



PLANNING BY DESIGN
FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Proposal: Conversion of Restaurant (Class E) to Flatted Accommodation (C3)

Site: 1A Bentley Street, Gravesend, DA12 2DH

Local Authority: Gravesham Borough Council

Client: Written and prepared by Planning by Design on behalf of Mr. Sandher

Introduction

Planning By Design (The agent) has been instructed to act on behalf of Mr Sandher (the applicant) to submit a planning application to the Gravesham Borough Council (the Local Planning Authority) for a change of use from a restaurant (E) to flatted accommodation (C3) at 1A Bentley Street, Gravesend, DA12 2DH. In support of the application, the following Planning, Design and Access Statement has been drafted to demonstrate the suitability of the site for the proposed development and evaluate its accordance with national and local planning policy along with supplementary design guidance.

Proposed Site

The site lies within the urban boundary area defined by the Local Plan as Gravesend, Northfleet and Ebbsfleet. It comprises a modest commercial building most recently used as a restaurant. It is situated on land which has not been allocated for any specific purpose by the development plan. It also appears to be situated within the Town Centre, as defined by the Policies Map and it is in close proximity to the conservation area, which broadly surrounds it. The surrounding area is mixed use, with both residential and commercial units prevailing.

The building is a two storey, flat roof design, finished externally with cream render and horizontal wooden cladding above. Internally the property as existing comprises an integral single garage on the ground floor with stairwell leading to an open plan restaurant area. The property measures approximately 41sqm and takes access from the public roads to the east and north.

Proposed Development

The proposed development involves the change of use from a vacant first floor restaurant (Class E) (with ground floor car port), to flatted accommodation (1no. unit) (Class C3).

Internally the property would retain the integral garage with stairwell to the upper level. However, the lower level would be subdivided to form a separate kitchen/living area inclusive of the stairwell. The upper level would provide 1 bedroom with en-suite, a study and shower room.

Externally, the materials and finishes will not be altered. 2no additional windows are proposed to be installed on the east elevation (first floor) with the existing 2no. windows on

the lower level enlarged. The existing 2no. windows on the north elevation (first floor) are also proposed to be enlarged.

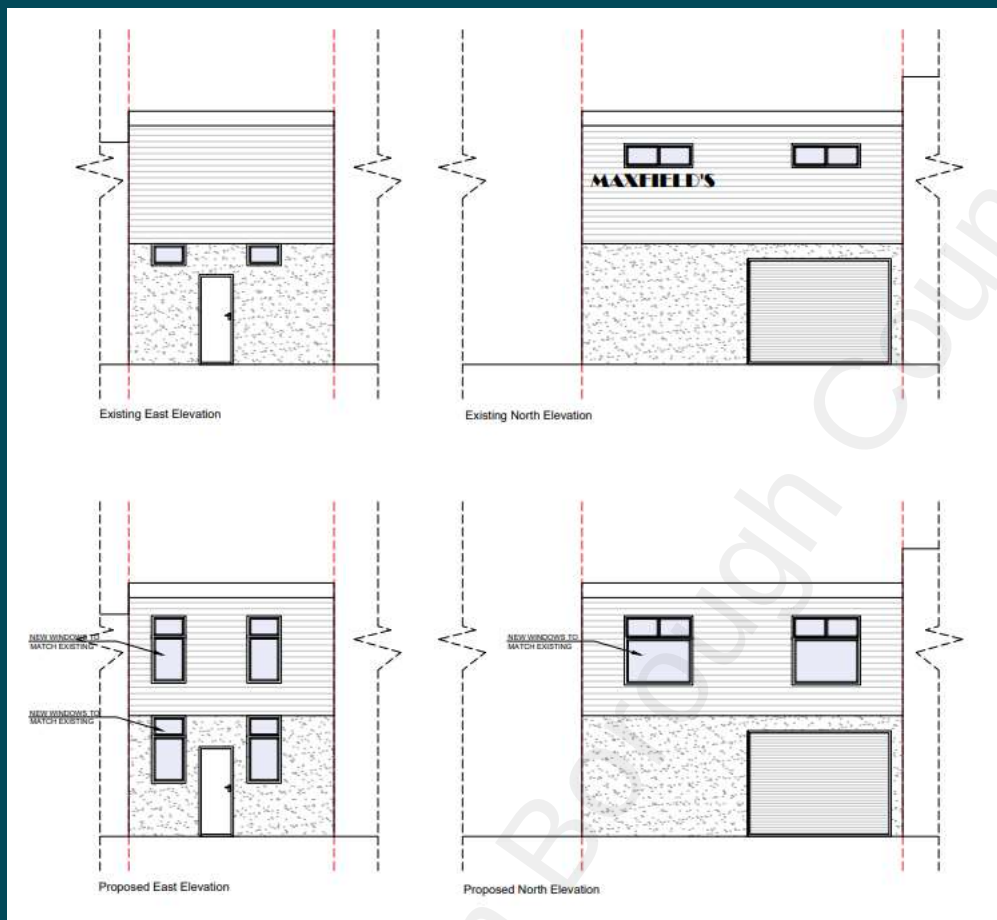


Figure 1 – Elevations

Planning History

A search of the Council's online planning portal did not show any history for the site. However, the following relevant history was found for nearby sites:

Ref 20200704 - 19 Milton Road Gravesend

Conversion and change of use of first floor from A3 (restaurant) to C3 use (dwelling houses) to provide 2 residential units comprising one 1 bedroom flat and one 2 bedroom flat – Granted 24 Mar 2021

Ref 20220340 - Land Adjacent 2 Milton Place Gravesend

Erection of a three storey building to form 4no. apartments consisting of 2no. one bedroom and 2no. two bedroom with associated parking court – Granted 10 August 2022

Assessment

The following planning policy and guidance documents are recognised as material considerations for the assessment of this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework 2021
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- Gravesham Borough Council Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted September 2014

The following section will evaluate the proposals in accordance with the above, to demonstrate that the proposal is acceptable in principle and should be supported by the Planning Authority.

National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF explains that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 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):

- 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;
- 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 well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

The proposed development will positively contribute to the above objectives. From an economic perspective, the development will contribute to an existing developed area, where there are existing resources and services, thus avoiding additional pressure on rural services.

It will also support the local economy through employment of local businesses for construction and materials.

In terms of the social element, the proposal will provide a flexible living accommodation which is adaptable to the needs of various occupants and demographics. It will provide a welcoming and attractive home, within walking distance of public parks and open spaces to support healthy living.

Environmentally, the proposal will not conflict with NPPF objectives to protect ecology and biodiversity, as it will maintain the status quo. On-site management of the storage of materials/plant and for efficient and sustainable site operations will be implemented to minimise building waste and vehicle movements during construction. The dwellings will utilise mixed refuse, to encourage recycling inclusive of organic household waste. Insulation will be installed in conjunction with high quality U-value windows and doors to reduce the carbon footprint and increase energy efficiency.

Section 12 of the NPPF aims to achieve well-designed places. It states that “the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”

The proposed development is in accordance with Section 12 in that the external design changes are minimal but will improve the visual aesthetic of the building. The proposed residential use of the site will bring the building back into active use, which is appropriate for the character of the surrounding area and will be beneficial in supporting crime reduction.

As such, the proposed development accords with Section 12 of the NPPF, in that it will meet the following criteria:

- a) 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) Visually attractive because of good architecture and layout
- c) 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.
- 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; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy

Principle of Development

A key objective of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to boost the supply of housing. The Local Plan aims to address the housing land supply through infill, windfall sites and allocations. The proposed change of use would be considered infill development and is therefore broadly acceptable in principle.

The Local Plan is generally supportive of the subdivision and conversion of existing buildings for the provision of residential units, on the proviso that the development will not erode the character or amenity of the site and wider area.

Character and Amenity

Given the site is located within the Town Centre, there is an existing mix of uses in the surrounding area. Whilst the immediately adjacent buildings are predominantly for commercial purposes, there is a residential development on Pilots Place, at the north end of Bentley Street. Milton Place (east) is predominantly residential, and Milton Road (south) features many commercial properties with residential accommodation above. As such, the proposed development is unlikely to erode the character or amenity of the site and surrounding area through the loss of commercial premises or the formation of additional residential accommodation.

The impacts of the proposal on residential amenity will not be significant, as the adjacent properties to the north and east are used for commercial purposes. Nonetheless, the adjacent property to the north has infilled all windows on the upper floor. The building to

the east is on the opposite side of the public road, at approximately 7m distance from the site, and forms an ancillary storage shed. Therefore any overlooking impacts are expected to be negligible.

Given the proposed alterations are minimal, the visual impact of the proposed development will not be significant. Notwithstanding, the site is set back from the main public carriageway and is therefore not visually prominent. Overshadowing and overbearing are not expected to give rise to any notable concerns, given there are no changes proposed to the scale or siting of the building.

The local plan requires the provision of appropriate amenity space for new developments, such as an area of outside space for enjoyment purposes, ancillary to the main use of the dwelling. In this instance, there is no private amenity land pertaining to the property. However, the site is located in close proximity to public parks and open spaces such as Gravesend Promenade, which provides appropriate amenity space. Generally, amenity levels are expected to be at a reduced level for flatted accommodation, in particular where sites are located in high density urban areas. As such, the lack of private outdoor amenity space is not expected to be of significant detriment to future occupants. This appears to have been the pragmatic approach taken by the Local Authority for nearby similar approvals (please see planning history).

Access and Services

Proposed vehicular access will remain to the north of the site, with an integral garage with parking for 1no. car. Otherwise, on-street parking spaces are available to the north of the property and within the surrounding area. The garage will also provide a secure location for bin and bicycle storage and there is a doorway on the south elevation of the garage for pedestrian access. The main door to the property will however be maintained on the east elevation.

Proposed connections to the water and drainage supplies will make use of existing.

The proposal will not have any significant impacts on trees, biodiversity or ecology, given the immediate surroundings lack soft landscaping features or blue-green networks, and are heavily developed and urban in character.

Summary

Overall, the proposed development is in the spirit of the NPPF, in that it will support its social, economic and environmental aims. The principle of development can be supported in accordance with the Local Plan and the proposed layout, siting, and design will not erode the character or amenity of the site and wider area. Technical matters such as car parking and services are in accordance with the relevant Local Plan policies and there are no known material considerations which suggest that the application should not be supported. For these reasons, we request that the Planning Authority consider the proposal favourably, with a view to granting Full Planning Permission, subject to conditions.

Should the Planning Authority have any questions in relation to this proposal or require additional supporting information, please don't hesitate to contact Planning by Design to discuss.