

Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20221198

Location: Earl House Priestwood Road Meopham Gravesend

Description: Demolition of artists studio, oil store and porch; erection of rear extension and porch; alteration of existing porch with internal alterations

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Dickens

Site Visit Date: 25th November 2023

Submitted Documents/Plans

Planning Application Form and Certificates
Planning, Design and Access Statement by Robinson Escott Planning
Unnumbered OS Red Line Site Location Plan
Unnumbered Existing Block Plan
Unnumbered Proposed Block Plan

Drawing No PDB/PR-01: Existing Floor Plans and Elevations
Drawing No PDB/PR-06: Existing Outbuildings
Drawing No PDB/PR-09 Rev B: Proposed Floor Plans and Section
Drawing No PDB/PR-10 Rev B: Proposed Elevations

Procedural Notes

The application has been determined in accordance with the above submitted documents/plans and Paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) sets out adopting a positive and proactive approach to development proposals.

Prior to this application being submitted the applicant submitted a pre-application enquiry regarding extending the dwelling along with a detached garage where the response outlined the dwelling had originally been extended and any further extensions would likely conflict with the development plan. The following extracts are worth noting from the pre-application enquiry response.

'Although these floor areas are only approximate, it is evident that the one third allowance prescribed in Policy C13 has already been reached and exceeded as a result of planning permissions 19780717 and 19930282. Any further extensions would therefore result in this limit being further exceeded and in quantitative terms would fail to comply with Policy C13(ii).'

and

'The above analysis demonstrates that the proposed extension and dormers would be defined as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are no very special circumstances that would justify an exception to the established Green Belt policy approach. In light of these considerations, these elements of your proposal would be unlikely to be considered favourably if submitted for planning permission.'

As discussed further in this report there is principal objection to the proposed development, and it would not

be possible to negotiate with the applicant to overcome the conflict with local and national policy. Communication between the previous case officer and agent took place but the information from these discussions does not warrant a request for further information or negotiations.

Therefore, a decision issued would give the applicant a formal stance from the Local Planning Authority on its position with this application. In this instance a further extension of time would not be appropriate to address the above issues and there is a strong reality that even with an extension of time with the application the applicant could not overcome the fundamental conflict with local and national planning policy.

No further information is considered necessary to be submitted or clarified by the applicant in order for the Local Planning Authority to determine the application.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
19930282	Erection of a two-storey rear extension to form living room with study and bathroom over.	Permission	03.06.1993
19780717	Erection of 2 storey side and rear extension to form wc lobby kitchen and store on ground floor and bedroom and staircase on first floor	Permission	04.08.1978
19540090 (TH/6/54/90)	Additions	Permission	07.04.1954

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

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

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- C13: Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside
- P3: Policy for 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
- 12 – Achieving sustainable development and well-designed places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 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);
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021); and
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Meopham Parish Council

Meopham Parish Council raises no objections to this planning application providing it meets the requirements of GBC's Householder extensions/Alterations Design Guide.

Neighbouring properties

Neighbour notification was originally sent to 5 adjoining dwellings and a site notice was displayed on site (under Article 15). The expiry date for the receipt of any comments was 9th December 2022.

There have been two representations both in support and commenting

- Earl House (formerly Squirrels) is a very attractive house from the outside but needs to be brought up to modern standard of living.
- These older cottages need care and imagination to achieve a good outcome and not spoil the original cottage profile from the road
- Previous proposals lacked imagination, resulting in a modernized extension tacked onto the old cottage, the remaining cottage rooms being untouched and far from useful.
- This proposal will make the house suitable for modern living, whilst still maintaining the beauty of the house and its place in a lovely rural setting.

Officer's Analysis

Site Description

Earl House is an attractive detached two storey dwelling located on the eastern side of Priestwood Road close to the junction with Horns Oak Road and is within the Green Belt. The dwelling is set close to the road and there is a low hedge to the frontage. The dwelling was formerly known as the Squirrels and the original building dates from the late 19th century when it appears to have comprised two small cottages.

The applicants statement accompanying the application indicates that by the late 1920s the property had been converted into one standalone dwelling.

The dwelling externally comprises a ground floor of white painted brickwork and with black weatherboarding to the first floor. It has a plain tiled roof.

The property has been extended at the rear and there is a cat slide roof at the rear with 3 large roof lights in the roof slope. There is a small timber porch with a shallow lean-to slate roof at the front (western side). There is an open porch on the north side.



There is a timber detached single garage with metal roof on the south side and behind it and in the rear garden another timber shed building termed an artist's studio. There is parking in front of the garage and parking for 2-3 cars on a hardstanding between the garage and the south side of the dwelling.



Most of the rear garden is lawned and there are a number of trees to the boundaries. There are also further outbuildings behind a hedge to the rear of the back garden including a large and a small timber shed and a Wendy house.

To the south and fronting Priestwood Road are a pair of two storey cottages, Greyridge Cottage and

Priestwood Cottage, while to the north and located on the corner with Chandlers Road is Wentways, an extended two storey thatched roof cottage set in large grounds. There is woodland opposite the site on the corner of Priestwood Road and Horns Oak Road. At the rear the property adjoins former agricultural land running southwards, now in the ownership of Priesthood a chalet bungalow further to the south.

The application site is outside of any rural settlement and is within the Green Belt and just to the south of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AoNB).

Priestwood Road is a narrow single width country lane with limited passing places (often available only where there are vehicle accesses from dwellings on to the road) and with poor forward visibility edged by trees and hedging.

Proposal

The application seeks to add a rear extension which will provide a ground floor addition to create a kitchen / dining area on the eastern elevation. This will have a vaulted ceiling with gable roofscape. As part of the roofscape, it is proposed to increase the head height of the two existing first floor rooms on the eastern elevation, which will be served by roof windows to improve accessibility for the applicant's elderly parents. A small, pitched roof is proposed on the southern elevation and replacement porch on the northern elevation.

There will be solar panels within the roof slope.

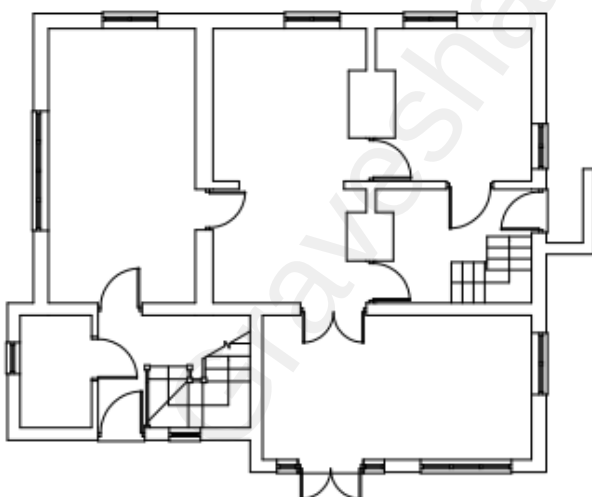
The submitted plans show that the rear ground floor element of the extension will project out by 3.3m and will be 5.8m wide with a first floor

In the applicants Planning, Design and Access Statement it is indicated that the floor area of the extension is 19.29m² but with the demolition of the floor area of an oil store and artists studio (29.25m²) this will result in a net decrease in floor area by 34.05% on the site compared to what exists currently.

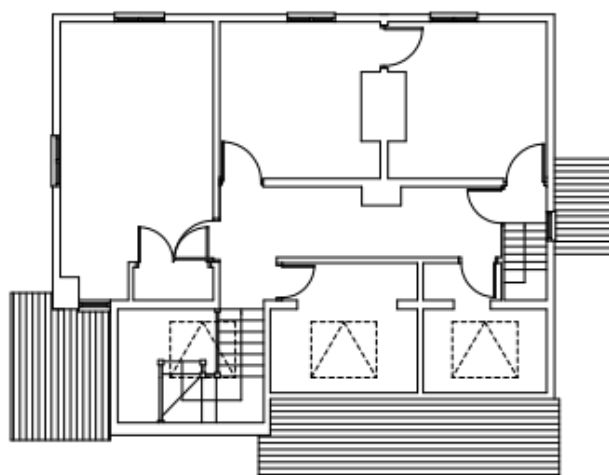
The applicants have indicated that a further outbuilding in the rear garden will also be demolished.

The existing and proposed floor plans and elevations are shown below

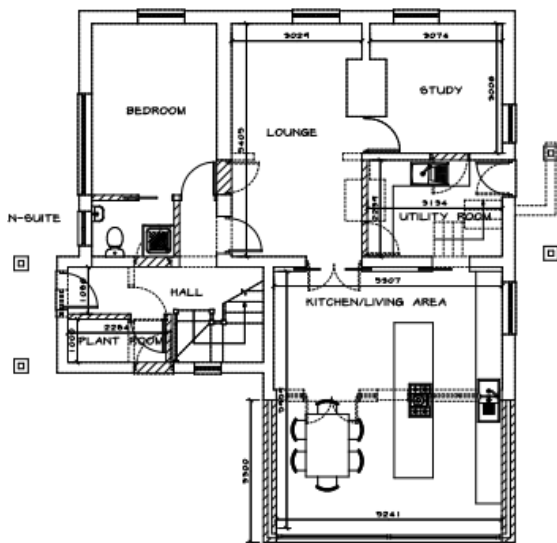
EXISTING GROUND FLOOR



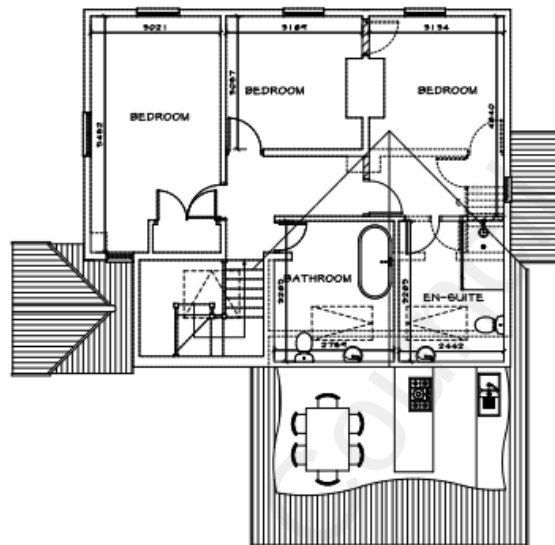
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR



EXISTING REAR ELEVATION EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION



PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION



The principle issues in the assessment of the application are:

- Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt;
- Effect on the openness of the Green Belt;
- Very Special Circumstances
- Character and Appearance including the effect of the proposal on landscape character;
- Impact on Occupier Amenity
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity;
- Parking and Highway Safety;

Whether the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt

The application site is located within the Green Belt where inappropriate development is, by definition,

harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (Paragraph 147 of the NPPF (2021)).

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 of the NPPF (2021) states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- 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 point (c) is relevant. Any extension to the property must not result in disproportionate additions over and above the original building.

Saved Policy C13 (LPFR) states that extensions to dwellings will be considered on their merits but the Council will expect the following criteria to be satisfied:-

- (i) The existing dwelling must be an "original dwelling"* in permanent use as a dwelling.
- (ii) There will be an overall limit of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally) prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.
- (iii) Those extensions which provide essential basic amenities such as a bathroom, toilet or kitchen, which are currently not available or are clearly inadequate, will normally be permitted.
- (iv) The extension shall not be in a form which would facilitate the future formation of a separate residential curtilage.
- (v) The dwelling to be enlarged must have sufficient curtilage to accommodate the extension without undue visual intrusion into the open countryside.
- (vi) The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting.
- (vii) Proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot.

Development Management Policies Document April 2018 (a document that has been subject to consultation but is not adopted) contains Proposed Policy DM 6 which relates to extensions, replacement buildings and ancillary development in the Green Belt. Although the weight that can be attached to this document/policy is limited, it does illustrate the Borough Council's most recent approach to the type of

development proposed at the application site.

With regard to extensions, Proposed Policy DM 6 outlines that the following will be taken into account in determining whether an extension in the Green Belt is proportionate;

- its footprint, floorspace and volume compared to the original building; and
- whether its scale, mass and height is subservient to the original building.

The plans submitted to the Council in 1978 (ref 19780717) show the following as the existing plans. There was a small lobby and wc at ground floor at the rear. It can be construed that this is the original floor space, thus as the **original building as at 1 July 1948**.

Based on those plans the 'original' dwelling (formerly two separate cottages) and taking into account the ground floor south side extension and the rear (east side) lobby would mean a dwelling of circa 65m² at ground floor and 39m² at first floor, as measured externally and 104m² in total.

The 1977 application added a first-floor bedroom on the south side and a larger lobby and wc plus staircase. This amounted to circa 15m² (enlarged ground floor lobby and wc and first floor staircase) and 19.0m² at first floor (bedroom), thus 34m², or as a percentage around a 32% increase.

The 1993 application for a rear ground floor living room and a first-floor study bathroom added 17.3m² and 9.8m² (useable floor space) respectively thus a further 27m² **and thus over a 58% cumulative increase**.

This current proposed extension adds a total of circa 23.5m² additional floorspace being 19.5m² at ground floor and 4.0m² at first floor giving a cumulative increase of 84%.

In summary a Total % increase over the original floor space of 84%.

It is evident from the above calculations that the proposal would exceed the one third limit (33%) and to a significant amount.

Although an increase in floorspace is a useful indicator, it is only one measure of the impact of a development and other factors that are taken into account in determining whether a proposal is proportionate are its footprint and volume compared to the original building and whether its scale, mass and height is subservient to the original building.

The application seeks to add a rear extension which will provide a ground floor addition to create a kitchen / dining area on the eastern elevation. This will have a vaulted ceiling with gable roofscape. As part of the roofscape, it is proposed to increase the head height of the two existing first floor rooms on the eastern elevation, which will be served by roof windows to improve accessibility for the applicant's elderly parents. A small, pitched roof is proposed on the southern elevation and replacement porch on the northern elevation.

The submitted plans show that the rear ground floor element of the extension will project out by 3.3m and will be 5.8m wide.

The extension would appear as a bulky addition which does not respect the character of this modest bungalow and would significantly increase the volume of the property. Taking into account the extensions which already exist at the property and the extension proposed, this would result in a much enlarged dwelling. Therefore, by virtue of an assessment of floorspace, volume, scale, bulk, massing and design, it is considered that the proposed two storey rear extension would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the original building. This is demonstrated below.

Proposed Side Extension



Existing Side extension



The proposal would therefore be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS02 (LPCS), saved Policy C13 (LPFR) and section 13 (NPPF, 2021).

Effect on the openness of the Green Belt

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF (2021) states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

The two storey extension would add to the built form of the dwelling, adding significant floorspace over and above the original dwelling and increase the depth of the dwelling significantly. The rear of the dwelling would go from single storey to two storey. By virtue of the scale of the proposal it would add a dominant addition to the property which would increase its prominence. The proposal is therefore considered to have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Very Special Circumstances

Very Special Circumstances

The development comprises inappropriate development as defined by the NPPF (2021). Paragraph 148 requires 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.”

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.

The applicant in their supporting Design & Access Statement considers the following Very Special Circumstances apply;

a. Trade-Off Proposal/Demolition of Existing Buildings

6.18. The proposal involves the demolition of the existing artists studio and oil store. The floor area of these existing structures, against the proposed floor area of the extension is outlined below:

Floor Area of Oil Store and Artists Studio	Floor Area of Extension
29.25sqm	19.29sqm

6.19. By demolishing the existing oil store and artists studio, the proposed extension will result in a net decrease in floor area by 34.05% on the site compared to what exists currently.

6.20. The proposed extensions whilst over the one third threshold will therefore not have a greater impact than the existing structures on site in terms of openness.

6.21. I attribute significant weight to this very special circumstance.

6.22. I conclude, therefore, that these other considerations, for the reasons set out above, cumulatively clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm and constitute the very special circumstances necessary to justify planning permission being granted.

In this instance is the Local Planning Authority's view that the applicant's suggested demolition of an oil store and artist studio does not amount to very special circumstances and therefore are no 'very special circumstances' which outweigh the harm of the openness of the Green Belt with this proposal.

Character and Appearance including the effect of the proposal on landscape character

The application site is located in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Areas and as such, Policy CS12 (LPCS) is relevant. This policy 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.

In relation to the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area the document highlights that the key landscape characteristics, Varied topography with steep valley sides and plateaux, Ancient woodland, chestnut coppice and small paddocks and pasture, Traditional historic settlement of Harvel set around village green, Occasional traditional farmsteads and Haphazard mosaic of residential plots and small holdings set within the woodland. It states that the overall condition of the landscape is moderate and has a moderate sensitivity.

The site itself contains a dwelling and three outbuildings. The proposed development would result in a significant increase of built form of the dwelling, which would consolidate and extend the level of built development on the plot and in the wider area. It is therefore considered that by virtue of the increased prominence of this residential development in the surrounding landscape and its visibility, there would be an adverse impact on the landscape character. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS12

(LPCS) and section 15 of the NPPF (2021).

In design terms the two storey rear extension would be a large addition being 3.3m deep and 5.5m wide with a slab to ridge height of 6.34m. It would also be a very bulky addition as it would project out beyond rear roof slope and this design element is not in keeping with the catslide roof of the dwelling. The proposal would result in an overly dominant, bulky and incongruous addition which would not be subservient and would not be in keeping with the scale or character of the host dwelling. The proposal, in combination with the extensions the property has already had, would result in the dwelling becoming a substantial building from what was a modest dwelling.

In respect of character and appearance including landscape character it is therefore considered the proposal is contrary to Policy CS19 (LPCS) and section 12 of the NPPF (2021).

Impact on occupier amenity

The proposed extensions would result in a 4 bedroom property with all the internal rooms complying with the local and national space standards and there would be sufficient outside amenity space for future occupiers.

In respect of the amenity of occupiers the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Impact on neighbouring amenity

Due to the distance of the nearest neighbouring property, to the application site and the siting of the extension, there would be no impact on this property with regards overshadowing or loss of outlook. In respect of neighbouring amenity, the proposal is therefore considered compliant with Policy CS19 (LPCS).

Parking and Highway Safety

As stated the property would be a 4 bedroom dwelling. The application dwelling has a large area of hardstanding with space for two spaces and more therefore the proposal is considered to provide sufficient off-street parking provision for the property and in respect of parking and highways safety the proposal is therefore considered compliant with saved Policy P3 (LPFR).

Balancing Exercise/Conclusion

The proposed two storey extension would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there are no very special circumstances to justify the development. Whilst there would be no harm to occupier or neighbouring amenity or parking and highway safety, there would be harm to the openness of the Green Belt and landscape character and the proposal is also considered to be of unacceptable design. The proposal would not accord with the development plan and there are no other material considerations to outweigh this finding. Therefore, it is recommended that planning permission is refused.

Recommendation

Refusal

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mr Richard Hart	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:	<i>R Hart</i>	Signed:	
Dated:	2nd March 2023	Dated:	03 March 2023

Gravesham Borough Council