

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Annex to The Granary, Little Hermitage Farm, Gravesend Road, Higham, Rochester, Kent, ME3 7NU.

Introduction.

This application is in respect of the existing annex which it is proposed change use from annex to residential dwelling, creating a one-bedroom dwelling.

Minor internal alterations are proposed in order that the bedroom received natural light via the rear glazed doors and windows in addition to the existing skylight.

The external amenity area will be increased in size and fenced with an attractive 1.8 metre high wattle fencing around two side of the garden boundaries. There is an wall along the western boundary.



Wattle fencing panel.

The building is not within the Metropolitan Green Belt nor within a National Landscape Area.

Design.

The annex layout will be revised by swapping the bathroom and bedroom and removing part of an internal wall so the bedroom benefits from daylight from the skylight and the rear glazed doors and windows.

At the time of conversion from farm building to annex, the walls, floor and ceiling were insulated with 200mm of PIR insulation ensuring that this building is thermally extremely efficient to heat.

Access.

Access to the annex building and adjacent dwellings is via a private drive and from the Gravesend Road.

The location is very accessible being within walking distance of bus stops that offer regular bus services to the Medway Towns and to Gravesend and beyond. There are mainline rail services to London and the Kent Coast from the stations at Higham and at Strood. Also, within walking distance of a wide range of shopping and leisure facilities in

Strood and small supermarkets that includes a supermarket at Whitegates Petrol Station just along the Gravesend Road. Within the village of Higham there are three convenience shops catering for day to day shopping needs, a Post Office and two public houses.

Access by road is excellent being located close to the Wainscott Bypass which leads to the A2/M2 and on the Gravesend Road leading to the Medway Towns and to Gravesend.

Employment areas nearby including retail, office and commercial employment centres in Strood, Rochester and Medway City Estate are within walking and cycling distance and are accessible by bus.

Bin store, cycle store and a parking space for one vehicle will be provided within the existing parking area.

Planning.

Planning approval was granted for the annex use under Decision Notice 20180741 dated 25th January 2019.

The annex has a gross internal area just over 52 square metres. The amenity area will be 38 square metres plus a car parking space. A bin and cycle store will be provided as shown by the application drawings.

There is no additional effect or impact on the open countryside. The building is already in residential use with an existing external amenity area and the slight increase in area.

The tall brick wall that forms the side wall to the annex and continues along the west side of what was the former farm yard area, creates a physical and visual boundary between the area that is now residential and includes an Airbnb, a dwelling with an annex at The Granary and dwelling with an annex at The Coach House.

To the west of the annex there is a large permanent pasture field and allotment garden owned by the applicants and jointly by their neighbour and friends at The Coach House. The private drive is also owned jointly, hence notice of this application has been served on the neighbours.

The bedroom and bathroom layout will be altered internally so that daylight and an outlook are provided to the bedroom area. The two skylights will be retained with one serving bathroom, the other will provide additional daylight to the bedroom.

The new dwelling will be retained by the applicant.

At the start of the private drive that serves The Coach House and The Granary and the various annexes and Airbnb described, there is a Grade 11 Listed Building, Little Hermitage, which was used as a wedding venue as well as being the owner's home for

some 25 years. It is now a private house, the wedding use has permanently ceased operation.

There is no Bio-diversity net gain impact as this is a change of use application and the minor extension to the garden area is less than 25 sq metres and the land that will become additional amenity area is current surfaced in loose stone and used as part of a parking area that serves the Granary and the annex.

We consider that the proposed wattle fencing will provide suitable privacy for the garden and residents of the new dwelling. Obscure glazing film has been fitted to the windows of The Granary nearest to the annex.

This application is effectively the same as the approved application for Oak Tree Cottage, Knights Place Farm, ME2 3UB, application 20240370. Approval was granted for an existing detached building used as an annex to change use to a detached dwelling. In that case the annex is in a more isolated location with less access to public transport, with access down a long private drive and within a rural area, Metropolitan Green Belt and a National Landscape Area.

Planning policies

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.

Relevant policies included:

CS01-Sustainable Development

CS02-Scale and Distribution of Development

CS11-Transport

CS14-Housing type and Size

CS18-Climate change

CS19-Development and Design Principles.

Other relevant planning documents include the Residential Layout Guidelines Amended 2020 and KCC Parking Standards.

Also of consideration is 5 year deliverable housing land supply. The last statement for the period 2024-2029 published in February 2025 stated that 2279 dwellings are deliverable in the next 5 years against the Government requirement of 4032 homes. There is mention of 150 homes may be delivered through windfall sites but even so there is only **3 years** housing supply that Gravesham can supply at this stage. Therefore, there is a considerable shortage of 1753 homes against the deliverable list if all the homes on that list are built which is not likely in view of the downturn in demand, rise is

cost of living costs, uncertainty over fuel costs and wars in Iran and in Ukraine affecting the financial markets.

NPPF 2025

The NPPF supports sustainable development with a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS01 also says the council will look positively at sustainable development proposals.

The NPPF says that councils should avoid granting consent for isolated development. In this case there are a number of dwellings in the immediate area of the annex and the site is adjacent to Dillywood Lane where there are a number of houses. Also, as described, the annex is within a short walk of retail, leisure and public transport facilities.

The NPPF supports securing the future of heritage assets by granting consent for sustainable planning uses. The annex is within a converted farm building which forms part of a group of farm buildings associated with Little Hermitage Farm which includes the converted timber frame barn, now The Granary and converted Coach House and range of other buildings including the former milking shed, now an annex.

The NPPF supports the provision of sufficient land to meet new housing requirements and the use of brown field sites and disused buildings. The annex is currently in use as for this purpose, however, the applicant wishes to prepare for the future, whenever this may be, when the annex may not be needed in its current use.

As mentioned, minor internal alterations to the layout will be made. No external changes to the building are required.

KCC Parking Standards require one parking space. A Pod Point 7.4kV single vehicle electric vehicle charger will be provided on implementation of the approval.

Conclusion

The change of use of this annex to a one-bedroom dwelling accords with local planning policies and with national planning policies. In addition, it provides one new dwelling towards the local housing requirements, something which is very important in view of the shortage in housing and with Gravesham Borough Council only having 3 years housing supply allocated and falling short of the 5 year deliverable housing requirement.

The location and this proposal to change the annex to a dwelling is the very essence of sustainable development as the building already exists and is in residential use as it has since been converted.

There are excellent transport links being located within walking distance of shops, leisure facilities, pubs, gyms, cafes, public parks. There are bus stops close by on the Gravesend to Rochester Road with regular bus services between the Medway Towns and Gravesend. Mainline train stations at Higham, Strood and Rochester are within a reasonable cycling and walking distance for someone of reasonable fitness.

Employment areas nearby including retail, office and commercial employment centres in Strood, Rochester and Medway City Estate are within walking and cycling distance and are accessible by bus.

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