



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Application No:	20230898
Location:	Blue Ash, 86 Rhododendron Avenue, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0TT
Description:	Change the existing roof a Dutch Barn style to allow for habitable space, introduction of dormer style windows to the rear, roof line windows to the front, single storey rear extension, front porch and changing the materials of the existing lean-to.
Applicant:	Mr Julian Roberts
Site Visit:	N/A Desktop Assessment

Submitted Documents/Plans

The application comprises the following documents and plans:

- Application Form - dated 23/08/2023;
- Supplementary Information - Planning Statement;
- Un-numbered Location Plan - Existing Block Plan (scale 1:500);
- Un-numbered Location Plan - Proposed Block Plan (scale 1:200);
- Un-numbered Plan - Site Levels (scale 1:200);
- Un-numbered Plan - Existing Floor Plans (received 30/09/2023);
- Un-numbered Plan - Proposed Floor Plans (received 30/09/2023);
- Un-numbered Plan - Proposed Elevations (received 30/09/2023);
- Drawing no. 1622.WD.01 - Existing Site Location, Block Plan and Floor Plans;
- Drawing no. 1622.WD.04 - Existing Front and Northern Side Elevations;
- Drawing no. 1622.WD.05 - Existing Rear and Southern Side Elevations.
- ~~Un-numbered Plan - Proposed Floor Plans (received 24/08/2023) - SUPERSEDED;~~
- ~~Un-numbered Plan - Proposed Elevations (received 24/08/2023) - SUPERSEDED.~~

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20230565	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the proposed two storey rear extension, single storey side extension, front porch 3no. x roofline 'Velux' style roof windows to front.	CERTIFICATE REFUSED	04.08.2023
20230148	Alterations to roof to create usable space, rear dormer, roof light windows to the front, porch and two	WITHDRAWN	25.05.2023

	storey rear extension with habitable space in the roof.		
20221214	Erection of a two storey rear extension, installation of 3 No. pitched dormers in the front roof slope with external alterations.	REFUSED	06.01.2023
20130841	Erection of a detached garage.	PERMITTED	01.11.2013
19990472	Retention of the attached garden shed at the side.	REFUSED	02.09.1999
1999/00015/ REF		APPEAL ALLOWED	16.03.1999
19910409	Erection of detached bungalow with detached garage at the front and construction of a cesspool.	PERMITTED	16.07.1991

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (September 2014):

- CS01 - Sustainable Development
- CS02 - Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 - Green Infrastructure
- CS18 - Climate Change
- CS19 - Design & Development Principles

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (LPFR) (November 1994):

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

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) sets out that policies within adopted local plans should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Such reviews are also a legal requirement as set out in Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

The Council undertook such a review in September 2019 and found that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy is in need of a partial review in terms of Policy CS02, due to the increased need for housing since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted and the need to ensure that a sufficient land supply exists to meet this need. Whilst saved policies from the Local Plan 1st Review (1994) generally conform with the NPPF (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

Other material considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)

- Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt Land
- Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural 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 Guidance (SPD) (2021)

- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Internal consultees

Local Ward Councillors - No comment received.

External consultees

Meopham Parish Council - We raise no objection to this application, subject to compliance with local planning policy.

Kent County Council (Public Rights of Way) - (taken from the previous application ref. 20221214).

Public Rights of Way NS293 lies to the west of the application area and I therefore enclose a copy of the Public Rights of Way network map showing the definitive line of the path for your information.

It is important to advise the applicants that a public right of way must not be stopped up, diverted, obstructed or the surface disturbed and there must be no encroachment on the current width, at any time now or in future. This includes any building materials or waste generated during any of the construction phases. Please note that no furniture or fixtures may be erected on or across Public Rights of Way without the express consent of the Highways Authority.

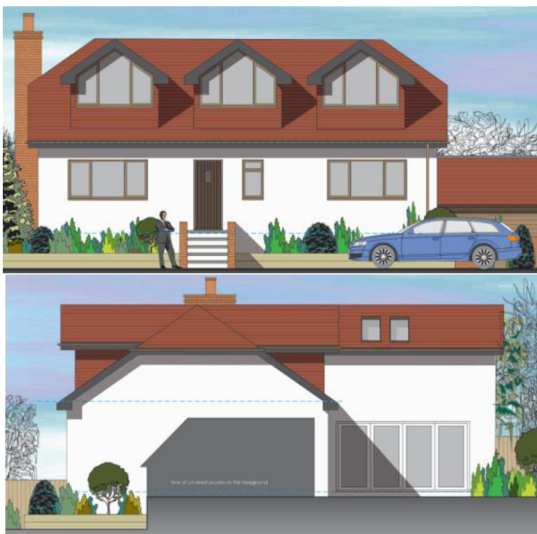
Neighbouring properties

An advert was published in the local paper and a notice displayed on site.

In addition, three surrounding properties were consulted and no representations were received. The consultation period expired 13th October 2023.

Preliminary Matters

This application follows a refused planning application (ref. 20221214), which proposed the “erection of a two storey rear extension, installation of 3 No. pitched dormers in the front roof slope with external alterations”. The screenshots below are taken from the previous application:



The Local Planning Authority refused the application on the following grounds:

1. *The proposed extensions are inappropriate development that will have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt, by virtue of disproportionate scale, dominant appearance and perceived bulk. Therefore, the proposal is contrary to saved Policy C13 of Gravesham's Local Plan First Review (1994) and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).*
2. *The proposed development will add significant and disproportionate bulk to the property, by virtue of extensions that are not subordinate or subservient, a bulky two-storey flat roof projection and dormer windows that are overly dominant features on the roof slope. As such the proposal is considered incongruous and poor design which will be harmful to the character of the area and wider landscape. As such the proposal is contrary to Policies CS12 and CS19 of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), Gravesham's Householder Design Guidance SPD (2021) and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).*

In order to receive a positive decision the development hereby proposed must be considered to overcome the grounds of refusal above.

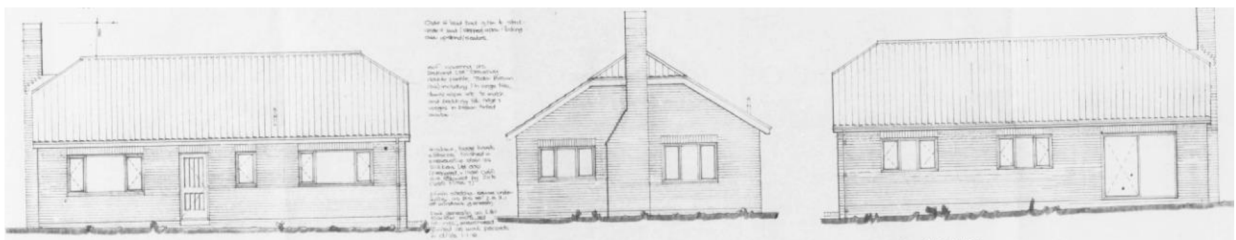
Analysis

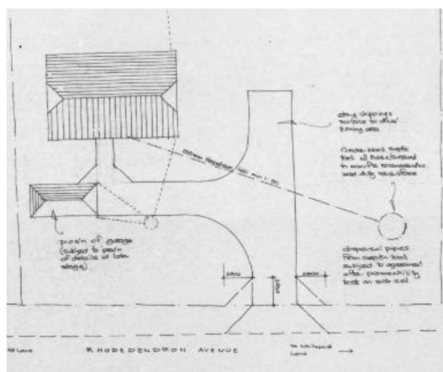
Site Description and Context

Blue Ash is a detached chalet style bungalow located on the eastern side of Rhododendron Avenue and within the Metropolitan Green Belt.



The existing property is considered to be the original dwelling, with the exception of the attached structure (highlighted as a lean-to on the plans). Therefore, for the purpose of this application the existing property is considered to be original, as supported by the exerts below from the 1991 application (ref. 19910409):





Proposed Development

This application proposes the erection of a single storey rear extension and front porch, conversion of the lean-to structure into habitable rooms and alterations to the roof to create additional living space within the loft.

The proposed Dutch barn style roof will not increase the ridge or eave height of the main dwelling but will increase the depth of the space within the loft (as demonstrated in the screenshots below), with two pitched roof dormers on the rear slope. The conversion of the lean-to will involve a reduction in the footprint of the projection. The dimensions of the porch and rear extension are as follows:

Rear Extension

- Depth - 4m
- Width - 8m
- Height - 2.6m

Porch

- Depth - 2.9m
- Width - 1.2m
- Height (max) - 3.1m
- Height (eave) - 2.15m

Dormers

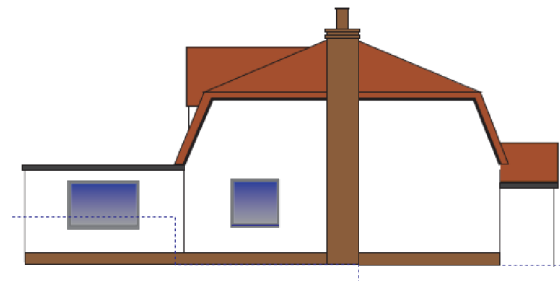
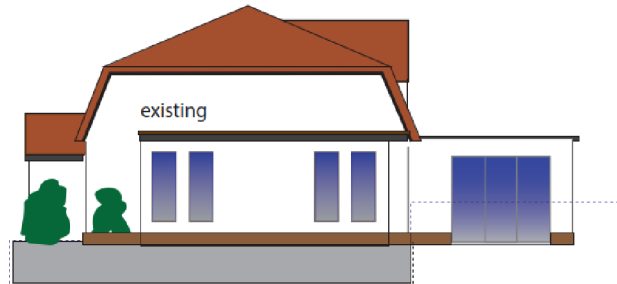
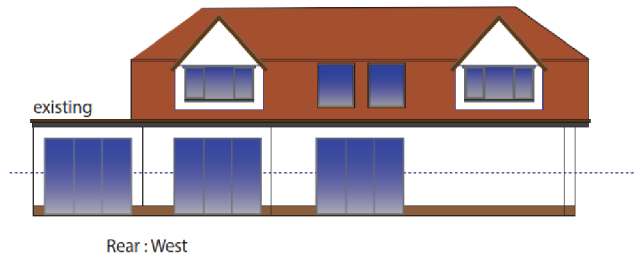
- Depth - 3m
- Width - 2.35m
- Height (max) - 2.1m
- Height (eave) - 1.25m

Existing



Proposed





Green Belt

The application site is located in the Green Belt and as such Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) (2014) is relevant. Development in the urban area is prioritised as the sustainable location for development. In the rural area, Policy CS02 states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the policies map. Development outside those settlements, i.e. in the Green Belt, will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the LPCS.

There are five principle issues in determining this application;

1. Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?
2. The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
3. Any very special circumstances?
4. The effect on the character and appearance of the area;
5. Impact on the Landscape; and
6. Other matters.

1. Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?

There are strict policy considerations within the Green Belt whereby paragraph 147 of the NPPF (2023) states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 148 goes on to say that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green

Belt unless it falls within the specified exceptions. The relevant exception to consider for this application is part c of paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2023), which states that it may be acceptable to extend or alter a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

In determining this proposal account will be taken of Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (LPFR) (1994) which relates to extensions to dwellings in the countryside. It sets out a number of criteria that should be met when considering proposals for domestic extensions. As the policy pre-dates the NPPF (2023), the weight attached to the policy must be considered carefully, with greater weight being given where the approach is consistent with paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2023).

In particular Policy C13 places an overall limit on extensions of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling unless the increased floor space has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling (criteria ii). It also requires the massing, scale and form of any extension to be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting (criteria vi). It is considered that these factors are relevant in determining whether the size of an extension is proportionate and as such, these aspects of the policy are broadly in line with the NPPF (2023) and should be afforded due weight.

	Original Dwelling	Proposed Extended Dwelling	% increase above original
Footprint (m²)	94m ²	147.7m ² (+53.7m ²)	57%
Internal Floorspace Area (m²)	127.4m ²	199.2m ² (+71.8m ²)	56.3%
Volume	-	-	-

Note – the original dwelling figures do not match the previous refusal (ref. 20221214), this is due to an incorrect scale which has been highlighted. Therefore, the figures above are reflective of the original footprint of the dwelling.

The calculations demonstrate that the proposed additions to the dwellinghouse exceed the one third limit set out in saved policy C13. These calculations include the pre-existing lean-to, which will be converted into habitable rooms, however the new proposed additions only represent a 37% increase above the original footprint. Nevertheless, in purely numerical terms, the extension is contrary to the local plan Green Belt policy, potentially representing a disproportionate increase over the original floor area of the building. The volume calculations of the extensions, over the original dwelling, have not been calculated in this application and will instead be visually assessed.

However the numerical calculation forms only a part of the overall assessment. Paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2023) states that it may be acceptable to extend or alter a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. It is does not provide a figure.

The roof alterations will not raise the height of the ridge, but will increase the depth and usable floorspace within the loft by utilising a Dutch barn roof profile. This change, along with the dormers, does not result in any significant increase in perceived bulk and is well-balanced and proportionate. The proposed extensions will increase the size of the property, however are well

designed and considered to be proportionate additions. The rear extension has been reduced to single storey, is part width and set in from the flank wall of the dwelling. The porch is also not excessive in size or scale. Therefore, the extensions are subservient to the main dwelling.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development would/would not result in a disproportionate addition to the property and as such the proposal would not be inappropriate development which is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. It is therefore compliant with Policy CS02 (LPCS), Policy C13 (LPFR) and to paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2023).

2. The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF (2023) states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.

Any new built form of development is likely to impact on the openness of the Green Belt, however it is important to establish the degree of harm. The development will enlarge the dwelling, by incorporating the side lean-to into habitable rooms and introducing the rear extension and porch, however as aforementioned these additions have been designed with subservience and are subordinate. These good design strategies reduce perceived bulk and create a proportionate, balanced building. Moreover, as aforementioned the roof alteration will not increase the ridge height of the dwelling. As such, although introducing additional built form of development into the Green Belt, the extensions have been designed appropriately and at an acceptable scale and are therefore not considered to result in any significant harm to the openness.

Furthermore, the proposed extensions are a significant improvement on the previously refused application (ref. 20221214). As demonstrated in the screenshots shown earlier in this report, the previous proposal was poor design and introduced excessive bulky, which has improved significantly, and the scale of the additions have been reduced in this proposal. Therefore, the new design and scaled back extensions are a significant improvement, creating a more proportionate and less impactful property.

Reference back to paragraphs 147 and 148 of the NPPF (2023) informs us that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Whether the development causes any other harm and whether there are any other relevant considerations to balance the overall planning argument, should now be considered.

3. Very special circumstances

No specific arguments have been put forward by the applicant in relation to the assessment of 'very special circumstances'.

4. Impact on the Landscape

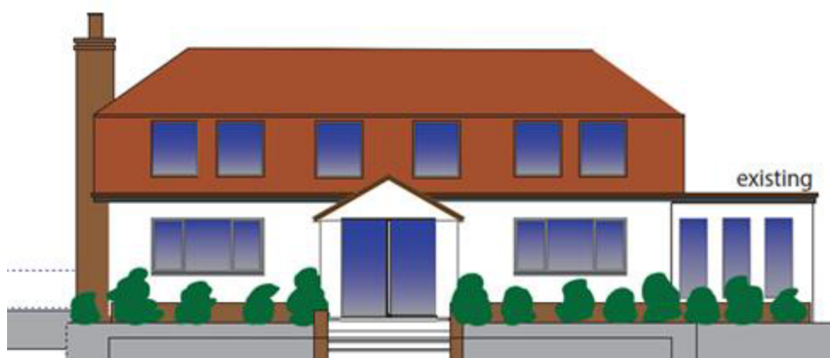
In addition to being within the Green Belt, the site is located within the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area. This area is characterised by varied topography, ancient wood and haphazard mosaic resident plots and small holdings. The style of properties is varied in terms of scale and style, with many plots being derelict caravans and small brick bungalows.

The Landscape Character Assessment (2009) continues to state that incongruous elements within the area involve replacing more traditional features through to modernisation of vernacular buildings. This is continued in the guidelines which set out how to conserve strong elements and "halt the erosion of the area with inappropriate development", and include the following points:

- Conserve and maintain traditional and distinct buildings, materials and elements;
- Assess development proposals through the area to modify variety in building styles and materials;
- Resist proposals that introduce inappropriate designs and materials.

Policy CS12 (LPCS) seeks to protect the Green infrastructure within the Borough and states at 5.7.26 the overall landscape character and valued landscapes will be conserved, restored and enhanced.

The information submitted with this application is inconsistent, with the plans showing a clay-coloured roof with white rendered walls but the application form states slate/slate effect roof. The existing materials on the dwelling and its roof are matching with the detached garage. While the use of materials such as slate and render can in some circumstance be considered to fit within a rural context, the slate effect roof and white rendered walls has a modern material palate which is more in keeping with urban characteristics. This urban appearance is exacerbated by the extent of glazing proposed. The screenshot below demonstrates the inconsistencies between the proposed materials and highlights the extent of glazing:



It is noted that the variety of buildings on Rhododendron Avenue means that there is no clear materiality or character, however as set out in the Landscape Character Assessment and Gravesham's Design Guide SPD (2021) new development should reflect and respond to original character/ features, and utilise traditional materials to conserve the Harvel Wooded Downs.

Discussions were had with the applicant seeking clarification on the proposed materials and it was confirmed that their preference was the use of slate. The local authority expressed the concerns regarding slate and render, and recommended that clay tiles should be used instead. Although the applicant would prefer slate, in order to proceed with the application, they agreed to the use of clay tiles.

Subject to a condition clarifying the materials to be used, it is considered to be in accordance with Policy CS12 (LPCS).

5. The effect on the character and appearance of the area

Policy CS19 (Development and Design Principles) (LPCS) states that new development will be visually attractive and locally distinctive. It should also conserve and enhance the character of the local built and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding area. Moreover, Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places) of the NPPF (2023) sets out that developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character.

Gravesham's newly published Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guidance SPD (2021)

set out key principles for developments. Generally, the SPD highlights the importance of new development complimenting and corresponding to existing character and the wider context. In this case, the rural character of the area and other surrounding dwellings should be considered.

The extensions are not excessive in size or height, are proportionate to and do not dominate the dwelling. The rear extension is subservient to the dwelling, and the side projection will be reduced in size and is proportionate to the dwelling in height and width. Moreover, the front porch is not an overly dominant addition and is subordinate.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable design and subject to the condition relating to materials, which will ensure that the development responds and reflects to original character, there would be no detrimental impact on the property or the wider context. As such, the proposed extensions are considered to be acceptable in design terms and in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Section 12 of the NPPF (2023).

6. Other matters

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The proposed development provides acceptable living conditions that safeguard the amenity of existing and future occupiers in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Section 12 of the NPPF (2023).

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CS19 (LPCS) requires new development to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties and land and paragraph 127 of the NPPF (2023) requires development to have a high standard of amenity for existing users (in this case surrounding properties).

There is not considered to be any detrimental impact on the amenity of surrounding properties in terms of loss of light, loss of privacy, loss of outlook or sense of enclosure. As such, the proposed development is in accordance with Policy CS19 (LPCS) and Section 12 of the NPPF (2023). No neighbour representations have been received.

Parking and Highways

There are no issues relating to parking or highways related to this application.

Conclusion

The application has been fully considered and is in accordance with local and national planning policy.

The proposed extensions enlarge the property above the one third limit set out in saved policy C13 (LPFR) but have been carefully designed to reduce perceived bulk and be proportionate. These strategies are considered to mitigate harm to the Green Belt and the extensions are not inappropriate development. The development is well designed in accordance with Gravesham's Design SPD (2021), will not impact the amenity of future occupiers or surrounding residents, is acceptable in parking and highway terms, and will preserve the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape.

As such, it is recommended that planning permission is granted, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

Permission

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ethan Bonthron	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	17 th October 2023	Dated:	19 October 2023