

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Land Adjacent to Dawes Cottage

Demolition of Existing Barn and Erection of Replacement Barn-Style Dwelling

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement accompanies a full planning application for the demolition of the existing barn and the erection of a new barn-style dwelling at land adjacent to Dawes Cottage.

The proposal has been deliberately and carefully designed to respond to:

- Its Metropolitan Green Belt location;
- The established rural and agricultural character of the area; and
- The specific functional requirements arising from a long-term, family-based care arrangement for a severely disabled adult.

This statement explains the design evolution of the scheme and demonstrates compliance with:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places;
- NPPF Section 8 – Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities;
- NPPF Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land (in design and spatial terms);
- Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS19 – Sustainable Development and Design;
- Policy CS20 – Heritage and Landscape;
- Policy CS12 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity.

The design approach integrates architectural restraint with practical living requirements. Functional needs have been accommodated without introducing visual excess, suburban detailing or over-articulation.

2. Site Context and Surroundings

The application site comprises an existing barn structure located within a developed parcel associated with Dawes Cottage. The surrounding character is rural, with open countryside interspersed with established buildings of varying scale and age.

The existing barn is utilitarian in form and appearance, constructed in simple agricultural style with limited architectural merit. Its removal presents an opportunity to replace a visually basic structure with a carefully composed building of improved architectural quality while maintaining a rural typology.

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The proposal has therefore been consciously designed to:

- Avoid suburbanisation;
- Retain a robust agricultural character;
- Limit additional visual impact;
- Maintain openness beyond the established developed parcel.

In spatial terms, the development remains contained within the existing built envelope associated with the dwelling and does not represent outward encroachment into open countryside.

3. Design Principles and Policy Compliance

3.1 National Design Policy (NPPF Section 12)

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF requires development to:

- Function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- Be visually attractive as a result of good architecture;
- Be sympathetic to local character and landscape setting;
- Establish or maintain a strong sense of place;
- Create safe and accessible environments.

The proposal satisfies these objectives by:

- Adopting a simple agricultural barn form reflective of rural context;
- Consolidating massing into a single coherent volume;
- Using restrained and locally appropriate materials;
- Avoiding domestic over-articulation and suburban detailing;
- Providing a safe and adaptable internal layout responsive to care needs.

3.2 Local Plan Policy CS19 – Sustainable Development and Design

Policy CS19 requires development to respond positively to context, protect amenity and deliver high quality design.

The dwelling:

- Responds directly to the agricultural character of the locality;
- Utilises a brick plinth and vertical timber cladding consistent with rural vernacular;
- Maintains subservience within the landscape;

- Avoids overdevelopment of the plot;
- Preserves residential amenity.

The proposal therefore accords with the design and contextual objectives of Policy CS19.

3.3 Policy CS20 – Landscape Considerations

The design retains the spatial openness of the wider site beyond the established developed parcel. The replacement structure does not materially extend into undeveloped countryside and maintains the existing relationship between built form and open land.

The limited footprint and restrained massing ensure that landscape character is preserved.

4. Layout

The dwelling is arranged over two storeys, reflecting the proportions of a traditional barn conversion rather than a suburban dwelling.

The internal layout has been structured to accommodate family occupation associated with long-term care provision. The ground floor provides primary living accommodation and circulation space, enabling practical day-to-day functioning and supervision. The first floor accommodates bedrooms and associated facilities.

The spatial arrangement allows for proximity and functional separation where required, ensuring that care needs can be supported without compromising domestic stability.

Externally, the building sits within the existing developed footprint area and does not extend materially beyond the established built envelope. This approach limits additional spatial impact on Green Belt openness.

5. Scale and Massing

The proposed dwelling adopts a simple rectangular footprint and consolidated dual-pitched roof form consistent with agricultural precedents.

The ridge height and overall proportions have been carefully considered to ensure that the building remains visually subordinate within the wider rural setting.

The massing is expressed as a single, coherent volume rather than fragmented into multiple projecting elements. This avoids visual clutter and reinforces the strong, simple silhouette characteristic of traditional barns.

By consolidating form and limiting articulation, the development minimises perceived bulk and visual intrusion.

6. Appearance and Materials

Material selection has been driven by rural appropriateness, durability and visual restraint.

The external materials comprise:

- A brick plinth at lower level, grounding the structure and referencing traditional agricultural masonry bases;
- Vertical timber cladding above, providing a recessive and textured façade treatment;
- A dark, matt roof finish to reduce visual prominence within the landscape.

The combination of brick and timber introduces depth while avoiding suburban character. Over time, the materials will weather naturally and integrate further with the rural context.

Fenestration has been deliberately controlled. Openings are proportioned and positioned to provide adequate daylight and outlook without creating expansive glazed elevations inconsistent with agricultural typology.

This restrained approach ensures compliance with NPPF design guidance and local plan expectations for contextual design.

7. Landscape and Visual Considerations

The proposal replaces an existing utilitarian barn with a building of improved architectural quality and controlled composition.

From a landscape perspective:

- No built form is introduced into previously undeveloped countryside;
- Development remains within an established residential grouping;
- The majority of surrounding land remains open;
- Visual permeability beyond the built envelope is preserved.

The brick plinth provides visual grounding, while timber cladding and muted roofing reduce contrast against the rural backdrop.

The dwelling will be experienced within the context of existing built form and vegetation rather than as isolated encroachment.

Overall visual impact is limited and proportionate.

8. Access and Movement

Access arrangements remain unchanged. The dwelling will utilise the existing vehicular access serving Dawes Cottage. No new access points are proposed.

Parking and turning are accommodated within the established access area. The proposal does not introduce curtilage subdivision or independent access infrastructure.

The development therefore complies with local accessibility objectives and does not generate material change in movement patterns.

9. Inclusive Design

The design has regard to inclusive access principles in accordance with national policy promoting safe and inclusive communities.

The ground floor layout enables practical movement and supervision. Circulation widths and spatial configuration allow adaptability should mobility requirements evolve.

Given the specific care context associated with the wider site, flexibility has been incorporated to support supervision, assistance and long-term functional resilience.

The design therefore aligns with NPPF Section 8 objectives in supporting vulnerable individuals through safe and inclusive environments.

10. Sustainability

The proposal represents redevelopment of an existing built footprint rather than encroachment into previously undeveloped land.

Environmental measures include:

- High-performance building fabric;
- Renewable energy generation (solar photovoltaic panels);
- Air source heat pump;
- Rainwater harvesting;
- Grey water recycling;
- On-site biodiversity net gain.

These measures demonstrate compliance with Policy CS12 and national objectives for sustainable development.

11. Conclusion

The design approach is deliberate, restrained and contextually responsive.

The proposal replaces an existing barn with a carefully composed barn-style dwelling that respects rural character, maintains architectural simplicity and avoids suburbanisation.

The scale, massing and materials ensure limited impact on openness and landscape character. Inclusive design principles have been integrated to support long-term care needs.

Having regard to national policy promoting high quality design and relevant local design objectives, the proposal represents a well-considered, policy-compliant and proportionate design response.

The development is therefore acceptable in design, landscape and accessibility terms.