



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20220514

Location: Woodhill House, Brimstone Hill, Meopham, Gravesend

Description: Demolition of the existing storage building and the construction of a new garage/car port ancillary to the main residence.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs L Tomlinson

Site Visit Date: 7 June 2022

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form
Design and Access Statement
Drawing no. 209PD-01 (Existing floor plan, Elevations, Site Plan)
Drawing no. 209PD-02 (Proposed Elevations, Floor Plan)
Drawing no. 209PD-03 (Location Plan, Site Plan, Block Plan)

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20171147	Erection of a timber frame outbuilding for the storing of equipment to support the equestrian use.	Refused	13.04.2018
20120276	Erection of stable block comprising five stables and a tack room and construction of a ménage.	Permitted	18.09.2012
20050656	Erection of a detached stable block and hay store.	Permitted	10.11.2005
20020379	Erection of single storey extension on south west elevation to form orangery & indoor swimming pool enclosure, plant room and changing room/shower room/w.c.	Permitted	27.09.2002
19990493	Erection of a two storey rear extension to form enlarged living room and enlarged kitchen with two bedrooms and ensuite bathroom over.	Permitted	30.11.1999
19990494	Details of conversion of stable building into a dwelling pursuant to conditions 2 and 4 of planning permission granted under reference GR/98/378 including provision of integral garage, alterations to all elevations and construction of new slate roof; formation of residential curtilage.	Permitted	30.11.1999

19970878	Application for Lawful Development Certificate in respect of use of dwelling for unrestricted residential occupation.	Granted	31.03.1998
19910749	Removal of agricultural condition attached to planning permission ref. no. GR/75/375.	Refused	27.02.1992
19900262	Erection of two storey side extension to form enlarged kitchen and dining room with two bed- rooms, ensuite bathroom and ensuite shower room over and erection of a first floor over the existing detached storage/games room at the side to form attic/store.	Refused Appeal dismissed	21.08.1990 12.04.1991
19840113	Change of use of land from agriculture to the keeping of horses continued use of former agricultural building for the stabling of horses and erection of a dutch barn	Permitted	25.07.1984
19750375	Erection of a two storey replacement farmhouse and double garage	Permitted	19.08.1975

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C13 – Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) sets out that 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 as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

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 (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020)
- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006)

- SPD – Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (October 2021)
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standards (2015)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)
- The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (2021-2026)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

KCC Heritage were consulted but are not required to comment on this type of application.

Kent Downs AONB

No comments received.

GBC Highways

There are no objections to the proposal, the site benefits from more than adequate car parking. It should be noted that the garage element can only be considered a store as its size does not conform to the guidance in SPG4. The car port would be adequate for two cars.

Meopham Parish Council

No objection to this application.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by individual neighbour letter to 7 properties and on site. The consultation periods expired on 14 and 24 June 2022 respectively.

No letters of representation have been received.

Local Ward Councillors were also consulted and no responses were received.

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application seeks permission for the demolition of the existing storage building and the construction of a new garage/car port ancillary to the main residence.

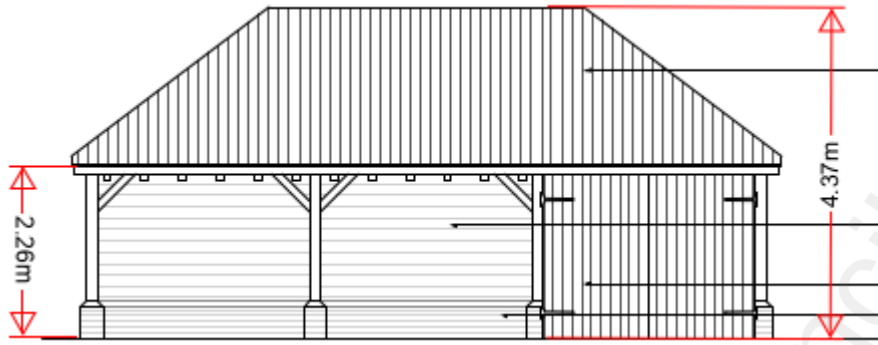
The existing wooden storage building (shed) is rather dilapidated. It has a pitched roof up to 2.6m high to the ridge and 1.9m to eaves. It is 3.02m deep and 6.126m wide.

The proposed building will be located on the site of the existing shed. It will have a pitched and hipped roof up to 4.37m in height to the ridge, and 2.26m to eaves. The footprint will be 6.11m deep and 8.98m wide. The structure will be oak framed with Cedar wood cladding under a plain red tiled roof.

Approximately two thirds of the building will comprise a car port for two cars (the building will be open to the front), and the other third will be for domestic storage with timber doors facing into the driveway.

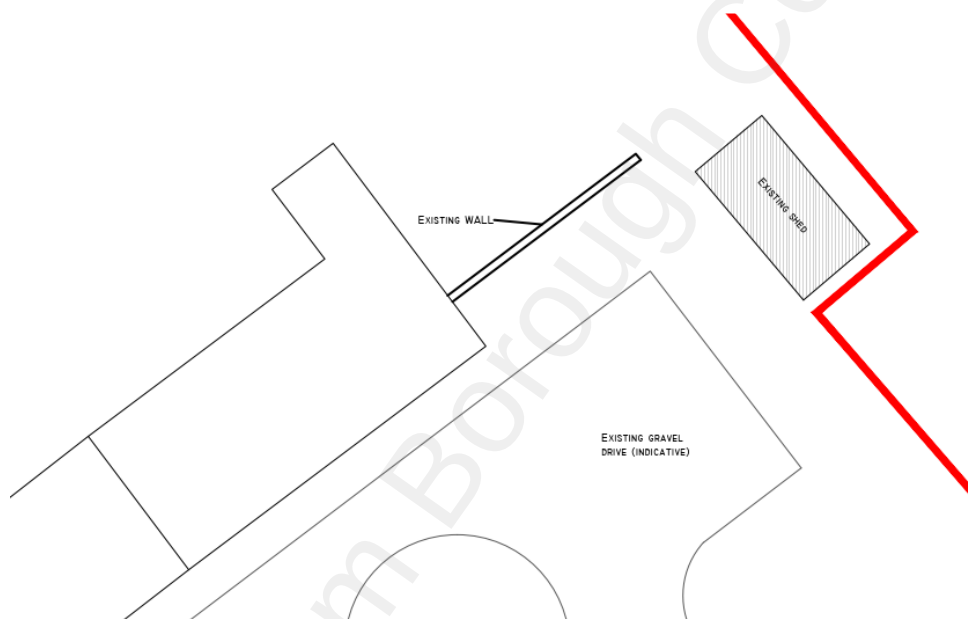
There are currently no facilities on the site for secure storage or enclosures for car parking.

Proposed front elevation:

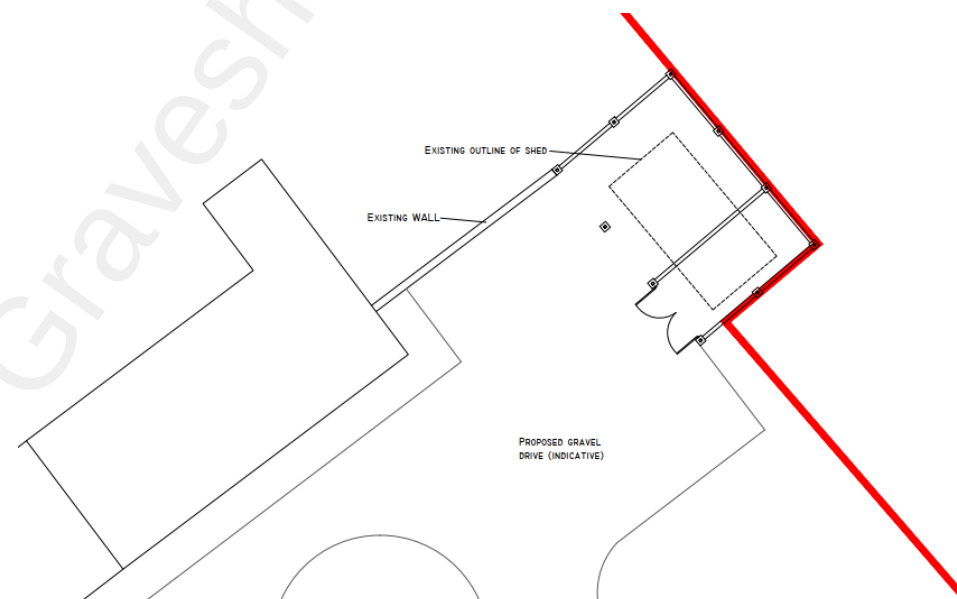


The proposed outbuilding will be accessed from the existing driveway for the house:

Existing site plan:



Proposed site plan:



The application site is located in the countryside in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and in the Green Belt. It is also located in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area.

A similar proposal was submitted in 2017 (see Planning History above). The main reason for this previously refused application 20171147 for a timber frame storage building for the equestrian use at the site in the same location as that proposed under the current application, centred around the excessive scale, mass and height of the building and the resultant impact on the Green Belt. Likewise, the main issues for consideration with this proposal are as follows:

- Principle of development in the Green Belt
- Impact on openness and the character and appearance of the surrounding area

There were no design, residential amenity or highways concerns.

The previous refusal grounds of application 20171147 will be borne in mind in terms of assessing the revised proposal, in order to determine whether these grounds have been adequately addressed and therefore overcome.

In addition, the matter of residential curtilage extent and planning permission for the existing outbuilding should be considered, as it would appear that the curtilage for Woodhill House would be amended with this application and that planning permission was never sought for the outbuilding, which was outside the original curtilage. The existing outbuilding has clearly been on the site for many years; indeed an outbuilding can be seen in the same location on Google Earth images as far back as 2003 at least:

Google Earth 2003:



Google Earth 2020:



Existing outbuilding:

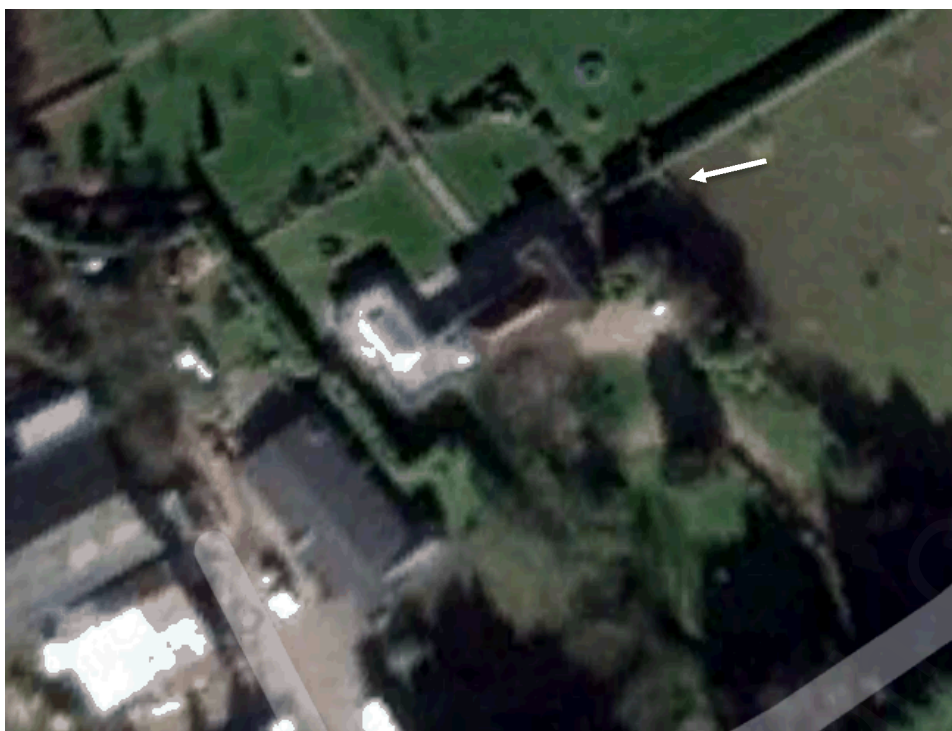




Over time, the residential curtilage of Woodhill House appears to have been extended slightly over into the paddock to the east of the house, around the outbuilding. The outbuilding would appear to have been accessed from the garden to the side of Woodhill House for at least 9 years, though images prior to 2013 are not as clear. The below image is from 2013, where a fence line can be seen that is reflective of the post and rail fence shown in the image above immediately to the left of the outbuilding:



The 2011 image below appears to show the same fence line but the shadowing on the image makes it harder to read:



On balance, it would appear that the residential curtilage has been established around the outbuilding, and the outbuilding has been present on the site, for at least 10 years, and would therefore be immune from any enforcement action.

Principle of development in the Green Belt

Green Belts are of great importance. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by preserving the open and permanent characteristics of Green Belts (paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021). Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021 states that 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.

Local Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt (paragraph 149 of the NPPF 2021). However, there are exceptions to this which, as in the case of this proposal, include:

- (d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- (g) the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development or would not cause substantial harm to openness and would contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need.

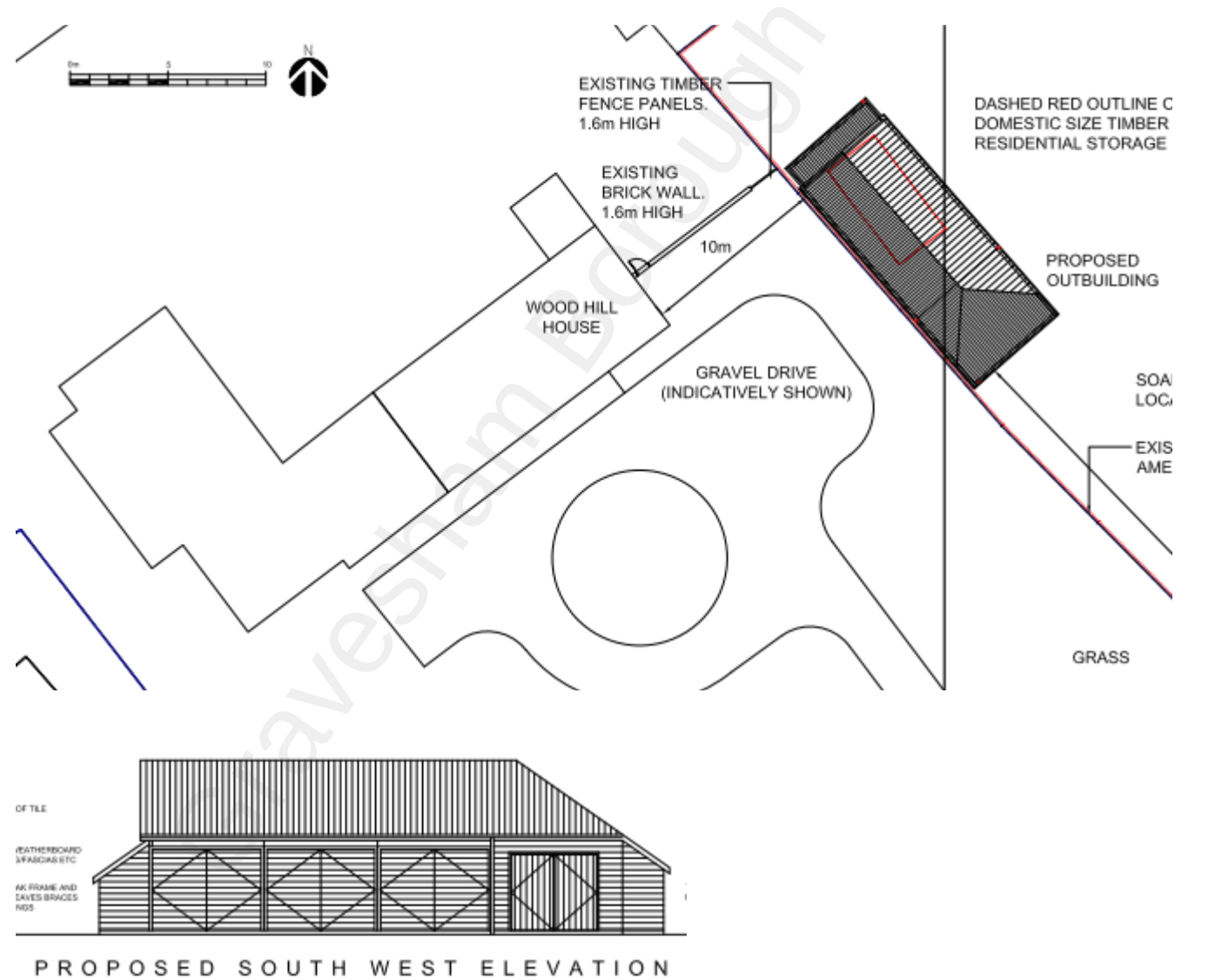
Policy CS02 of the Core Strategy 2014 prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Core Strategy 2014.

Saved Policy C13 of the Local Plan 1994 relates to extensions to dwellings in the countryside, and generally seeks to maintain the open character of the Green Belt and retain a stock of rural dwellings of modest size. In relation to this proposal, criteria (vii) is relevant, which states that proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot.

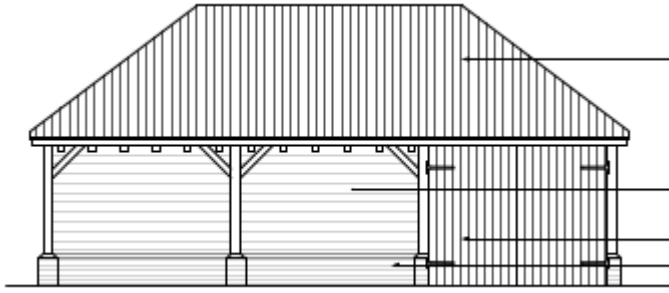
Turning to the matter of the impact of the replacement domestic and ancillary outbuilding in this location in the Green Belt, the proposed replacement outbuilding has been reduced in size and height compared to the previously proposed outbuilding, and it is no longer proposed to be used in relation to the equestrian use at the site; it would be domestic and ancillary to the main house, Woodhill House, for a car port and domestic storage. This is potentially in line with the NPPF exception criteria listed above. However, the proposed outbuilding remains materially larger than the existing outbuilding:

	Existing outbuilding	Previous (20171147)	Proposed outbuilding	Increase over existing (%)
Gross external floor area (m²)	18.5 m²	81.3 (> 62.8) m²	54.9 (>36.4) m²	66 %
Ridge / eaves height (m)	2.6 / 1.9 m	4.4 / 2.4 m	4.37 / 2.26 m	40 / 16 %

20171147 Proposed outbuilding:



Current proposed outbuilding:



Whilst the height and width of the proposed outbuilding have been reduced from the previously refused proposal, it would undoubtedly remain significantly larger than the existing outbuilding. On this basis, the proposed replacement outbuilding would not comply with the requirements of the NPPF, as at 66% larger than the existing outbuilding, it is considered to be materially larger and this would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

As part of the assessment of this proposal, the impact of such an inappropriate development on the openness of the Green Belt must also be considered.

Impact on Openness and Character and Appearance of Surrounding Area

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 001 of the Planning Practice Guidance 2019 on Green Belts looks to assess the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt by taking into account the spatial and visual aspects of a development, its duration and remediability, and the activity levels generated.

As established above, the application proposal, by its size, would involve an inappropriate form of development at the application site that would erode the openness of the Green Belt.

The application site can be described as previously developed land as it is part of an existing residential site. As the proposed development would not provide affordable housing, the proposal can also be judged against the first part of paragraph 145(g) of the NPPF 2019, which seeks to prevent a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development on a site. In this case, the proposal is considered as inappropriate development but its impact on the openness of the Green Belt must be also assessed, and in turn the impact on the character and appearance of the area.

The existing outbuilding is a modestly sized domestic storage building within the curtilage of a large, detached dwelling on a very generous plot. The proposed replacement outbuilding will introduce a much larger, permanent structure than what is existing, and this will clearly reduce and cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt in this location. The proposed outbuilding would also extend beyond the established residential boundary (made up of the north-eastern and south-eastern sides of the existing outbuilding) into the paddock, and would therefore encroach into the open countryside, which is contrary to the purpose of the Green Belt.

Paragraph 130 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that development will add to the quality of an area, be visually attractive, and sympathetic to local character and history. Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy reflects these aims and requires that new development is well-designed and respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The site lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Reflective of paragraph 176 of the NPPF 2021, Policy SD2 of the Management Plan 2021-2026 recognises the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB as the primary purpose of the designation, and this is given the highest level of protection. Policy SD8 states that proposals which negatively impact on the distinctive

landform, landscape character, special characteristics and qualities, the setting and views to and from the AONB will be opposed unless they can be satisfactorily mitigated.

The application site is also located in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area and as such, Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2014 is also relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) will be taken into account in determining applications.

In relation to the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area, the LCA states that the overall condition of the landscape is moderate and that it has moderate sensitivity. It recommends that the strong landscape elements of the area should be conserved, whilst design standards should be defined to halt the erosion of the area with inappropriate development.

The site is fairly open at the front with post and rail fencing and open gates, though Woodhill House and the existing outbuilding are set back from the road and there are trees/shrubs to the front of the property. However, the larger scale of the proposed outbuilding, which would be set forward of the main dwelling, would be visible from the front of the site.



The proposed replacement outbuilding is well designed with the use of high-quality materials. It is traditional and in keeping with the character and appearance of domestic storage/garaging in the rural area. The layout is not unacceptable and access would be appropriate. However, the fact that the proposed outbuilding would be positioned forward of the main dwelling and that it would still be significantly wider, deeper and higher than the existing outbuilding, will add to the amount of built development on the site, and this is considered to have a harmful impact on the openness of the site and an adverse erosive impact on the surrounding Landscape Character Area, which is contrary to the recommendations in the Landscape Character Assessment. In a similar vein, the proposed outbuilding would be more intrusive within its AONB setting.

It must also be noted that the original property has already been extended, as can be seen from the above planning history. Therefore, historical increases in the amount of built development on the site have already had an impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and on the character and appearance of the site. The further built addition to this part of the site in the form of what remains a substantial outbuilding represents a significant change to its rural character and appearance, and in particular, its openness and the openness of the Green Belt within which it sits.

Referring to paragraphs 147 and 148 of the NPPF 2021, inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. As the proposal involves a car port/store for a private dwelling, there are no special circumstances that would outweigh the harm brought about by this inappropriate development.

On this basis, despite a reduction in its size compared to the 2017 proposal, it is considered that the proposed outbuilding would still detract from the openness of the Green Belt and would fail to conserve the rural landscape context of this site within the AONB and Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area. As such, the proposal would not comply with the requirements of Policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014, saved Policy C13 of the Local Plan 1994 and paragraphs 130, 137, 174 and 176 of the NPPF 2021.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Biodiversity

Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy seeks to protect sites designated for their biodiversity value based on their level of importance and enhance, restore, recreate and maintain habitats particularly within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, which is a designation of this site. The development is located within the curtilage of a residential property and on the site of an existing outbuilding. It is not considered that it would be significantly detrimental to biodiversity and therefore is acceptable in this regard.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The excessive size of the proposed outbuilding would detract from the openness of the Green Belt, encroach into the countryside, and fail to conserve the rural landscape context of this site within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area. As such, the proposal would fail to comply with the requirements of Policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan 1994 and paragraphs 130, 137, 147, 148, 149, 174 and 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

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

Case Officer:	Mrs Katherine Parkin	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	7th July 2022	Dated:	08 July 2022