

Planning Design & Access Statement

Erection of detached family home

Land opposite the Railway Inn
Sole Street
Gravesend
Kent
DA13 0XZ

On behalf of
Mr David Dean

OUR REF: PH/21/161



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Robinson Escott Planning LLP,

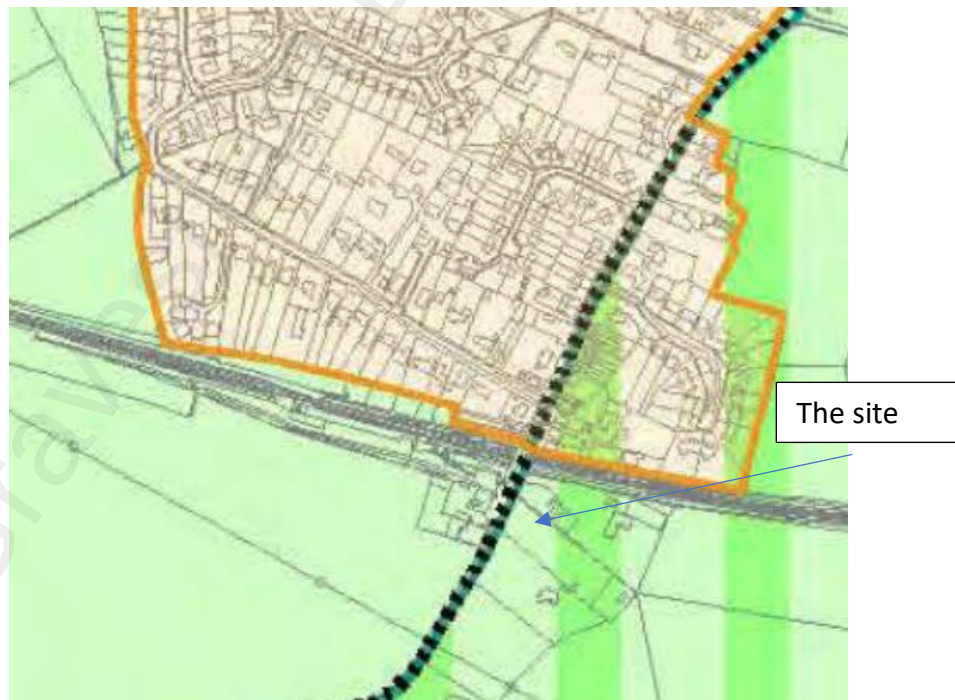
Downe House, 303 High Street, Orpington, Kent BR6 0NN

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. We have been instructed by Mr David Dean to prepare and submit an application for full planning permission for the erection of a detached dwelling of two storey design on land opposite the Railway Inn, Sole Street, Gravesend DA13 0XZ.
- 1.2. This application has been prepared following a visit to the site and a review of the character of the surrounding area and the sites level of sustainability. It also considers the sites position within the Green Belt and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with a frontage onto a local distributor Road.
- 1.3. In light of the site's location within the confines of the Green Belt between neighbouring detached residential properties and directly adjacent to the village boundary, pub, bus stop and railway station, the application is submitted with it comprising limited infilling within a village in accordance with paragraph 149(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).
- 1.4. This statement has therefore been prepared in order to present detailed justification that the application does comprise limited infilling within a village.
- 1.5. The justification provided has regard to the terms of all relevant planning policy contained within the national Planning Policy Framework (2021), the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and the Council's Emerging Regulation 18 Stage Two Consultation Document (Development Management Policies Document) which provides a useful summary of how the Council will look to assess applications for limited infilling in villages within the Green Belt in the Borough.
- 1.6. In addition, this statement makes reference to case studies where limited infilling on Green Belt land within a village has been approved that is technically outside the defined boundary of a village.

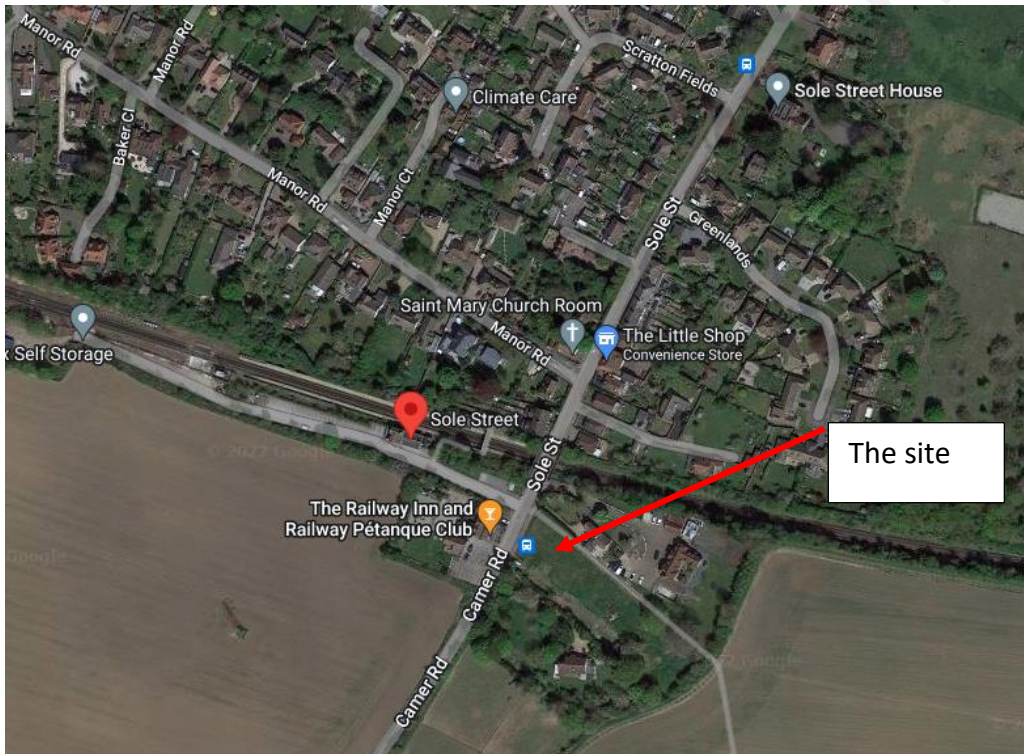
2. THE APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1. The application site comprises a parcel of currently under-utilised land that is located on the eastern side of Sole Street directly opposite the Railway Inn.
- 2.2. The application site is positioned between adjacent detached dwellings and their residential curtilages which comprise 'Montilla' and 'Leighton' to the north and 'Wildacre' to the south.
- 2.3. The site is located within close proximity to the village boundary of Sole Street which runs directly along the northern side of the major railway line that lies immediately to the north.
- 2.4. The below extract from the Core Strategy Local Plan Proposals Map illustrates where the village boundary is relative to the application site and confirms that the land in question is positioned between two existing residential properties with these homes directly adjoining the railway line and the village boundary to the north.



Site located on land defined as Green Belt, AONB and on Local Distributor Road

- 2.5. As can be seen from the below aerial image the application site is also located directly opposite Sole Street Railway Station that provides direct commuter access to central London and north-west Kent. There is also a bus stop located directly opposite the application site in front of the Railway Inn.



Sole Street railway station located on the opposite side of the road adjacent to The Railway Inn



Image showing The Railway Inn, bus stop and railway station directly opposite the site

- 2.6. The bus stop is served by three local bus services with one of these providing access to the local secondary school/grammar school. In addition, the village shop is located within easy walking distance to the north of the site on the opposite side of the railway line and a public footpath leads from this and the centre of the village directly to the application site.

Sole Street, Gravesend

Stops in Sole Street

[The Railway \(opp\) ✓](#)
311 416 695

[Scratton Fields \(opp\) ✓](#)
311 416 695

[Scratton Fields \(adj\) ↗](#)
311 416 695

[The Railway \(adj\) ↗](#)
311 416 695

Bus services

311 [Lower Higham - Cobham - Meopham School - Cobham](#)
Brian Jones Coaches

695 [Grammar Schools - Istead Rise](#)
Arriva Kent and Surrey

416 [Gravesend - Meopham](#)
Redroute Buses

Details of bus services stopping opposite application site

- 2.7. It is therefore reasonable to describe the site as being 'within' the village of Sole Street and in a highly sustainable and accessible location given its proximity to the bus stop, railway station and local services.

- 2.8. There are no substantial trees or other features on the site and landscaping located outside its northern and southern boundaries provides good amenity to neighbouring properties.
- 2.9. The site benefits from an existing vehicular access and dropped curb onto the road that would serve the dwelling that is proposed.



Image showing existing access onto the site and footpath leading into centre of the village to the north

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The application seeks full planning permission to introduce a detached dwelling of two storey design on land to the north of Wildacre and to the south of Montilla/Leighton to infill the existing 'gap' between these adjacent properties.
- 3.2. The proposed dwelling would be set back from the road with the building line of the house staggered back from the highway in order to respond to the building line of Montilla to the north and the set-back position of Wildacre to the south.
- 3.3. The plans illustrate that the dwelling would be served by an existing vehicular access and dropped curb leading onto Sole Street. The proposed house would have a similar footprint to surrounding homes and would be smaller in terms of its footprint relative to the public house that is positioned directly opposite.
- 3.4. The dwelling has been designed in order to comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards Document (2014) with it comprising a four-bedroom 8 person dwelling with a total internal floor area of 256.9m². This would exceed the minimum space standard requirement for a dwelling of this size as prescribed by the Nationally Described Space Standards (130m²). Furthermore, all double bedrooms would meet and exceed the Nationally Described Standard of 11.5m².
- 3.5. At ground floor level the design incorporates the provision of an integral garage along with an open plan kitchen, dining and sitting area, a separate living room, study, utility room and downstairs toilet.
- 3.6. The elevations detail that the dwelling would be of render and weatherboarded design which responds to the character and appearance of surrounding homes within this part of the village that includes dwellings of render and weatherboarded appearance. The use of these materials

would therefore be sympathetic to the site's location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The footprint of the dwelling would sit comfortably within the proposed plot and would appear commensurate in size with surrounding homes.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. Relevant planning policy to the determination of this application principally comprises that contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and the Council's Emerging Regulation 18 Stage Two Consultation Document entitled 'Development Management Policies Document' (October 2020).

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 4.2. The National Planning Policy Framework outlines the Government's commitment to a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan policy without delay.
- 4.3. In terms of delivering a sufficient supply of homes, Section 5 recognised the importance of small sites contributing to meeting the housing requirements of an area and also recognises these are often built out relatively quickly.
- 4.4. Section 9 refers to the promotion of sustainable transport with the thrust of policy encouraging new development in sustainable and accessible locations with good access to public transport.
- 4.5. In relation to the Green Belt, Section 13 outlines the National Green Belt policies. It is then left to the discretion of each individual planning authority as to how it interprets these.
- 4.6. Paragraph 149 outlines what forms of development will be judged to be acceptable on Green Belt land and this includes **limited infilling in villages**. It has since been recognised by case law that the term 'limited infilling in a village' means that what is shown on the policies map as the boundary of a village is not determinative and a decision on what constitutes the limits of a village should be made 'on the ground' by judging each application on its own merits.

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014)

- 4.7. Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy outlines the scale and distribution of development and provides a settlement hierarchy table. This assigns Sole Street as comprising a Fourth Tier Settlement. It is recognised as being a 'village'.

Table 2: Settlement Hierarchy

First Tier Settlements:	Gravesend/Northfleet/Ebbsfleet, i.e. the urban area
Second Tier Settlements:	Istead Rise, Hook Green Meopham, Higham
Third Tier Settlements:	Culverstone Green, Meopham Green, Vigo
Fourth Tier Settlements:	Cobham, Shorne, Sole Street
Other Settlements:	Harvel, Lower Higham, Luddesdown, Lower Shorne, Shorne Ridgeway, Three Crutches

Source: Settlement Hierarchy Technical Paper December 2009

- 4.8. The policy states that in the rural area development will be supported within rural settlements and it is compatible with National policies for protecting the Green Belt and other policies within the plan.
- 4.9. Policy CS12 - green infrastructure requires for no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough. It therefore seeks to ensure that no harm to any protected species is caused by new development and that biodiversity enhancements are employed within new development proposals.
- 4.10. Policy CS16 refers to the provision of affordable housing within the Borough and specifies that affordable housing to be sought for developments of 3 or more units within the rural area or on sites of more than 0.1 hectares in size. In this case, the application does not trigger a requirement for the provision of affordable housing or a contribution towards it.

- 4.11. Policy CS12- Green infrastructure prescribes that the overall landscaped character and valued landscapes of the Borough will be conserved, which includes the Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 4.12. Policy CS15 concerns housing density and requires all new housing to be developed of a density that is consistent with achieving good design and where it does not compromise the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated. In the rural area, new residential development is expected to achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare but having regard to the character and appearance of the surrounding area is of paramount importance to determining whether this figure is achievable.
- 4.13. Policy CS19 outlines the development and design principles that will be used to assess all applications. This requires for all development to be of a high quality of architectural design that conserves and enhances the character of the local built, historic and natural environment. It also seeks for all new development to integrate well with the surrounding local area.
- 4.14. In relation to Green Belt policy, the most up to date policy in this regard which has been adopted comprises that contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. However, the Council's Regulation 18 Development Management Policies Document provides useful further guidance although this emerging policy has not yet been adopted.

Draft Development Management Policies Document (October 2020)

- 4.15. The emerging Gravesham Local Plan includes a detailed summary of how the Council will apply the terms of National Green Belt policy.
- 4.16. Section 3.7 provides detailed advice in relation to limited infilling in villages and a copy of this section of the plan forms **APPENDIX 1** of this statement. Paragraph 3.7.2 acknowledges that in terms of limited infilling in villages, the Council has identified a number of rural settlements inset from the Green Belt and Sole Street is one of these. . The guidance then notes the terms of Core Strategy Policy CS02 which states that within the rural area development that is

technically outside the settlement will be supported where it is compatible with National Policies for protecting the Green Belt. The Council's Emerging Policy accepts that Sole Street is a village with it defined in a settlement hierarchy.

- 4.17. Paragraph 3.7.6 specifies that under a plan led system, applications for planning permission are to be determined in accordance with policies in the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In the case of infilling, case law is recognised as determining that in terms of limited infilling in a village, what is shown on the Policies Map as the boundary of the village is not determinative and a decision on what constitutes the limits of a village should be made 'on the ground'.
- 4.18. Considering whether a site lies within a village or outside it, the Council will therefore have regard to both physical or functional relationships between the site and village and the surrounding countryside. The guidance goes on to specify that what constitutes limited infilling in a village is likely to be case specific. The term 'limited infilling' would therefore be taken to comprise the development of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage or involving a group of buildings, where a site is capable of accommodating no more than one or two dwellings.
- 4.19. Great importance is also placed upon ensuring that a site is sustainably located. Therefore, the Council will also assess the suitability of a site for the proposed use having regard to the level of dependence on the private car, the distance to shops and other services that may need to be accessed on a day-to-day basis and how this might be physically accessible not only by car but by walking or cycling.
- 4.20. Proposed Policy GB6 outlines the detailed text of the proposed Policy that relates to infilling with this stating that in considering proposals for limited infilling in villages the boundaries of rural settlements inset from the Green Belt shown on the Policies Map will be taken as the starting point for determining where limited infilling in villages is considered acceptable. It is therefore a reasonable expectation that any infilling within the Green Belt must be closely linked to a settlement boundary of a defined village in the Borough.

5. PLANNING MERITS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. The principal issue to be assessed as part of this planning application is whether the introduction of a dwelling on the site can be justified having regard to its location within the confines of the Green Belt and if therefore its development can reasonably be concluded to comprise 'limited infilling within a village setting'.

The Green Belt

- 5.2. In order to justify the application on Green Belt grounds, it is necessary to satisfy the Council that compliance with paragraph 149(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework is achieved, along with a more specific, helpful guidance is contained within the emerging Draft Development Management Policies Document as attached in **APPENDIX 1**.
- 5.3. The Council's emerging guidance states that the boundary of an existing village will be a helpful starting point to help determine whether a site can reasonably be described within a village but will not be the determinative factor.
- 5.4. In this case, the application site is almost directly adjacent to the village boundary that lies to the north, which runs along the opposite side of the railway line. It is therefore reasonable to describe the site as appearing as part of the village with it being directly adjacent to the south of the village boundary. The site therefore forms part of the village of Sole Street which is recognised as a defined 'village' by the Council's Settlement Hierarchy within the Core Strategy.
- 5.5. It is also necessary to demonstrate that the site would form an infill plot and here there is either a requirement to show that the development comprises the filling in of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage or the development of the site is positioned around a group of buildings and is capable of accommodating no more than one or two dwellings.

- 5.6. In this case, the application site is located between two detached dwellings to the north and a further dwelling to the south. The plot size is commensurate with the neighbouring dwelling to the south and would also sit comfortably with the scale and nature of the detached dwellings that can be seen on both sides of the application site. In addition, the land is located directly opposite the village pub. On three sides therefore, the site adjoins either residential development or the village public house. It can therefore be reasonably described as forming a gap between the existing frontage and comprising a site that is surrounded on three sides by development that is within the setting of the village of Sole Street.
- 5.7. The Council's guidance also requires an applicant to demonstrate that a site is sustainable. In this case, the evidence presented demonstrates that the site is located directly opposite the public house with the village bus stop located immediately in front of the public house. It is also located directly opposite the mainline railway station providing regular commuter services into London. Furthermore, there is a public footpath located immediately in front of the site and adjacent to the highway, with the centre of the village a short walk away to the north on the opposite side of the railway line. The site is barely 5 minutes' walk away from the village shop to the north.
- 5.8. The sustainable credentials of the site are unquestioned in this case. It is within a highly sustainable position within the village that will encourage the use of sustainable transport modes including walking and cycling as an alternative to the private car.
- 5.9. It is acknowledged that applications of this nature will be dealt with on their own merits and what constitutes limited infilling within a village will be an assessment that is made 'on the ground' by the Council. It is also acknowledged that the onus will be on an applicant to demonstrate how an application comprises limited infilling.
- 5.10. The above review of the site confirms that it is within the village of Sole Street and that it comprises 'infilling' and this is strongly supported by the sites sustainable credentials. It is

therefore reasonable to conclude that the application represents an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt in compliance with the terms of Council policy and paragraph 149(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

- 5.11. This conclusion is further supported by other examples of infilling that has been approved within the County and two case studies are provided below:

Haresfield, Badgers Road, Badgers Mount, TN14 7AY

- 5.12. In the case of Haresfield, Badgers Mount, Sevenoaks District Council refused planning permission for the erection of a single detached dwelling on an infill plot that sat outside the limits to built development of the village of Badgers Mount.



Site plan for infill development at 'Haresfield'

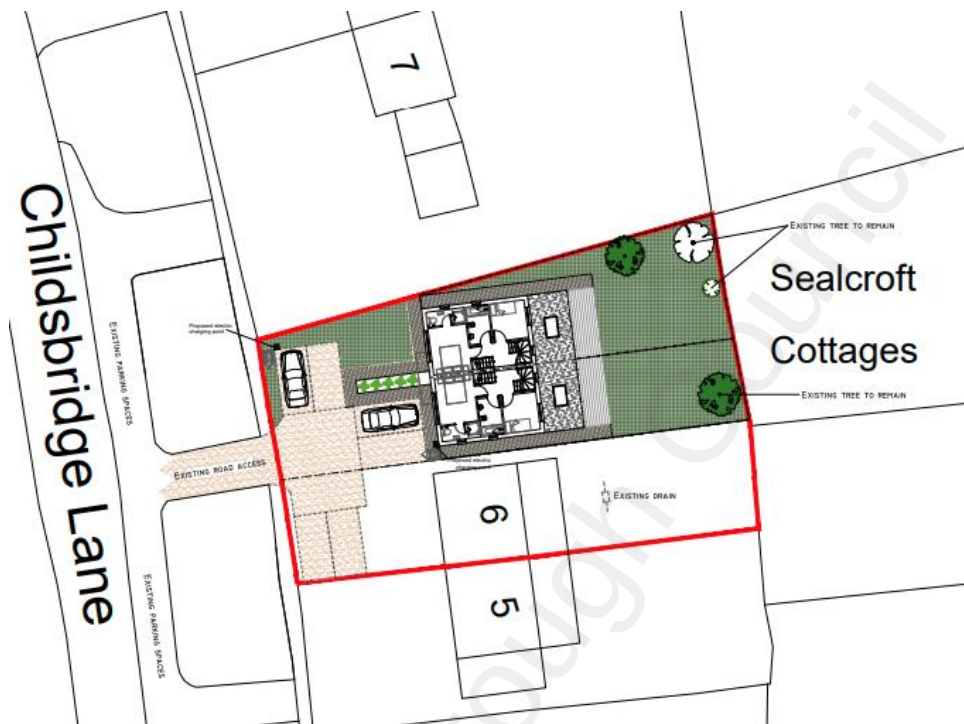


Extract from Sevenoaks Local Plan Proposals map with village boundary in light hatching and Green Belt shown as darker green (the site in this case is also within an AONB)

- 5.13. In allowing a subsequent appeal (**ATTACHED AS APPENDIX 2**), the Inspector accepted that the application involved limited infilling and noted that the gap between the adjacent dwellings in that case (Haresfield and Selworthy) was atypical of the pattern of development in the road. The Inspector was satisfied that the size of the gap allowed the development of one dwelling whilst retaining spaces between itself and the buildings on either side typical of the pattern of development in the vicinity. The same conclusion can therefore be reached in relation to the application site in this case although the land at Sole Street is a much more sustainable and accessible location by comparison.

Land West of 6 Seal Croft Cottages, Seal, Kent

- 5.14. In the case of the Land to the West of 6 Seal Croft Cottages, planning permission was approved for an infill development outside the limits to built development of the adjoining village (Seal) within the District of Sevenoaks.



Approved site plan



Extract from Sevenoaks Local Plan Proposal Map showing sites location outside the defined village boundary of Seal to the south

- 5.15. In granting planning permission, the Council accepted that the site was outside the village confines but did comprise 'limited infilling' as it would appear in keeping with the adjacent residential development on either side of it. A copy of the Council's delegated report which accompanied its decision in that case is attached in **APPENDIX 3** of this statement.
- 5.16. These case studies therefore further support the infilling case now advanced on Land opposite the Railway Inn, Sole Street. The application can therefore be fully supported on Green Belt grounds.

Other Material Planning Considerations

- 5.17. The design of the dwelling would appear in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the scale of the detached properties that can be seen immediately to the north and south of the site. Furthermore, the dwelling would be positioned away from adjacent homes ensuring that it does not appear overbearing, oppressive or harmful to the privacy of neighbouring properties.
- 5.18. The house would be served by an existing vehicular access leading on to Sole Street and adequate space would be provided in front of the dwelling for vehicles to manoeuvre and emerge onto the highway in a forward gear. Furthermore, parking would be provided on site in accordance with the Council's adopted standards whilst limiting the amount of hardstanding associated with the new driveway.
- 5.19. The Council will appreciate that the building line of the proposed house has been set back from the highway in order to sit comfortably with the building line of adjacent homes to the north and south. In addition, important landscaping outside the site boundaries is to be preserved along the northern, southern and rear boundaries which both benefits the amenities of adjacent properties and that would also ensure that the openness and character of the Green Belt and this part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is adequately preserved.

- 5.20. The land is at present maintained and simply comprises an area of grassland/scrubland of little landscape significance. There are no trees on the site to be removed and therefore no harm would be caused to any important tree species. Having said this the applicant would introduce biodiversity enhancements on site and these could adequately be secured via a suitable planning condition in order to comply with Core Strategy policy.
- 5.21. Taking these material considerations into account, the application complies with the terms of all relevant planning policy, and it is therefore requested for planning permission to be granted.