

Design and Access Heritage Statement

60 South Hill Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1JZ

Proposed External Works: Demolition of Existing Garage, New Driveway, Widened Dropped Kerb, Stepped Access, Bin Store, Retaining Walls and Associated Landscaping

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application submitted to Gravesham Borough Council for external alterations at 60 South Hill Road, Gravesend.

The proposed development comprises:

- Demolition of the existing detached garage;
- Construction of a new off-street parking space to the front of the property;
- Widening of the existing dropped kerb;
- Alterations to the existing stepped pedestrian access;
- Provision of a dedicated refuse and recycling storage area;
- Construction of retaining walls; and
- Associated hard and soft landscaping.

A separate application for a Certificate of Lawful Development (Existing Use) has been submitted in respect of the existing single-storey side/rear extension. That structure does not form part of this application and should not be taken into account in determining the proposals described within this statement.

2. The Site and Surroundings

The application site comprises a two-storey semi-detached dwelling dating from the mid-twentieth century. The property has evolved over time and incorporates a mixture of external materials including brickwork, Canterbury Spar render, K-Rend render, painted timber cladding and white uPVC cladding.

Positioned to the front of the site is a small brick-built garage with a flat concrete roof. The garage structure is of limited architectural or historic merit and makes little positive contribution

to either the character of the property or the wider Conservation Area. Due to its age, construction and proportions, the garage is no longer capable of accommodating modern family vehicles.

The site lies within the Windmill Hill Conservation Area and is located adjacent to Constitution Crescent, a Grade II Listed Building. These heritage assets have been carefully considered throughout the design process.



Image: The application site.

3. The Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the following works:

- Demolition of the existing garage;
- Formation of a new front driveway;
- Widening of the existing dropped kerb;
- Alterations to the existing stepped pedestrian access;
- Construction of retaining walls;
- Provision of a dedicated refuse and recycling bin store; and

- New planting and landscaping.

A short section of existing burr/reject brick walling is also proposed to be removed. This wall is in poor structural condition and contributes little to the streetscene. Nevertheless, should the Local Planning Authority consider it desirable, the applicant is willing to salvage and reuse the existing burr bricks as a decorative feature within the new retaining walls in order to retain a visual reference to the site's historic character.



Image: Existing Burr Brick Wall which requires reconstruction screened by parked cars, feeder pillar and telegraph pole

4. Planning Policy Context

The proposal has been assessed against the Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The development is considered to accord with the objectives of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy, including:

- **Policy CS11 (Transport)** by improving the accessibility and functionality of the site whilst reducing reliance upon on-street parking.
- **Policy CS18 (Climate Change)** through the efficient use of previously developed residential land without increasing the built footprint.
- **Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles)** by delivering high quality, well-designed domestic alterations which respect local character and improve the usability of the property.
- **Policy CS20 (Heritage and the Historic Environment)** by preserving the character and appearance of the Windmill Hill Conservation Area and safeguarding the setting of the adjacent listed building.

The proposal also accords with the design objectives contained within Chapters 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek to achieve well-designed places whilst conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

5. Assessment of the Proposal

Existing Garage

The existing garage is no longer capable of serving its intended purpose.

Although originally constructed as a vehicle garage, its internal dimensions are significantly below the standards required for modern vehicles. In practice, it has become functionally obsolete.

The previous owner used the garage only for a very small Fiat 500, and even then was required to squeeze between the vehicle and the garage wall, frequently causing damage to the vehicle doors due to the extremely restricted width. Unsurprisingly, the current owners are unable to use the garage for vehicle parking and instead park both vehicles on the public highway.

Consequently, the garage provides little practical benefit and currently fails to meet modern parking requirements.

Its removal therefore represents the loss of a redundant structure of negligible heritage significance rather than the loss of a genuinely usable parking facility.

Highway and Parking Benefits

The proposed driveway would provide a practical off-street parking space for one vehicle.

South Hill Road already experiences considerable pressure for on-street parking. The ability for the applicants to remove one vehicle from the public highway on a permanent basis will make a modest but genuine contribution towards reducing local parking demand.

The proposal is therefore consistent with the objectives of Local Plan Policy CS11, which seeks to promote safe and efficient transport arrangements whilst ensuring development functions effectively.

Importantly, the proposal reflects an established pattern of development within the immediate street.

Both adjoining neighbouring properties have already created front driveways, and No. 53 South Hill Road has also recently upgraded its off-street parking arrangements. Photographs illustrating these comparable developments are included at the end of this statement.

The proposal therefore follows an established character of frontage alterations rather than introducing a new or isolated form of development.



Image: New Driveway formed at neighbouring property



Image: Driveway formed at neighbouring property at no.59 South Hill Road

In addition, another driveway has just been reconstructed using brickwork retaining walls at no.53 South Hill road to provide off street parking.



Image: This photograph demonstrates how the applicants currently need to park, both on the highway contributing to parking pressure.

Conservation Area Considerations

The Windmill Hill Conservation Area derives its significance primarily from the wider street pattern, mature landscaping, traditional boundary treatments and historic building groups.

The existing garage contributes little towards that significance.

It is a modest utilitarian outbuilding of relatively modern construction and possesses little architectural or historic interest. Its removal will therefore result in no meaningful loss of heritage value.

The proposed retaining walls, landscaping and hard surfacing have been carefully designed using materials that complement the surrounding streetscene and neighbouring properties.

Given the modest scale of the works and the established presence of similar driveways nearby, the proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area

in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy CS20 of the Gravesham Core Strategy and Chapter 16 of the NPPF.

Similarly, the proposal will not adversely affect the setting or significance of the adjacent Grade II Listed Constitution Crescent.

Design and Visual Impact

The development represents a modest domestic alteration that remains entirely subservient to the host dwelling.

The proposed retaining walls, steps and landscaping create an attractive and well-integrated frontage whilst improving accessibility and functionality.

The proposed planting softens the appearance of the new parking area and assists in maintaining an appropriate balance between hard and soft landscaping within the street.

Overall, the proposal represents a sympathetic enhancement to the appearance of the property.

Practical Benefits for Modern Family Living

In addition to providing off-street parking, the proposal delivers significant practical improvements to the day-to-day operation of the property.

At present, the applicants are required to manoeuvre refuse and recycling bins up and down the steep front steps every collection day. The same access arrangement is also used when transporting a pushchair for their newborn child.

This arrangement is inconvenient, physically demanding and poorly suited to modern family living.

The proposed stepped access, driveway and dedicated bin storage area provide a far more practical and accessible layout, improving the everyday functionality of the property without adversely affecting neighbouring amenity or the character of the area.

The proposal therefore represents a proportionate and reasonable enhancement to the living conditions of the occupants while maintaining a high standard of design.

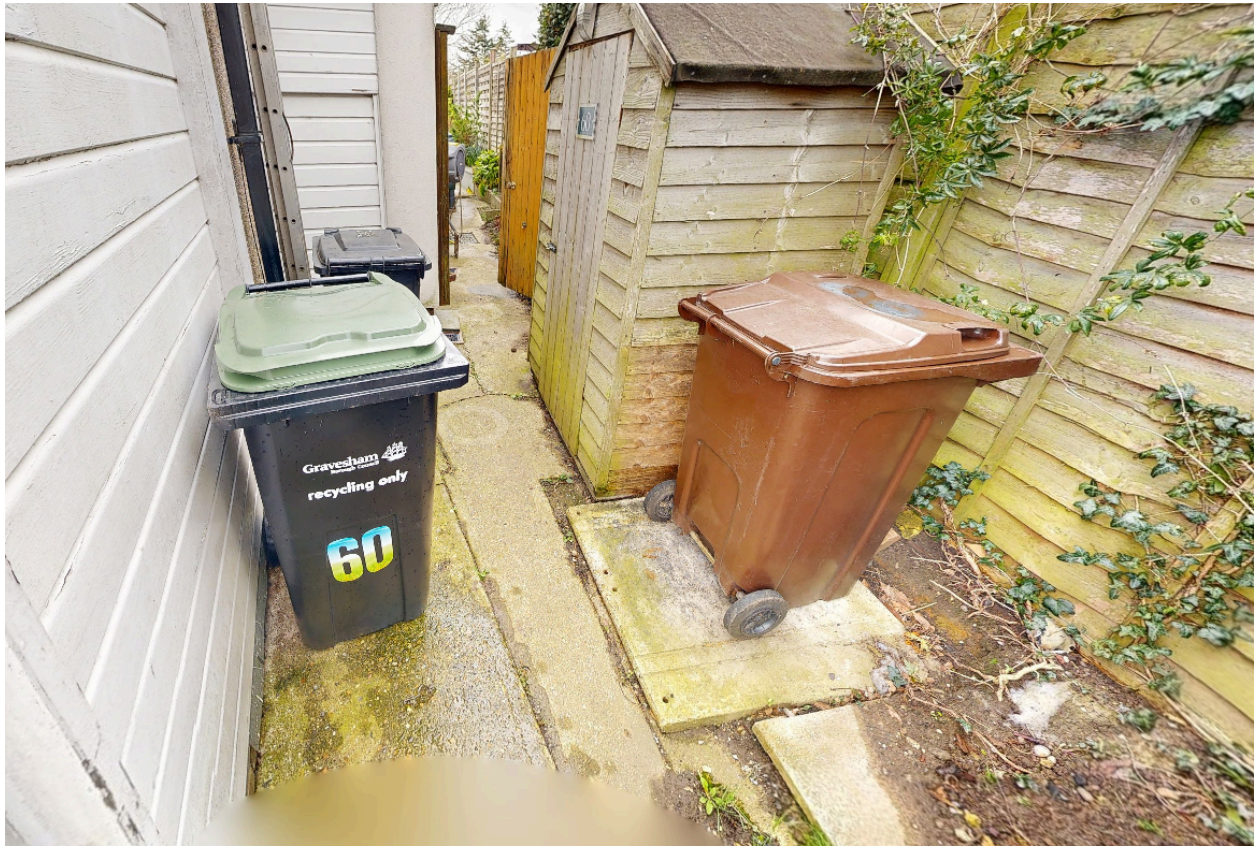


Image: This photograph demonstrates the current refuse store location which requires refuse to be taken up and down 17 steps, 2 bins per week which is a significant and unnecessary risk to the applicant.

6. Planning Balance

The proposal delivers a number of clear public and private benefits:

- Removal of a redundant garage that is no longer capable of accommodating modern vehicles.
- Provision of a usable off-street parking space, reducing pressure on heavily parked surrounding streets.
- Improved accessibility and functionality for a modern family.
- Purpose-built refuse storage integrated into the site layout.
- High-quality replacement landscaping and boundary treatment.
- A design approach that reflects the established pattern of development within South Hill Road.

- Preservation of the character and appearance of the Windmill Hill Conservation Area and the setting of the adjacent Grade II Listed Building.

No material planning harm has been identified.

7. Conclusion

The proposed development represents a modest, well-designed and logical improvement to the property.

The existing garage is functionally obsolete and makes little contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. Its removal enables the provision of a practical off-street parking space, reducing existing parking pressure within the street whilst improving the accessibility and functionality of the property for contemporary family life.

The proposal has been carefully designed to respect the character of the surrounding area and reflects similar developments already undertaken on neighbouring properties. It preserves the significance of the Windmill Hill Conservation Area, does not harm the setting of nearby listed buildings and accords with the objectives of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

It should be noted that the Applicant is also a Structural Engineer and therefore will be committed to the safe execution of the project on site.

Having regard to the Development Plan as a whole and all other material considerations, the proposal represents sustainable development for which planning permission should be granted.

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