



Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20221313

Location: The Barn East Court Farm Church Lane Gravesend

Description: Creation of storage and games room within roof space, and the insertion of gable end windows, roof windows and rear door to the existing garage building.

Applicant: Mr H Singh

Site Visit Date: Desk top

Submitted Documents/Plans

- Application form;
- Drawing no. 110 Rev. A – Proposed Scheme: Floor Plan and Elevation;
- Drawing no. 111 – Existing Details: Floor Plan and Elevation Block Plan;
- Drawing no. 112 – Location Plan;
- Drawing no. 113 – Existing Details: Existing & Proposed Block Plan; and
- Design and Access Statement Incorporating Heritage Statement.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20190265	Removal of stable building and outbuilding and replacement with an 8 bay domestic garage building with lift facility for double stacking of vehicles.	Permitted	13.06.2019

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development and Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) 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 (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 12 - Achieving well designed places
- 13 - Protecting Green Belt land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006);
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021); and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009).

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Neighbouring properties

6 surrounding properties were consulted plus site notice – overall consultation expiry date was 14 December 2022 – no responses received.

Officer's Analysis

The application site East Court Barn is one half of a converted threshing barn which has been converted into two, three bedroom dwellings (the other half being 'The Granary') under application references 20151207 & 20160336.

The former threshing barn is one of a number of buildings from the former East Court Manor Farmstead which have been converted from farm buildings to residential use and incidental uses. The conversion and re-use of the buildings accorded with Green Belt policy.

This application relates specifically to the 8 bay domestic garage building with lift facility for double stacking of vehicles (so 16 in total) which was permitted in 2019 under application reference 20190265. The garage building measures 29.5m in length, 7.9m in width and a height to the ridgeline of 6.9m. It is constructed of blockwork walls clad in timber weatherboarding with a brick plinth and a clay plain tile roof. The garage was to replace an existing outbuilding on the site.

Whilst the garage building represented an 800% increase in new built volume on the site, was a greater footprint than the dwelling (East Court Barn), was only marginally less than the entire length of the converted threshing barn (containing East Court Farm and The Granary) and that the provision of an 8 bay garage with double stacking went beyond what could reasonably be required for domestic purposes and was therefore considered to constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, planning permission was granted. The garage is outlined below (in red) with the host dwelling outlined in blue and showing the context of the wider site:



This was subject to conditions including no.2 which restricts the use of the building for the accommodation of private motor vehicles for the residential occupants of The Barn as a private dwelling house and no other purpose. Hence planning permission is required for the current proposal to convert the first floor of the garage to a games room and storage and the insertion of rooflights (four in the front roof slope and two in the rear roof slope), a window in each flank and a door in the rear.

The site is within the Green Belt and in the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area.

The principle considerations are considered to be:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt including impact on openness;
- Character and Appearance including the effect on landscape character;
- Parking and Highway Safety
- Other Matters
- Whether very special circumstances exist

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt including impact on openness

Policy CS02 (LPCS) states that development in the Green Belt will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting Green Belt.

Paragraph 147 (NPPF, 2021) states that inappropriate development if, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 148 of the NPPF (2021) states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 149 (NPPF, 2021) states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt but there are some exceptions to this as follows:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- 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;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

In this case it is considered point (c) is the most relevant as this is for alterations to an existing building. The principle of the development is therefore considered acceptable subject to an assessment of the impact that the development would have on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

The proposal would not result in any increase in the size of the building at all, it would simply change the use of the first floor from the parking of vehicles to a games room and storage accessed via a new internal staircase. The only external changes are the insertion of six rooflights (four in the front roof slope and two in the rear) and two windows in either flank; this would not result in the building increasing in size or prominence they are not considered excessive in number. The use as a games room and storage are incidental uses to the host dwelling and it is considered there would be no intensification of the use of the building over and above the permitted use as a 16 space garage.

As such it is considered the proposal would have no impact on the openness of the Green Belt and would continue to preserve it.

Paragraph 138 (NPPF, 2021) sets out that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- 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.

In respect of these it is not considered that the proposal would conflict with any of the Green Belt purposes.

As the proposal would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, the proposal would meet the exception (c) of paragraph 149 of the NPPF (2021) and as such the proposal is considered compliant with Policy CS02 (LPCS).

Character and Appearance including the effect on landscape character

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF (2021) requires development to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (amongst other things) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan). Policy CS12 (LPCS) states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment will be taken into account in determining applications.

The site is located in the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area. The Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009) advises that the Higham Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area is characterised by very gently undulating topography, open arable farmland, views out to the marshes and the River Thames in the north, original Saxon village of Lower Higham and more recent development to the south, marsh side hamlets and settlements, isolated farmsteads and scattered properties with locally distinct styles and materials, pockets of orchards and garden nurseries, historic sites including a Priory and Gads Hill and the Thames and Medway Canal which runs to Lower Higham. Its condition is described as poor and its sensitivity as moderate. The guidelines for the character area focus on restoring landscape elements in poor condition, whilst safeguarding it as a prominent landscape feature within the wider landscape.

The area the site is located in is rural in character, with open fields to the north, south, east and west of the wider East Court Farm site. Given the proposal would not increase the scale of the building it is considered it would not increase its prominence over and above the existing situation. Many of the other converted and new buildings on the wider former farmstead have rooflights in them as seen in the above aerial and so they would not appear incongruous or out of keeping in this context. The proposed windows in both gables would not be visible from above and would be similar to the many other windows that are in the other buildings on the wider former farmstead. Overall therefore, it is considered that the proposal would have no adverse impact on landscape character and in respect of this matter the proposal is therefore compliant with Policy CS121 (LPCS).

Amenity of Occupiers

The proposal would have no impact on the garden area or rear garden depth of the host dwelling. It would therefore have no harmful impact on the amenity of occupiers and in respect of this matter the proposal is therefore compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Neighbouring Amenity

The rooms at first floor level would be a games room and storage. The window in the north gable serving the games room would look out onto the open fields to the north and there are no neighbouring properties to the north therefore no neighbour impact. The window in the southern gable would serve the storage area; to the south there is the outbuilding belonging to East Court Manor, another dwelling to the south-west of the garage building which have been used as a store, kennels and stables. The window would serve a non-habitable room (storage) and would not look into any of the windows in the rear of the property or its private garden area. It is therefore considered there would be impact on East Court Manor with regards overlooking. In respect of neighbour amenity the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Parking and Highway Safety

The proposal would result in a reduction in the number of parking spaces in the garage from 16 to 8. The application dwelling would therefore still retain a significant amount of parking spaces for the dwelling in excess of the maximum number of parking spaces required for a property with three bedrooms as set out in SPG4. In respect of parking and highway safety the proposal is therefore considered compliant with saved Policy P3 (LPFR).

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

Use – In order to ensure that the building is only used as a garage at ground floor level and a games room and storage at first floor level, it is recommended that if permission is forthcoming then a condition to restrict this use as such should be attached.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would not impact on landscape character, the amenity of occupiers or neighbouring amenity or parking or highway safety. It is therefore compliant with national and local planning policy.

Recommendation: Permission

(For detailed conditions and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Ms Rebecca Harrison	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	<i>Rebecca Harrison</i>	Signed:	
Dated:	7th February 2023	Dated:	07 February 2023