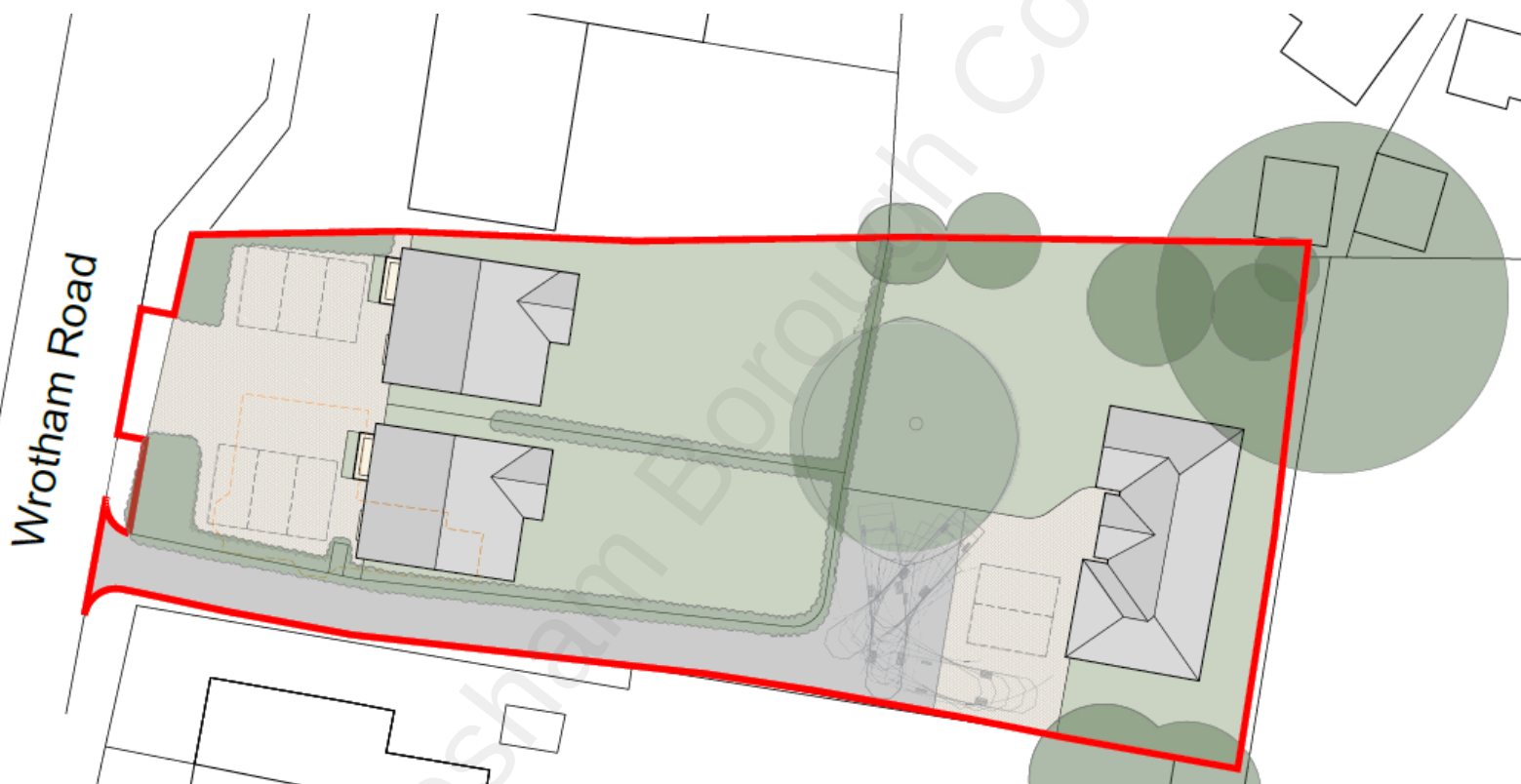




SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

Northfield House, Wrotham Road, Meopham

October 2022

SUPPORTING PLANNING STATEMENT

In support of an outline planning application for the demolition of Northfield House and outbuildings and the erection of three detached dwellings, with associated parking, access and amenity areas

at

Northfield House,

Wrotham Road

Meopham

DA13 0AQ

On behalf of

Mr M Rossi

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Introduction

- 1.1. This statement has been written on behalf of our client Mr Rossi in support of an outline planning application for the demolition of Northfield House and erection of three detached dwellinghouses which includes the provision of parking, access and amenity areas for each dwelling. This application is submitted following the refusal of planning application reference 20220823 and addresses the Council's previous concerns.
- 1.2. The council had the following concerns with the previous proposal;
- *"The backland siting of the proposal, accentuated by the bulk, height and scale of the rear dwelling in particular, would be uncharacteristic of the development in this part of Meopham, would fail to integrate into its surroundings and would not add to the quality of the area."*
 - *"The poor design and appearance of the frontage dwellings would further harm the character and appearance of the area."*
 - *"The proposal has insufficient space for on-site turning and manoeuvring, which would result in vehicles reversing onto the A227 Wrotham Road to the detriment of highway safety."*
 - *"The proposal fails to secure a contribution towards strategic mitigation measures within the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites to resolve disturbance issues to wintering birds."*
- 1.3. To address the Council Concerns the revised proposal does the following;
- The height of the rear dwelling has been reduced from a maximum of 6.6 metres to 5.37 metres at the tallest point, with an overall reduction in floor area of 32%.
 - Reaffirmed the proposed garden areas and plots are characteristic in their size and shape to surrounding development in the area, ensuring the proposed dwellings and their plots integrate well into their surroundings.

- The design and appearance of the front dwellings have been altered to closely reflect the design of adjacent buildings, with additional detailing incorporated to add to the traditional character of the buildings. Notwithstanding this, the outline application with matters reserved includes the appearance of the dwellings.
- On-site turning areas for the front dwellings have been revised in line with Planning Guidance Note 6 on Vehicle Accesses on Classified Roads to ensure turning and manoeuvring onto Wrotham Road can be done in a forward gear. The rear dwellings turning area has been adjusted to accommodate an area sufficient for the turning of emergency vehicles notwithstanding that amendments to the turning circle were sent to the council prior to determination of application 20220823.
- The proposal demonstrates the intent of the applicant to contribute to towards strategic mitigation measures within the Thames Estuary and Marshes to resolve disturbance to issues to wintering birds through a SAMMS payment during the course of the application.

1.4. This statement considers the proposed development in relation to the context of the site, relevant local and national policies and all other material planning considerations.

Supporting documents

1.5. This application is supported by the following:

- P.2781.010.A Site Location Plan
- P.2781.030.B Proposed Site Plan
- P.2781.020.A Existing Block Plan
- P.2781.021.A Demolition Plan
- P.2781.060.B Indicative Plans Dwelling 1
- P.2781.061.B Indicative Plans Dwelling 2
- P.2781.062.B Indicative Plans Dwelling 3
- P.2781.070.B Indicative Elevations Dwelling 1
- P.2781.071.B Indicative Elevations Dwelling 2
- P.2781.072.B Indicative Elevations Dwelling 3

Site Context

- 1.6. The application site is located within the settlement of Meopham, along Wrotham Road, which connects to the larger settlement of Gravesend beyond to the north.



Figure 1 – Google Earth Image showing location of site

- 1.7. The application site comprises a rectangular shaped parcel of land comprising Northfield House and its residential curtilage to the east which will be split to provide the curtilage for three additional units.
- 1.8. The site is located to the east of the main highway, Wrotham Road from which access is gained. The site lies within the development boundary for Meopham and within the urban settlement boundary of Gravesham as defined in the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (Adopted) (September 2014).
- 1.9. The site is not subject to any Tree Preservation Orders and there are no public rights of way running through the site.

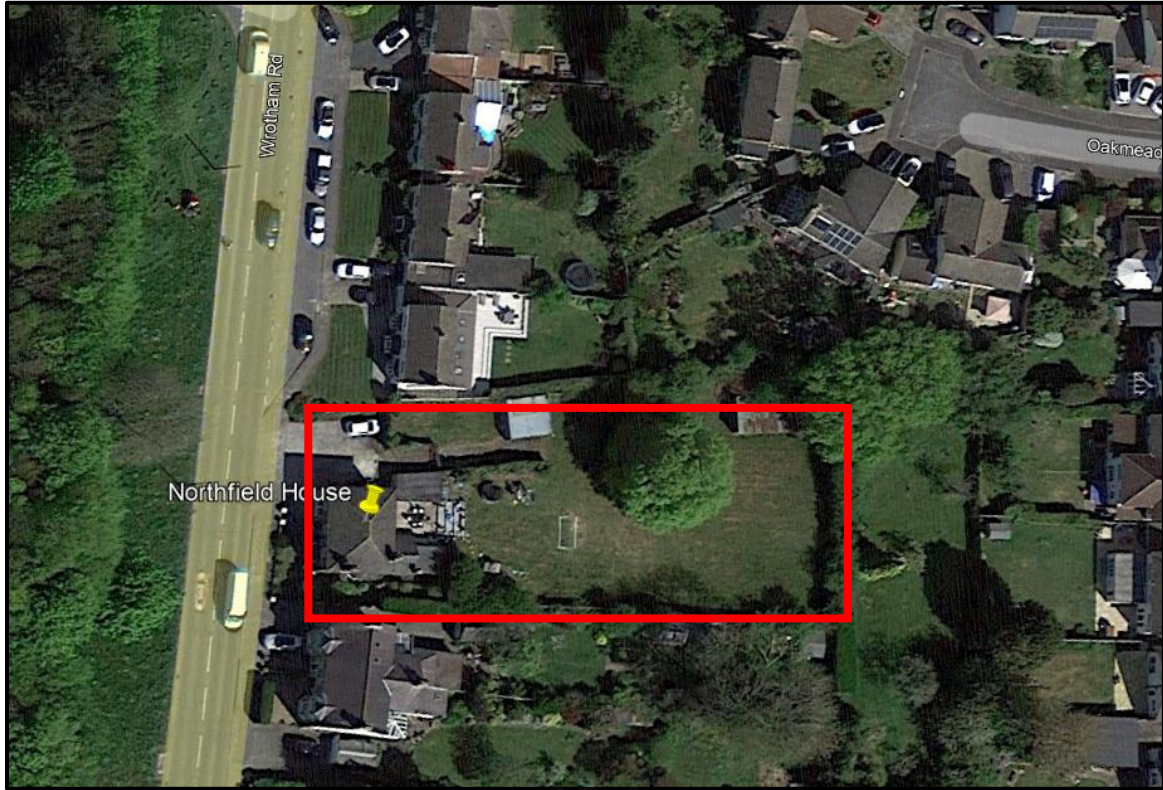


Figure 2 - Google Earth image of the site

- 1.10. The site is not located within a Conversation Area.
- 1.11. The site is not within an area at risk from flooding.

Locational Sustainability

- 1.12. Within the adopted Core Strategy Meopham is categorized as a rural settlement and within the third tier of the settlement hierarchy in terms of suitability for sustainable development. The village is predominantly residential in character and there are a number of shops, services and employment opportunities provided in the village center serving the local community. This includes a village hall, two churches, convenience store, Surgery and services, primary and senior schools. Meopham is served by a regular bus service providing access to Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Gravesend.
- 1.13. Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2019, seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas. It notes that housing should be located where it will *“enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities”*. Paragraph 79 seeks to avoid isolated new homes in the countryside.

- 1.14. Due to the location of the site close to other existing residences, buildings and facilities it is not considered that the site is isolated or within an unsustainable location.

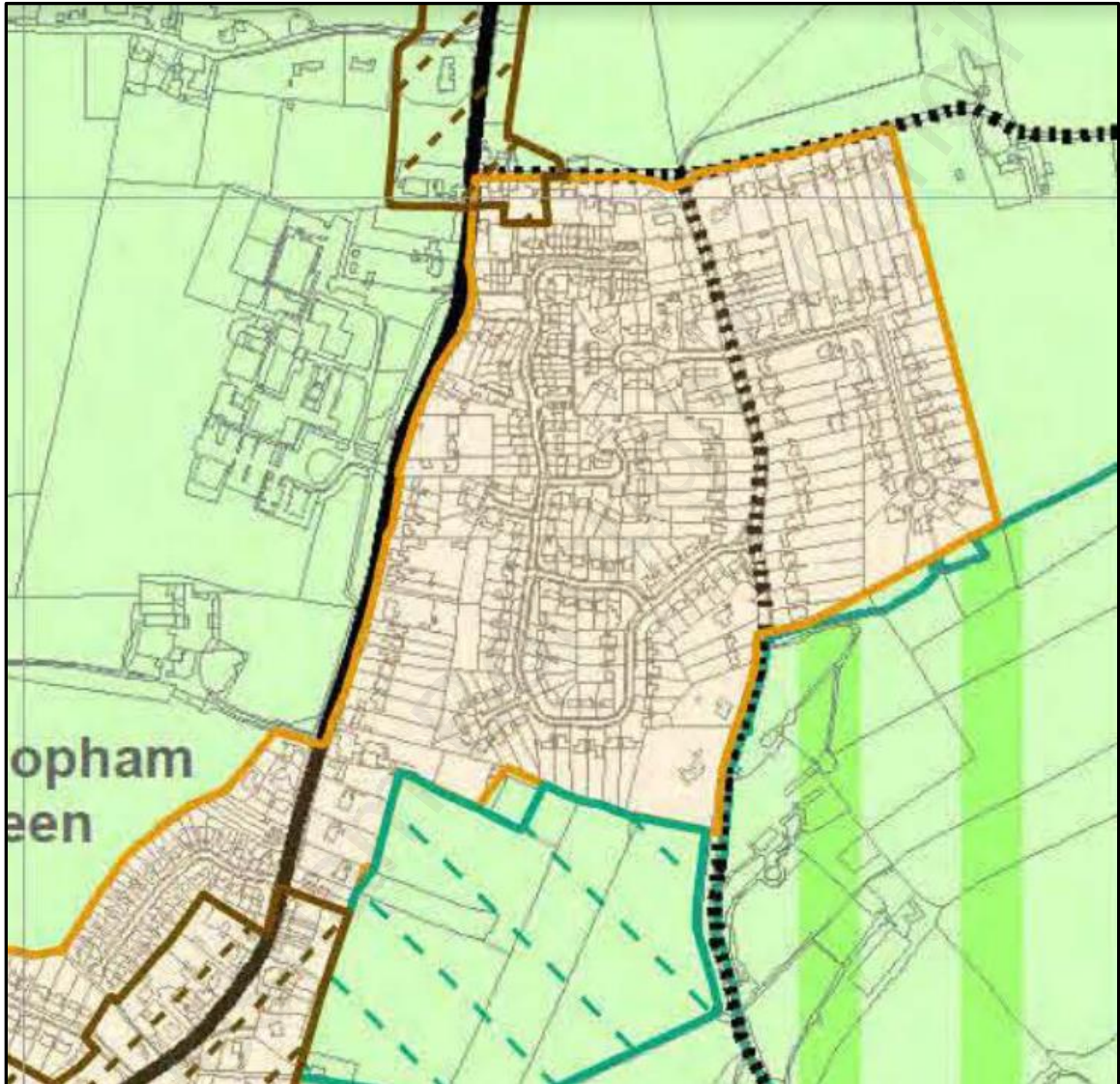


Figure 3 – Core Strategy Plan of Meopham

2. Relevant Planning History

Planning application reference 20220823

- 2.1. On the 21st September 2022, planning permission under reference 20220823 was refused for an *“Outline application for the demolition of Northfield House and outbuildings and the erection of three detached dwellings, with associated parking, access and amenity areas.”*
- 2.2. This application is for outline planning permission will all matters reserved except for access. As a result, other matters such as appearance, landscaping, layout and scale should not be considered as reasons to refuse the application.
- 2.3. The Planning Officer considering the proposal recommended the application for refusal for the following reasons;
 1. *The backland siting of the proposal, accentuated by the bulk, height and scale of the rear dwelling in particular, would be uncharacteristic of the development in this part of Meopham, would fail to integrate into its surroundings and would not add to the quality of the area. The poor design and appearance of the frontage dwellings would further harm the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the requirements of Policies CS14, CS15, and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraphs 119, 124, 126 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.*
 2. *The proposal has insufficient space for on-site turning and manoeuvring, which would result in vehicles reversing onto the A227 Wrotham Road to the detriment of highway safety, and which is contrary to Planning Guidance Note 6 Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways, saved Policies T1 and T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994, Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.*
 3. *The proposal fails to secure a contribution towards strategic mitigation measures within the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites to resolve disturbance issues to wintering birds, and in the absence of this contribution or any evidence to inform an appropriate assessment, the development fails to comply with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations and paragraphs 174 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.*
- 2.4. The amended scheme seeks to address these concerns as detailed within the preceding sections of this statement.
- 2.5. Other relevant planning history at the site is briefly detailed below.

- 2.6. An application was previously submitted to the council under 20070988 for outline planning permission for the demolition of an existing dwelling and erection of two detached two storey dwellings each with a garage. Outline planning permission was granted in January 2008.
- 2.7. With this permission, the principle of development was granted but no further permission was sought from the council.

Other relevant applications

Planning Reference	Planning Description	Decision	Decision Date
19550136	Erection of a dwelling- Land adjoining Northfield House Wrotham Road Meopham	Refused	07/10/1995
19900346	Change of use of part of the ground floor from shop to residential and alterations to the ground floor front elevation	Permitted	07/06/1990
20080188	Continued display of non-illuminated free standing sign in front garden and wall mounted sign on side elevation of house.	Consent for Advert	27/03/2008

3. Proposal

- 3.1. Following the refusal of application 20220823 this application seeks outline planning permission for the demolition of Northfield House and erection of three two storey detached dwellinghouses which includes the provision of parking, access and amenity areas for each dwelling.

The revised scheme seeks to address the Council's concerns through;

- Reducing the size of the rear dwelling.
 - A revised design to improve the appearance of the proposed front dwellings.
 - Altering the vehicle on-site turning space and parking arrangements.
 - Additional information regarding contributions to strategic mitigation within the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites.
- 3.2. This application proposal has been designed to take full account of local and national policy, physical constraints, and other similar decisions within the remit of Gravesham Borough Council.
- 3.3. This scheme proposes a similar scheme to that of the original outlined application which was granted under reference 20070988, involving the demolition of Northfield House and the erection of two additional dwellings in its place. This application includes the further proposal of a third dwelling to the rear garden of Northfield house.
- 3.4. The site forms part of an existing development and is accessed from the main highway of Wrotham Road on its Western Boundary. The site is generally level and surrounded by mature hedging and trees which will be maintained, including the large tree in the rear garden. There is good highway access with clear visibility to and from the site.
- 3.5. The form and scale of the buildings within the revised scheme have been carefully designed to consider the street scene and amenity of neighboring properties.
- 3.6. Figure 4 below demonstrates how the resultant buildings would be positioned within the site and the neighbouring and future amenity of the property could be accommodated on the site.



Figure 4 – Extract from proposed block plan showing locations of new dwellings.

- 3.7. The site layout has been designed to benefit from screening of existing trees and boundary planting and highlights possible options for landscaping along the boundaries. If the council requires further landscaping along the boundaries, this could be imposed by way of condition.
- 3.8. Access and parking will be accommodated to the west of the two dwellings located immediately adjacent to Wrotham Road. This will allow the occupants of the house to park off the road, whilst matching the arrangements of both the neighbouring properties to create uniformity in the street scene.
- 3.9. One of the concerns raised as part of application 20220823 was the parking arrangement provided for the dwellings fronting the highway and the inability to demonstrate that the vehicles accessing these dwellings could leave in a forward direction. Following conversation with the officer, as part of this proposal we have shifted the dwellings fronting the highway east slightly to allow occupants of these dwellings to leave and enter the site in a forward gear. This ensures the proposal complies with the *Gravesham Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highway Supplementary Planning Document*.
- 3.10. The proposed dwellings provide for a good standard of living space and accommodation and also includes sufficient space for storage and areas for refuse, recycling and cycle storage can be provided within the curtilage.

Design and Access Statement

- 3.11. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) sets out that: *“A Design and Access Statement is a concise report accompanying certain applications for planning permission and applications for listed building consent. They provide a framework for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users. ... The level of detail in a Design and Access Statement should be proportionate to the complexity of the application, but should not be long.”*

Scale and Amount

- 3.12. The proposed dwellings would be designed to incorporate a simplistic form and design that follows the local vernacular of Wrotham Road. The two dwellings to the west of the site will be of a similar height to that proposed in the previous outlined application under reference 20070988 and other surrounding dwellings; being 8.9 metres. The size of the two front dwellings to the west remain the same as the previous submission (reference 20220823), it is noted there were no concerns raised by the Officer in respect to the size and scale of the proposed front dwellings within this application. We would not therefore expect this to be a concern in this submission.
- 3.13. One of the concerns by the Council with the previous submission was the overall size and scale of the dwelling proposed in the rear garden of Northfield House. These comments have informed the design of the new proposal, with the rear dwelling now proposed to be single storey with a floor area of 108.3 square metres compared to the previous submission which proposed a two storey dwelling with a GIA of 149.5 square metres, reducing the overall bulk. The maximum height of the rear dwelling proposed is 5.37 metres which represents a large reduction compared to the previously submissions height of 6.6 metres.
- 3.14. Following the decision under reference 20220823 it was acknowledged within the Delegated Report that there were no concerns raised in respect of the density of the proposals.
- 3.15. It is considered the revised scheme addresses the Council's concerns in respect of the rear dwelling.

Appearance and character

- 3.16. The chosen amended design is intended to take cues from other residential developments in the area. The proposed dwelling design is based on the common stylings of dwellings within this urban context and would retain form with modern materials to ensure that each dwelling would not appear incongruous or visually harmful to the streets scene or wider character of the area.
- 3.17. The two dwellings to the west have been set slightly further back from Wrotham Road compared to the previous scheme, though still aligned to the houses to the North.. Notwithstanding that the matter of appearance remains a reserved matter, the design of the two street facing dwellings has been altered to reflect the adjacent brick-built semi-detached dwellings more closely. The large stone window heads and sills have been inspired from the surroundings and additional details implemented to add some traditional character with a contemporary styling. The design of the fenestration has been reconsidered to be more in keeping with the street scene.
- 3.18. The materials proposed would be of a traditional appearance with the use of London stock Brick with handmade red brick detailing with slate tiles for the four-bedroom dwellings. The proposed dwellings would remain comparable in design to other dwellings within the vicinity.

Layout

- 3.19. The two dwellings to the west of the site will follow the same design with a kitchen, living space, dining area and bathroom on the ground floor with four double bedrooms on the first floor, one with an ensuite and a shared additional bathroom.
- 3.20. It is noted within the previous submission (reference 20220823) the council had no concerns in respect of the layout of the proposed dwellings. We would therefore not expect this to be a reason for concern in this resubmission.

- 3.21. The third dwelling has been revised, removing the first floor and proposing a single storey dwelling to reduce its perceived bulk. The layout includes a kitchen, dining, living, study, utility area with two double bedrooms, one benefitting from an ensuite.

Landscape and ecological enhancements

- 3.22. The existing site boundaries are surrounded by existing hedgerows as well as a number of established trees. The proposal seeks to retain all existing hedgerows and trees. The extent of that being retained is shown in the Arboricultural report accompanying this application. As will be evident from this report, the proposed dwellings have been built to ensure that the existing trees and their corresponding root protection zones are protected.
- 3.23. The proposal will provide three separate garden areas which will include the addition of hedgerows as boundaries which will provide an overall enhancement to the area over mowed grass. These will provide good wildlife corridors between the proposed units.
- 3.24. Further planting has been proposed to the west of the site around the parking areas to provide a greater enhancement to the site compared to the previous submission under reference 20220823.
- 3.25. It is noted within the previous submission (reference 20220823) the council raised some concerns in relation to the loss of soft landscaping on the site however, the Officer stated *“as the site comprises an existing residential property within the rural settlement boundary of Meopham, the proposals unlikely to have any adverse impact on the wider landscape character of the area.”* The revised proposal has reduced the amount of hard standing proposed, particularly to the rear of the site, while ensuring adequate space is available for the turning of vehicles. It is noted this was not considered as a reason for refusal within the previous submission and we would therefore not expect this to be a reason for concern in this resubmission.

Vehicular access and parking

- 3.26. It is proposed the existing area of hardstanding to the west of the Northfield house will serve as the access and parking for the two dwellings adjacent to Wrotham Road. The dwelling located to the rear of the property will benefit from a new access running from the south west of the site to the south west with associated parking and turning space.
- 3.27. Due to the use of the existing access which now allows for occupiers to enter Wrotham Road in a forward gear and the fact the additional access that only serves a single dwelling is now large enough to permit long wheelbase panel vans to turn around as per the Officers comment and a consultee comment from Kent Fire & Rescue Service within the previous submission, it is not considered to have a material impact upon the highway safety.
- 3.28. The parking has been amended following the previous submission under reference 20220823. The proposal now provides sufficient space for on-site turning and maneuvering for the front dwellings, enabling vehicles to leave the site onto Wrotham Road in a forward gear. The turning space meets the required forecourt area established in the Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highway Planning Guidance adopted by Gravesham Borough Council of 7.5 metres in width and 8 metres in depth.
- 3.29. It is conceded the original submission proposed an inadequate turning area for the rear dwelling which fell short of the 6 metres turning space requirement. However, following a consultee response from Kents Fire & Rescue Service on the previous submission which highlighted the inadequacy of the proposed turning area, the Block Plan was subsequently amended to meet the requirements and sent to the Case Officer on the 25th August 2022. Despite this, the Council did not consider the revised plan as part of the proposal which would have addressed an outlined reason for refusal of application 20220823. As a result, we do not consider this to have been a valid reason to refuse the original submission. Respectfully therefore, we would not expect to see this feature as a reason for refusal in this current application.

4. Planning Policy

- 4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that “a *determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise*”.
- 4.2. For the purpose of this planning application, the Development Plan comprises the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2028, which was formally adopted in September 2014.
- 4.3. In addition to the development plan the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in 2021. The NPPF sets out the Government’s requirements and policies for planning in England and must be taken into account as a material planning consideration. Of particular importance is Annex 1 of the NPPF, which sets out the weight to be afforded to existing development plan policies. Paragraph 219 states that “*existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)*”.
- 4.1. This section of the statement highlights the relevant parts of the NPPF and Council’s development plan in respect of this application, along with the weight that should be afforded to the existing adopted policies.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (the ‘NPPF’) sets out the Government’s requirements and policies for planning in England and must be taken into account as a material planning consideration in the determination of any planning application, as detailed within paragraph 2.
- 4.3. The core national objective for the planning system is to achieve sustainable development, with the foundation of the NPPF being the presumption that sustainable development should go ahead without delay.

4.4. In all respects, the NPPF seeks to maximise opportunities for the supply of housing in appropriate locations, that can contribute towards housing supply, along with maintaining and enhancing the vitality of existing communities. The key objective of sustainable development is expressed within paragraph 7 to be “...meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

- **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;
- **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
- **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land.

4.5. Paragraph 10 advises that “*at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development*”, with Paragraph 11(b) reiterating that for plan-making this means that “*strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other land uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas*”, and with Paragraph 11 (c) and (d) stating that for decision-taking this means:

- c) *Approving development proposals that accord with the 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 planning 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 when taken as a whole.*

- 4.6. The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in 2014, and so in this regard the policies within the plan are considered to be broadly up to date. However, Footnote 8 in the NPPF confirms that out of date policies would include housing policies where the Council does not have a five year supply. Gravesham does not have a five-year supply and so saved and adopted policies would, for the purposes of the NPPF, be considered out of date for decision making purposes. This significantly limits the weight that can be afforded to them.
- 4.7. As the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, this application should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.8. In respect of housing supply, Paragraph 60 adds further that *“to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay”*. In this regard Paragraph 119 refers specifically to making effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, with Paragraph 120(d) stating that planning policies and decisions should *“promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained...”*
- 4.9. Paragraph 64 considers that *‘provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas (where policies may set out a lower threshold of 5 units or fewer).’* The scheme would adhere to this.
- 4.10. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to promote sustainable development in rural areas, with housing located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It notes that *“planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services”*.
- 4.11. Paragraph 94 states that the government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities.

- 4.12. Section 11 considers making effective use of land and states that *'policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses'*.
- 4.13. Specifically, paragraph 119 states that *"planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions"*.
- 4.14. Paragraph 123 requires decisions to reflect changes in the demand for land. They should be *"informed by regular reviews of both the land allocated for development in plans, and of land availability"*. Paragraph 121 states that *'Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.'* Paragraph 122 goes further stating *'Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:*
- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;'*
- 4.15. The NPPF identifies that good design is a key aspect to sustainable development (paragraph 126), with Paragraph 130 detailing that planning policies and decisions should ensure developments:
- a) Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;*
- 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;*
- d) Establish or maintain a strong sense of place;*
- e) Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; 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.*

- 4.16. The NPPF requires Local Planning Authority's to approach decision-taking in a positive way, encouraging decision-takers to approve applications for sustainable development where possible (paragraph 38).
- 4.17. It is obvious from this that it is the Government's clear intention that these core principles must underpin our entire planning system and therefore must be given weight in the consideration of site and applications such as proposed here.
- 4.18. Paragraph 195 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise.
- 4.19. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Gravesham Core Strategy

- 4.20. The Core Strategy sets out the Council's vision to guide the future pattern and form of development over the plan period until 2028.
- 4.21. Policy CS01 states when considering proposal, the council will take a positive approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development and will grant permission to proposal that accord with the development plan policies unless any adverse impacts would significantly outweigh the benefits.
- 4.22. Policy CS12 Green Infrastructure of the Local Plan Core Strategy states that the overall landscape character and valued landscapes within the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that proposals will take account of the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment.
- 4.23. Policy CS14 Housing type and Size requires the development to be considered in relation to housing type and size. New housing development is expected to take account of the existing character of the area in terms of dwelling type and size.

- 4.24. Policy CS19 Design & Development Principles Policy requires development to be visually attractive, fit for purpose and local distinctive. The local character will be conserved and enhanced and integrate well. The policy further requires new development to follow established guidance.
- 4.25. Policy P3 Parking Standards expect development to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with the Kent Country Council standards.

5. Analysis

Principle of development

- 5.1. Within the previous submission (reference 20220823) the application was considered acceptable in principle with the Officer stating *“There is no objection to the broad principle of residential development on the site.”*
- 5.2. Housing is a priority use for all Local Planning Authorities.
- 5.3. Core Strategy Policy supports making effective use of land within or close to the main built-up confines of towns and villages, especially previously developed land, consistent with maintaining their character. The Council will maintain and where appropriate enhance through the encouragement of growth, the effective network of villages that will continue to support the day to day needs of our rural communities, and which will accommodate some additional growth where this would be sustainable.
- 5.4. National policy generally encourages the provision of redevelopment in previously developed areas provided that it is designed to complement the character of surrounding developments, the design and layout make suitable residential accommodation, and it provides for garden and amenity space.
- 5.5. The proposal site is located within an existing built-up area and it is acknowledged that the Council does not have a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites at the present time. This means that policy restrictions on development in the countryside must be viewed at the present time as being ‘out-of-date’ (paragraph 11 of the NPPF) and that, as a consequence, planning applications fall to be considered in the context of paragraph 11 of the NPPF.
- 5.6. Planning Officers have further recognised the potential of erecting dwellings within the garden land in the locality.
- 5.7. A single storey dwelling house was permitted under planning application 20201100 in August 2021 for a dwelling within the garden area of Graveney Lodge, located within 50 metres to the south of Northfield House.
- 5.8. A two storey dwelling was also approved in the side garden of 5 Stanley Crescent under planning application 20160718.

- 5.9. It is considered these permissions granted by the Council demonstrate there is a principle for development within the garden area of existing dwellings.
- 5.10. In such cases housing applications are expected by paragraph 11 of the NPPF to be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless the harms would outweigh the benefits.
- 5.11. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. With Paragraphs 7-11 making it clear that the three objectives of sustainable development; social, economic and environmental being crucial to this. Given the Council's lack of five-year housing supply, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged. Although this is not a blanket green light for housing development, the planning balance is altered so that the benefits must exceed any perceived harm.
- 5.12. The National Planning Policy Framework places a greater emphasis on smaller housing development sites, with paragraph 65 requiring that local planning authorities should identify land to accommodate 10% of their housing requirement on sites that are no larger than 1 hectare. The proposal site is less than 1 hectare in size and would provide an opportunity for a small sensitive residential development within a sustainable location.

Visual impacts from the development

- 5.13. Section 12 of the NPPF identifies that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and that new development should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF confirms that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 5.14. In addition, paragraph 134 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.

- 5.15. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development. Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).
- 5.16. However, part b) of paragraph 134 states that in determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
- 5.17. With regards to visual impact, Policy CS19 states proposals for development will be permitted when a number of layout and design criteria are satisfied, including the requirement for new development to integrate well with the surrounding local area.
- 5.18. In terms of form and design, it should firstly be noted that the proposed dwellings would retain a low profile simple and modern design building which would appear in keeping with the character of the area, in turn promoting local distinctiveness. The buildings eaves and ridge height will be in keeping with neighbouring properties with the ridge height of the dwelling to the rear garden set lower than that of neighbouring buildings.
- 5.19. The two dwellings will also follow the residential layout of Wrotham Road conforming to the same street level as other dwellings in proximity to Wrotham Road. As previously outlined in section 5, the amended design of the front dwellings has improved their appearance to comply with Policy CS19.
- 5.20. Within the previous submission (reference 20170632) the Council determined by way of the bulk, height and scale of the rear dwelling it would be uncharacteristic of development in the local area. As outlined in section 5, the bulk, height and scale of the rear dwelling has been reduced to accommodate the Council's concerns.

- 5.21. Of particular relevance to the revised proposal is the Appeal Decision for application reference 20170632 at Graveney Lodge, located to the south of the application site which proposed the erection of a two storey dwelling house within the garden area of Graveney Lodge. The appeal was dismissed with the inspector stating, *“my concern with this proposal is not with its density but the fact that such a comparatively larger building, in a backland location, would lack space about it.”*
- 5.22. Subsequently following the dismissal, a revised application was submitted to Gravesham Borough Council under reference 20201100 for a single storey dwelling within the rear garden of Graveney Lodge. This application was permitted by the Council.
- 5.23. The revised submission now proposes a single storey rear dwelling which reflects the design, height and scale of the permitted rear dwelling proposed at Graveney Lodge, though with a slightly reduced height and scale. Therefore, the revised proposal by way of its bulk, height and scale should be considered acceptable.
- 5.24. The Council further found the subdivision of the plot into three subplots to accommodate the dwellings within the previous submission (reference 20220823) would be uncharacteristic of the area. The Delegated Report stated *“the plot being subdivided in the manner proposed, into two plots at the front and open at the rear, the garden sizes would be much reduced compared to the existing... This is compounded by the fact such a subdivision into three plots in the manner proposed would be out of character with the area.”*
- 5.25. In this case the Officer further made reference to the Graveney Lodge site to the south of the proposal, comparing it to the previous proposal at Northfield House; *“the plot and garden sizes of the existing and proposed dwelling remained generous and in keeping with the surrounding plot/garden sizes. This is not a comparable scheme to the current proposal, which proposed much smaller plots.”* As a result, the Officer concluded the subdivision of the plot, by way of their size was out of character for the area, contrary to Policy CS19.

- 5.26. It is firmly contested the plot sizes of the previous submission would be out of character or cause harm to the local area. There is no national or local policy which restricts the subdivision of a plot assuming the minimum space standards for garden amenity areas and living space are met. It was recognised by the Council in the previous submission that the dwellings and associated garden areas within the previous submission exceeded the minimum standard required by National Space Standards. As a result, the only planning considerations is whether the size of the plots themselves would be out of character for the area.

The garden plots by way of their shape and size would reflect the local character. It is worth noting the original permission for Graveney Lodge granted permission for a rear property with a 202 square metre overall footprint and a 666 square metre garden plot. In comparison, the current proposal is for a 125 square metre dwelling with a 489.4 square metre plot. Therefore, the current submission proposes a garden area 3.9 x the size of the footprint of the rear dwelling. In comparison, Graveney Lodge permitted a garden area 3.3 x the footprint of the rear dwelling. Therefore, the proposal represents a garden plot that by comparison, is larger in respect to the dwellings size while also comparable to Graveney Lodge.

- 5.27. While the Officer within the previous submission compared the proposed schemes garden size to that of Graveney Lodge, it is clear the proposed size of the plots would be comparable to others in the locality. The current scheme would result in the front dwellings having a garden area of 217 square metres and 284 square metres, with the rear dwelling having a garden area of 489 square metres. As shown below, the frontage dwellings garden area will be comparable in both size and shape of other dwellings along Wrotham Road with the rear dwellings area comparable in size to plots to the north along Oakmead Road.



Figure 5 - garden plot sizes of properties north of Northfield House, courtesy of Google Earth

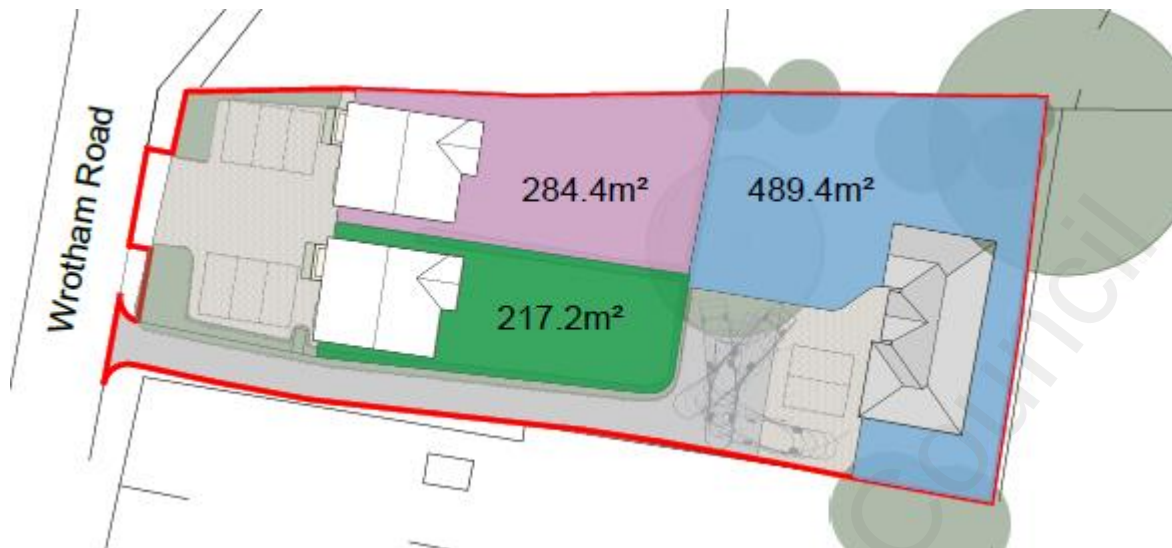


Figure 6 – Garden plot sizes of proposal

- 5.28. Therefore, the proposed gardens by way of their shape and size would reflect the local character of surrounding development in this part of Meopham, integrating well into the locality.
- 5.29. It is clear from the assessment above that the revised proposal would result in an acceptable form of development. The proposal would cause no harm to the character of the landscape in compliance with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Residential impacts

- 5.30. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy requires amongst other things that new development safeguards the amenity of its occupants and neighbouring properties in respect of privacy, daylight and sunlight.
- 5.31. The two dwellings located to the west of the site will be incorporating a similar design to that of the previous permission under reference 20070988 with a similar height and scale to ensure there are no overbearing or amenity issues compared to the previous scheme. The side elevations of both dwellings will only incorporate two windows which are not considered to result in any undue loss in privacy, particular as Northfield house currently has windows on both side elevations.

- 5.32. It is further noticed the houses along Wrotham Road are west facing and thus the addition of two dwellings to the south / north of neighbouring properties will not have an undue impact on daylight. The proposal dwellings would also grade with the existing dwellings along Wrotham Road following the existing street scene.
- 5.33. The dwelling to the rear of the property has been designed to have a minimal impact on adjacent residential amenity. The ridge height is set below 5.4 metres and its distance and position away from neighbouring properties further ensures amenity is protected. The proposed site also offers natural screening as the building is situated near larger trees and near the sufficient boundary planting of the north, south and east boundaries of the wider site. In this regard, it is considered this proposal would have no further undue impact on the neighbouring properties in respect of privacy, daylight or sunlight than that of the previous permission.
- 5.34. It is noted within the previous submission (reference 20220823) the council had no concerns in respect of the proposals impacts on surrounding residential properties. We would therefore expect this to be a reason for concern in this resubmission.

Living conditions for future occupiers

- 5.35. Policy CS14 requires development to be considered in relation to house type and size. The site lies within an established residential area and the development equates well with the occupancy ratios surrounding the site, allowing each dwelling to provide good family accommodation with access immediate access to Wrotham Road.
- 5.36. In terms of future occupiers, the proposed dwelling would incorporate the provision of a spacious living and dining area with sufficient amenity space available within the site. There is ample available space to fulfil the amenity requirements of the applicants long into the future. The curtilage proposed would remain comparable with other residential curtilages within the vicinity.

- 5.37. The development would provide acceptable living conditions for its occupiers exceeding the national living space standards. The two dwellings to the west will have a total GIA of 152.2sqm each exceeding the minimum of 124 sqm for a 4 bedroom 8 person dwelling. The dwelling to the rear of the existing garden will have a GIA of 149.5sqm exceeding the minimum of 102sqm for a 3 bedroom 6 person dwelling.
- 5.38. There would therefore be no conflict with Policy within the Local Plan because acceptable levels of privacy would be available to the development's occupiers.
- 5.39. It is noted within the previous submission (reference 20220823) the council had no concerns in respect of the amenities of existing and future occupiers. We would therefore not expect this to be a reason for concern in this resubmission.

Highways

- 5.40. Paragraph 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework says decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people.
- 5.41. With consideration to policies P3 and T1, Car parking is provided on site to Kent County Council (Highway) standards.
- 5.42. The provision of three additional dwellings at the site would generate low traffic numbers and would not significantly affect the local highway network. The Development includes separate parking areas within the layout that would ensure that vehicles can enter and exit in forward gear.
- 5.43. In terms of parking, as can be seen on the proposed layout plans, there is ample space at the plot to three parking space for each dwelling with the hardstanding areas enabling the turning of vehicle onto Wrotham Road in a forward gear as per the requirements of Planning Guidance Not 6 Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways.
- 5.44. The proposal for three dwellings would not result in any significant changes to traffic volumes entering and existing the site to and from the highway. It is noted this was not a concern within the previous submission and therefore we would expect this to be a reason for concern in this resubmission.

- 5.45. The proposed development would not amount to a significant material increase in traffic numbers, nor to any severe residual cumulative impacts. As such, there would be no requirement for this application to be accompanied by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment, in accordance with Paragraph 109 of the NPPF. As was recognised in the previous application, the noise associated with the new access would not amount to a level that would be harmful to living conditions of the residents of the area.

Landscaping

- 5.46. Paragraph 179 of the Framework identifies that, where possible, developments should *'promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.'* Due to the topography of the locality and the presence of existing mature boundary planting which is to be retained, the proposal is not considered to have any significant impact upon the overall character of the area and it would not result in the loss of any biodiversity features.
- 5.47. Nonetheless, any subsequent scheme would incorporate the provision of additional planting should the Council consider that necessary to help integrate the development within the street scene.
- 5.48. The previous application referenced that a tree survey and method statement should have been submitted to assess the developments impact on trees and shrubs at the site and should also be used to inform the development. It is conceded both a method statement and survey were not submitted as part of the original proposal. However, both were sent to the council on the 25th August, prior to determination. The previous submitted proposal under reference 20220823 and the revised proposal have been designed to protect the existing vegetation and trees on the site and ensure all trees and vegetation with the exception of unremarkable category C trees are retained. It was further recognised by the Case Officer within the Delegated Report that *"Ecological enhancements should also be incorporated into the development. These matters could also be secured by condition"* Therefore, it is expected if further ecological enhancements are considered to be required, this could be conditioned and should not be a reason for refusal.

Flood risk

- 5.49. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF advises that inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at high risk.
- 5.50. The site is located in flood zone 1 as shown in Figure 6 and therefore is at a low risk from surface water flooding, The proposed development will have no detrimental effect on offsite flood risk.

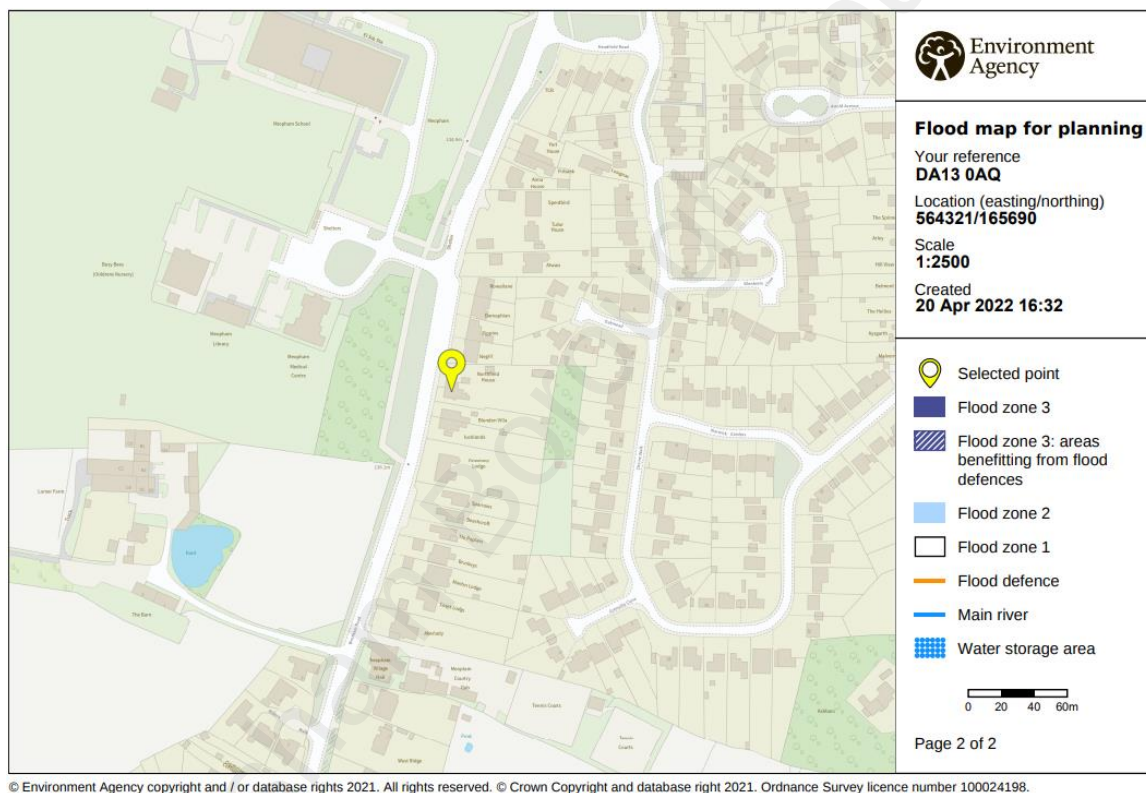


Figure 6 - Extract from Environment Agency's flood risk map

- 5.51. Within application 20220823, the council did not have any concerns in respect of flood risk and we would not therefore expect this to be of concern in this case.

Drainage

- 5.52. The site is not major development so it is not mandatory to provide SUDS, however the application form at part 12 sets out that the development will utilise a sustainable drainage system with soakaways proposed.

- 5.53. There are extensive areas of unsurfaced green spaces within the site.
- 5.54. Foul Drainage will be dealt with through the main sewer, as is the situation with the current house proposed for demolition.
- 5.55. Within application 20220823 the council did not have any concerns in respect of drainage matters and we would not therefore expect this to be of concern in this case.

Locational Sustainability

- 5.56. Policy CS01 states when considering proposal, the Council will take a positive approach to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.57. The application site lies in Meopham which is categorised as a rural settlement within the third tier of the settlement hierarchy in terms of suitable for sustainable development according to the adopted Core Strategy. The village is predominantly residential in character and there are a number of shops, services and employment opportunities provided in the village centre serving the local community. This includes a village hall, two churches, convenience store, GP Surgery and services, primary and senior schools. Meopham is served by a regular bus service providing access to Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Gravesend.
- 5.58. The site's location within Meopham and access to transport and other services will enable future occupiers to access a variety of sustainable transport options and basic services ensure that they are not totally reliant on private vehicles, thus having the potential to mitigate against carbon emissions and benefit the wider environment.
- 5.59. Due to the location of the site close to other existing residences, buildings and facilities it is not considered that the site is isolated or within an unsustainable location.
- 5.60. It is therefore submitted that this proposal should be considered in respect of Government advice, as indicated in Paragraphs 10 & 11 of the NPPF, with "*a presumption in favour of sustainable development*".

- 5.61. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF details the three overarching objectives of sustainable development as an economic objective; a social objective, and an environmental objective.
- 5.62. The council did not have any concerns in respect to the previous submission under reference 20220823 regarding the location of the development, recognising the proposal in principle was acceptable.

Economic benefits

- 5.63. Paragraph 8 (a) of the NPPF is clear that the economic role of sustainable development means *“to help to 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”*.
- 5.64. Whilst Paragraph 80 of the NPPF places weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity, it does not specifically preclude proposals for residential use, where appropriate.
- 5.65. The erection of three residential dwellings will support businesses in the short term through the need for local trades people and suppliers to carry out the work required. In the mid to long term there will be requirements for the day-to-day provision for families, which are likely to be felt at a local level.
- 5.66. The council did not have any concerns in respect to the previous submission under reference 20220823 regarding the economic benefits of the development, recognising the proposal in principle was acceptable.

Social benefits

- 5.67. National planning policy is clear at Paragraph 8 that the social role of sustainable development means *“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...”*.
- 5.68. Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework adds further that, *“to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities”*.
- 5.69. This proposal will provide three additional residential properties at the time of spiraling need for housing nationally and within Gravesham, providing a good level of accommodation and amenity space in accordance with national space standards.
- 5.70. The proposed layout will also offer a high-quality amenity space and parking provision while being located close to other residential properties.
- 5.71. The council did not have any concerns in respect to the previous submission under reference 20220823 regarding the social benefits of the development, recognising the proposal in principle was acceptable.

Environmental benefits

- 5.72. The environmental role of sustainability is recognised as meaning *“to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and adapting to climate change”*.
- 5.73. Careful consideration has been given to the design of the three dwellings to ensure the proposals will provide a layout and design consistent with the character of the surrounding area. It is therefore submitted that the proposed development could be carried out in a manner which integrates successfully into this location, retaining the character of the area.

- 5.74. Enhancements to the site could also be carried out through landscaping improvements as indicated on the block plan, including the addition of native boundary hedging between the properties which would provide greater ecological enhancement compared to grass. Furthermore, all existing hedgerows and trees are to be retained.
- 5.75. In addition, given the sustainability of the location and as the proposal can be designed in a way which ensures there would not be any significant visual impact, there is not known to be any environmental disadvantages which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the overall benefits.
- 5.76. In light of the above it is submitted that this proposal would make a valuable contribution to all three pillars of sustainable development.
- 5.77. Within the previous submission the council considered matters of environmental benefits could be secured by condition through the protection of trees (habitats) and if necessary, further environmental enhancements could be secured by condition.

Ecology

- 5.78. KB Ecology was commissioned to undertake a bat survey, baseline ecological survey and preliminary ecological appraisal with regards to development at Northfield House. As seen with the accompanying reports, the site was considered to have a low suitability for roosting bats and no bats were seen emerging from the building during the survey. The survey found the site unlikely to house amphibians, reptiles, and birds.
- 5.79. No concern was raised relating to the matters of ecology in application with the council considering matters of ecology could be secured by condition including the protection of trees (habitats) and the incorporation of ecological enhancements.

Arboriculture survey

- 5.80. Cantia was commissioned to undertake an Arboriculture survey with regards to development at Northfield House. The accompanying plans show the existing trees and hedges on the site and the Root Protection Area of each tree.

- 5.81. The revised proposal has been designed to limit the impact on surrounding vegetation with only the removal of two Category C groups of small trees and saplings required, referenced within the report as ‘unremarkable specimens.’ It is acknowledged that some mitigation measures will be required to protect the large Maple in the centre of the site but this can be achieved through a specialized no-dig design for the rear dwellings turning area and pile foundation for the rear dwelling which can be conditioned. As referenced within the arboricultural survey report *“So long as the precautionary and protective measures outlined within this report are strictly observed and adhered to then the proposed development will have neutral impact upon trees marked for retention.”*
- 5.82. It is noted the previous submission was not refused on arboricultural grounds. We would not therefore expect this to feature as a reason for concern in this submission.

Recycling and Refuse

- 5.83. There is adequate storage for waste and recycling provided at the front of each property. Application 20220823 did not raise any concern on this matter in the refusal of application and as a result we would not therefore expect it to feature as a reason for refusal in this submission.

Nature Conservation and landscape

- 5.84. Following the third reasons for refusal for submission 20220823, a strategic mitigation contribution of £551.76 (£275.88 per dwelling) will be made during the application process following assurance of a positive decision to provide mitigation for Bird Wise as required for all new development proposing one or more dwellings within 6km of an SPA or Ramsar Site.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. It is considered that the proposed development would represent sustainable development for which there is a presumption in favour, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The principle of development is accepted.
- 6.2. This resubmission demonstrates that the site could accommodate a three dwellinghouses in replacement of Northfield house comfortably and would not have a greater impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents or be detrimental to the character of the area.
- 6.3. Since the refusal of application 20220823 this revised proposal has:
- Provided sufficient parking and turning areas for the front two dwellings and rear dwelling.
 - Reduced the bulk, size and height of the rear proposal, reducing the floor area by 32% and the maximum height of the dwelling from 6.6 metres to 5.37 metres.
 - Affirmed the garden areas and plots proposed integrate well into the surrounding area through their size and shape and therefore reflect the local character.
 - Amended the design of the frontage dwellings to reflect the appearance and design of the locality. The outline application is also made with appearance being a reserved matter.
- 6.4. Stated the applicants will to make a SAMMS payment towards the mitigation of wintering birds within the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Sites during the course of the application. It is suggested that any reasonable concerns can be overcome via the imposition of appropriate conditions.
- 6.5. As such, we respectfully submit that this application should be considered favourably.