Drawing No. 02 Rev. A – Plans and Elevations – Existing;
 Drawing No. 03 Rev. B – REVISED Plans and Elevations – Proposed; and
 Drawing No. 04 Rev. B – REVISED Block Plan – Proposed.

~~Superseded Documents/Plans~~

~~Supplementary Information – Planning Statement;
 Drawing No. 03 Rev. A – Plans and Elevations – Proposed; and
 Drawing No. 04 Rev. A – Block Plan – Proposed.~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20240810	Lawful Development Certificate application for the proposed provision of a twin unit mobile home (not operational development) within the garden of the lawful dwelling house for use as additional accommodation by one household (not a material change of use).	Certificate Granted	30.10.2024

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF (2024) 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 (2024), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 2 – Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)
- SPG 4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Gravesham Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)

Other Relevant Guidance

- Kent County Council Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2023)
- Gravesham Driveway Dropped Kerb Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)
- Gravesham Front Driveway Design Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Local Ward Councillors

No comments received.

KCC Highways

I refer to the above planning application and confirm that provided the following requirements are secured by condition or planning obligation, then I would raise no objection on behalf of the local highway authority:-

- Provision and maintenance of 2.0 metres x 2.0 metres pedestrian visibility splays behind the footway on both sides of the access with no obstructions over 0.6m above footway level, prior to the use of the site commencing.

Please advise the applicant that they will require the separate consent of KCC Highways for the construction of the vehicle crossing within the public highway.

It is important to note that Local Planning Authority (LPA) permission does not convey any approval to carry out works on or affecting the public highway.

Any changes to or affecting the public highway in Kent require the formal agreement of the Highway Authority, Kent County Council (KCC), and it should not be assumed that this will be a given because LPA planning permission has been granted.

For this reason, anyone considering works which may affect the public highway, including any highway-owned street furniture or landscape assets such as grass, shrubs and trees, is advised to engage with KCC

Highways and Transportation at an early stage in the design process.

Across the county there are pieces of land next to private homes and gardens and near the highway that do not look like roads or pavements but are actually part of the public highway.

Some of this highway land is owned by Kent County Council whilst some is owned by third party owners. Irrespective of the ownership, this land may have 'highway rights' over the topsoil.

Works on private land may also affect the public highway. These include works to cellars, to retaining walls which support the highway or land above the highway, and to balconies, signs or other structures which project over the highway. Such works also require the approval of the Highway Authority.

Kent County Council has now introduced a pre-application advice service in addition to a full formal technical approval process for new or altered highway assets, with the aim of improving future maintainability. Further details are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>.

This process applies to all development works affecting the public highway other than applications for vehicle crossings, which are covered by a separate approval process. Further details on this are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/apply-for-a-dropped-kerb/dropped-kerb-contractor-information>

Once planning approval for any development has been granted by the LPA, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that before development commences, all necessary highway approvals and consents have been obtained, and that the limits of the highway boundary have been clearly established, since failure to do so may result in enforcement action being taken by the Highway Authority.

The applicant must also ensure that the details shown on the approved plans agree in every aspect with those approved under the relevant legislation and common law. It is therefore important for the applicant to contact KCC Highways and Transportation to progress this aspect of the works prior to commencement on site.

Further guidance for applicants, including information about how to clarify the highway boundary and links to application forms for vehicular crossings and other highway matters, may be found on Kent County Council's website:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>.

Alternatively, KCC Highways and Transportation may be contacted by telephone: 03000 418181.

Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board

Thank you for consulting the Board on the above-referenced planning application.

The site is within the drainage district of the North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Board; the application has been reviewed, and the Board has no objection.

This response is based on the information provided with the planning application and is reliant on its accuracy.

Environment Agency

No comments received.

Neighbouring properties

Two surrounding properties were consulted and a site notice was displayed on 14.05.25. The overall consultation period expired on 06.06.25 and one comment was received, objecting to the proposal. The objection raised the following concerns:

- The verge contains underground services
- The verge is being used as parking by the attached neighbouring property, impeding the view and creating danger to other road users
- Neighbouring planting impeding pedestrian safety
- Adverse impact on the character and appearance of the street scene
- Erosion of the soft landscape quality of the streetscape

Only material planning considerations shall be considered in the assessment of the proposal. This includes, design character and appearance and also parking and highways safety which shall be considered in the report below. Other matters would not be considered to fall under the planning remit, but may fall under private matters or other legislation/authority (such as Kent County Council, Utilities, Building Regulations).

Site Description

278 Lower Higham Road is a two storey semi-detached property fronting the southern side of the highway.

Site Photos

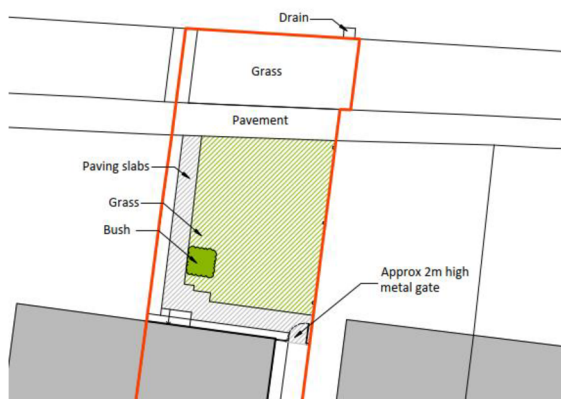


This application proposes the formation of vehicular access on to 'C' classified road and provision of two off-street parking spaces in the front garden with associated hard standing area.

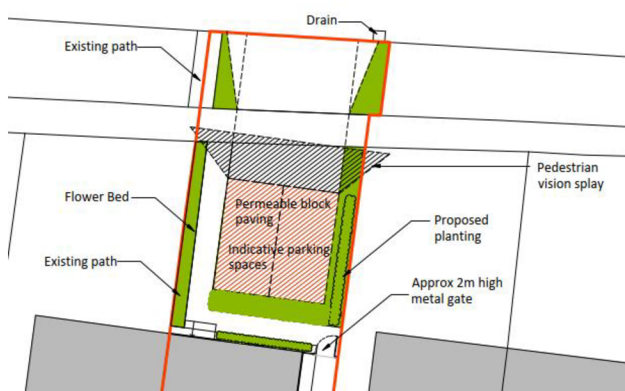
Proposed Development

The development would create off-street parking provision for the property.

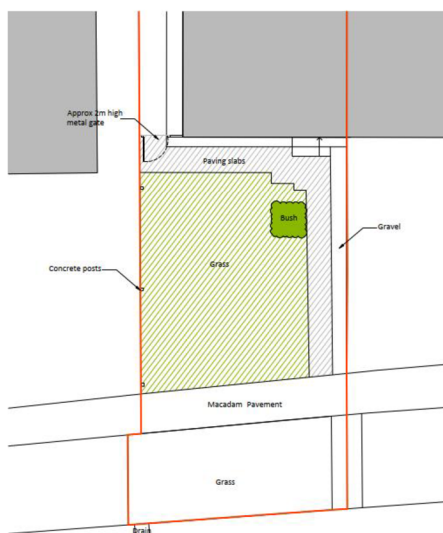
Existing



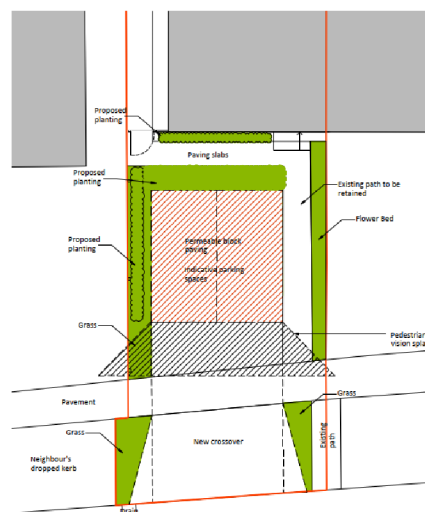
Proposed



Existing



Proposed





Officer's Analysis

Design, Character and Appearance

Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) (LPCS) (2014) states that new development will be visually attractive and locally distinctive. It should also conserve and enhance the character of the local built and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding area. Moreover, Section 12 (Achieving well- designed places) of the NPPF (2024) sets out that the creation of high quality beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It states developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character.

The Design For Gravesham Design Code (2024) is a strategic document that sets out Gravesham's vision and expectation for quality place-making. Gravesham's Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guidance SPD (2021) set out key principles for new developments. Generally, the SPD (2021) highlights the importance of new development complimenting and corresponding to existing character and the wider context.

In terms of this application, although it is unfortunate, it is evident in Lower Higham Road, that where properties are on a similar land level to the grass verges, there are examples of vehicle crossovers having been installed. 278 Lower Higham Road is considered to be on a similar land level to the existing grass verge, and is situated to the west of No. 280 (referenced by the Inspector in the aforementioned appeal). It is considered that, heading west after the application property (from 276 onwards) there is a more noticeable incline in the gradient in the grass verge, which then becomes steeper and is a highly prominent feature within the street scene, which contributes positively to the character of the area.

Google Images depicting gradient- note that steps are required to access the dwellings/path



Therefore, in situ, it is considered the crossover is not unacceptable in principle.

In terms of the design of the proposal, the revised plans demonstrate a higher intensity of planting and soft landscaping, with the parking area to be bordered on all three sides with greenery (flower bed, grass and planting). Additionally, the plans clearly indicate a section of grass verge would be retained, which will separate the development from the existing crossover at No.280. This all contributes to soften the development, in terms of its appearance. The hardstanding area would be constructed using permeable paving, which is desirable, both in terms of appearance, and drainage.

Therefore, on balance, considering the surrounding context, aforementioned Inspectors views and the intensified soft landscaping, the development is considered to be acceptable and accords with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014) and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) in terms of design, character and appearance.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The works would provide off-street parking provision for future occupiers. Therefore, the proposed development would safeguard the amenity of future occupiers in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) (2014) and Section 12 (NPPF) (2024).

Neighbouring Amenity

As aforementioned above, one response was received objecting to the proposal. The objection did not raise any concerns in terms of neighbouring amenity itself, however amenity has been considered, and it is surmised that there would be no impact on neighbouring amenity as a result of the proposal. Therefore, the proposal is considered to safeguard neighbouring amenity in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) (2014) and Section 12 (NPPF) (2024).

Parking and Highways

The plans show there would be sufficient space on the hardstanding area for two vehicles.

Kent County Council Highways have reviewed the proposal and raise no objections on highways grounds, but request the following condition be added to the decision notice:

Provision and maintenance of 2.0 metres x 2.0 metres pedestrian visibility splays behind the footway on both sides of the access with no obstructions over 0.6m above footway level, prior to the use of the site commencing.

As such, an appropriately worded condition can be added to the decision notice to ensure this requirement is met, if planning permission were to be forthcoming. In addition, KCC wish the applicant to be advised they shall require a separate consent from KCC for the construction of the vehicle crossing. This can be added as an informative, as appropriate.

Overall, subject to the inclusion of the aforementioned condition, KCC have raised no other issues. As such, there are no further concerns in terms of highways and parking that would fall under the Borough Council's planning remit.

Therefore, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy CS11 (LPCS) (2014).

Biodiversity

Although it is a shame to lose soft landscaping within the property frontage, and part of the grass verge, the revised plans do incorporate additional planting into the design, which will provide biodiversity opportunity.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Flood Zones

The site lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3, however, the Environment Agency have been consulted on the application and have provided no comments. In addition, the Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board were consulted and raise no objections. As such, there are no concerns with regards to this constraint, and it is noted that the hardstanding area is permeable, with areas of grass and soft landscaping to assist with drainage.

Conclusion

The application has been fully considered and is in accordance with local and national planning policy.

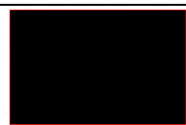
In situ, in this instance, the formation of the vehicle crossover and associated hardstanding is acceptable in terms of design character and appearance. In addition, there is no detrimental impact on amenity, and no concerns in terms of highways and parking, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

Permission

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Lucy Hankin	Team Leader:	Mrs Faye Walsh
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Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	3 rd July 2025	Dated:	11 July 2025