

Shorne Parish Council

————— Borough of Gravesham —————

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23rd June 2022

Application ref 20220586

1 Cheneys Cottages Thong Lane Shorne Gravesend Kent DA12 4AA

Creation of a parking area surfaced with porous tarmac and finished with resin bound gravel.

The Parish Council has significant concerns about this application:

1) Retrospective application:

Regrettably, the application is largely retrospective despite the applicant being aware that the property is located in a Conservation Area and that planning permission is therefore needed. It would have been preferable not to have been put in this situation.

We note that the applicant had previously attempted to obtain approval for this new plan while applying under 20211403 to discharge Conditions from an earlier application and Appeal (Ref 20190929).

2) Size and layout of parking area:

The original size of the separate parking area (not drive as frequently described) is what was applied for, and having just two parking spaces was considered acceptable to the Appeal Inspector.

In retrospect, the layout originally proposed and approved was not optimal, and if revision is required then a combined wide driveway and access path (as at Orchard House next door) would be better as the driveway would then provide turning space and visitor parking.

However, we consider that vehicles can in fact safely reverse into the proposed parking area, as happens at the neighbouring cottages (which also do not have visitor parking). Parking space sizes have national and local recommendations, so overall the parking area does not need to be as large as now proposed. We are not aware of any evidence that parking on the roadside is unsafe in this location, no incidents being recorded on "CrashMap" in the last ten years.

A parking layout plan should also be submitted, in order to clarify and define the orientation in which vehicles are to be parked.

3) Structural aspects:

We note that there is also a new path that has steps down from the parking area, indicating that the land levels have been raised.

Installing steps is a negative design feature as it unnecessarily introduces a safety risk.

The parking area should be lower at the back than the front so that excess water drains back onto the property rather than the roadway, and the path (if needed) should then either be flat or at most gently sloped.

4) Parking Area surface:

We note the comments from the GBC Highways Officer in the Officer Report for application ref 20211403, we were not made aware of the proposed change to a resin surface prior to the decision.

We note the applicant's suggestion that reinforced mesh with grass might be substituted. If that is acceptable to GBC Highways, then it might be more suitable for and compatible with the rural and Conservation Area location as it could appear to just be a grassed area. It would also facilitate future revision. We note that the property is presently up for sale, a future owner might wish to improve on the design and layout of the paths and parking area.

5) Fencing:

Fencing off a parking area from the property it serves is unusual, and, contrary to the applicants supporting statement, we are not aware of any other residential property in the immediate area or further afield where this has been done. The appearance is visually intrusive, whereas the original plan was described in the Appeal decision notice that "it would not result in a notably more intensive form of development and would still maintain the character of openness that is prevalent within the site and its surroundings". With the larger, resin surfaced area plus the fencing and pathway, this is not now the case.

Safety of children at the property is cited as justification however it is more usual to divide garden areas into front and back garden if containment of children is a genuine need. We note in that connection that the rear (east) garden fence is post and rail, and the right side (south) boundary includes a wooden barred field gate that opens from the side track from the roadway. A temporary solution would also be a possibility as has already been used previously on the site.

6) Future vehicle gates:

There is unconnected discussion about potentially installing vehicle gates however that has not been applied for. It is not common for residential properties in the area, particularly not if the gates would be located immediately adjacent to the roadside. That would probably not be permitted due to highway safety concerns.