



Thursday, 29 August 2024

Objection to Application 20240701

Site Address: Cobb Tree Court, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0AU

Description: Erection of garden building to replace existing timber shed.

Introduction:

This objection letter relates to application 20240701, which is a householder planning application for the erection of a garden building at Cobb Tree Court, Wrotham Road, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0AU.

The site sits within the Meopham Green Conservation Area.

Relevant Planning Policy:

National Planning Policy:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Design Guide (NDG)

Local Planning Policy:

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies Map (2014)

Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) – saved Policies

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

Residential Layout Guidelines SPG2

Design for Gravesham - Design Code SPD

Householder Extensions / Alterations Design Guide SPD

Meopham Green Rural Conservation Area Appraisal

Discussion of Scheme:

Design, Visual Amenity and Heritage:

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure that all developments will add to the overall quality of the area over the lifetime of the development, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, establish and 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, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of

development. Paragraph 139 of the NPPF goes on to state that development that is not well designed should be refused.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that achieving good design “is about creating places, buildings, or places that work well for everyone, look good, and will adapt to the needs of future generations.”

Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

Paragraph 202 develops upon this further, noting that where a proposed development leads to substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 sets out that new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should conserve and enhance the character of the built environment and take account of the scale, height, building lines and other architectural features of buildings. Account should also be taken of strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value which contribute to local character and sense of place.

The application site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area (LCA) and the Meopham Green Conservation Area. As such, Policies CS12 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Saved Policy TC3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) are relevant. These policies set out that overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored, and enhanced and place a high priority on the preservation, protection and enhancement of conservation areas.

The Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) outlines that outbuildings should be subordinate in scale to the existing dwelling and to the plot. In assessing proposals, the Council will consider factors such as the scale, height, proximity to boundaries, roof design, finishing materials and prominence in the street scene or rear garden environment. It further outlines that outbuildings should not detract from the character of the area.

Cobb Tree Court was originally permitted as a new dwelling under application 20140592. This proposal seeks to demolish an existing shed and erect a significant outbuilding within its residential curtilage. The proposal would also require the removal of a significant number of trees which add greatly to the amenity of the surrounding area.

The proposed outbuilding would be a substantial structure, measuring 23m in width and 4.7m in depth, resulting in a floorspace of approximately 108sqm. It would measure 2.6m to the eaves, and 4m to the ridge. The resulting building would be extremely large in terms of bulk and massing, taking up a large proportion of the garden area, upon land which currently makes a positive contribution to the open, spacious, and verdant setting of the conservation area. While the building would be single storey in height, it would nonetheless be long and so would not be seen within the immediate context as a subservient and sympathetic addition in this garden setting. Although it is located to the rear of the property, the character of the conservation area derives from the buildings, layout, and surrounding spaces as a whole, regardless of whether particular elements are open to public view. Its significance does not therefore rely only on the elements that can readily be seen.

Furthermore, the proposal would use modern materials and large sections of glazing, which, given its size, would make the proposal appear as a discordant and alien feature within the locality, leading to visual harm.

These impact would be intensified by the loss of the trees on the site, which are protected by virtue of their conservation area setting; extensive tree planting and landscaping is appreciated in most parts of the conservation area; trees, landscaping and a sense of openness provide a complementary and positive setting to the built form in the conservation area.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 requires special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

It is considered that the proposal, due to its siting, bulk, massing, materials, and loss of trees would result in both general visual harms, and specific, less than substantial harm to the conservation area. This harm is not outweighed by any identified public benefits of the proposal. The proposal would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA and therefore it would conflict with the design and conservation requirements of local planning policy, or the requirements of the NPPF. As such, the application should be refused.

Residential Amenity:

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF sets out six criteria against which planning decisions should meet to deliver well-designed places. This includes criteria (f), which requires development to “create places ... with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.”

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that achieving good design “is about creating places, buildings, or places that work well for everyone, look good, and will adapt to the needs of future generations.”

Policy CS19 states that new development will be located, designed, and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including daylight and sunlight of neighbouring properties.

The Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) states that outbuildings should not have an adverse impact on the amenity of the surrounding properties in terms of overlooking/overshadowing of existing properties.

The proposal would sit within extremely proximity of the rear boundaries of the properties along Cricketers Drive, which sit to the northwest of the site. It would extend significantly above the fence line, resulting in the total enclosure of these rear garden boundaries with 4m tall built development, and the loss of the attractive trees on the boundary. This enclosure of the rear garden boundaries of these properties would result in significant overbearing impacts and feelings of enclosure, as well as unacceptable loss of light and overshadowing of the rear garden areas to the detriment of the residential amenity of these properties.

Furthermore, the proximity of the proposed building to the rear windows of these properties would result in a significant and unacceptable loss of outlook, causing further harm to the residential amenity of the occupiers of these dwellings.

There are also concerns relating to the overlooking impacts that would result from the loss of trees on the garden boundary; due to the topography of the site, Cobb Tree Court sits significantly higher than the dwellings along Cricketers Drive, with the trees offering significant amounts of privacy to the occupants; the removal of these trees would result in clear, raised, uninterrupted views into

both the rear garden areas, and rear windows of the properties along Cricketers Drive, causing an unacceptable loss of privacy for their residents.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would result in unacceptable impacts on the residential amenity of the dwellings along Cricketers Drive, through overbearingness and enclosure, loss of outlook, overshadowing and loss of light, and overlooking and loss of privacy. The application fails to comply with Policy CS19, the requirements of the Householder Design Guide, and the relevant provisions of the NPPF, and the application should be refused.

Trees:

Paragraph 136 of the NPPF states that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The application site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area (LCA) and the Meopham Green Conservation Area. As such, Policies CS12 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Saved Policy TC3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) are relevant. These policies set out that overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored, and enhanced and place a high priority on the preservation, protection and enhancement of conservation areas.

The provided plans show the loss of a significant number of trees onsite, which are protected due to their siting within the conservation area. These trees are significant and attractive and offer significant amounts of amenity to the surrounding area. The Meopham Conservation Area appraisal notes that mature trees within the Green make important contributions to its character.

The total loss of these trees should be resisted; the removal of the trees would fail to accord with Conservation Area principles, and would further harm the rural, open and verdant character of the locality, resulting in an urbanising effect and nullifying the significant positive contribution that the trees have on the character and appearance of the area as set out above.

Although a small amount of token replacement planting is proposed, this is minor, sitting between the host dwelling and the outbuilding, and would not have sufficient amenity value either at implementation or for a great many years sufficient to outweigh the harm caused by the loss of the existing trees on the site.

It should also be noted that no arboricultural reports have been submitted alongside this application.

The loss of the protected trees would have an unacceptable effect on the character of the area, which would be contrary to the requirements of Local Planning Policy and the requirements of the NPPF; as such, the application should be refused.

Conclusion:

It is considered that the proposal would result in general visual impacts, and specific heritage impacts on the designated conservation area. Furthermore, the proposal would result in significant unacceptable impacts on the residential amenity of the occupiers of dwellings to the rear of the site. It is also considered that the total loss of the attractive, large trees would be unacceptable. As such, the application should be refused.