

Planning Statement

Coachfields, Northfleet Green, Gravesend, Kent DA13 9PN

February 2025



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application submission for the conversion of an existing detached feed barn and equipment store to a residential dwelling.
- 1.2 This Statement outlines the planning history of the site and the adjoining land, which is also in the ownership of the applicant; it sets out the local and national planning policy considerations of the scheme; and, provides an assessment of the acceptability of the proposals assessed against these relevant planning policies.
- 1.3 Included with this application submission are the following supporting documents:
 - Accompanying letter
 - Planning application forms including ownership certificate
 - Location Plan
 - Existing and Proposed Block Plan
 - Existing floor plan and elevations
 - Proposed floor plan and elevations
 - Photographs of the existing building
 - Planning Statement

2. Site Context and Proposed Development

- 2.1 The application site is located at the southern end of Northfleet Green, a hamlet to the south of Gravesend and the A2. The application site sits within a wider piece of land owned by the applicant and used for the stabling of horses, ménage, outdoor horse exercise, and paddock. The application site itself comprises a feed barn and equipment store, constructed of metal and timber frame, timber cladding and dark grey tiles. Access to the application site will be from the existing access into the stable area. The boundary of the application site has an area of 0.08 hectares.
- 2.2 The proposed development in this application is for the conversion of the field barn and equipment store to a 4 bed residential dwelling.
- 2.3 The proposed layout plan shows how the curtilage of the new residential property will be drawn around the proposed converted barn, so as not to project unduly out into open countryside. The private amenity space to the rear of the new dwelling will be 120 sq m (5m deep by 24m), with patio areas and soft landscaped garden, enclosed by a post and rail fence and hedging. The plans show how cycles and bins will be accommodated within the building. Three parking spaces are provided to the south of the equestrian stables accessed from existing hardstanding.

- 2.4 The external alterations to the building have been kept to a minimum and retain the rustic barn character of the building.
- 2.5 Photographs have been included with the submission showing the substantial and permanent construction of the barn, which would allow for a conversion of the building.
- 2.6 The applicant has sought planning permission for the conversion and change of use to a residential use as the barn has become surplus to the requirements of the stabling. The applicant also wishes to live at the new dwelling to allow him to look after the horses at the stables on a 24 hour basis.

3. Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 The following history relates to the application site and adjoining stables/exercise/paddock:

20161114 - Change of use of land from agricultural to equestrian and erection of a detached stable building, horse exerciser and horse manège. Granted full planning permission on 21st July 2017.

20181154 - Erection of a detached feed barn and equipment store. Granted full planning permission on 9th January 2019. A planning condition was imposed on the barn and store by the permission requiring that it be used in connection with the equestrian recreational use permitted under reference 20161114.

20190766 - Continued use of land for equestrian purposes and retention of a detached stable building building, horse exerciser and horse manège. Granted full planning permission on 4th November 2019. This permission was required to allow internal changes to the stable building to allow a small admin office and veterinary room.

4. Planning Policies

Development Plan

- 4.1 The current Development Plan for the Borough includes The Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy adopted in 2014, and, the Saved Policies of the Gravehsam Local Plan First Review adopted in 1994.

- 4.2 The Adopted Proposals Map identifies the application site as falling within the Green Belt. It is also located within Flood Zone 1. There are no other Development Plan designations associated with the application site.
- 4.3 The following policies contained within the Core Strategy 2014 and Local Plan 1994 are applicable to the consideration of this planning application.
- 4.4 *Core Strategy CS01: Sustainable Development* highlights that the Council will take a positive approach to considering applications that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and in the Core Strategy. The policy also highlights in paragraph 4.1.8 that where relevant policies are out of date at the time of making a decision 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 NPPF taken as a whole; or*
 - *Specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.*
- 4.5 *Core Strategy Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development* sets out the Council's strategy for prioritising the delivery of a housing and employment within sustainable urban locations. Within rural areas the policy continues to support development within those rural settlements inset from the Green Belt as defined on the Policies Map. Where there are development opportunities outside of the inset settlements, Policy CS02 states that it will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and other policies within the Development Plan.
- 4.6 *Core Strategy Policy CS11: Transport* requires developments to provide sufficient parking for new developments in accordance with adopted parking standards. It is the Kent Design Guide Movement & Connectivity Parking Standards that are applicable to this application, with a requirement of 3 parking spaces for 4+ bed houses. 1 cycle space is also required for each bedroom.
- 4.7 *Core Strategy Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure* highlights the need to provide suitable mitigation towards any harm to biodiversity as a result of a development.
- 4.8 *Core Strategy Policy CS14: Housing Type and Size* states that the Council will expect new housing development to provide a range of dwelling types and sizes taking into account the existing character of the area and evidence of local need to create sustainable and balanced communities.

- 4.9 Core Strategy Policy CS15: Housing Density requires the density of housing development should achieve good design and should not compromise the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated. The policy highlights that where development proposals fail to make efficient use of land for housing, having regard to the character and location of the area, this may be reason for refusing planning permission.
- 4.10 *Core Strategy Policy CS18: Climate Change* requires developments to minimise the impact of drainage on waste water systems, through providing Sustainable Drainage Systems where technically and financially feasible. It also requires developments to manage the supply of water (to 105 litres per person per day consumption), and supports a reduction in overall carbon footprint of developments.
- 4.11 *Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles* sets out the Council design requirements ensuring new developments are visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. The policy requires developments, including conversions, to comply with the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (amended June 2020). The Guidelines set out the size of rooms to be achieved and also that gardens for 4 or more bedrooms should be at least 100 sq m with a depth of 10m.
- 4.12 *Local Plan Saved Policy T1: Impact of Development on the Highway Network* requires the consideration of the impact on the transport system and on the environment of traffic generated by new development.
- 4.13 *Local Plan Saved Policy P3: Vehicle Parking Standards* expects developments to make provision for vehicle parking in accordance with the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- 4.14 A revised version of the NPPF was published on 12th December 2024 (updated 7th February 2025) and the guidance contained within the Framework is a material consideration in determining this application.
- 4.15 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF highlights the overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development from an economic, social and environmental perspective.
- 4.16 Paragraph 10 states that at the heart of the Framework there is a “*presumption in favour of sustainable development*”, and Paragraph 11 goes on to state that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay..
- 4.17 To ensure that this positive approach to sustainable development is pursued, paragraph 10 of the NPPF emphasis that at the heart of the Framework is a “*presumption in favour of sustainable development*”, which paragraph 11 defines as:

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 (footnote 8), granting permission unless:

i) the application of policies in this Framework that protects areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed (footnote 7); 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.

- 4.18 Section 5 of the NPPF provides guidance on delivering a sufficient supply of homes, and paragraph 61 highlights the need to provide a significant boost for new homes, to meet housing needs, and to develop land with permission without unnecessary delay.
- 4.19 There is also support given to this proposal through Paragraph 73 of the NPPF 2024, which acknowledges that “small sites” can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly.
- 4.20 Of particular note is that the new Government has reversed through the latest version of the NPPF, the way in which housing need is calculated and that it should again follow the standard methodology. This will therefore potentially put greater pressure on Gravesham Borough to deliver more housing.
- 4.22 In March 2023, Gravesham confirmed that they had a 2.90 years supply of housing, based on the annual housing requirement of 848 dwellings. The Council therefore currently has an identified five year housing supply shortfall.
- 4.23 As a result of the 5 year housing supply shortfall, the Council’s adopted Core Strategy Policies CS01 and CS02 that relate to housing supply are out of date. Paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF 2024 is therefore engaged, which advises that where policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, Councils should grant permission unless:
- i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong 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, having regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.*

4.25 In the case of this application a tilted balance approached needs to be applied to the consideration of the proposed development, weighing up the positive attributes of the development against its the negative harmful impact.

4.26 Section 13 of the NPPF sets out national planning policy to protect Green Belt land. Paragraph 143 sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt:

- A. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- B. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- C. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- D. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- E. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

4.27 Paragraph 153 emphasises that when considering planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. This paragraph goes on to highlight that inappropriate development, is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

4.28 Paragraph 154 lists the forms of development in the Green Belt relevant to this application, that are considered an exception to the inappropriate rule:

c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

h)iv. Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are: the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.

4.29 The proposed development in this application, which involves the conversion and re-use of an existing building within the Green Belt would fall within both c) and h)iv allowed exceptions, and therefore not considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Significant weight should be given to this material consideration in determining this planning application.

- 4.30 It should be noted that paragraph 155 of the NPPF is also applicable to this case, taking into account the previously developed nature of the existing site and its grey belt land status (as defined by Annex 2 of the NPPF).
- 4.31 Paragraph 155 criteria a., b., and c. are applicable to this case and state, that development for homes in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where the following applies:
- a. 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;*
 - b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
 - c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework.*
- 4.32 It is considered that the proposal of this grey belt land will not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, and the Council has a five year housing supply shortfall, demonstrating an unmet need for the dwelling proposed in this application. In relation to the sustainable credentials of this scheme, one of the reasons that it is required is to allow the applicant to look after and care for the horses at the stables, rather than having to travel to the site every day. This therefore would make a more sustainable set up in terms of reducing travel movements to and from the site.
- 4.31 In relation to criteria d. of paragraph 155, this refers to the 'Golden Rules' that are applicable to considering developments in the grey belt. This criteria is however only relevant to major development, which is not applicable to this application.

5. Planning considerations

Principle of Development

- 5.1 A review of both the Council's Adopted Development Plan policies and national planning guidance set out in the NPPF has highlighted that the development proposed in this application falls within both Green Belt exception c) and h)iv set out in paragraph 154 of the NPPF. It is also considered to be classed as not inappropriate development under paragraph 155 of the NPPF, being development on previously developed land and grey belt land.
- 5.2 In the case of paragraph 154 exception c) there are no extensions proposed to the building that would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling. The changes to the exterior of the building include the installation of fenestration and doors, and have been kept to a minimum to ensure the barn appearance of the building is maintained.

- 5.3 Exception h)iv does require development to preserve the Green Belt openness, and, should not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, as set out in paragraph 143 of the NPPF. In terms of the consideration of the scheme under paragraph 143, it is considered that site and proposed development is not at conflict with any of the five purposes listed. The scheme will not encroach into countryside or cause urban sprawl, and, as only a conversion is proposed it will not result in the merging of settlements. The proposed site is therefore not at conflict with purposes set out in paragraph 143.
- 5.4 In terms of “*preserving the openness*”, the curtilage of the new property has been drawn around the converted barn to ensure that there is adequate amenity space, but that it also limits the amount of intrusion into visual appearance of openness as viewed from Northfleet Green Road to the south. Parking, bins storage, and cycle storage have all be kept to the east side of the converted barn, between the barn and equestrian building, again to reduce the visual impact of the proposed conversion and domestic use of the building.
- 5.5 The barn subject of this application was originally granted planning permission and constructed to provide for a feed barn and equipment store for the equestrian use of the site. However, over time the applicant has found that there is adequate storage of equipment and feed that can be provided elsewhere within the adjoining site and stables. The barn has therefore become surplus to the requirements of the equestrian use.
- 5.6 Photographs have been included with the application showing that the barn is of substantial and permanent construction.
- 5.7 The conversion of the barn to a dwelling in this application is therefore considered not be inappropriate development and an allowed exception in the Green Belt, and, there is no objection in principle to the proposed development.

Five Year Housing Supply Shortfall and Planning Balance

- 5.8 It has been highlighted in paragraphs 4.22 to 4.25 of this Planning Statement that the Council has a 5 year land supply shortfall, and, that Core Strategy Policies CS01 and CS02 related to housing delivery are out of date. This situation therefore requires the local planning authority to grant permission unless there is strong reason for refusal. In the case of this application at Coachfields, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development will comply with Green Belt policies, and, that it will not result in a visual or spatial harmful impact on the surrounding area.
- 5.9 Whilst this proposal will result in the delivery of only one house, it will contribute to towards meeting the shortfall, and as such, this should be given substantial weight in determining this application.

- 5.10 Similarly, the proposal includes the conversion of an existing building that has been become surplus to the requirements of the equestrian use, and will result in an efficient use of an existing building. Again, substantial weight should be given to this consideration.
- 5.11 The proposal will allow the applicant to live next door to the stables, where he will then be able to provide 24 hour care for the horses. This factor should be given at least moderate weight in determining this application.
- 5.12 Overall, it is considered that these positive factors along with the sensitive conversion the barn, weigh in favour of granting planning permission for the development.

Design and layout

- 5.14 There are minimal changes proposed to the external appearance of the barn to ensure the rustic character and appearance of the building is maintained.
- 5.15 The size of rooms throughout the building will comply with the standards set out in the adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (amended June 2020).
- 5.16 The proposed private garden area to the rear of the barn conversion amounts to 124 sq m. This area of private garden complies with the Guideline requirement of a minimum of 100 sq m for 4+ bed properties. Whilst the back garden is 5m deep, which is below the Guideline suggested depth of 10 metres, the proposed garden will be 24m long. The plans also show that there is sufficient room to provide patio areas, ensuring the property has an acceptable level of amenity.
- 5.17 Bin and bike storage has been provided within the scheme to comply with the Council's standards required.

Environmental considerations

- 5.15 The proposed development subject of this application does not impact on more than 25 square metres of priority habitat or 5 metres of linear habitat, such as hedgerows. As such, the proposed development is therefore exempt from the statutory requirement of providing 10% net biodiversity net gain.
- 5.16 The proposed development will not result in the loss of any trees or hedgerows, and additional landscape planting is proposed around the application site.

Access and parking

- 5.17 The proposed scheme utilises the existing access onto Northfleet Green Road, which will provide safe access to and egress from the site onto the highway.
- 5.18 The scheme proposes 3 parking spaces all with electrical charging points in compliance with the Kent County Council parking standards.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application for the conversion of an existing barn at Coachfields in Northfleet Green to a residential dwelling.
- 6.2 The Statement reviews the proposals against both local and national planning policies. It is considered that the proposed conversion is not inappropriate development under paragraph 155 of the NPPF, and, falls within the allowed exceptions set out in paragraph 154 of the NPPF. As such, the proposed development is not considered inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It is also considered that because of the limited changes and curtilage of the proposed new property that the impact on openness will be limited. There is therefore not an objection to the proposed development under Green Belt policies.
- 6.3 It has been highlighted that the Council has a 5 year housing supply shortfall and out of date Development Plan policies that relate to housing delivery. As such and with reference to paragraph 11d) of the NPPF, there is a requirement to grant permission unless it can be demonstrated that there is substantial harm. In the case of this application, positive attributes have been put forward that tip the planning balance in favour of granting planning permission.
- 6.4 The Planning Statement also confirms that the scheme will comply with the Council's Residential Layout Guidelines and that sufficient parking is proposed for the new property.
- 6.5 It is therefore considered on this basis that planning permission be granted for the proposed development in this planning application.



PJB PLANNING
CREATING PLACES

1st & 2nd Floor, 2 West Street, Ware, Herts, SG12 9EE
Tel: 07710016079 • Email: peter@pjbplanning.co.uk • www.pjbplanning.co.uk