

Shorne Parish Council

————— Borough of Gravesham —————

Clerk & Responsible Officer
Shorne Village Hall
The Street

Nr Gravesend
Kent DA12 3EA
E-mail: clerk@shorneparishcouncil.org



17th January 2025

Application ref 20241166

Shorne Mead Pear Tree Lane Shorne Gravesend Kent DA12 3JT

Demolition of existing dwelling, garage and outbuilding. Erection of a self-build detached two storey dwelling with submersed basement for parking and entertainment facilities.

This property and site has a long and complicated recent planning history. The present proposal is to demolish and replace the existing house, effectively a re-application further to the refusal of Application ref 20230514, which was also Dismissed at Appeal.

We note that there has been pre-application discussion and a site visit to which we were not party so do not know what GBC advised the applicant except as stated on page 13 of the Design and Access statement.

There are some improvements to the design, which is now of a more traditional appearance from the roadway however the Parish Council still has considerable concerns, as follows:

Application issues:

- The application is referred to as “self-build” but we do not consider that the proposal meets self-build criteria, being merely replacement of an existing dwelling, or differs from other property alterations/rebuilds where the design is naturally specified by the owner.
- The red line boundary is incorrectly represented in all the submitted plans, documents and reports as it does not encompass the whole of the site in the ownership of the applicant.
- The application refers to a “submersed basement” (hopefully not) but, as with the previous application, the description as basement is incorrect as the lower ground floor becomes ground level at the rear.
- A “tree-house” is noted on various of the plans, located close to the western boundary at the bottom of the site. This could require planning permission.
- Drawing 3316-020 and others show a circular structure at the rear of the upper terrace (also seen on page 27 of the Design and Access statement) that would interrupt the line of the “green wall”, this needs clarification as it does not match the “basement” design and is not shown on elevation plans.

- There are labelling discrepancies throughout with proposed features labelled to be existing, for example in plan 3316-029.

Size issues:

- The proposed house is much greater in floor area than the existing dwelling (315sqm from the applicant's figures), having a proposed total gross floor area of 477sqm (applicant's figure), but that figure does not include the basement of approximately 975sqm.
- The proposed dwelling has greater mass than the existing dwelling, especially when viewed from the sides.
- The ridge height of the proposed house is shown on plan 3316-023 to be higher than the tallest part of the existing house. As the roadway falls away here the ridge should instead be at an average between the neighbouring houses.
- The proposed property will have a very dominating appearance to the properties on either side which are at lower ground levels.

Design issues:

- Even if the lower ground floor (not a basement) is disguised with green walling, the house will still be three floors at the back, will require considerable land excavation and will have impact on the landscape and same-height views, and particularly on the amenity of neighbouring dwellings.
- For the "basement"/lower ground floor:
 - None of the areas have any natural light, which does not provide a good environment for even occasional use. Flat, walk-on, glazed ceiling panels could be considered.
 - There are no fire escape routes, which is a safety concern for users, especially as flammable materials will be stored in the garage.
 - The subterranean parking area is electro-mechanically dependent as there is no other vehicular access. This could lead to vehicles being trapped underground and/or additional pressure on open parking on the site.
- The car lift is shown on the cover of the Design and Access statement and is noted to have a fixed above ground structure and to be in front of the building line.
- Being much deeper than the existing house, the first floor balcony could lead to overlooking of private amenity areas of neighbouring properties.
- First floor side windows should be of permanently obscured glass and only openable above 2m height.
- No chimney is shown for the lounge fireplace.

Engineering works:

- As shown on plan 3316-029 the proposal includes very considerable engineering and excavation works, further carving away the original topography of the site. We question whether this is appropriate in the Green Belt and wooded Shorne Woodlands landscape area, and immediately adjacent to the Court Woods SSSI.
- The additional terracing presently proposed extends much further back from the house than currently.
- It is unclear whether the ground level of the house will be raised above that existing.

- No spoil should be re-deposited on the site and particularly not into the Court Woods SSSI.
- There is a considerable increase in hardstanding and other hard surfaces around the proposed house which could reduce permeability (especially with the basement underneath) and increase water runoff. Rainwater must be prevented from running off onto the roadway.
- The materials to be used for the “lower terrace” require clarification (note pictured as grassed on page 27 of the Design and Access statement.)

Environmental issues:

- We note the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report but the site has already been largely destroyed by the massive landscaping activities previously undertaken by the applicant. The photographs on page 25 detail the original highly vegetated situation.
- The Arboricultural report faces the same problem.

Landscaping and lighting:

- Although the Design and Access statement tries to say otherwise, it is our understanding that Application ref 20221105 (Approval of condition 3(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi) and (vii) attached to planning permission reference number 20220543 relating to details of landscaping to new gabion basket constructed walls) is still outstanding. The Condition has not been satisfied as it requires the provision of full details of the proposed plantings on both side boundaries and on the gabioned slope as a whole (only the northern boundary was previously submitted). The plans should include trees/larger bushes so as to conceal and soften the appearance of the extensive gabion walls. This omission needs to be addressed prior to the granting of any further permissions and otherwise further enforcement action should be taken in order to achieve compliance.
- A detailed landscaping and planting plan should also be required and provided in connection with the present planning application, for the area around the house and any new terracing of the upper slope.
- A detailed exterior lighting plan is needed defining the amount and type of exterior lighting on the whole site, which should be minimal, including how it is directed and to be controlled.

Other points:

- EV charging points, a bin store and cycle storage need to be added and shown on the plans.
- Sewerage arrangements require clarification.
- A Condition should be included that prevents the basement/lower ground floor from being opened up to the outside at the rear wall, it should perpetually remain windowless.
- Materials to be used require more detail, including of the green wall, which should be Conditioned to be permanent. A planted earth bank might be preferable as less visually intrusive.
- Screening plantings to Pear Tree Lane must be permanent by Condition.
- Permitted development rights should be withdrawn for the whole site due to the great increase in built form that has taken place on the site
- We mention again that there is a cave structure with a chimney that has been built into the rear garden slope but is not shown clearly on the plans. The applicant should be reminded that this and the other outbuildings on the property, including the garage building, are not residential in terms of being permitted to be used as living accommodation.