

Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20231150

Location: Copperfield Valley Lane Meopham Gravesend

Description: Conversion of detached garage into a residential annex with raised roof incorporating dormer window in eastern side roof slope.

Applicant: Mr M Gosal

Site Visit Date: 24 January 2024

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application for Planning Permission form;
Drawing no. COP/01 Existing and proposed layouts, elevations and sections;
Drawing no. COP/02 Existing and proposed block plans and location plan; and
Reasons for conversion document.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20161028	Application for minor material amendment to planning permission reference no. 20160611 for the erection of single storey side and rear extensions, insertion of dormer windows into front and rear roof slopes and the creation of front barn hipped gable to existing roof with associated internal and external works; to allow alterations and the enlargement of the single storey rear extension.	Refused	16.01.2017
AP2017/0000 5/REF	Appeal against the refusal	Allowed	21.06.2017
20160611	***REVISED PLAN/REVISED DESCRIPTION*** Erection of single storey side and rear extensions, insertion of dormer windows into front and rear roof slopes and the creation of front barn hipped gable to existing roof with associated internal and external works.	Permitted	16.09.2016
20110372	Erection of a detached triple stable block.	Refused	12.08.2011
20000493	Erection of a replacement dwelling with rooms in the roof space, erection of detached garage at the front, erection of a stable at the rear and installation of a septic tank in substitution of that permitted under planning permission ref. No. GR/99/106.	Permitted	10.01.2001
19990106	Erection of detached dwelling with rooms in the roof space, erection of detached garage with attached shed	Permitted	04.05.1999

	at front, erection of a stable at the rear and installation of a septic tank.		
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Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- 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 (2023) 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 (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 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)
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- Gravesham Local Plan Regulation 18 Stage 2 Consultation Part 2: Draft Development Management Policies Document (2020)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

GBC Highways Officer

Without a parking plan it is impossible to comment. The applicant needs to demonstrate there are at least two parking spaces for the existing property, a readily accessible parking space for the new annex, which could be used as an independent property or holiday let, plus as on street parking on Valley Lane is not practicable a communal visitor parking space. The site is large so a condition should suffice. All parking bay sizes to conform to the requirements of KCC SPG4 and a 6 metre aisle width is generally required. Any alterations to the drive should be constructed from a bound permeable paving.

In addition, cycle parking should be provided for the annex and existing dwelling at the rate of one cycle per

bedroom, as the existing garage could be used for cycle parking, to comply with the requirements of KCC SPG4.

GBC Environmental Protection Team (Regulatory Services)

No objection to this application. The following is recommended.

Lighting

Artificial lighting can cause a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It is important that the applicants are not permitted to install external lighting that illuminate anything other than the ground within the curtilage of the new properties in order to assist in preventing a nuisance from occurring (which would be most likely if the bedrooms on neighbouring properties are illuminated).

Drainage/sewerage informative

The foul sewage shall be removed by means of the mains drainage system and not by the use of non-mains sewerage systems, unless connection to the drainage system is not reasonably practicable.

GBC Waste and Recycling Manager

No response received.

KCC Biodiversity Officer

No ecological information has been submitted with this application. As a result of reviewing the data we have available to us (including aerial photos and biological records) and the information submitted with the planning application, we advise that further information is sought from the applicant with regards to the potential for ecological impacts.

While we acknowledge that the proposed works are of limited scale, habitats and features are present on and around the site indicating ecological value and the potential for protected species presence that must be taken account of in the planning decision.

The proposals include structural changes to the tiled roof and given the proximity to broadleaved woodland we advise that an assessment of potential impacts on roosting bats is required.

The proposed development lies c. 7m east of the edge of Ridge Wood/High Reed ancient replanted woodland (PAWS). As such, we highlight paragraph 186 of the NPPF which states that “development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists”.

When making its decision, the local planning authority should take into consideration standing advice on Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions of Natural England and the Forestry Commission¹.

The Natural England/Forestry Commission standing advice states that there should be a minimum 15m buffer zone between development and ancient woodland, including gardens. This requires consideration of the potential for additional impacts from proposals even when there is existing development within the 15m buffer. Whilst it will be the decision of the local planning authority as to whether the development is ‘wholly exceptional’, we are able to comment on any compensation plans which may be submitted. We point out that proposed compensation measures should not be considered as part of the assessment of the merits of the development proposal.

The site also lies within 15m of the boundary of Happy Valley, Meopham Local Wildlife Site (LWS), and areas of deciduous woodland designated as habitat of principal importance as listed under section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) border the site to the south and west. Impacts to habitats of principal importance, or ‘priority habitats’, are capable of being a “...material consideration in the... making of planning decisions” (Paragraph 84, Government Circular (ODPM 06/2005)).

Currently, there is insufficient information submitted to enable the local planning authority to fully consider the impact on protected species, ancient woodland and habitats of principal importance. As such, an ecological impact assessment (EcIA) must be undertaken by a suitably qualified, CIEEM-registered ecologist, in accordance with good practice guidelines (Appendix A). The EcIA will assess the habitats and features within and around the site and identify if there is a need for further ecological surveys to assess ecological value and/or confirm protected species presence/likely absence. Where required, full survey results together with details of any mitigation required should be provided within the EcIA. The EcIA should also consider any precautionary approaches required during construction and potential impacts of artificial lighting on the adjacent woodland habitats.

To ensure that the planning determination is adequately informed in respect of all potential ecological impacts, we advise that the EcIA report, detailing all surveys and outcomes, must be sought prior to determination of the planning application. The submission must provide appropriate and achievable mitigation measures for any identified ecological impacts. This is in accordance with paragraph 99 of ODPM 06/2005, which states “it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision”.

Impacts on trees and woodland should also be assessed by an arboricultural survey and impact assessment submitted prior to determination.

Under section 40 of the NERC Act (2006), NPPF (2023) and the Environment Act (2021), biodiversity must be maintained and enhanced through the planning system. As such, we advise that it is demonstrated that the development can achieve measurable net gain/enhancement for biodiversity.

¹ Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Meopham Parish Council

Objection raised on the grounds of inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised by a site notice and to one neighbouring property by letter. One representation has been received and is summarised as follows;

- Loss of outlook/view for The Willows, Valley Lane from the raised roof pitch.
- Loss of privacy for The Willows, Valley Lane from overlooking from the proposed dormer windows.
- Adverse impacts to the value of The Willows, Valley Lane.
- Out of keeping with existing garages/conversions, especially the proposed dormer.

Officer's Analysis

Background

Planning permission was granted for the existing dwelling and garage at the application site under reference 20000493. In June 2017, approval was given for the erection of single storey side and rear extensions, the insertion of dormer windows into the front and rear roof slopes and the creation of a barn hipped gable to the front of the existing roof of the existing dwelling (reference 20161028). As a result, the existing dwelling at the application site has four bedrooms, one of which is on the ground floor.

The existing garage at the application site was granted planning permission under reference 20000493 and there have been no subsequent planning permissions or lawful development certificates for any extension or alteration of the building.

At the site visit, it was noted that the garage is not currently being used for the parking of vehicles. Instead it was being used for domestic storage including some pieces of gym equipment.

At the site visit, it was also noted that the garage has been subject to an unauthorised extension to create a domestic storage area. Drawing number COP/02 appears to illustrate the floor area of the extension (20 square metres) but the layout and elevations are not shown on drawing number COP/01. The following images illustrate the exterior and interior of the garage extension;



Principle of a Residential Annex

Residential annexes are an increasingly common form of development that are normally proposed in order to allow relatives to live with their family but to retain some degree of independence. To remain ancillary accommodation and not be considered as a separate unit of accommodation, the use of annex must be closely tied to the main dwelling.

There is no specific local or national planning policy that directly relates to the development of annexes. However, there is an emerging policy in the Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Development Management Policies Document (2020), Proposed Policy RES 3: Residential Annexes.

Proposed Policy RES 3: Residential Annexes reads as follows;

Proposed Policy RES 3: Residential Annexes

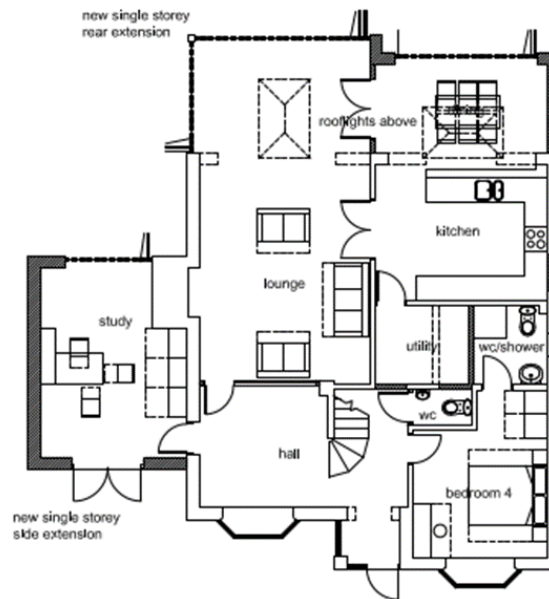
- 9.3.8. Planning permission will only be granted for residential annexes within the curtilage of an existing residential property where there is a proven need that cannot be met either within the existing property through adaptation or acceptable extension and:
- there is a functional link with the principal dwelling (i.e. the occupants should be a dependant relative/s);
 - both the annexe and principal dwelling are in the same ownership and remain so in perpetuity;
 - the accommodation forms a linked extension to the main dwelling and is capable of being used as an integral part of the dwelling, or forms a separate outbuilding which is in close proximity to and within the curtilage of the principal dwelling, and shares some essential facilities with the main dwelling; and
 - the scale of the annexe is subordinate to the existing dwelling and is the minimum level of accommodation required to support the needs of the intended occupant/s; and
 - there is adequate parking and amenity facilities (areas for bin storage, drying clothes, garden space etc.) for the needs of the annexe occupants and existing residents; and
 - there is no boundary demarcation or subdivision of garden areas between the curtilage annexe and principal dwelling;
- 9.3.9. Where planning permission is granted for a residential annexe, a planning obligation will be imposed to ensure that the annexe retains a functional link with the main dwelling (i.e. the occupants should be a dependant relative(s) and that the annexe is retained in the same ownership as the main dwelling and that this remains the case in perpetuity.

It is noted that as an emerging policy, the weight attached to it is very limited but it does illustrate the Borough Council's intended approach to the assessment of residential annex development.

The proposed development would provide residential accommodation in an outbuilding, over two floors, which would be used to accommodate a close relative of the applicant who is elderly. The outbuilding would provide a kitchen, shower room, lounge/diner and a bedroom, which constitutes all the facilities required for day-to-day domestic existence. However, the applicant has highlighted that the occupier of the outbuilding would have evening meals and spend time every day within the main house. Therefore, despite the provision of all essential facilities within the outbuilding, there would be a familial and functional relationship between the occupier of the outbuilding and the main house.

It is noted that the outbuilding would be located within the same curtilage as the main house and there would be no separate garden or parking area. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would provide a residential annex and would not constitute a separate dwelling.

The application property is a substantial four bedroom dwelling, which according to the applicant is occupied by four persons (a couple and two dependents). As the following image highlights, the existing layout of the dwelling provides a ground floor bedroom that is located at the front of the property, with easy access to the kitchen and a downstairs shower room;



As there would appear to be a spare bedroom at the application property, it is considered that the existing dwelling could easily be adapted to provide accommodation for a dependent relative. Indeed, it is arguable that this arrangement would be preferable to the proposed development because it would provide accommodation which is located in close proximity to the existing occupiers, that is all on one level and that is highly accessible. Whereas the proposal would result in an elderly relative being a significant distance from the main house and having to go up and down stairs (albeit using a stair lift) to access a bedroom located on the first floor and a kitchen and shower room located on the ground floor.

Therefore, the proposed development would not be entirely in line with Proposed Policy RES 3 of the Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Development Management Policies Document (2020) because the required accommodation could be provided by the adaption of the existing dwelling.

However, on balance and taking account of the limited weight attached to Proposed Policy RES 3, it is considered that the proposed development would be a residential annex and provided that any planning permission granted was conditioned to ensure that its use and ownership remains linked to the main dwelling and that no separate garden or curtilage area can be created in future, then the proposal would be acceptable in principle.

Notwithstanding the above, the following sections will assess the detail of the proposal.

Green Belt

The application site lies within the Green Belt outside the village of Culverstone Green, a rural settlement inset from the Green Belt and identified on the Local Plan Core Strategy Policies Map. The site falls within an area known as the Culverstone Valley Area. While this area has always been subject to Green Belt policy, up until 2014 development within the area was considered against a specific area policy, Policy C14 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review. Policy C14 and the associated Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Culverstone Valley Area were withdrawn following the adoption of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, on the recommendation of the Examination Inspector. From this point, development in this area has been considered against national and locally adopted Green Belt policy, in the same way as other areas within the Borough that lie in the Green Belt.

Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy.

Paragraph 142 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF 2023) sets out that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence and paragraph 143 lists the five purposes that the Green Belt serves. At the application site, the Green Belt assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF 2023 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2023 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt but it lists certain exceptions. These exceptions are set out in sub-paragraphs 154(a) to 154(g). Sub-paragraph 154(c) identifies 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.

Paragraph 155 of the NPPF 2023 specifies certain other forms of development that are not inappropriate, in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These forms of development are set out in sub-paragraphs 155(a) to 155(f). Sub-paragraph 155(d) identifies the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.

The proposed development would result in an existing outbuilding used for storage/parking being extended and altered to be used as a residential annex. The physical alterations to the exterior of the building would include a new roof with a dormer extension on the eastern side and two rooflights on the western side and the insertion of a door and two windows in the northern elevation and a window in the southern elevation.

The existing outbuilding has a footprint of 35 square metres and a maximum height of 4.8 metres. The roof is pitched with two barn hipped gable ends. Due to restricted headroom, the first floor of the outbuilding does not contain any habitable floor area, it is currently only used for domestic storage. The outbuilding appears to be of permanent and substantial construction.

The proposed garage would have the same footprint as existing but the floor area would be 61 square metres (35 at ground floor and 26 at first floor). The maximum height of the building would be 5.4 metres. The roof would be pitched with two gable ends and a dormer that effectively extends across the full width of the roof space on the eastern side.

The floor area of the building would be increased by 74% above the original and in terms of bulk and massing, it is considered that the proposed development would add significantly to the appearance of the building. A usable first floor area would be created and the new roof would be taller and bulkier than that existing, as it would no longer include barn hips and would include a large and prominent dormer feature on the eastern side.

In terms of openness, the proposal would result in a building which is significantly larger and bulkier than the original, consolidating and extending the level of built development at the application site, to an unacceptable level. The proposed development would be highly visible from public vantage points in Valley Lane and would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and represent an encroachment of development into the countryside.

It should be noted that the existing unauthorised extension to the outbuilding has already created 20 square metres of additional floor area, which represents a 57% increase above the original building. The flat roof and wooden construction of the extension are at odds with the design of the original building but they do reduce the bulk and massing of the extension to some extent. However, by virtue of its overall size, it is considered that the unauthorised extension is detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt. When the impacts of the unauthorised extension and the proposed development are considered cumulatively, they would result in even greater harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

It should also be noted that the existing dwelling at the application site, could be adapted to provide residential accommodation for an elderly relative. Reference to the section above illustrates this issue. Therefore, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt and to the purposes that the Green Belt serves,

could be entirely overcome, if the applicant were to undertake a different development approach at the application site.

It is noted that Meopham Parish Council considers the proposal to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Overall, it is considered that the floor area, bulk and mass of the outbuilding would be significantly increased by the proposed development. Therefore, the proposal would result in disproportionate additions to the original building and would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt or protect the countryside from encroachment. As such, the proposal would be inappropriate development and contrary to Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and to paragraphs 154(c) and 155(d) of the NPPF 2023.

Very Special Circumstances

Referring to paragraphs 152 and 153 of the NPPF 2023, inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

It is noted that the applicant has not identified any very special circumstances.

The following paragraphs will consider whether there are any other considerations that might outweigh the Green Belt harm.

Design, Character and Appearance

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2023 sets out various design requirements and includes the need for the development to add to the overall quality of an area; be visually attractive; and be sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment. Paragraph 139 of the NPPF 2023 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

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 in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area (LCA) and as such, Policy CS12 of the Local Plan Core Strategy is relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment will be taken into account in determining applications.

The Harvel Wooded Downs LCA is characterised by varied topography with steep valley sides and plateaux. Ancient woodland, chestnut coppice and small paddocks and pastures can be found. Views both within and out of the character area are limited because of the combined effect of topography and the heavily wooded character of the landscape.

The application site is located in a rural area and is surrounded by woodland and dwellings in plots of a similar nature. The plot surrounding the existing dwelling has a significant area of hard surfacing and some grass and mature vegetation. As a result, the site has a somewhat semi-rural appearance. It is noted that there would be no loss of vegetation and that the residential nature of the application site would be retained.

The proposed development would result in a significant increase in the size and bulk of the outbuilding, which would consolidate and extend the level of built development on the plot and in the wider area.

However, the alterations would not be harmful to overall landscape quality. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to landscape character and would be in line with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

The proposed facing materials would match with the existing outbuilding and dwelling at the application site but the proposed roof would not be in keeping because the outbuilding and dwelling have barn hipped roof designs. The proposed dormer would be a prominent feature of the roof and would have only small insets from the ridge, sides and eaves of the roof slope and as such, it would not appear especially subservient to the existing roof. Due to the location on the site frontage, the building is highly visible in the surrounding area.

It is noted that a local resident has raised concerns that the proposal would be out of keeping with existing garages/conversions in the surrounding area.

Overall, the proposed development would result in a building which is currently designed to be ancillary in appearance and scale, being altered to give the appearance and scale of a small dwelling. Furthermore, the building would increase significantly in terms of its size and bulk and the roof design would be out of keeping with the existing building and dwelling. As such, the proposal would be inappropriate in design and be an overdevelopment of the host building, which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the application site and contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants. In this regard, the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and the Borough Council's adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (RLG) are relevant.

The total floor area of the outbuilding would not meet the minimum floor area requirements for a one bedroom, two person, two storey dwelling in the NDSS. However as an annex, full compliance with the NDSS would not always be expected. It is noted that the proposed bedroom would exceed the minimum floor area requirements for a double bedroom in the NDSS, which would be a positive feature.

There would be no alteration to the existing garden at the application site, which exceeds the requirement for a dwelling with four or more bedrooms in the RLG.

In order to prevent a loss of privacy for future occupiers, any proposed bathroom/w.c./en-suite windows should be conditioned to be permanently obscure glazed.

Overall, the proposed development would provide a good standard of living for future occupiers and would not be detrimental to residential amenity. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of neighbouring occupiers. In this regard, the Borough Council's adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (RLG) are relevant.

The closest residential property to the application site is The Willows, Valley Lane (located to the north). It is noted that a local resident has raised concerns regarding the potential for adverse overlooking impacts and a loss of outlook for The Willows.

The proposed development would introduce a number of new windows to the outbuilding, including two in a dormer that would face the front elevation of The Willows. It is noted that there is a privacy distance

of some 32 metres from the proposed dormer to the front elevation of that property. Therefore, no significant adverse overlooking impacts would occur.

Due to the design of the proposed development and to the layout and orientation of The Willows, there would be no adverse overshadowing or overbearing impacts to the occupiers of that dwelling.

The GBC Environmental Protection Team (Regulatory Services) has raised concerns regarding adverse external lighting impacts. However no external lighting is proposed. Their comments in this regard can be given to the applicant in an informative attached to any planning permission granted.

Overall, the proposed development would not be detrimental to the residential amenity of any surrounding occupiers and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Parking and Highways

Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994 require new development to mitigate its impact on the highway and public transport networks and to provide sufficient parking in accordance with adopted parking standards.

Saved Policy P5 of the of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) allows a relaxation of the vehicle parking standards for changes of use of buildings and the sub-division of existing dwellings in certain circumstances and provided that existing on-street parking problems are not unduly exacerbated.

The application property has four bedrooms and a large frontage hard surfaced area which can accommodate a number of vehicles. In addition, there is an existing double garage, which is not currently used for vehicle parking but could be used as such and also could provide cycle parking.

The GBC Highways Officer has not raised an objection to the proposed development but seeks confirmation that four vehicles could be parked within the application site (because on road parking is not available in this location) and that cycle parking can be provided for the annex and existing dwelling at the rate of one cycle per bedroom.

It is considered that sufficient space would be available at the site to accommodate the required vehicle and cycle parking and in order to ensure that this is kept permanently available, any planning permission granted should be conditioned to require the relevant details to be submitted and approved.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety and would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policies T1, P3 and P5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Wildlife and Biodiversity

Paragraph 180 of the NPPF (2023) requires development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (amongst other things) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity value (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan) and minimising impacts on, and providing net gains for, biodiversity.

Paragraph 186 of the NPPF (2023) sets out a number of principles that should be applied to the determination of planning applications in relation to protecting habitats and biodiversity. These include refusing development that results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland) unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists and ensuring opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments are integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 states that there will be no net loss of biodiversity in Gravesham and that sites designated for their biodiversity value will be protected.

The application site is located immediately adjacent to a Biodiversity Opportunity Area and is seven metres to the east of the Ridge Wood/High Reed ancient replanted woodland. In addition, the Happy Valley, Meopham Local Wildlife Site is located to the west (within 15 metres) across Valley Lane.

The KCC Biodiversity Officer has highlighted that habitats and features are present, on and around the site, indicating ecological value and that there is the potential for protected species to be present. Therefore, an ecological impact assessment and arboricultural survey are required. However, as there is in principle, objection to the proposed development, the applicant has not been asked to provide any ecological information at this time.

In the absence of ecological and arboricultural assessments, it is not possible to determine the impacts of the proposed development on existing ecological features or biodiversity or to outline any measures to mitigate any potential adverse impacts associated with the proposal.

Overall, by virtue of the lack of ecological information, the proposal would have the potential to be detrimental to protected ecological features and biodiversity and as such, it would be contrary to Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and to paragraphs 180 and 186 of the NPPF 2023.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

A local resident has raised a number of concerns, the majority of which have been covered in the above discussion. The outstanding issues are summarised and commented on as follows;

- Loss of view from, and adverse impacts to the value, of The Willows, Valley Lane – these are not material planning considerations and are not relevant to the determination of this application.

Conclusion & Balancing Exercise

The above analysis sets out that the proposed development would be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt and contrary to one of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, namely protecting the countryside from encroachment. The development would be a disproportionate addition to the building, consolidate and extend the level of built development at the application site to an unacceptable level and be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

No very special circumstances have been advanced pursuant to paragraphs 152 and 153 of the NPPF 2023 sufficient to overcome the presumption against such inappropriate development.

In addition, the proposal would be an overdevelopment of the host building, which would undermine its character and have the potential to be detrimental to protected ecological features and biodiversity.

The proposed development would provide a good standard of living for future occupiers, would not be detrimental to the surrounding landscape, residential amenity or highway safety. All of which weigh in support of the proposal.

On balance, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt, to the character of the building and to ecology/biodiversity.

Recommendation

Refusal on the following grounds;

(1) The proposal, by virtue of its proposed size, scale, massing and form, would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt or protect the countryside from

encroachment. In the absence of any very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and to paragraphs 154(c) and 155(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

(2) The application building would increase significantly in terms of its size and bulk and the roof design would be out of keeping with the existing building and dwelling. As such, the proposal would be inappropriate in design and an overdevelopment of the host building, which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the application site and contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

(3) Given the site's location adjacent to an ancient woodland and local wildlife site, the proposal has the potential to adversely impact upon protected ecological habitats/species. The proposal fails to demonstrate that it would protect the biodiversity value of these habitats/species. As such, the proposed development is contrary to Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and to the paragraphs 180 and 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

(For detailed informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	1st February 2024	Dated:	01 February 2024