



# PLANNING STATEMENT

## Project Number:

2026-2529

## Project:

Little Cottage, Ridge Lane, Meopham, Gravesend, DA13 0DP

## Proposal:

Erection of dwelling following demolition of existing (retrospective)

## Date:

September 2026

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of my clients' planning application. This is in relation to the erection of a dwelling following demolition of existing (retrospective).
- 1.2 First this statement will set out the details of the site description to provide a context in which the proposal has been designed. Secondly, we review the sites planning history and set out the details of the proposal, subject of this application. Next, we provide a summary of the relevant national and local planning policies. Following this we set out a detailed assessment of the proposal and the relevant material considerations. Finally we provide a short conclusion.
- 1.3 In addition to this statement the following documents have been provided;
- Application forms
  - CIL Forms

### Drawings

- Site Location Plan – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-Location
- Existing Block Plan – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-ExistBlock
- Existing Dwelling Plans and Elevations – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1ExistDwelling
- Proposed Block Plan – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v2-PropBlock
- Proposed Dwelling Elevations – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-PropDwellingElev
- Proposed Dwelling Floor Plans – Drawing Ref - 2026-2529v1-PropDwellingFloor

## **2. Site Description**

- 2.1 The application site is situated within open countryside, outside of any defined settlement boundary. The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and therefore falls within an area where national and local planning policy seek to safeguard openness and prevent inappropriate development. The site is also located within the *Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area*, as defined by the relevant Landscape Character Assessment, which identifies the area as comprising a strongly wooded and undulating landscape with a rural and tranquil character.
- 2.2 A designated Biodiversity Opportunity Area lies immediately adjacent, and a Local Wildlife Site is located to the north of the site. In addition, areas of Ancient Woodland are present to the east and south. These designations reflect the ecological value of the wider landscape and highlight the importance of ensuring that development proposals respond sensitively to their surroundings and avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity assets.
- 2.3 The site comprises a relatively generous residential plot positioned within a predominantly rural setting. Historically, the site contained a detached, single-storey, two-bedroom dwelling located within the south-western corner of the plot. The siting of the original dwelling allowed for substantial areas of open land within the remainder of the curtilage, contributing to a spacious and verdant character.
- 2.4 A replacement dwelling is currently under construction; however, the design and built form of the structure do not accord with the drawings approved under the previous planning permission. As such, the development presently on site differs materially from that which was formally approved.
- 2.5 Access to the site is taken from the existing highway via a tarmac driveway, which opens into a turning and parking area situated to the north of the dwelling. The land immediately to the north of the building functions as domestic garden. Beyond the formalised tarmac area, the eastern portion of the site is predominantly surfaced in shingle and accommodates a variety of ancillary buildings, structures and stored materials. This part of the plot has a more utilitarian appearance and contrasts with the otherwise rural and landscaped character of the wider setting.
- 2.6 In locational terms, the site benefits from reasonable proximity to local services and facilities within both Vigo Village and Meopham. Vigo Village provides a range of day-to-day amenities including a local convenience store, village hall, public house, primary school, and community facilities serving the immediate area. The village functions as a small but established rural community with access to recreational spaces and public footpaths connecting into the surrounding countryside.
- 2.7 Meopham, located to the north, offers a broader range of services and facilities consistent with its larger size and role within the borough. These include additional convenience retail provision, local shops and services, primary schools, a secondary school, healthcare facilities, places of worship, public houses and restaurants. Meopham also benefits from a mainline railway station providing regular services to London and the Kent coast, thereby offering wider connectivity for employment, education and leisure opportunities.
- 2.8 Accordingly, whilst the site is located outside defined settlement boundaries and within the Green Belt, it is not isolated in functional terms and has access to an established range of services and facilities within a short travelling distance.

### **3. Planning History and Proposal**

#### **Planning History**

- 3.1 The site has a relatively extensive planning history which establishes a longstanding residential use and associated ancillary development.
- 3.2 Planning permission was initially sought under reference 20060528 for the erection of two detached three/four-bedroom replacement dwellings, each with rooms in the roofspace and a detached garage positioned to the front, together with the erection of a detached stable block comprising two stables and a tack room. This application was refused on 16.08.2006.
- 3.3 Subsequently, a revised scheme under reference 20100456 for the erection of two detached replacement dwellings with associated garages, alongside a detached stable block, was granted planning permission on 03.09.2010. In association with this wider redevelopment of the site, planning permission reference 20100930 was granted on 11.11.2010 for the removal of two sheds on Plots 1 and 2 and the erection of two replacement garden stores (one per plot), confirming the acceptance of ancillary domestic structures within the residential curtilage.
- 3.4 In addition, a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) was granted under reference 20060512 on 13.09.2006 in respect of the existing use for the stationing of a mobile home, thereby formally recognising the lawfulness of that use at the time.
- 3.5 More recently, an application for a Lawful Development Certificate under reference 20180655 for the continued use of the former stables building as a residential dwelling and associated curtilage (known as "Little Cottage") was withdrawn on 19.11.2018. A subsequent application under reference 20181207 for the same proposal was approved, and a Lawful Development Certificate was granted on 29.11.2019. This decision confirmed the lawful residential use of the former stables building and its associated curtilage, thereby regularising the planning status of "Little Cottage" as a dwelling.
- 3.6 Planning permission was granted under reference 20230320 in May 2024 for the demolition of the existing dwelling and associated outbuildings, the removal of lawful touring caravans from the site, and the erection of a replacement dwelling. This permission represents the most recent extant consent for residential redevelopment of the site and forms an important material consideration in the assessment of the current proposal.
- 3.7 Most recently, planning application 20260461 sought planning permission for the erection of a self-build detached dwelling and the retention and change of use of the existing building for ancillary gym, office and storage purposes associated with the main dwelling. Planning permission was refused on 30 June 2026. The Council's reasons for refusal related solely to the retention of the former dwelling, concluding that the cumulative amount of built development would result in substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt and would represent an overdevelopment of the site, causing harm to its character and appearance. Importantly, the officer's report confirmed that the principle of a replacement dwelling had already been established through the previous planning permission and raised no objections in relation to the design of the replacement dwelling, residential amenity, highway safety, ecology, biodiversity or landscape character. The current application has been specifically amended to address the reasons for refusal through the demolition of the former dwelling, thereby reinstating the proposal as a genuine replacement dwelling.
- 3.7 Collectively, this planning history demonstrates the established residential character of the site, the long-standing acceptance of residential development and replacement dwellings, the principle of redevelopment within the site, and the lawful use of buildings for residential purposes. It also demonstrates that the only outstanding planning concern identified by the Local Planning Authority related to the retention of the former dwelling, a matter which has now been addressed through the revised proposal.

### Planning Proposal

- 3.8 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a detached single dwelling and the retention and change of use of the existing building to ancillary residential storage.
- The proposed dwelling would be positioned in broadly the same footprint and orientation as the previously approved scheme, albeit set marginally further back within the plot to optimise site layout and residential amenity. This revised siting maintains the established spatial relationship with neighbouring properties while allowing for improved circulation and private amenity space.
  - The external materials palette has been carefully selected to ensure a high-quality appearance that responds appropriately to the character of the surrounding area. The dwelling would incorporate slate-effect roof tiles and timber cladding, providing a traditional yet contemporary finish that complements the site context.
  - The former dwelling on the site would be demolished.
  - Existing access arrangements into the site would remain unchanged. Two off-street parking spaces would be provided to serve the new dwelling, with adequate on-site turning space retained to ensure vehicles can enter and exit the site in a forward gear, thereby maintaining highway safety.



Figure 1 – Proposed front elevation



Figure 2 – Proposed Block Plan

## 4. **National Planning Policy**

### **National Planning Policy Framework 2024**

- 4.1 The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies which Local Plans need to accord with. Relevant paragraphs include;

#### **Achieving Sustainable Development**

- 4.2 Para 7 of the NPPF states that 'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs<sup>4</sup>. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.'
- 4.3 Para 8 states that 'achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a. **An economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - b. **A social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
  - c. **An environment objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

#### **Presumption in favour of sustainable development**

- 4.4 Para 11 of the NPPF states that 'plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.'

For decision-taking this means:

- c. Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
  - i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
  - ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

#### **Achieving well-designed places**

- 4.5 Para 131 relates to achieving good design and states that 'the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development acceptable to communities.'
- 4.6 Para 135 continues to state 'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a. will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b. are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c. are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d. establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users<sup>49</sup>; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.'

## **5. Local Planning Policy Summary**

### **Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy – 2014**

5.1 The Core Strategy was adopted in September 2014 and sets out the Councils long term spatial vision for the Borough. The Core Strategy covers the period from April 2011 to March 2028.

- Policy CS01 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CS02 – Scale and Distribution of Development
- Policy CS11 – Transport
- Policy CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- Policy CS15 – Housing Density
- Policy CS19 – Development and Design Principles

5.2 Policy CS01 relates to sustainable development and states that;

*Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan for Gravesham will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*

*When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and in this Core Strategy. It will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic social and environmental conditions in the area.*

*Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:*

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

### **Gravesham Local Plan First Review Saved Policies – 2014**

5.3 The Local Plan was originally adopted in November 1994. In September 2007 a number of policies were saved through direction from the Secretary of State. In September 2014 the Council adopted their Core Strategy and as a result a number of saved policies were deleted. The remaining saved policy is relevant to this proposal are as follows;

- Policy T1 – Impact of development on highway network
- Policy T5 – Access to identified highway network
- Policy P3 – Vehicle parking standards

### **Site Allocations and Development Management Policies**

5.4 A second regulation 18 consultation was carried out between October and December 2020. No further consultations have been carried out since this time. It is understood that there have been delays to the progression of the Emerging Plan due to highways modelling. As a result, we consider that the policies contained within the emerging local plan hold very limited weight and have therefore not been referenced here. Planning Assessment

## **6. Planning Assessment**

### **Previous reasons for refusal**

- 6.1 This application has been specifically prepared to overcome the reasons for refusal issued under planning application reference 20260461. The revised proposal differs from the refused scheme in one fundamental respect. The former dwelling, which the Council identified as the principal source of planning harm, is now proposed to be demolished in its entirety. Consequently, the proposal once again comprises the replacement of a single dwelling with a single replacement dwelling, rather than the retention of the original dwelling for ancillary storage on the site. The amendments have been carefully considered to directly address the concerns expressed by the Local Planning Authority whilst retaining the high-quality replacement dwelling already constructed on the site.
- 6.2 The first reason for refusal stated that:
- Due to the adverse spatial and visual impacts of the proposed material increase in the amount of built development on the site, the proposal is considered to cause substantial harm to the openness of the site. As a result, the proposal would not meet the paragraph 154 exception criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are no special circumstances that would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the relevant requirements of Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, including paragraphs 142, 143, 153, and 154 and Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.*
- 6.3 The wording of the refusal is particularly important as it clearly demonstrates that the Council's objection did not arise from the replacement dwelling itself. Rather, the perceived planning harm resulted from the cumulative impact of retaining the former dwelling alongside the replacement dwelling. The Council therefore considered that it was the additional built form on the site which resulted in harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.4 The second reason for refusal similarly concluded that:
- The proposal represents overdevelopment of the site due to the proximity of the proposed dwelling to the eastern end of the plot along with the retention of the existing dwelling. The resultant increase in built form on the site overall is considered to have an adverse visual effect on the character and appearance of the site, particularly as surrounding outbuildings on neighbouring plots are generally modest in size. The proposal would be contrary to the requirements of paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014.*
- 6.5 Again, the emphasis of the refusal relates to the continued presence of the original dwelling rather than the replacement dwelling itself. The Council's concern was that the site would accommodate two principal buildings, leading to an excessive concentration of development that would erode the spacious and verdant character of the plot.
- 6.6 It is significant that when the officer's report is read as a whole, no criticism is made of the principle of replacing the existing dwelling, nor is there any suggestion that the replacement dwelling is unacceptable in terms of its design, appearance or relationship with neighbouring development. Likewise, the Council raised no objections in respect of residential amenity, highway safety, parking provision, ecology, biodiversity or archaeological considerations. The officer's assessment therefore demonstrates that the refusal was based upon a single issue, namely the retention of the former dwelling. The revised proposal has been expressly amended to remove that concern.

### **Green Belt**

- 6.7 Paragraph 154(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies the replacement of an existing building, provided that the new building is in the same use and is not materially larger than the building it replaces, as one of the forms of development that is not inappropriate within the Green Belt. The previous planning permission granted under reference 20230320 established that a replacement dwelling on this site was acceptable in principle, subject to the demolition of the existing dwelling and

associated buildings. That planning permission therefore provides a strong material consideration in favour of the current proposal.

- 6.8 The officer's report expressly acknowledges this position, stating that: *"The principle of a new dwelling on this site in the Green Belt has already been established by the previous permission and does not need to be assessed further."* This is an important conclusion. It demonstrates that the Council did not dispute the acceptability of a replacement dwelling within the Green Belt. Instead, the officer concluded that the previous application ceased to benefit from paragraph 154(d) because it no longer represented a genuine replacement dwelling, given that the former dwelling was proposed to remain. As a consequence, the proposal was assessed against paragraph 154(g) of the Framework instead.
- 6.9 The current proposal directly resolves that issue. The former dwelling is now proposed to be demolished as part of the development and, as a result, there will no longer be two principal residential buildings occupying the site. The proposal therefore once again represents the replacement of one dwelling with another and should properly be assessed under paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF. The planning circumstances have therefore materially changed since the refusal of the previous application.
- 6.10 In reaching its previous decision, the Council concluded that the retained dwelling represented "the largest structure proposed to remain on the site" and that its retention would "have a substantial impact on the openness of the site." The officer also considered that the improvements secured through the previously approved scheme would be undermined because the original dwelling would remain alongside the replacement dwelling. Those findings were wholly dependent upon the continued presence of the original building. As that building is now proposed to be demolished, the additional built form that previously gave rise to concerns regarding openness has been entirely removed. The proposal therefore restores the site to the position previously accepted by the Council through the extant planning permission.
- 6.11 Whilst the replacement dwelling differs modestly from the dwelling previously approved in terms of its footprint, ridge height and siting within the plot, it is noteworthy that none of these changes formed part of the reasons for refusal. Had the Council considered the replacement dwelling itself to be unacceptable, it would have identified these matters as separate reasons for refusal. Instead, the officer consistently attributes the Green Belt harm to the retention of the former dwelling. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that once the former dwelling is removed, the proposal once again falls within the scope of an acceptable replacement dwelling in Green Belt terms.

### **Character and Appearance**

- 6.12 The second reason for refusal follows the same reasoning. The officer accepted that the previously approved scheme would have improved the appearance of the site by removing a number of existing structures and concentrating development around a single replacement dwelling. The report concluded that the retention of the former dwelling would undermine those improvements by introducing a second substantial building into the western part of the site, thereby creating the impression of overdevelopment.
- 6.13 The revised proposal now reinstates the layout envisaged under the previous planning permission. The former dwelling will be demolished, resulting in a significantly less developed site with a single principal building occupying the plot. The generous areas of garden surrounding the replacement dwelling will once again reinforce the spacious character of the site, whilst reducing the visual presence of built development when viewed from the surrounding countryside. The proposal therefore responds directly to the Council's concerns regarding site layout and overdevelopment.
- 6.14 Furthermore, the officer's report contains a number of positive conclusions regarding the replacement dwelling itself. The report accepts that the building is lower than neighbouring dwellings, adopts a design that responds positively to the wooded rural setting and incorporates an appropriate palette of materials. It also concludes that the replacement dwelling would not, in isolation, result in unacceptable landscape or visual impacts. Those conclusions remain equally applicable to the revised proposal and provide further support for granting planning permission.

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**Overall Planning Balance**

- 6.15 This revised proposal has been prepared with the clear objective of overcoming the Council's previous concerns. The feature identified as causing harm to Green Belt openness and the character of the site—the retention of the former dwelling—has now been removed from the development. Consequently, the proposal once again represents a genuine replacement dwelling consistent with the extant planning permission and the provisions of paragraph 154(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.14 When the officer's report is considered objectively, it is evident that the Council accepted the vast majority of the proposal. No objections were raised in relation to the principle of redevelopment, the design of the replacement dwelling, landscape impact, residential amenity, highway safety, parking provision, ecology or biodiversity. The only issue identified was the retention of the former dwelling. By removing that building from the proposal, the revised scheme directly addresses both reasons for refusal and restores the development to one that closely reflects the previously approved replacement dwelling. In these circumstances, the proposal accords with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies CS01, CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy, and there are no remaining material planning considerations that justify the refusal of planning permission.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 This planning application seeks retrospective planning permission for the erection of a replacement dwelling following the demolition of the existing dwelling. The proposal has been specifically revised in response to the refusal of planning application reference 20260461, with the former dwelling now proposed to be demolished. This amendment directly addresses the concerns previously expressed by the Local Planning Authority regarding Green Belt openness and the perceived overdevelopment of the site.
- 7.2 The principle of a replacement dwelling on the site has already been established through the grant of planning permission under application reference 20230320. Furthermore, the Council's previous officer report expressly acknowledged that the principle of a replacement dwelling was acceptable and did not identify any objections in relation to the design of the replacement dwelling, residential amenity, highway safety, landscape character, ecology or biodiversity. The sole reason the previous application was refused was the proposed retention of the former dwelling, resulting in two principal buildings occupying the site.
- 7.3 The revised proposal removes the former dwelling from the scheme, reinstating the development as a genuine replacement dwelling. Consequently, the proposal no longer gives rise to the additional built form that previously resulted in concerns regarding Green Belt openness or the character and appearance of the site. The revised scheme therefore closely reflects the form of development that was previously approved by the Council and restores the planning position accepted under the extant permission.
- 7.4 The proposal represents a high-quality replacement dwelling that has been designed to respond positively to its rural setting through the use of appropriate scale, form and external materials. The development continues to provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers, maintains the amenities of neighbouring residents, utilises the existing access arrangements and provides appropriate parking and turning facilities. Subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal also safeguards ecological interests and conserves the wider landscape character of the area.
- 7.5 Having carefully considered the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework together with the policies of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy, it is concluded that the revised proposal accords with the Development Plan when read as a whole. The amendments made to the scheme have directly addressed the previous reasons for refusal, and there are no remaining material planning considerations that justify withholding planning permission.
- 7.6 In light of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the proposal represents an acceptable form of replacement development that preserves the openness of the Green Belt, respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area and accords with the objectives of sustainable development. Planning permission should therefore be granted.