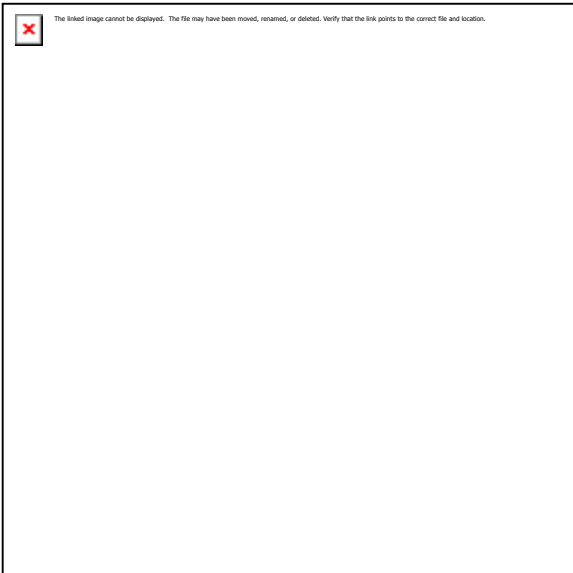




Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20211426

Location: Land West Of Long Acre Rhododendron Avenue Meopham Gravesend

Description: Erection of a mobile home with hardstanding, new retaining wall and lay gravel to existing access.

Applicant: Mrs Dawn Beale

Site Visit Date: 22nd April 2022

Submitted Documents/Plans

Planning Application Form;
Proposed Site Plan;
Proposed Floor Plan;
Drawing No. 21-1853 D01 Rev 0 – Existing and Proposed Block Plans and Site Location Plan;
Drawing No. 21-1853 D02 Rev 1 – Proposed Landscape Plan;
Drawing No. 21-1853 D03 Rev 1 – Proposed South Elevation;
Drawing No. 21-1853 D04 Rev 1 – Proposed West and East Elevations;
Drawing No. 21-1853 D05 Rev 1 – Proposed North Elevation; and
Mobile Home Layout.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
19790275	Outline application for the erection of two detached four bedroom dwellings	Refused	05.04.1979

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS15 – Housing Density
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 – Making effective use of land
- 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006); and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Meopham Parish Council

The Parish Council objects to this application on the grounds of inappropriate development in the Greenbelt.

KCC – Public Rights of Way & Access Service

Public Rights of Way S293 lies to the west of the site and may be affected by the application.

KCC – Heritage Conservation (E & W)

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, I consider it unlikely that these proposals, immediately adjacent to the existing dwelling, would have a significant below-ground archaeological impact and have no further comments to make in this case.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by site notice and individual letters to 6 neighbouring properties, with an overall expiry date of 13th May 2022. No letters of representation have been received.

Officer's Analysis

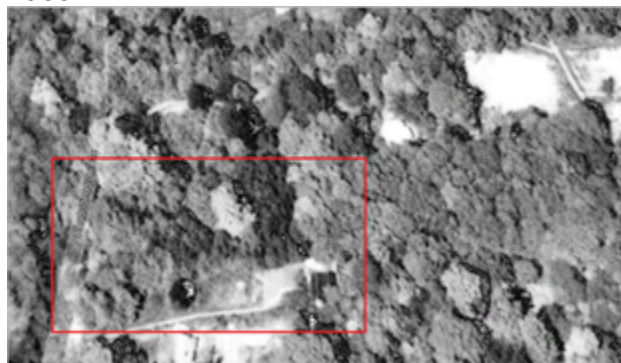
Procedural Matters

The submission included historic planning permission (Ref. TH/6/62/326) and Title Deed relating to the application site. Whilst the site address is Rhododendron Avenue, Culverstone Estate, Meopham is within the vicinity of the application site, there was no accompany plan to show to which site this permission relates.

The only permission relating to the application site is for the *erection of a chalet* in which was given permission in 1952 (19520150). It is unclear from the information available if this permission relates specifically to the site and if it was implemented.

Looking at the following satellite images, the site appears to have remained vacant and there does not appear to have been a chalet or mobile home within the site.

1960



1990



2003



2007



2013



2015



2017



2020



The application that has been submitted will be assessed against current local and national planning policies.

For the avoidance of doubt there is no existing residential use on the site.

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a mobile home with hardstanding, new retaining wall and lay gravel to existing access. The building would measure 3.65m wide, 10.69m in length and 3.49m in height from the natural ground level to the ridge. The mobile home would be elevated on stilts by 620mm. The hardstanding would measure 9.1m by 12.1m. There would also be access steps located to the east with an 'L' shape raised deck which would project 1.5m from the east of the building and 980mm from the south. A new 3m high gabion wall would be to the east that would span the full width from the existing driveway to the southern boundary. There would also be a new gravel drive located to the west of the building which would be accessed from the existing access from Rhododendron Avenue, to the north.

The proposed mobile home would have a shallow pitch roof and would contain an open plan living, dining/kitchen area, bathroom two double bedrooms with storage and one with an en-suite.

Green Belt, Landscape Character and Appearance

The application site is located within the Green Belt and the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character.

The application site is a parcel of land located to the west of the existing detached bungalow which is set considerably back from the road and surrounded by residential properties.

The area is characterised by predominantly detached dwellings of varying designs set within large plots. The majority of the properties are set back from the road with driveways. There are examples of detached garages located to the front of some of the surrounding properties, however there are no mobile homes within the immediate area.

Application Site



Streetview



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 that 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 that 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 view is taken that the proposal does not fall within any of the listed exceptions, and is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The construction of a new building located to the west (front) of Longacre where there is currently open space undoubtedly impacts on the openness of the Green Belt.

Section 29 (1) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 defined a caravan as:

"... Any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another (whether being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer) and any motor vehicle so designed or adapted"

Whilst a mobile home may fall under the definition of a caravan, by the siting of a residential unit that contains all the accommodation necessary to be an independent dwelling, together with laying out of gravel driveway, hardstanding, raised platform/decking, steps and the 3m high gabion wall, the proposal cannot be considered as a temporary structure or development of the site and would therefore be an additional dwelling in the Green Belt. As such the development will no doubt bring further residential paraphernalia such as boundary treatment, patios, sheds and driveways that would all impact negatively on the openness of the Green Belt.

No information has been provided to explain why special circumstances might exist and therefore the proposal conflicts with paragraph 148 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

The proposed mobile home, due to its location within the Green Belt, self-contained nature of the development and siting within the plot is considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt where no

special circumstance exist. It therefore conflicts with para. 147 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and Policy C12 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994.

Sustainable Development - creation of an isolated dwelling

The NPPF, taken as a whole, represent the Government's view of what constitutes sustainable development. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF provides specific advice on sustainable development in rural areas and seeks to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances .

It should be noted that a number of recent appeal decisions within the Borough of Gravesham have clarified the issue on sustainability in relation to both new build dwellings and conversions within the countryside.

Appeal decision APP/K2230/A/12/2186760 related to an outline application for erection of a detached dwelling and garage at land adjacent to the See-Ho Public House, Shorne, Gravesend, Kent which is situated directly adjacent to the settlement boundary of Shorne Ridgeway. The site the subject of this application is located 160 metres from the settlement boundary of Culverstone Green and over 1km from the nearest A1 retail unit.

When dismissing the above appeal the Inspector stated:

"It was indicated to me at the Hearing that these services are very limited, with no more than a handful of buses a day at best, which reflects the 'infrequent' nature suggested in the Technical Paper. Both are factors which would mean that there would be an over-reliance on private motor vehicles to access local services. The proposal would therefore fail to achieve the social role of the planning system in terms of the lack of accessible local services, and the environmental role by minimising waste and pollution."

The Inspector went on to state "due to limited accessibility, there would be difficulty for future occupiers in accessing local services to support the community's health, social and cultural well-being, which would be contrary to the social role of planning which seeks these aims. What is more, I have found that there would be significant harm to the Green Belt through inappropriateness. The proposal would therefore fail to fulfil the environmental role of sustainable development which includes contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment."

It is the Local Planning Authority's view that if the Inspectorate concluded that a proposed dwelling which is directly adjacent to a settlement inset from the Green Belt is deemed to be unsustainable then the proposed dwelling the subject of this application being located within the countryside being over 1km to the boundary of the settlement of Culverstone Green (if going by the roads) is unsustainable. In addition once future occupiers travel the 1km to the village boundary there is over 1km travelling along Whitepost Lane which has no pavement or street lighting. In addition once persons travel over the 1km the only local services is a small A1 retail shop and petrol station with ancillary a1 use. In addition there is a primary school a short distance to the north of the petrol station.

It is therefore considered that the sheer distance would result in future occupiers being over reliant on the private motor car in order to access the most basic facilities within Culverstone Green. There is also limited bus services from Culverstone Green and no bus services along Rhododendron Avenue.

A further appeal decision (APP/K2230/16/3157994) relates to conversion and extension of existing stables into a one bedroom residential dwelling at Knights Cottage, Knights Place Farm. Knights Cottage is located 0.7 miles from the town of Strood, but is situated within the Green Belt and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Notwithstanding the short distance from the town of Strood the Inspector concluded that converting an existing building into a dwelling would be unsustainable form of development and stated the following:

"The appeal development would be located on the edge of a small group of dwellings in the countryside. It would not be within easy walking distance of services, facilities or public transport. Further, the appeal site's

entry drive leads onto a very busy road that connects with the M2 motorway. For all these reasons, it is likely that the future occupiers would have a high dependence on private motorised modes of transport. For this reason, it would not be sustainably located. It would result in an new isolated home in the countryside, which would be contrary to paragraph 55 of the Framework, which indicates that such development should be avoided and would fail to accord with Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) (LP) Policy C11. That policy states that conversion of farm buildings to other uses will be permitted where, amongst other things, the building is a substantial one, of permanent construction and in an appropriate location in relation to roads and services”.

Appeal decision APP/K2230/W/15/3003758 relates to the development of a new dwelling within the same area (Culverstone Valley Area).

11. The nearest facilities to the appeal site are located in the village of Culverstone Green, and include a shop, post office and petrol station. There is also a primary school and a bus stop. A limited number of facilities, including a small convenience store and a community centre, are also available in the village of Vigo, approximately 1 kilometre from the appeal site. A wider range of facilities is available in Meopham, some 3.5 kilometres away, including shops, a secondary school, a day nursery, a library and doctors/dentist surgeries. The nearest railway station is at Hook Green, just beyond Meopham when travelling from the appeal site.

12. The limited range of facilities in Culverstone Green and Vigo are beyond comfortable walking distance. Moreover, the pedestrian route to these facilities involves negotiating narrow and unlit lanes that, whilst hard surfaced, do not have a dedicated pedestrian pavement. The route also involves significant gradients that, whilst not presenting a problem for some people, would present a significant obstacle for those with reduced mobility, including the elderly and those with young children. Pedestrian access to the facilities in Culverstone Green and Vigo would therefore be an unattractive and potentially hazardous prospect, particularly at night, and would be wholly impractical in adverse weather conditions. In relation to the wider range of services in Meopham and the railway station at Hook Green, these difficulties would be compounded by the greater distance involved. It is therefore likely that all these services would be primarily accessed by car, such that the occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be reliant upon the private car for their day-to-day activities.

13. I conclude that the proposed development would not provide a suitable site for housing, having regard to the principles of sustainable development. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be contrary to Policy CS01 of the Core Strategy which provides, amongst other things, that the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the Framework. In this respect, the proposed development would be contrary to the objectives of paragraph 17 of the Framework in terms of actively managing patterns of growth to make the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling.

Taking into account the above appeal decisions and the fact that the appeal sites are within the borough of Gravesham and have been assessed against the same local and national planning policies it has to be concluded for the above reasons the application site is deemed to be an unsustainable location for residential use.

The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to paragraph 80 of the NPPF (2021) and CS01 of Gravesham Core Strategy which seek to encourage sustainable living, and the Policies of the Framework, which, amongst those cited, include improving conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure.

Character and Appearance

The application site is also located within the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character. The key characteristics are a varied topography, ancient woodlands and a haphazard mosaic of residential plots. The condition is moderate and distractors include derelict buildings, caravans, poor fencing and fly tipping. The sensitivity is moderate where more recent plots and buildings are indistinct and enclosed by mismatched fencing or suburbanised walls, gates and railings. The proposed building will add further modern

development and, as it is self-contained, will be accompanied by residential paraphernalia in a prominent location that will not enhance the landscape character of the area. In terms of appearance, as discussed above, the additional building to the front of the site, together with raised deck and driveway will further urbanise the appearance of the area to the detriment of its character.

The proposed annexe therefore conflicts with policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and para. 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Residential Amenity

The NPPF 2021 states that planning decisions should aim to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future users (paragraph 130f). The impact on amenity is also considered with regard to the criteria within Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, which states that new development should be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants, and those of neighbouring properties and land.

Future Occupiers

The internal layout of the proposed dwelling provides insufficient floor space for a two bedroom, four person dwelling. The National Housing Standards require a floor area of 70sqm and the proposed building provides for 68.98sqm. The bedrooms have a floor area of approx. 10.96sqm and 10.07sqm which do not meet the standards for a double and therefore can only be considered as a single. The building would however provide for sufficient outlook, sunlight and daylight.

Neighbouring Amenity

The site is surrounded by neighbouring dwellings however, the proposed building would be located to the front which means any overlooking of neighbouring properties would not be of private amenity areas. The building will be single storey and therefore any boundary treatment would screen the habitable room windows in the southern flank.

The proposal, in terms of occupier amenity, would conflict with the objectives of Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and para. 130f of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Parking and Highways

A proposed site plan shows 2no. parking spaces which would accord with the KCC – Parking Standards (2006). The access is existing and would remain unchanged and as such there would be no significant impact on highway safety.

Conclusion

The application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt within which inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The proposed mobile home comprises inappropriate development that is, by definition, harmful to the openness of the Green Belt. The development will not preserve the openness of the Green Belt and will conflict with one of the purposes of including land within it. In the absence of any 'very special circumstances' that may otherwise outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, the proposed development is contrary to national planning guidance contained in paragraphs 148 and 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and Policy CS02 of the Borough Council's adopted Core Strategy.

The application site lies within the locally designated Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area, where local and national planning policy and guidance expect developments to conserve, restore and enhance the natural landscape. However, the proposed development would be harmful to the landscape

character by reason of the intensification of residential development and resultant domestic paraphernalia, parking areas and associated hard and soft landscaping that would result.

The application site is also in a unsustainable location.

The application is therefore contrary to Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Borough Council's adopted Core Strategy and paras. 174 and 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Recommendation:

Refuse

See draft Decision

Case Officer:	Mrs Amanda Grout	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:	<i>A Grout</i>	Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	27 th May 2022	Dated:	27th May 2022