



Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No:	20260624
Location:	Land West Of Steeles Wood Wrotham Road South Street Meopham
Description:	Conversion of existing barn into 5 x 4-bed residential units, together with provision of associated parking.
Applicant:	Mrs S Foy
Site Visit Date:	3 rd August 2026 and 2 nd September 2024 (previous site inspection)

Submitted Documents/Plans

Planning Application Form;
Site Location Plan
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-01-EP-A1 – Existing Ground Floor Plan;
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-02-EE-A1 – Existing Elevations;
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-03-PGF-A1 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan;
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-04-PFF-A1 – Proposed First Floor Plan;
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-05-PE-A1 – Proposed Elevations;
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-06-ESP-A1 – Existing Site Plan;
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-07-PSP-A1 – Proposed Site Plan;
Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-08-VVS-A1 – Visibility Splays;
Supporting Information – Supporting Statement (April 2026);
Supporting Information – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2024/04/28 KB Ecology (June 2024);
Supporting Information – Structural Assessment (June 2024);
Supporting Information – Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment – 0571 Kent Sussex Ecology (July 2026);
Supporting Information – BNG Condition Assessment;
Supporting Information – BNG Metric.

~~Drawing No. 07-PSP – Proposed Site Plan.~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20240604	Conversion of existing barn to three residential units, together with provision of associated parking and private amenity space and removal of rear canopy to barn and existing WC, office and stables.	Permitted	11.09.2024
20190609	Erection of a barn for the storage of hay, straw and other bedding, and to include two secure spaces for use as a tack room and hard feed storage,	Permission	06.08.2019
20180219	Change of use of the land for the stationing of 1 mobile home, 1 touring caravan and erection of a utility/dayroom for ancillary use; and formation of a hardstanding.	Refused	29.11.2018
20150645	**REVISED PLAN**	Permission	18.11.2015

	Continued use of the agricultural barn as a livery stable, retention of the existing hay barn, shipping container and formation of an equestrian sand school.		
20080512	Application for approval of condition 3 of planning permission reference number 20071088 relating to the screening of the barn from the main road.	Approval of Details	21.10.2008
20071088	Change of use from agricultural barn to B8 commercial storage.	Permission	07.02.2008
19920290	Use of land for trotting events for 6 days per calendar year.	Refused	13.07.1992

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS16 – Affordable Housing
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C11 – Change of Use of Redundant Buildings in the Countryside
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- T4 – Development outside the Built-Up Area
- T5 – Access to the Identified Highway Network
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites

As set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012 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

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 (2026), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2026)

- Section 3 – Decision-making
- Section 4 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 6 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 12 – Making effective use of land
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land
- Section 14 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Section 15 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 19 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Section 20 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 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)
- Gravesham Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Emerging Local Plan as a Material Consideration

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) make it clear that planning applications can only be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Decision Making Policy DM4 of the Framework sets out that when considering development proposals, relevant policies may be given weight, however, this is subject to:

- The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- The degree of compliance of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the policies for plan-making in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework, the greater the weight that may be given to them).

West Oxfordshire District Council v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government & Rosconn Strategic Land Ltd [2018] EWHC 3065 (Admin) is a High Court judgement that deals with the weight to be given to a Regulation 19 Local Plan. In this judgement, the Court found that the weight to be given to an emerging Local Plan was a matter of planning judgement, which had to be reached having fully considered the relevant part of the Framework, which from 17 August 2026 Decision Making Policy DM4 of the Framework.

The Council's emerging Local Plan has reached the Regulation 19 Consultation stage, with the consultation having ended on 18 August 2026. The emerging Local Plan does not form part of the Development Plan. The Council is aware that third parties have raised objections to the wider emerging Local Plan and specific policies within it. Therefore, at present the Council cannot categorically state that the emerging Local Plan can be considered sound and consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) [as an emerging Local Plan being brought forward under the legacy system, it would be examined under the 2024 Framework]. Taking this into consideration, one can only conclude that at this stage of the process, **limited (i.e. minimal) weight should be afforded to the emerging Regulation 19 Local Plan.**

This position would only change once the emerging Local Plan has progressed towards submission and examination, with the Council being fully aware of policies that are subject to unresolved objections and with knowledge of policies that have had their soundness and conformity against the Framework challenged.

This approach accords with the approach taken in a separate High Court case, Gladman Developments Ltd v SSHCLG & Corby Borough Council; & Uttlesford DC [2020] EWHC 518 (Admin) and Court of Appeal [2021] EWCA Civ 104, which was also the subject of a Court of Appeal Ruling [2021] EWCA Civ 104.

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

External

KCC Highways and Transportation

24.08.26

Whilst no TRICS information has been provided, it is noted that the addition of 5 dwellings will not result in a significant impact on the highways network.

The PROW team have provided comments, and we support the comments which request that the applicant considers the pedestrians safety where the PROW crosses over the site access road.

With the above in mind, I refer to the above planning application and having considered the development proposals and the effect on the highway network, raise no objection on behalf of the local highway authority.

05.08.26

In line with the Kent Parking Standards, for a rural location, we now recommend that 3 car parking spaces are provided per each 4-bedroom unit. 1 visitor space across all the 5 dwellings would be acceptable.

The proposal for the conversion of the existing barn into 5 x 4-bed residential units would result in intensification of the use of the existing access and it would therefore be beneficial for the applicant to quantify the uplift in trips by undertaking a TRICS assessment.

As the access is being intensified, we would need to be provided with the required visibility splays in line with the 30mph speed limit.

Please also provide pedestrian splays.

KCC Public Rights of Way (PROW)

Public Right of Way NS265 crosses the access road to the site. The applicant should ensure that users of the public right of way are not adversely affected by construction activities and that appropriate consideration is given to pedestrian safety both during construction and following completion of the development. I enclose a copy of the Public Rights of Way network maps showing the line of the path for your information.

The granting of planning permission confers no other permission or consent on the applicant. It is therefore important to advise the applicant that no works can be undertaken on a Public Right of Way without the express consent of the Highways Authority. In cases of doubt the applicant should be advised to contact this office before commencing any works that may affect the Public Right of Way. Should any temporary closures be required to ensure public safety then this office will deal on the basis that:

- The applicant pays for the administration costs.
- The duration of the closure is kept to a minimum.
- Alternative routes will be provided for the duration of the closure.
- A minimum of six weeks' notice is required to process any applications for temporary closures.

This means that the Public Right of Way must not be stopped up, diverted, obstructed (this includes any building materials or waste generated during any of the construction phases) or the surface disturbed. There must be no encroachment on the current width, at any time now or in future and no furniture or fixtures may be erected on or across Public Rights of Way without consent.

KCC Heritage

Thank you for your letter consulting us on the above planning application. In this instance I suggest that no archaeological measures are required.

I hope that the above is helpful and would be pleased to discuss further if required.

Meopham Parish Council

We do not object to the conversion of this barn. Permission for residential conversion of this building was granted in September 2024 under 20240604 and is extant until September 2027. The Council accepted then that the barn is of permanent and substantial construction, that its re-use falls within paragraph 155(d) of the Framework, and that the location is sustainable.

The applicants making fuller use of the roof void is acceptable. If they can get more floorspace out of the building without changing its envelope, that is a sensible use of an existing structure.

Our objection is to what they are doing with that gain. Rather than better houses, the extra roof space is being used to take the scheme from three units to five. Everything that follows from those two extra units happens outside the barn, on open Green Belt land, and it breaches the Council's own published standards in at least two places.

- What has actually changed - The permission granted in 2024 was for three dwellings of 183.14 sqm each, made up of 132 sqm on the ground floor and 49 sqm in a partial roof conversion. About 549 sqm of dwelling in total. This application is for five units of 145.0, 142.7, 142.7, 142.7 and 145.0 sqm. About 718 sqm in total. The ground floor is essentially unchanged at 384 sqm. The first floor goes from 147 sqm to 334 sqm. So the roof void is being converted much more fully, which is fine, and the number of households on the site rises by two thirds, which is not the same thing at all. The supporting statement describes this as a revised internal arrangement wholly contained within the established building envelope. The floorspace is. The consequences are not.
- GBC's own standards on amenity space - When GBC assessed the three-unit scheme in 2024 its officer recorded that each plot would have 103.8 sqm of garden, that this exceeded the 100 sqm minimum in the Gravesham Residential Layout Guidelines, and that the depths met the 10m minimum.

Three units cleared the Council's own threshold by under four square metres. This application puts five gardens into the same rear strip. The supporting statement sets out a room by room internal schedule down to the 3.1 sqm ground floor WC, and says nothing at all about external amenity space. No garden areas are given on the drawings either. That omission is the single most important thing in this application. On the Council's own 2024 figures, five gardens in that space cannot meet the guideline. GBC should require the garden area and depth for each unit to be stated on the plans, and to assess them against the Residential Layout Guidelines before determining the application.

- Parking and hardstanding - The 2024 permission provided two spaces per dwelling, six in total, which met the minimum in the adopted parking standards. This application shows three spaces per unit, fifteen in total, together with five EV charging points and five cycle stores. That is nine additional car spaces, all of them outside the building, all of them on open land within the Green Belt. The applicants' case on openness rests on the removal of ancillary structures amounting to 108.65 sqm of built form. On any reasonable calculation, nine new parking spaces will lay down a similar area of new hard surface. The benefit they are asking the Council to weigh is cancelled out by development they have not weighed at all. GBC should quantify the total area of new hardstanding and to re-run the openness assessment with it included, rather than accepting the 108.65 sqm figure in isolation. We note that Kent Highways raised no objection in 2024 on the basis that the traffic generated by three dwellings would not be significant. Five dwellings with fifteen spaces is a different proposition and Highways should be consulted again on the scheme as it now stands.
- Character - The 2024 officer accepted the appearance of the scheme partly because the boundary treatment was kept light. The report records 1.2m post and rail fencing with 1.8m timber fencing next to the patio areas only, leaving what the officer described as an open visual aspect. Five plots require four internal divisions rather than two, and the submitted site plan labels 1.8m timber garden fencing between each pair of dwellings. That is a greater extent of close boarded fencing than was approved, and it moves the site further towards a suburban terrace and away from the agricultural character the Council relied on in

accepting the earlier scheme. The site sits in the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area, where the guideline is to conserve and reinforce. The proposed boundary treatments need to be compared directly with those approved in 2024, and for the extent of 1.8m fencing to be reduced to what was previously found acceptable.

- **Nature** - The site adjoins Steeles Wood and the Happy Valley Local Wildlife Site, with ancient woodland in the surrounding landscape. Gravesham took that seriously in 2024. It imposed a pre-commencement Construction Environmental Management Plan requiring protection of the Local Wildlife Site and ancient woodland from light, noise and dust, and a lighting condition requiring any external lighting to comply with the Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance, including a light spill plan. Five households with fifteen cars will generate more vehicle movement, more lighting and more disturbance next to that boundary than three households with six. The biodiversity net gain documents were only added to the file on 23 July and have had no scrutiny. We ask that the ecological and lighting conditions from 20240604 are carried forward in full, and that KCC Biodiversity is re-consulted on the scheme as amended rather than relying on the 2024 appraisal.
- **GBC's own conditions** - Two of the conditions Gravesham attached in 2024 are worth putting back in front of it. Condition 7 removed permitted development rights for any new window, door or opening, expressly to protect the amenity and privacy of neighbouring occupants. A first floor of 334 sqm rather than 147 sqm will need considerably more light than the approved scheme. Condition 8 removed permitted development rights for extensions and outbuildings, expressly to ensure adequate private amenity space is maintained. Smaller gardens make that condition more necessary and harder to live with, and it should be imposed again if permission is granted.

In Conclusion – we object to the scheme as submitted, because the increase from three units to five cannot be accommodated on this plot without falling below the Council's own minimum standards for private amenity space, and without a significant increase in hard surfacing and parking on open Green Belt land which has not been quantified or weighed.

We request for four things before determination: garden areas and depths stated on the plans and assessed against the Residential Layout Guidelines; the total new hardstanding quantified and included in the openness balance; Kent Highways and KCC Biodiversity re-consulted on five units rather than three; and the boundary treatments brought back into line with what was approved in 2024.

Internal

GBC Environmental Protection

As with the previous application (20240604) for conversion to 3 units, the following comments are made:

The supporting statement indicates that some stable/livery use is to remain on site (stables/barn, horse walker, driving track, welfare facilities). This continued use could give rise to noise problems and this needs to be considered in terms of noise levels both internally and in the external garden areas. To address this and other matters, the following conditions and informatives are recommended:

Noise Control

Prior to commencement, a noise impact assessment shall be carried out and submitted to the LPA for approval demonstrating that:

- o The internal ambient noise levels in all habitable rooms of the proposed residential dwellings shall not exceed the guideline LAeq values found in Table 4 of BS8233:2014.
- o The maximum internal noise levels in all habitable rooms should not exceed 45dB L_{Amax} more than 10 times per night in accordance with the Professional Practice Guidance on Planning & Noise and the WHO Guidelines for Community Noise.
- o External areas shall be designed and located to ensure that amenity areas are protected on all boundaries as to not exceed 50 dBLAeq,16hr. If a threshold level relaxation to 55 dBLAeq,16hr is required for external areas full justification should be provided.

Watching Brief

The applicant shall undertake a watching brief during construction in case any contamination issue is encountered. If during development any contamination is found, the local planning authority should be informed as soon as practical and the work shall not continue until written agreement is provided by the LPA as to the appropriate measures to be taken to resolve the matter and they are satisfied that those measures have been carried out.

Code of Practice on Construction and Demolition

Please apply as appropriate.

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.

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. If foul sewage is to be removed using non-mains sewerage systems, a sewage treatment plant or septic tank system will be considered in preference to a cesspool. Such a system may require the prior consent of the Environment Agency under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991. Applicants are therefore advised to discuss their requirements with the Environment Agency at the earliest opportunity. It should be ensured that the septic tank or cesspool is of adequate capacity to serve the proposed development and suitable access and hardstanding area shall be maintained to it on site.

GBC Waste and Recycling

I have reviewed the planning application and confirm I am happy with the waste & recycling provision.

However, the properties will be away from the public highway, so on collection day both properties will need to place their bins at the end of the accessway adjacent to the public highway (South Street).

The provision of the bins is the responsibility of the developer, this can be done via the Council's Waste Management Team at waste.management@gravesham.gov.uk.

The residual and recycling bins will be emptied on an alternate basis once a fortnight with food waste collected weekly.

Neighbouring properties

The application was advertised by the displaying of a site notice and press notice and individual letters sent to 3 surrounding properties with an overall expiry date of 28th August 2026. No comments have been received.

Officer's Analysis

Site Description

The application site forms part of the Steeles Wood Farm which is located within the Green Belt, the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area and an area of archaeological notification area.

Proposal

The application seeks permission for the conversion of existing barn into 5 x 4-bed residential units, together with provision of associated parking.

The existing stable block forms part of the Steeles Wood Farm and is located to the west of the site. The proposal would result in its conversion from an existing stable block to a 5no. two storey four bedroom properties with separate living room, wc, utility, study and open plan kitchen/dining room on the ground floor and four double bedrooms and bathroom on the first floor. Each property has a private garden with cycle storey and two parking spaces directly to the front with an additional parking space located to the south of the stable block and one communal visitor space.

Proposed Site Plan



Proposed Elevations



Proposed South Elevation @ 1:100



Proposed North Elevation @ 1:100

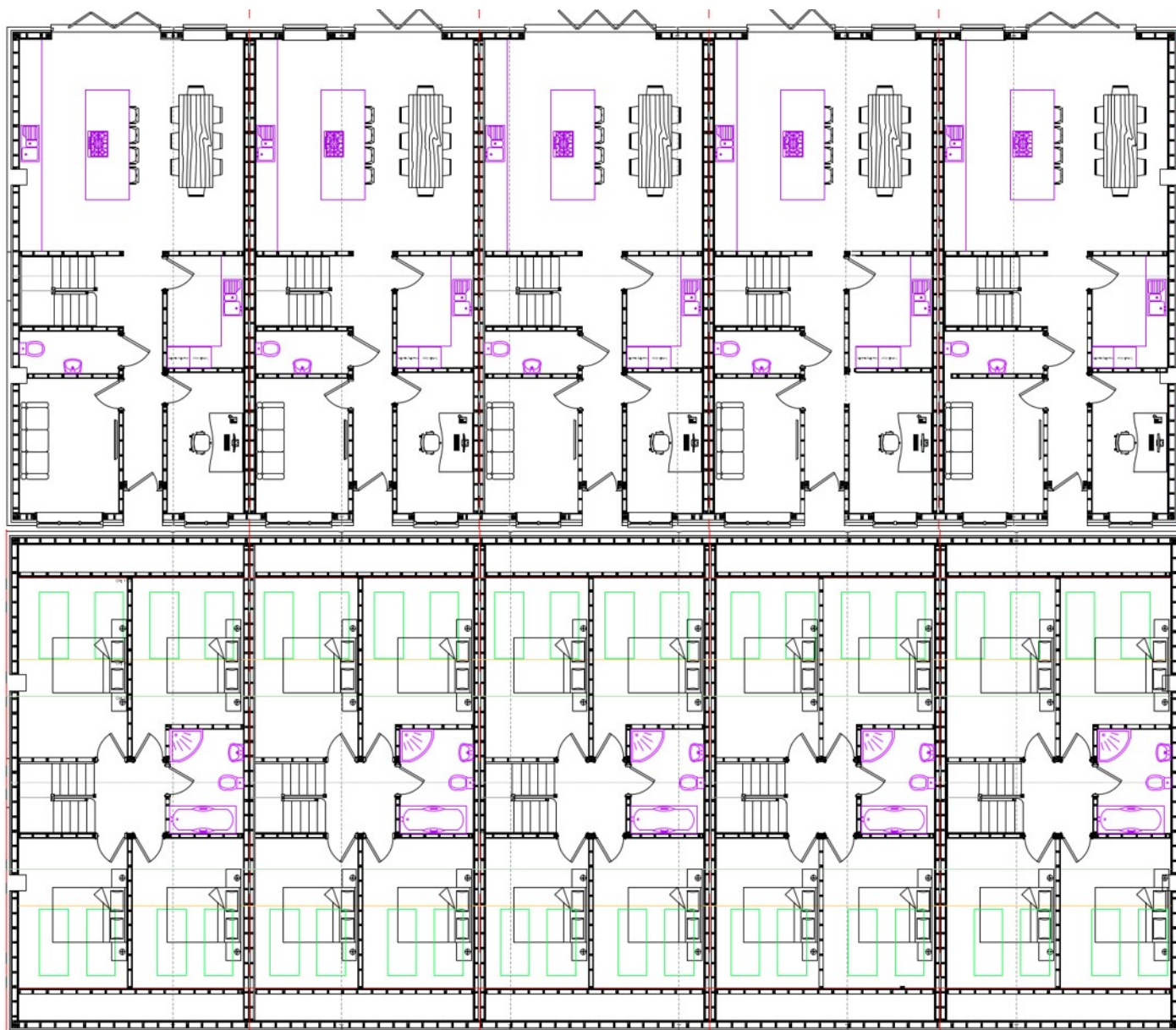


Proposed West Elevation @ 1:100



Proposed East Elevation @ 1:100

Proposed Floor Plans



Principle

The principle issues in determining this application;

- Housing Need;
- Green Belt;
- Character and Appearance;
- Amenity of Future Occupiers;
- Neighbouring Amenity;
- Parking and Highways; and
- Other matters

It is also noted that the 2024 planning permission for the conversion of the stable building into three residential units remains capable of implementation. Consequently, the principle of the building's conversion to residential use has already been accepted and established through the earlier permission.

Housing Need

The Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted by the Council in September 2014 and is more than five years

old. Local housing need is therefore calculated using the Government's Standard Method, establishing a baseline requirement of 687 dwellings per annum.

The Housing Delivery Test (HDT), published by the Government on 17 August 2026, sets out that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies within the Borough. National decision-making policy S3 of the Framework sets out that decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, as follows:

- a) National decision-making policy S4 of the Framework should be applied when considering development proposals within settlements;
- b) National decision-making policy S5 of the Framework should be applied when considering development proposals outside settlements; and
- c) In all locations, development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the decision-making policies of the Framework are to be approved without delay.

The Council's most recent Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement, covering the period 2025-2030, identifies a deliverable supply of 2,053 dwellings against a buffered requirement of 4,056 dwellings (based on the 2025 outcome of the standard method). The Council is therefore currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. This position equates to a housing land supply of 2.53 years.

National decision-making policy HO7 sets out that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of providing homes which will contribute towards meeting the evidenced accommodation needs of the community, taking into account evidence produced for the Council e.g. a local housing needs assessment, and the needs for different groups.

The proposed development is for a net increase of 5 residential units, which would contribute towards meeting an unmet need for general market housing as identified in the Council's Local Housing Need Assessment (October 2025). Therefore, substantial weight should be afforded to meeting the needs of the housing needs of the community.

However, this has to be balanced against other requirements of the Development Plan and the NPPF 2026, including as set out in National decision-making policy DP3 Para.3, compliance with relevant development plan policies when assessing the design quality of proposals i.e. Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles. This and other matters will be discussed in detail in the sections below.

Green Belt

Policy CS02 states that development in the Green Belt that proposes to maintain and diversify the rural economy will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy.

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.

Policy GB2 states that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

e. Assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Policy GB1 states that the general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions.

Policy GB6 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. '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.

Policy GB7 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

a. Development which is for agriculture, horticulture and forestry, or which is solely for nature conservation, restoration and/or enhancement;

b. The reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the original building⁴⁰. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

c. Limited infilling in villages lying within the Green Belt;

d. Limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in this Framework or the development plan (for instance, on a rural exception site);

e. The redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed-use including residential), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt;

f. Certain other forms of development, provided the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised, and there would not be a significant conflict with the Green Belt purposes. These are:

i. Mineral extraction and processing, engineering operations, and transport, electricity network, water and telecommunications infrastructure required in a Green Belt location);

ii. Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order;

iii. Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

iv. The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments.

g. Development where all of the following apply:

i. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

ii. There is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed⁴¹;

iii. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3 of this Framework⁴²; and

iv. In the case of major development involving the provision of housing, the development proposed complies with policy GB8.

h. Residential or mixed-use development which would:

i. Be within reasonable walking distance of a well-connected station (applying the definitions in the glossary at Annex B);

ii. Be physically well-related to the station or the settlement within which the station is located;

iii. Be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure;

iv. Not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location; and

v. In the case of proposals for major development, comply with policy GB8.

The proposed development comprises the reuse of an existing building and may therefore be considered an exception under Policy GB7(b) of the NPPF (2026). The proposal is for the conversion of an existing stable block that is constructed of breeze block and metal sheeting. The building is not a temporary structure as it has been present on the site since 2003, as can be shown in the following satellite images:

Satellite Images

2003



2007



2012



2017



2024

2026



The undamaged block work and corrugated walls and roof make the building a substantial construction, which has been confirmed by the supporting structural report. The proposal conversion and elevation alterations would not result in the increase of the structure either in footprint or height.

In relation to the land around the barn, the attached timber stables and flat roof extensions to the side and rear would be removed, and low level boundary fencing would be used for the rear gardens with the inclusion of native hedging to screen the building from the road. Access would be from the same point from South Street (Wrotham Road).

Consequently, the proposal would not result in any material increase in the external dimensions, massing or volume of the building. In this respect, the development would not constitute disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and would therefore accord with Policy GB7(b) of the NPPF (2026).

Openness has both spatial and visual dimensions. As the proposal would not increase the physical extent of the building beyond that already established, there would be no adverse impact on the spatial openness of the Green Belt. Whilst the proposal would result in five additional dwellings which would have a domestic appearance, the site is in close proximity to the existing residential dwellings of the west. Overall it is considered that the proposal would not introduce a materially greater level of domestic activity or associated residential paraphernalia that would detract from the rural landscape. Accordingly, there would be no significant harm to visual openness.

It is therefore considered that the openness of the Green Belt would be preserved. For the same reasons, the proposal would not conflict with the Green Belt purpose identified in Policy GB2 of the Framework of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. There is also no evidence to suggest that the development would undermine any of the other Green Belt purposes set out within Policy GB2 of the NPPF (2026).

Character and Appearance

Policy CS12 states that the overall landscape character and valued landscapes within the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that proposals will take account of the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment.

Policy CS19 states that new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive and will conserve and enhance the character of the local, built, historic and natural environment.

The site is located within the Meopham Downs Landscape Character area. The key characteristics include gently undulating topography with a mixture of arable and pasture farmland, neat pattern of small square fields in the south, broader irregular shaped fields to the north, narrow lands and roads lined with hedgerows and traditional architecture surrounding village greens provide local vernacular. The guidelines are to conserve and reinforce.

The site comprises the existing stable building which forms part of this application, together with the associated farm buildings to the east of the site. The remaining site consists of fields, grazing land which is bounded by post and rail fencing. To the east is Bocoda Hill Farm, which has had recent planning approval for the conversion of the stable block to one residential dwelling (App. Ref. 20250942), together with Hamptons Reach, The Granary, Bocoda Hill Farm Cottage and The South Lodge, which are all residential properties. Separating the site from these residential dwellings is South Street which is the main A227 road to Gravesend to the north. The area is rural in character. The existing stable block is of breeze block with metal sheeting construction.

Existing Building



The proposal would create 5no. four bedroom eight person dwellings. The internal layouts would all be the same with each property would providing an entrance hall with the sitting room, study, wc and utility with the stairs to the upper floor being centrally located with the open plan kitchen/diner to the rear. The upper floor have a further 4no. double bedrooms and family bathroom.

The elevational changes include single front door and 2no. modest windows on the front elevation to each dwelling. To the rear 1no. small window and bi-fold doors to four of the properties with the middle unit only have bi-fold doors. Within the roof there would be 4no. rooflights to the front and rear of each property.

Whilst the development would include windows, doors and rooflights, the proposal would not dramatically alter the appearance of the building, with all details relating to external finishes being secured by the imposition of planning conditions. The wooden stables on the east elevation and the staff outbuilding and canopy to the rear would be removed. As such, it is considered that the proposed elevational changes would be respectful and not detract from the original building.

The properties would have off road surface parking to the front for two parking spaces and one additional space located on the opposite side of the access road, with areas of soft landscaping. To the rear, each property would have a private garden area with 1.8m internal fencing to provide privacy, with the remaining

fencing being 1.2m high timber post and rail fencing, leaving an open visual aspect. The proposal also includes the planting of native hedging along the western boundary to act as screening. It is considered that the soft landscaping and boundary treatments would not detract from the character of the existing building and surrounding area.

The development is considered to accord with Policies CS12 (Green Infrastructure) and CS19 (Development and Design Principles) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Sections 13, 14, 19 and 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Sustainable location

The proposal falls under Policy GB7(b) of the NPPF (2026), which, unlike Policy GB7(g), does not require development to be located in a sustainable location and does not specifically require compliance with the locational sustainability requirements of Policy TR3. Nevertheless, in the interests of completeness and robust decision-making, the proposal has been assessed against the objectives of Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2026), which seeks to promote sustainable transport.

The objective of Section 15 of the NPPF (2026) is to ensure that transport considerations are fully taken into account in the assessment of development proposals. Policy TR3 requires development to be located where it supports sustainable patterns of movement, provides good accessibility for all users, and makes effective use of existing and proposed transport infrastructure. Policy TR3(1)(a) states:

"Development proposals which could generate a significant amount of movement, in the context of the area within which they would be situated, should be in locations that are sustainable (or which can be made so, taking into account planned improvements, including any provided for as part of the development itself). This means the location should limit the need to travel, particularly by private car, and offer a genuine choice of transport modes for residents and users, unless the nature of the development would make this impractical."

The site is located within the open countryside, outside any defined rural settlement boundary. Meopham Green lies to the north and provides a limited range of local services and facilities, including a village hall, church (St John's Church of England), The Cricketers Inn public house and recreational open space. However, these are not considered sufficient to meet all day-to-day needs without reliance on private vehicle use. Culverstone Green is located approximately 1 mile to the south and contains a primary school, nursery, petrol filling station and convenience store. Whilst these facilities are accessible on foot, the journey would typically take approximately 20 minutes and may not be suitable for all users, particularly those with mobility impairments.

The site is served by a bus route; however, the frequency and operating hours of the service are limited, reducing its effectiveness as a realistic alternative to the private car, particularly for commuting purposes, including journeys to Meopham railway station. South Street benefits from a footway, which provides opportunities for pedestrian access, however it must be acknowledged that it does not benefit from street lighting and some of the footpath is uneven. Nevertheless, having regard to the rural location of the site, the dispersed nature of nearby facilities and the limitations of public transport provision, it is likely that future occupants would be largely dependent on the private car for many day-to-day journeys. Consequently, the site would not ordinarily be regarded as a sustainable location in transport terms.

However, this must be considered within the specific context of the current application. As noted above, the proposal comprises the conversion of an existing stable building, which falls within the scope of Policy GB7(b), a policy that does not require development to be located within a sustainable location. Furthermore, the building already has permission for the conversion into three dwellings and therefore the principle of the conversion of the building into residential dwellings has already been established. This, together with the existing use as a functioning stable, which already generates vehicle movements associated with the care and management of horses, including regular visits and horsebox movements to and from the site. The conversion of the building to a five four-bedroom dwellings is not considered likely to generate a significant increase in movements when compared with a lawful equestrian use the existing

permission for three dwellings. The proposal would also utilise the existing driveway and access onto South Street.

Policy TR3(1)(b) is not considered directly relevant in this instance, as the development would make use of the existing vehicular access onto South Street and would not require alterations to the local highway network. The site also benefits from connections to the wider road network via the A227 and is served by an existing footway and local bus service.

The proposal would result in five additional dwellings utilising an existing access arrangement. Given the scale of the development, together with the existing permission for three dwellings, as well as the existing lawful use of the building/stable of equestrian use, it is not considered that the proposal would materially increase traffic generation, place additional pressure on the highway network, or give rise to highway safety concerns.

Policy TR3(1)(d) is also of limited relevance to a development of this scale. The proposal involves the reuse of an existing building and is not considered likely to result in any significant adverse environmental effects arising from transport impacts.

Policy TR3(1)(e) requires that, in rural areas, opportunities to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport accessibility, as well as wider connectivity, should be taken where they exist. In this case, the proposal relates to the conversion of an existing stable building to form residential dwellings. The development would utilise existing access arrangements and would not necessitate changes to the surrounding transport infrastructure. Given the scale and nature of the proposal, there are no reasonable opportunities to secure wider transport improvements, and therefore the requirements of Policy TR3(1)(e) are not considered directly applicable.

Policy TR6(4) requires planning permission to be refused where development would have a severe impact on the transport network, in terms of capacity and congestion, or would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. The proposal would be served by the existing access onto South Street. The access benefits from good visibility in both directions and is located on a straight section of the A227. Although the road is subject to a 40mph speed limit, the additional/revised visibility splays as shown on Drawing No. 26015TS-PP-08-VVS-A1 are considered adequate to ensure safe access and egress.

Taking the above into account, it is not considered that the conversion of the existing stable building would generate a significant increase in vehicle movements or give rise to adverse highway safety impacts. Nor would the proposal require additional transport infrastructure or result in a severe impact on the local highway network. As such, Policy TR6(4) is complied with and there is no conflict with Policy TR3 of the NPPF (2026). The development is therefore considered to accord with Policies CS01 and CS02 of the Core Strategy (2014) and the objectives of Section 15 of the NPPF (2026).

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CS19 (LPCS) requires that all development should be 'fit for purpose' and be 'adaptable to allow changes to meet the need of users' and that 'the design and layout of new residential development, including conversion, will accord with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines' (RLG) (2020). Moreover, on 25 March 2015 the Government issued a written ministerial statement, which introduced new technical housing standards in England and set out how these would be applied through planning policy. These standards came into effect on 1 October 2015.

Meopham Parish Council has raised concerns regarding the living conditions of future occupiers, particularly in relation to the size and usability of the proposed garden areas. Whilst the submitted plans do not include annotated garden dimensions, they are drawn to scale and demonstrate that the proposed private amenity spaces exceed the minimum standards set out within the Gravesham Residential Layout Guidelines, as detailed in the following paragraphs.

In respect of boundary treatments, the proposed combination of post-and-rail and close-board fencing is considered acceptable. This approach provides an appropriate balance between maintaining a more open visual appearance across the site and ensuring adequate levels of privacy for future occupiers. Furthermore, the amenity and appearance of the development will be enhanced through the provision of soft landscaping, details of which can be secured by planning condition.

The floor area required for a four-bedroom, eight person dwelling is 124sqm and the proposed dwellings all have an internal floor area greater than 142sqm. The proposed development therefore meet this standards. The bedrooms all the exceed the national standards for double rooms and offer sufficient light, outlook and privacy for future occupiers.

The garden areas for each dwelling exceed the 100sqm minimum and the depths accord with the 10m minimum, within the Gravesham Residential Layout Guidelines.

The boundary fencing have been kept to 1.2m post and rail to respect the character of the area, with the fencing inbetween each property being 1.8m timber fencing to provide privacy for the occupiers which is considered acceptable.

The proposal therefore complies with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Noise

The supporting Planning Statement indicates that some stable/livery use is to remain in site (stables/barn, horse walker, driving track, welfare facilities). The stables/barn is located to the east of the application building and sits parallel to the access track. As such, this continued use could give rise to noise problems. GBC Environmental Protection have not objected on these grounds but have provided some suggested conditions and informative to address the issue.

In addition, it is noted that in appeal decision APP/K2230/W/18/3211138 (attached as Appendix 1) for the construction of 8no. residential dwellings in nearby Istead Rise, the Inspector considered the noise impact on future occupiers of the proposed dwellings of vehicle movements and plant used to access a grain store. The considered that most activity would be during normal working hours and concluded in paragraph 31 *that the noise generated by the activity associated with the retained agricultural building could, potentially, result in occasional exceedances of background levels by a sufficient amount to have a noticeable effect on future occupiers. However, having regard to the likely frequency and times of day of those activities, I consider that, their overall noise impact would not be significant.*

The site is currently used for stabling of horses. It is likely that there would be vehicle movements during the day to tend to them, however on the balance of probabilities, it is unlikely that large vehicle movements would be late at night. Furthermore, due to the layout of the road, vehicles would generally be moving at lower speeds.

Neighbouring Amenity

The closest residential dwelling is located over 100m to the west. Due to the distance of the stable building to the surrounding properties, it not considered that the proposal would have any significant impacts on neighbouring amenity. Accordingly, the proposal would not result in any unacceptable harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers or the residents of the host dwelling. The development is therefore considered to safeguard residential amenity and complies with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Parking and Highways

There are no parking or highway issues related to this proposal. The existing access will be used and proposed vision splays provide open views of South Street Road to the north and south. The proposed parking provides 3 spaces per dwelling, which exceeds the minimum of 2 spaces and as such would accord with Gravesham's adopted parking standards (SPG4) (2006).

The proposed dwellings are not expected to increase vehicular movements within the area significantly. As the access to the existing site is in regular use and therefore, the impact on the highways network and traffic generation are low. It is not considered the vehicle movement, noise and lighting would be different to the existing.

In relation to the intensification of the existing access. KCC Highways and Transportation made no objection to this and consider that the additional traffic generation from three dwellings would not be significant and is therefore acceptable.

The proposal is in accordance with Policy CS11 (Transport) (LPCS) and Policies T1 (Impact on Highway) and T5 (Access to Identified Highway Network) (LPFR).

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Affordable Housing

Meopham Green does not form part of any of the Statutory Instruments such as The Housing (Right to Acquire or Enfranchise) (Designated Rural Areas) Order 1997. Neither, has it been designated as a rural area under Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985. Therefore, the Council in its housing role is unable to stop households who are allocated new council homes from exercising their legal Right to Buy.

Policy HO8 of the NPPF (2026) states that *where development proposals include the reuse or redevelopment of vacant buildings, any affordable housing contributions which are due should be reduced by a proportionate amount, equivalent to the gross floorspace of the existing building or buildings.*

The proposal falls within the exemption allowed for under the NPPF (2026) in Policy GB7(b) and as such there is no requirement for affordable housing. The proposal is not considered to be inappropriate development in the context of the NPPF (2026). Consequently, the proposal would not be contrary to Policy CS02 (LPCS) or the NPPF (2026). In light of this conclusion, there is no requirement to separately assess the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt, as this is not a determinative factor in gauging inappropriateness for proposals that fall under paragraph Policy GB7(b) of the NPPF (2026).

Biodiversity and Ecology

The NPPF (Section 19) seeks to ensure that any development result in a biodiversity net gain. The site comprises previously developed land, with no known ecological designations, priority habitats, or protected species records. This has been supported by the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2024/04/28 KB Ecology (June 2024).

Meopham Parish Council have raised concerns regarding the increased intensity of the development resulting from the proposed increase from three to five dwellings. It is noted that the site lies adjacent to Steeles Wood and the Happy Valley Local Wildlife Site, with areas of ancient woodland in the wider landscape. The Parish Council contend that the additional dwellings, parking provision and associated activity could result in increased vehicle movements, lighting, noise and general disturbance when compared to the previously approved scheme.

It is also noted that the previous planning permission (reference 20240604) secured ecological safeguards through conditions requiring the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan and details of external lighting to ensure protection of adjacent habitats and compliance with relevant bat conservation guidance. The Parish Council have expressed concern that the Biodiversity Net Gain information submitted in support of the current application has not been subject to the same level of scrutiny as the earlier scheme, and that further consultation with KCC Biodiversity should therefore be undertaken. As such, the ecological and lighting conditions imposed on the previous permission are carried forward in full on any forthcoming permission.

Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is a way of creating and improving biodiversity by requiring development to have a positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This statutory framework is referred to as 'biodiversity net gain' in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition"). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

The proposed development would be the conversion of an existing building with no extensions. The proposed garden area would be soft landscaped. The land surrounding the existing barn is a mixture of hardstanding, a sand school, grazing land and the associated agricultural use buildings. The supporting planning statement states that the proposed development includes net gain measure such as native hedgerow reinforcement, bat and bird boxes, hedgehog gaps and pollinator-friendly planting. In addition the proposed development would consist of no more than 9 dwellings; on a site no larger than 0.5 hectares; and would not impact more than 25 square meters of priority habitat or metres of linear habitat and would be exempt from the statutory requirement of providing 10% net gain.

As such, the development is exempt from biodiversity net gain.

With regards to ecology, the supporting documents confirm that there was no evidence of roosting bats were recorded, however in order to mitigate against potential adverse effect on biodiversity, a number of conditions have been provided by KCC Biodiversity (Statutory Consultee), together with a condition securing biodiversity enhancement.

Therefore, subject to the aforementioned conditions, the proposal is acceptable and would accord with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy (2014) and Section 19 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

Policy CS11 (LPCS) states that multifunctional linked network of green spaces, footpaths, cycle route and wildlife stepping stones and corridors will be created, protected, enhanced and maintained.

The NS265 PROW crosses the access road to the site. KCC PROW were consulted on the proposals and have raised no objections, subject to information relating to the stopping up of a PROW which can be included as an informative.

Equalities Considerations

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its function, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who

do not;

- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the decision maker, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-england>

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
- Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
- Engagement and the equality duty
- Equality objectives and the equality duty
- Equality information and the equality duty

The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance>

The planning issues set out above do not include any factors that relate specifically to any of the equalities categories set out in the Act, and therefore it has been concluded that there is no impact on equality.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 prohibits authorities (including the Council as local planning authority) from acting in a way which is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. “Convention” here means the European Convention on Human Rights, certain parts of which were incorporated into English law under the Human Rights Act 1998. Various Convention rights are likely to be relevant including:

- Article 8: Respect for your private and family life, home and correspondence
- Protocol 1, Article 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property

Along with any supporting material supplied by the applicant, this report has outlined the consultation that has been undertaken on the planning application and representations made to the Council as Local Planning Authority.

In determining the application, the Council needs to satisfy itself that the potential adverse amenity impacts are acceptable and that any potential interference with the above Convention Rights are legitimate and justified. Both public and private interests are to be considered in the exercise of the Local Planning Authority’s powers and duties. Any interference with a Convention right must be necessary and proportionate. The Council must, therefore, carefully consider the balance to be struck between individual rights and the wider public interest.

In making the recommendation on this application, consideration has been given to the requirements of the Human Rights Act. Where it is engaged, any interference in those rights is considered proportionate, lawful and in the public interest to secure the proper planning of the area in accordance with adopted policy, having regard to any other material considerations.

S106 Contributions

The development is for 5 new dwellings and is therefore under the 10 dwelling threshold for S106 Contributions and will therefore not be required.

Conclusion

Taking all the above into consideration, the development is considered to represent appropriate development within the Green Belt, consistent with Policies GB2 and GB7(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Furthermore, the proposal would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the surrounding countryside, or the wider landscape character area. The development would also provide a satisfactory standard of accommodation for future occupiers without causing any unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents. In addition, the proposal would not generate additional parking demand or give rise to any highway concerns.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), the guidance contained within SPG2 Residential Layout Guidelines and Housing Standards Policy Statement, and the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026). It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to appropriate conditions.

Recommendation

Permission

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Amanda Cue	Team Leader:	Richard Hart
Signed:	<i>A Cue</i>	Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>
Dated:	16 th September 2026	Dated:	17th September 2026