



Delegated Report

Full Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20250942

Location: Bocoda Hill Farm House Wrotham Road South Street Meopham

Description: Conversion of existing stables block to a dwelling.

Applicant: Doctor & Doctor Chatranjan Sehra

Site Visit Date: 15th August 2025

Submitted Documents/Plans

Planning Application Form;
Drawing No. 562/02 – Location Plan (Stables Conversion);
Drawing No. 562/03 – Existing Site Plan;
Drawing No. 562/06 – Existing Stables Block Plan & Elevations;
Drawing No. 562/PL11 – Proposed Site Plan;
Drawing No. 562/PL12 – Proposed Block Plan;
Drawing No. 562/PL13 – Proposed Elevations, Section & Roof Plan;
Supporting Information – Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment - GeoSmart (July 2025);
Supporting Information – Tapco Roofing Products Brochure;
Supporting Information – EV Charger Details;
Supporting Information – Lighting Details;
Supporting Information – Structural Report;
Supporting Information – Planning Statement;
Supporting Information – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – AdonisBlue (24 June 2026); and
Supporting Information – Bat Survey, Mitigation and Enhancement Advice – AdonisBlue (7 August 2026).

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20250666	Erection of a single-storey rear extension to existing garage block to create two additional car spaces and a domestic workshop.	Permitted	01.10.2025
20091037	Application for non-material amendment to planning permission reference number 20090457 to allow the construction of a new dormer window and relocation and reconfiguration of one of the other dormer windows on the south elevation and rearrangement of the internal layout to bedroom 6 and adjoining bathroom and provision of an extra en-suite bathroom between bedrooms 4 and 5.	Approval of Non-Material Amendment	12.01.2010
20090457	Construction of new enlarged roof on eastern side with four additional dormer windows in existing and proposed north roof slope and conversion of additional roof space	Permitted	29.07.2009

	into two bedrooms, bathroom/wc and sitting area.		
20060902	Erection of single storey side extension to form a conservatory.	Application Refused Appeal Dismissed	15.12.2006 15.04.1998
20050493	Extension of the residential curtilage; laying out of a tennis court; re-siting of the swimming pool within the residential curtilage and variation of condition (ii) attached to planning permission ref. No. GR/97/450 to allow three of the existing stables to be used for livery purposes.	Permitted	09.08.2005
20010304	Construction of a sand school.	Permitted	06.06.2001
19980101	Alterations to increase height of part of roof and conversion of roof space to form 2 no. bedrooms, bathroom and bedroom with ensuite bathroom.	Application Refused	14.04.1998
19950114	Retention of vehicular access onto Wrotham Road.	Application Withdrawn	01.01.1998
19970450	Erection of detached stable block comprising isolation stall, tackroom and 3 no. stables with canopy to front and variation of condition (ii) of planning permission ref no. GR/96/737W to allow use of loft space as a hay store and formation of hay loft opening in existing tractor store/garage building.	Permitted	17.11.1997
AP 1997/0000 1/REF	Application for the removal of agricultural occupancy condition granted under planning permission ref. no. TH6/64/325A.	Appeal Withdrawn	15.09.1997
19970229	Application for lawful development certificate in respect of retention and continued use of bungalow as a single family dwelling house.	Permitted	05.08.1997
19960737	Retention of extension and alterations to existing detached garage to form domestic garage and tractor store.	Permitted	03.04.1997
19960736	Erection of agricultural building for use as a hay barn to store hay and straw and dry feeds and storage of tractor and machinery.	Application Refused	18.03.1997
19950369	Retention of extensions to and alterations of existing detached garage to form domestic garage, tractor and machinery garage at ground floor and hay and dry feedstore with w.c. at first floor.	Application Refused Appeal Withdrawn	24.05.1996 10.01.1997
19950758	Determination as to whether prior approval is required for erection of barn for use as an animal shelter and food store.	Application Refused	06.12.1995
19950113	Outline application for the erection of a farm workers bungalow.	Application Refused	28.06.1995
19950085	Application for determination whether prior approval is required for erection of a barn for the storage of feedstuffs, plant & machinery.	Certificate Refused	03.03.1995
19940574	Conversion of farm buildings into six residential units incorporating extensions to buildings to form garages, external alterations, associated landscaping and use of land to form residential gardens.	Application Withdrawn Appeal Withdrawn	10.02.1995 10.02.1995
19900798	continued use of dwelling without complying with the agricultural occupancy condition attached to planning permission ref no TH6/64/325A	Application Refused	22.02.1991

19880572	Continued use of dwelling without complying with the agricultural occupancy condition attached to planning permission ref. no. TH6/64/325A.	Application Refused	30.09.1988
19870882	Conversion of farm buildings into 6 residential units incorporating extensions to buildings to form garages external alterations associated landscaping and use of land to form residential gardens	Application Refused Appeal Allowed	03.05.1988 23.01.1989
19800165	Erection of two storey rear extension to form lounge at ground floor level with granny annexe over comprising kitchen diner bedroom and bathroom	Permitted	22.05.1980
19760292	Erection of an extension to existing dutch barn to house agricultural machinery	Permitted	18.05.1976

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 Biodiversity

Note: The consultation responses reflect the policy framework and guidance contained within the 2024 NPPF at the time they were submitted.

13.08.26

SUMMARY: SUFFICIENT INFORMATION

We have reviewed the information submitted by the applicant and advise that sufficient ecological and biodiversity net gain information has been provided for determination. Recommended condition wording is provided below.

This planning application is for the conversion of the existing stables block to a dwelling with a residential garden. The existing hay store extensions on the south side of the stable block will be removed, and stud wall relocation and roof works will also be undertaken.

PROTECTED SPECIES

In our previous advice note (December 2025), we noted that the timber stable block, existing hedgerows, mature trees and grassland areas present on and around the site indicated ecological value and the potential for protected and priority species to be present on-site. We therefore advised that an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) be undertaken.

Bats

The applicant has since submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and a follow-up bat survey. The PEA assessed the stable block and hay store as having low suitability for roosting bats and recommended a single emergence survey. No evidence of roosting bats was recorded, and the report concludes that no further bat surveys or roost mitigation is required. We are satisfied that sufficient information has been provided regarding roosting bats and advise that the recommended precautionary mitigation measures are secured via condition if planning permission is granted, please see Appendix A.

Artificial Lighting

Lighting in the vicinity of a bat roost or along commuting/foraging routes could result in disturbance resulting in roost abandonment, which is an offence under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Artificial lighting has been shown to be particularly harmful to bats along river corridors, near woodland edges and near hedgerows. Local authorities have a duty to ensure impacts

upon legally protected species are avoided and impacts upon bats are a material consideration in any planning permission under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.

Therefore, to mitigate against potential adverse effects on biodiversity, the Bat Conservation Trust/Institute of Lighting Professionals 'Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night' should be consulted in the lighting design of the development.

We advise that the incorporation of sensitive lighting design for biodiversity is submitted to the local planning authority and secured via an attached condition with any planning permission. Please see Appendix A for suggested condition wording.

Other Species

We are satisfied that impacts on other species likely to be present can be addressed via a precautionary mitigation approach. We suggest that a Precautionary Works Method Statement is secured via condition, if planning permission is granted. Please see Appendix A for suggested condition wording.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications¹ for development (unless exempt^{2,3},) must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), shown via use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric prior to commencement of any development.

The applicant considers the proposals to be exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain under the self-build exemption. For this exemption to apply, the proposals must:

- consist of no more than 9 dwellings;
- on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
- consist exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

It is not within our remit to verify that the proposed dwelling(s) meet the definition of self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in the 2015 Act. The LPA should therefore ensure that the proposals meet the definition and that a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain does not apply.

Government guidance on self-build and custom housebuilding indicates that “[in] considering whether a home is self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout ... Off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing”.

A recent appeal decision⁴ indicates that a “suitably robust mechanism such as a planning obligation/legal agreement or other means” is necessary to properly secure a development as self-build and to prevent it reverting to an open market dwelling where a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain would otherwise apply.

ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

The proposed development provides opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as native species planting and the installation of integrated bat/bird nest boxes. This is in accordance with Paragraph 193 of the NPPF that “opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity”. We note that the PEA has provided enhancement recommendations.

We advise that measures to enhance biodiversity are secured as a condition of planning permission, if granted. Please see Appendix A for suggested condition wording.

09.12.25

SUMMARY: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED

We have reviewed the information submitted in support of this application and advise that insufficient ecological information has been provided to determine the application. The following information is required prior to determination:

- A simple Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)
- Biodiversity Net Gain clarification

This planning application is for the conversion of the existing stables block to a dwelling with residential garden. The existing hay store extensions on the south side of the stable block will be removed, and stud wall relocation and roof works will be undertaken.

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)

No ecological information has been submitted with this application. As a result of reviewing the data available to us and the information submitted with the planning application, we advise that further information is sought from the applicant with regard to the potential for ecological impacts to arise.

Habitats and features (including timber stable block, existing hedgerows and mature trees, and grassland areas) are present on and around the site, indicating ecological value and the potential for protected and

priority species presence (such as roosting, foraging and commuting bats, nesting birds, great crested newts, reptiles and hedgehogs) that must be taken account of in the planning decision. As such, an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist.

The EclA will need to include the following:

- Details of the impacts of development proposals on the ecological baseline established via a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and any necessary additional surveys undertaken;
- Details of any necessary and achievable ecological mitigation and/or compensation measures;
- Details of ecological enhancement measures, and;
- Provision of sufficient information to determine whether the project accords with relevant nature conservation policies and legislation.

To ensure that the planning determination is adequately informed in respect of all potential ecological impacts, we advise that the EclA is sought prior to determination of the planning application. This is in accordance with paragraph 99 of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Circular 06/2005 which states “it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision”.

Under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and paragraphs 187 through 195 of the NPPF 2024, biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced through the planning system.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications¹ for development (unless exempt^{2,3},) must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), shown via use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric prior to commencement of any development.

The applicant has claimed two exemptions from BNG: de-minimis and self-build.

On review of the information submitted to support the de-minimis exemption, it is not clear that this exemption applies as habitat changes are set to occur within the red line boundary, including the conversion of ‘overgrown’ areas to grassland. The de-minimis exemption will not apply where proposals will result in the loss/degradation of over 25m² and/or 5 linear metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero (hardstanding, buildings and artificial unvegetated surfaces have biodiversity values of zero).

The ‘overgrown’ areas are likely to have a biodiversity value above zero. The proposed site plan indicates changes to habitats on-site that will likely result in the loss of more than 25m² and/or 5 linear metres of onsite habitat that has a biodiversity value greater than zero.

If the self-build exemption applies to this development, then it is irrelevant whether the de-minimis exemption applies.

For the self-build exemption to apply, the proposals must:

- consist of no more than 9 dwellings;
- on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
- consist exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

It is not within our remit to verify that the proposed dwelling(s) meet the definition of self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in the 2015 Act. The LPA should therefore ensure that the proposals meet the definition and that a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain does not apply.

Government guidance on self-build and custom housebuilding indicates that “[in] considering whether a home is self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the

home will have primary input into its final design and layout ... Off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing”.

A recent appeal decision⁴ indicates that a “suitably robust mechanism such as a planning obligation/legal agreement or other means” is necessary to properly secure a development as self-build and to prevent it reverting to an open market dwelling where a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain would otherwise apply.

If it is found that the self-build exemption does not apply, further information should be provided to verify that the de-minimis exemption or another exemption from mandatory 10% BNG does apply. If there is no valid exemption from mandatory 10% BNG, the following information shall need to be provided prior to determination of this application:

- confirmation that the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, the development would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition;
- the pre-development biodiversity value(s), either on the date of application or earlier proposed date (as appropriate);
- where the applicant proposes to use an earlier date, this proposed earlier date and the reasons for proposing that date;
- the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations of the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application (or proposed earlier date) including the publication date of the biodiversity metric used to calculate that value;
- a statement whether activities have been carried out prior to the date of application (or earlier proposed date), that result in loss of onsite biodiversity value (‘degradation’), and where they have:
 - a statement to the effect that these activities have been carried out;
 - the date immediately before these activities were carried out;
 - the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on this date;
 - the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations, and
 - any available supporting evidence of this;
- a description of any irreplaceable habitat (as set out in column 1 of the Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) on the land to which the application relates, that exists on the date of application, (or an earlier date); and
- plan(s), drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North, showing onsite habitat existing on the date of application (or earlier proposed date), including any irreplaceable habitat (if applicable).

Whilst a full metric demonstrating a 10% net gain is not required for validation or determination of a planning application, the government’s standing advice on BNG states (under paragraph 002 Reference ID: 74-002-20240214): “[BNG] is not just a post-permission matter. To ensure the biodiversity gain objective is met and the condition can be discharged successfully, it is important biodiversity net gain is considered throughout the planning process.”

To this end, it is therefore good practice to submit (in addition to the above):

- An illustrative on-site soft landscaping plan and outline landscape and ecological management plan/habitat management and monitoring plan that has been taken into account within the biodiversity metric calculation tool;
- Clear consideration of the principle of additionality within the biodiversity metric calculation tool;
- A biodiversity net gain design stage report clearly setting out how the biodiversity gain hierarchy has been applied and describing any significant on-site enhancements;
- If off-site biodiversity net gain provision is required, as a minimum, the need should be reported, with relevant necessary compensatory habitats discussed in a biodiversity net gain design stage report, and information provided regarding discussions with off-site providers; and
- A draft biodiversity gain plan.

Internal

GBC – Environmental Protection

A 'Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment' dated July 2025 by GeoSmart (Report Ref: 86341R1) has been submitted with the application. Due to the past agricultural use and current use as a stables, the report advises that there is a risk of contamination from small scale fuel/chemical spills, use of herbicides/pesticides and also some infilling works on the site. As a result, a Phase 2 intrusive assessment⁶ is advised. This can be addressed by way of a condition (see below).

The dwelling is to be connected to the main foul sewer.

Contaminated Land

No development approved by this permission shall be commenced prior to a contaminated land assessment (in accordance with the Environment Agency's Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM) guidance) and if necessary an associated remedial strategy, together with a timetable of works, being submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval.

a) A site investigation, based on the findings of the submitted 'Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment' dated July 2025 by GeoSmart (Report Ref: 86341R1) shall be carried out by a suitably qualified and accredited consultant/contractor in accordance with a Quality Assured sampling and analysis methodology.

b) A site investigation report detailing all investigative works and sampling on site, together with the results of analysis, risk assessment to any receptors and a proposed remediation strategy shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority shall approve such remedial works as required prior to any remediation commencing on site. The works shall be of such a nature so as to render harmless the identified contamination given the proposed end-use of the site and surrounding environment including any controlled waters.

c) Approved remediation works shall be carried out in full on site under a quality assurance scheme to demonstrate compliance with the proposed methodology and best practice guidance). If during any works contamination is encountered which has not previously been identified then the additional contamination shall be fully assessed and an appropriate remediation scheme agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

d) Upon completion of the works, this condition shall not be discharged until a closure report has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The closure report shall include details of the proposed remediation works and the quality assurance certificates to show that the works have been carried out in full in accordance with the approved methodology. Details of any post remediation sampling and analysis to show the site has reached the required clean-up criteria shall be included in the closure report together with the necessary documentation detailing what waste materials have been removed from the site.

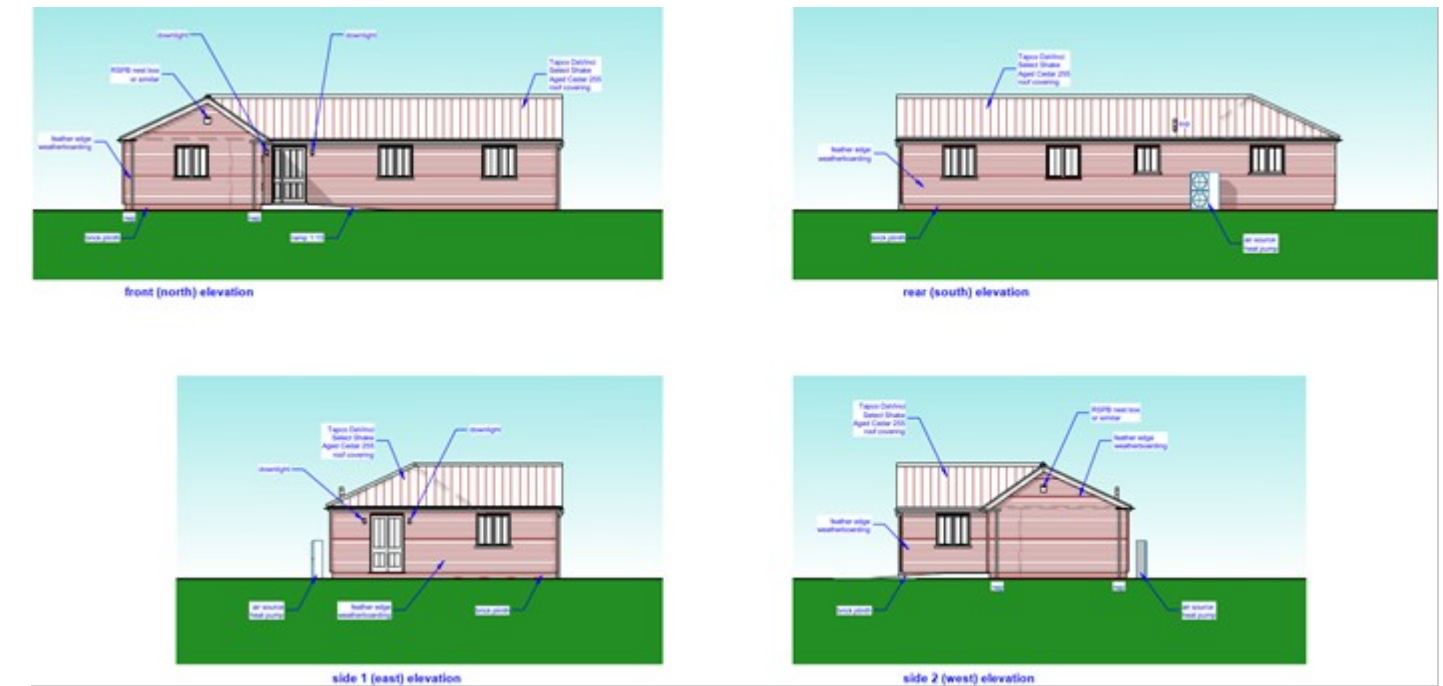
e) Where applicable, a monitoring and maintenance scheme to include monitoring the long-term effectiveness of the proposed remediation over an agreed period of time, and the provision of reports on the same, must be prepared and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Following completion of the measures identified in that scheme, and when the remediation objectives have been achieved, reports that demonstrate the effectiveness of the monitoring and maintenance carried out must be produced and submitted to the local planning authority.

Neighbouring properties

Consultation was by way of the displaying of a site notice and letters sent to two surrounding properties with an overall consultation expiry date of 4th December 2025. Two letters of objection were received making the following summarised comments:

- Stables on agricultural land should be retained for this use
- Would stop subsequent owners having livestock
- Loss of wildlife



- Parking and Highways; and
- Other matters

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 1 residential unit, 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 dwarf wall brickwork, timber weatherboarding and timber trussed roof with felt covering. The building is not a temporary structure as it has been present on the site since 1998, following the approval of planning permission in November 1997 (Planning Application Ref. 19970450), as can be shown in the following satellite images:

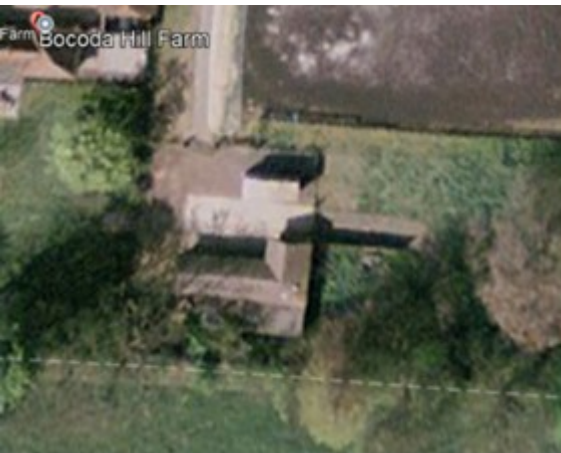
Satellite Images

2003



2013

2007



2018



2022



2026



The undamaged brick work, weatherboarding and trussed roof with felt 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, Bocoda Hill Farm House is located to the north west and is the home of the applicants. It is a large detached dwelling with detached garage that has had recent approval of a garage extension. Access would be from the same point from South Street (Wrotham Road). The barn does benefit from its own access driveway which is hard paved, although due to limited use has become overgrown.

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 one additional dwelling which would have a domestic appearance, it is located in close proximity to the existing residential dwelling of the applicants. Overall it is considered that the relationship of the existing stable block and residential dwelling is one of a domestic rather agricultural nature and as such would not introduce a materially greater level of domestic activity or associated residential paraphernalia. 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 residential dwelling of Bocoda Hill Farm House to the west with a detached garage which, as can be seen from the planning history, has recent approval for alterations (App. Ref. 20250666). The remaining site consists of fields, grazing land which is bounded by post and rail fencing. Further north is Hamptons Reach, The Granary, Bocoda Hill Farm Cottage and The South Lodge, with South Street to the east. The area is rural in character. The existing stable block is of dwarf wall and weatherboarding construction.

Existing Building



The proposal would create 1no. two bed four person dwelling, providing an entrance hall, living room, kitchen/diner, bathroom and 2no. double bedrooms. Externally there would be soft landscaping with patio terrace and 2no. parking spaces to the front, together with cycle/shed store and refuse storage.

The elevational changes include single front door and 3no. modest windows on the front, 1no. window and doors to the kitchen/dining on the east elevation, 1no. window to serve bedroom 1 on the west elevation and 4no. windows with air source heat pump on the rear elevation.

Materials

Materials would consist of black plinth with feather edge weatherboarding, Tapco DaVinci Select Shakes Aged Cedar 255 roofing and stained timber double glazing doors and windows.

Whilst the development would include windows, doors and new roofing materials, the proposal would not dramatically alter the appearance of the building, with the weatherboarding being an existing feature. The roof is currently felt and the proposal would be for Tapco DaVinci Select Shakes, Aged Cedar 255. As such, it is considered that the proposed elevational changes would be respectful and not detract from the original building.

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 could be reinstated and utilised as a functioning stable, which would generate 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 single two-bedroom dwelling is not considered likely to generate a significant increase in movements when compared with a lawful equestrian use. 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 a single additional dwelling utilising an existing access arrangement. Given the scale of the development and the lawful fallback position whereby the stable could be brought back into 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 a single dwelling. 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 result in one additional dwelling 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, visibility splays 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 to a single dwelling 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.

The gross internal area and rooms in the proposed dwelling are in accordance with the Nationally Described Space Standards (2015) and Gravesham's Residential Layout Guidelines (2020). It is considered that all habitable rooms will receive sufficient natural light by virtue of the window size and location. The garden size exceeds the requirement set out in the RLG.

In addition, the site is currently predominantly residential in nature with the main dwelling being located to the north west and the existing stable building not being use. Whilst the overall site is more rural with open fields, it is more domestic in character due to the existing residential dwellings. The proposal therefore complies with Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy 2014.

Neighbouring Amenity

The nearest residential dwelling is the host dwelling of the applicants with the surrounding properties located further north. 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 which benefits from good vision splays and open views of South Street Road to the north and south. The proposed parking provide 2 spaces and cycle store for the new dwelling, which accords the minimum of 2 spaces and as such would accord with Gravesham's adopted parking standards (SPG4) (2006).

The proposed dwelling is 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.

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 within a residential curtilage, with no known ecological designations, priority habitats, or protected species records. This has been supported by the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (AdonisBlue (24 June 2026) and a Bat Survey, Mitigation and Enhancement Advice (AdonisBlue 7 August 2026).

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 and mowed grass area. The supporting planning statement states that the proposed development includes net gain measure such as native hedgerow reinforcement, bird boxes 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).

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 1 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 adjacent host building, 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:	14 th September 2026	Dated:	14th September 2026