

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20221242

Location: 371 Singlewell Road Gravesend Kent DA11 7RL

Description: Retention of vehicle entrance gates and railings to existing boundary walls

Applicant: Mr P Sanghera

Site Visit Date: 12 January 2023

Submitted Documents/Plans

Householder Planning Application form;
Drawing no. 22/155-01 Existing layout and elevations;
Drawing no. 22/155-02 Location and block plans and proposed layout and elevations; and
Photographs.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20140229	Erection of lean to canopy to front elevation and repositioning/resizing of windows. Additional window with obscured glazing to first floor ensuite shower room	Permitted	15.05.2014
20130601	Erection of two storey rear and single storey side extension to form kitchen, replacement garage, dining and family area at ground floor level with bedroom, enlarged bedroom, bathroom/wc and two ensuite bathroom/wc's at first floor level including erection of new facing brickwork skin to existing building.	Permitted	27.08.2013
20130145	Erection of two storey rear extension to form kitchen, dining area, family area and shower room/wc at ground floor level with two bedrooms, bathroom/wc and two ensuite shower room/wc's at first floor level.	Refused	09.04.2013

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- T5 – Access to the Identified Highway Network
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites

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
- 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places

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)
- PGN 6 - Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways (2009)
- Kent County Council - Residential Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2022)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

GBC – Highways Officer

Kent County Council's guidance regarding gating a vehicular access contained within their Dropped Kerb Application guidance, dated September 2022 states,

11/Gates

Have you or are you considering installing gates?

The gates should not open outwards onto the public highway and you should have at least 5.5m clearance to ensure vehicles are not obstructing the public highway on accessing your property.

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/139485/Dropped-Kerb-Application-Guidance.pdf

Given this guidance I can only suggest refusal.

In addition, it is impossible to determine if the opened gates and/or railings would have any adverse effect on pedestrian visibility. The use of railings can at certain angles give the impression of a solid fence with zero visibility from an emerging vehicle. It must be remembered that given the guidance in the Highway Code a vehicle must give way to a pedestrian at a junction, but to do this the driver must see the pedestrian. So again I, would recommend refusal and there should be no boundary treatment over current wall height above footway.

Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised by a site notice and to five neighbouring properties by letter. No representations have been received and the consultation period expired on 03/02/2023.

Officer's Analysis

Background

The proposed development has already been completed and is the subject of an ongoing GBC Planning Enforcement investigation. This application is an attempt to regularise the unauthorised erection of vehicle entrance gates and railings on top of the existing boundary walls at the application site.

Design, Character and Appearance

Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF 2021) sets out various design requirements and includes the need for the development to add to the overall quality of an area; be visually attractive; and be sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 sets out that new development will be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should conserve and enhance the character of the built environment and take account of the scale, height, building lines and other architectural features of buildings. Account should also be taken of strategic views, site topography, the significance of heritage assets and features of townscape and landscape value which contribute to local character and sense of place.

In relation to front boundary treatments, the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) sets out that they should;

- Respond to the design of the dwelling;
- Be consistent with the height of other enclosures on the road;
- Avoid the introduction of different styles along the street. Treatments should reinforce the dominant boundary type along the street, ensuring consistency with the style and age of the property;
- Consider well-maintained planting as an alternative solution and retain any hedgerow;
- Encourage natural surveillance of the street and help design out crime;
- Incorporate visibility splays and sight lines for pedestrian and vehicular safety; and
- Hedges are also encouraged given their air quality benefits.

The front boundary treatments in the area surrounding the application site are mainly characterised by low walls and vegetation. Although no. 369 Singlewell Road (the adjacent property) has a metal gate, the gate is much smaller and more delicate in design than that proposed and it does not appear to have planning permission. Furthermore the main part of the front boundary treatment at no. 369 comprises of a low wall with planting above, which softens the impact of the gate on the appearance of the surrounding area.

The proposed development would result in a much higher boundary treatment than that existing and be of a design which is harsh and incongruous compared to the existing situation and existing boundaries in the surrounding area. The chunky nature of the railings and their dark, black colour mean that they are a prominent feature of the street scene, which is at odds with the planting and low red brick walls which prevail. As shown in the following images (the application site is on the left in the first image, with no. 369 adjacent);



Google Street View, November 2022 – Facing north outside the application site



Google Street View, November 2022 – facing north outside no. 370 Singlewell Road

The applicant has provided photographs of some existing front boundary treatments at nos. 377 and 378 Singlewell Road, and Wayside, Elvetham and Roman Way, Watling Street. However it is considered that these do not provide any justification for the proposed development. This is because none of these boundary treatments have planning permission and because those boundaries located in Watling Street are not part of the street scene surrounding the application site. The railings at no. 377 Singlewell Road are narrower and more delicate looking than those proposed at the application site and the wall/fence arrangement at no. 378 Singlewell Road is more consistent with the character of the street scene than this proposal. But in both instances (and indeed in all the Watling Street properties), it would be preferable in terms of design, to have a low wall/planted front boundary treatment than that which is existing. Due to their lack of planning permission and use of railings rather than walls/vegetation, all these properties should be referred to the GBC Planning Enforcement Team for investigation.

Overall, the proposal would be poorly designed and an incongruous addition to the frontage of the application site and be detrimental to the visual amenities of the surrounding street scene. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, to the Householder extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and to paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The proposed development would not adversely impact upon the private amenity space or internal layout of the application property or the privacy, daylight or sunlight of its occupants. As such, the proposal would not be detrimental to the amenity of future occupiers and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Neighbouring Amenity

The closest residential properties to the application site are nos. 369 and 373 Singlewell Road (located to the north and south respectively). No. 8 Broadwood is located to the east across the roadway. Elvetham and Nil Numero, Watling Street are located to the west.

Due to the design of the proposed development and to the layout and orientation of the surrounding properties, there would be no adverse overshadowing or overbearing impacts to the occupiers of the surrounding dwellings. As such, the proposed development would not be detrimental to the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Parking and Highways

Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) requires new development to mitigate its impact of the highway and public transport networks as required and for sufficient parking to be provided in accordance with adopted parking standards, which reflect the availability of alternative means of transport and accessibility to services and facilities.

Saved Policy T1 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) sets out that the impact on the transport system and environment of traffic generated by new development will be considered.

Saved Policy T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) sets out that the formation of new Accesses or the intensification of the use of existing accesses will not normally be permitted except where no danger would arise and where the proposed access is of a standard/location that is acceptable to the Local Planning and Highway Authorities.

Singlewell Road is a classified 'Schedule 2 Highway' in PGN 6 - Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways (2009). The application site has two vehicle entrance points from Singlewell Road and prior to the proposed development, the front boundary comprised of a low wall only. The original front boundary walls varied in height from 0.8 to 1 metre and the proposed front boundary walls/railings have heights of between 1.8 to 2.2 metres. The gates are a new feature on the frontage.

Kent County Council - Residential Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2022) states that gates should be a minimum distance of 5.5m from the highway edge and inward opening in order to ensure that vehicles do not obstruct the public highway when accessing the property. Furthermore the document sets out that there should be no obstruction to visibility over a height of 0.9 metres above footway level.

In this case, the proposed gate would be located at the highway edge and when used would therefore adversely impact on the free-flowing movement of traffic on Singlewell Road and be detrimental to highway safety, contrary to this guidance.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the driveway and front wall arrangement existed prior to the proposed development, this proposal (by virtue of the addition of railings/gates) would alter the visibility for users of the driveway and pedestrians using the footpath fronting the application site. Visibility splays have not been illustrated as part of this application and the following images illustrate that visibility would be compromised, presenting dangers to passing pedestrians;



Overall it is considered that the proposed development would obstruct the free flow of traffic on Singlewell Road and impede pedestrian visibility. As such, the proposal would be detrimental to highway safety and contrary to Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, to Saved Policies T1 and T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and to Kent County Council Residential Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment September 2022.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located within an area of multi-period archaeological potential, Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone, the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Safeguarding Zone and a smoke control area. However, as the proposed development would be within the confines of an existing residential garden and no groundworks would occur, then it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to archaeology, sensitive habitats, groundwater or the LTC. With regard to the smoke control area, advice regarding smokeless fuels/appliances can be given to the applicant in an informative attached to any planning permission granted.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The proposed development would have no adverse impacts on residential amenity. However the proposal would be poorly designed and detrimental to the visual amenities of the street scene. Furthermore it would obstruct the free flow of traffic on Singlewell Road and provide inadequate pedestrian visibility, which would be detrimental to highway safety.

Overall it is considered that the adverse impacts of the proposed development attract significant weight and would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal. Therefore, following a thorough assessment of the application and all material planning considerations, it is considered that the proposed development cannot be supported and that planning permission should be refused on the following grounds;

1. The proposed development, by reason of its design and incongruous appearance, would be detrimental to the visual amenities of the surrounding street scene. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, to the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021) and to paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).
2. The proposed development would make insufficient provision for safe access to, and egress from, the frontage parking area leading to vehicles obstructing the free flow of traffic on Singlewell Road and drivers having poor visibility and presenting dangers to passing pedestrians. As such, the proposal would be detrimental to highway safety and contrary to Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, to Saved Policies T1 and T5 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) and to the KCC Residential Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment September 2022.

(For informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	07th February 2023	Dated:	07 February 2023