



Delegated Report

Application No: 20210705

Location: Downhill, Heron Hill Lane, Meopham DA13 0DT

Description: Conversion of basement area with external door and internal staircase access for ancillary residential purposes (games room, cinema room).

Applicant: Mr John Mason

Site Visit Date: Desktop

Submitted Documents/Plans

The application comprises the following documents and plans:

Application form received 1 June 2021.
Planning Statement received 1 June 2021.
OS Plan received 1 June 2021.
Block Plan received 1 June 2021.
Drawing no. 04 rev A (south elevation) received 25 August 2021.
Drawing no. 04 rev A (north elevation) received 25 August 2021.
Drawing no. 04 rev A (west elevation) received 25 August 2021.
Drawing no. 04 rev A (basement floor plan) received 31 August 2021.
Drawing no. 04 rev A (existing basement floor plan) received 6 September 2021.

Relevant Planning History

20060384	Relocation of detached double garage previously granted planning permission under reference GR/1999/189.	PER	03.07.2006
19990189	Erection of detached dwelling with rooms in the roof space and erection of detached double garage at front.	PER	05.05.1999
19920005	Erection of detached bungalow.	REF	10.06.1992

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

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

Paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) sets out those 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 The review 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 a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these saved policies via the emerging Local Plan.

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994):

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- C13 – Policy for Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside

Other material considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 - Residential Layout Guidelines (2020)
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)
- Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Meopham Parish Council

No objection.

Public Rights of Way Officer

Public Rights of Way NS285 runs to the north of the site and may be affected by the application and I therefore enclose a copy of the Public Rights of Way network map showing the definitive line of this path for your information.

It is important to advise the applicants that a public right of way must not be stopped up, diverted, obstructed or the surface disturbed and there must be no encroachment on the current width, at any time now or in future. This includes any building materials or waste generated during any of the construction phases. Please note that no furniture or fixtures may be erected on or across Public Rights of Way without the express consent of the Highways Authority.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by site notice and individual letters to two neighbouring properties. No letters of representation have been received.

Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of basement area with external door and internal staircase access for ancillary residential purposes (games room, cinema room).

Character and Appearance

The application site is a detached chalet bungalow with a detached garage to the east. The land slopes down significantly to the north. The property is located within the Green Belt, within an area designated as a local wildlife site and within the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area.

The property already has a void under the house due to the presence of dry chalky clay underneath the house when it was built. It was constructed using a raft foundation which formed the existing void. As the works are underground there will be no detrimental impact to the surrounding landscape character.

Green Belt

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Para. 147 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 states that 'Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'

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

Para. 149 states 'A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether

redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.'

In this case, the proposal is considered an extension or alteration of a building. This is acceptable within the Green Belt providing it does not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. As the void already exists the conversion of this to a basement is not considered to materially alter the size of the building and therefore will not have an impact on the Green Belt or the openness thereof.

Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994 states that extensions to dwellings in the countryside will be considered on their merits and lists a number of criteria. One of which is that there will be an overall limit of 1/3 of the gross floor area of the original dwelling. The basement/void within the building was built when the property was built. Whilst it was not shown on the plans in 1999 it has been in existence for more than four years and is original. The internal stairs already exist. The proposal to use this area formally as a games room or cinema room does not technically increase the floor area. The basement is not being extended or excavated and therefore no issues arise in terms of the appearance, massing, scale, form or materials. On this basis, the proposal meets the criteria of this Policy and para. 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

The insertion of an external door or conversion of an existing space will have no detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt and therefore no objections are raised.

In terms of the impact on the character and appearance of the area and surrounding landscape character and wildlife site, the basement/void already exists and is not being extended. The rooms will not be bedrooms and therefore the number of people living at the property is unlikely to increase. The external door will face onto the existing garage and will not be readily visible. The proposal therefore accords with Policies CS12, CS19 and CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, para. 130 and 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The proposal will not involve the creation of any habitable rooms and therefore the lack of windows and subsequently daylight is not of concern. No additional volume is being added to the property and therefore the garden area is also not being altered. If this space was to be used as a bedroom concerns would be raised with regards to satisfactory levels of amenity, in particular, outlook and daylight, therefore a condition is recommended to ensure this remains an ancillary room.

Neighbouring Amenity

The proposed basement will not add any volume to the built form of the property and the only external change will be a door facing onto the garage. The proposal therefore will have no detrimental impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties.

The proposed development therefore accords with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and para. 130f of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Parking and Highways

The proposal will not result in any additional bedrooms or any alteration to the provision of off road

parking and therefore no objections are raised on highways grounds.

Conclusion

The proposed conversion of the void under the house to basement will have no detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area, the landscape character or openness of the Green Belt. It will have no detrimental impact on the amenities of the future occupiers, neighbouring dwellings or parking or highway safety and therefore accords with the abovementioned Policies and is recommended for approval.

Recommendation:

Permit

See draft Decision

Case Officer: AW	Team Leader: Richard Hart
Signed: 	Signed: <i>R Hart</i>
Dated: 18 October 2021.	Dated: 19 th October 2021