

2.1 Design and Access Statement

30th August 2021

1 Design Principles



The site is located on the Wrotham Road, immediately south of The George Inn (Public House), with the Meopham Secondary school and Leisure Centre complex to its western and southern boundaries. Currently, the dwelling at Willow Tree Farm fronts onto Wrotham Road at the southern end of the road frontage, while Holly Cottage fronts the middle third, and its extended garden is to the northern third facing onto Wrotham Road. Both residential properties currently have their own vehicular access points onto the Wrotham Road. The site sits within the Green Belt, and is adjacent to the southern boundary of "The Street" Conservation Area (to the west of Wrotham Road).

The design proposals are to create a secured cu-de-sac of family dwellings on land made available to the rear of Willow Tree Farm, by the demolition of the existing Holly Cottage, and the use of its current extended gardens to the north. Holly Cottage is proposed to be rebuilt on the northern portion of Wrotham Road, with the new access road created where the Holly Cottage garage access currently sits - this gives suitable sight lines in both directions, for all traffic leaving the development

Early considerations included several important characteristics of the site, which influenced the design development.

- 1 The Wrotham Road street-frontage has 2no dwellings, with potential sight lines further into the site. Additional dwellings facing onto Wrotham Road would only reduce "the openness" of views into the site, and this was considered to be an unacceptable addition to the streetscape.
- 2 The site is surrounded on 3no sides by substantial, and mature, bushes and trees, the overwhelming majority of which are on adjoining land. These provide an almost impenetrable visual barrier, both into the site, and out from it - the site is "private", and as a development, barely noticeable

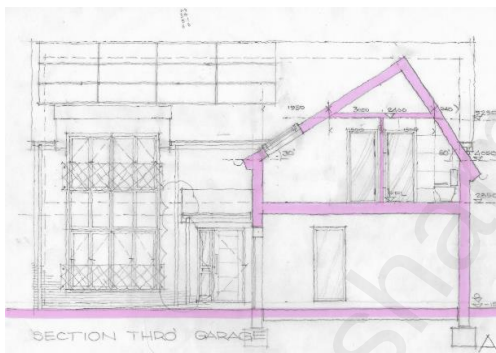
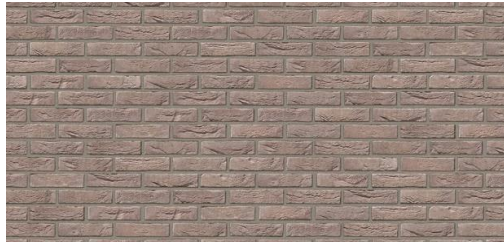




from beyond its perimeter. To further minimise the visual impact of the dwellings to the rear, 3no are substantially located behind the retained Willow Tree Farm, while those behind the relocated Holly Cottage and its detached garage only have minimal visibility from Wrotham Road. To assist with masking the new dwellings, the entrance road is staggered, and planting is included to give a natural visual barrier to the rear of the site.

- 3 "Courtyard" developments, and cul-de-sac developments are not uncommon off Wrotham Road in Meopham, ranging from small scale 5 house development (e.g. just south of Lomar Farm), through to the well established, circa 36 houses, in Pitfield Drive. As an additional feature, it is proposed there are cctv controlled access gates at the entrance to the development - this will enhance both security and safety within the development.
- 4 Detailing/landscaping to the front of the site presents an opportunity to enhance the streetscape view from the south (of Wrotham Road), towards the George Public House. Currently, the small embankment next to The George Inn is unmanaged and overgrown, but by opening up a view to the front corner of The George Inn, this will enhance its visual presence.

Within the site, there is sufficient space to provide a new Holly Cottage, (with a detached double garage), and 7no new 4 bedroom houses with integral double garage and double private parking spaces, (together with additional visitor parking). The repositioning of Holly Cottage, in a style to match Willow Tree Farm, will create "a portal" for the entrance to the new houses to the rear, and will not increase noticeably the impact of the views into the site from what currently exists. The proposed new houses behind the dwellings fronting Wrotham Road are predominantly aligned to minimise their visual intrusion for passers-by, and to maximise the privacy of the occupiers of these dwellings. The entrance road twists, with a landscaping feature to prevent sightlines through to the rear of the site, again to minimise visual intrusion and enhance privacy. The varied orientation of the dwellings creates a courtyard "cluster" around the last 4no dwellings at the end of the cul-de-sac, while a similar number of garage "fronts" create another zone.



The new housing designs within the courtyard are all similar in plan, and similar in their provision, but are adapted to suit both their location and orientation. All will have brick (samples opposite) and roofing variations to create added interest - upper floor fenestration varies to avoid overlooking, and where possible, maximise the benefit of natural sunlight. It is intended that all new dwellings will be constructed to "Passivhaus" standards, complete with solar panels, heat pumps, future-proofing for Electrical Vehicle charging, and "smart" controls and management of systems. All dwellings have dual aspect Living Rooms, so they all benefit from natural sunlight in the primary habitable room.

Roof profiles have been selected to produce both a lowered eaves line, (to lower the visual scale of the development from within the site) and lower ridges than traditional pitched roofs, while at the same time, also producing more interesting ceiling lines within the upper floor rooms and stair landings. Ridge heights for all new dwellings are similar to the existing ridge height of Willow Tree Farm, maintaining a consistent height and scale within the development.

There is significant mature planting immediately beyond the site boundaries to the south, west, and north of the site - they all create an almost impenetrable visual barrier in both directions, and even when "scrub" bushes and minor trees are removed from within the site, privacy will barely be affected. Rear garden depths accord with the required guidelines, and while perimeter paths to the dwellings with a nominal patio area will be incorporated into the design, the final layouts will be left for the home-owners to alter to suit their own particular needs. The private access road will be detailed from a combination of blocks and setts, suitable for accommodating fire tenders and pantechnicons (complete with suitable turning space), with a detail change to car only areas, then private drive parking areas, and pedestrian traffic areas. An integral part of the design, is the landscaping features after the access road enters the site. Small scale trees and bushes will, in the fulness of time, provide a visual barrier to minimise intrusion and maximise privacy.

The replacement Holly Cottage is designed in the style of the current building - a detached chalet bungalow with red tiles to the pitched roof, dormer windows on the upper floors, and hipped roofs to articulate the roof. To the ground floor, walls will be finished in a smooth white render,

The site lends itself to a cul-de-sac layout, as suitable access can be provided off Wrotham Road, while all other boundaries are constrained by the adjoining developments to all other sides. KCC guidelines for a "Homezone" style approach lend themselves perfectly for this development - "... residential areas in which the living environment clearly predominates over provision for traffic. The aim is to promote neighbourliness, quality of life, and social interaction." Additionally, CCTV controlled security gates will produce a secured area for potential children's play. Current vehicular accesses into both Willow Tree Farm and Holly Cottage, are direct off Wrotham Road, and are suitable for cars only. Both dwellings benefit from sufficient space within their boundaries for cars to undertake multi-point turns in order they may exit both dwellings going forward. Access to the development is designed to accommodate vehicle up to 17.5 tons, (fire tender, pantechnicon, and 3 axle rigid trucks) with a turning area within the site to allow all vehicles to exit forward.

Figure 1.1: Diagram illustrating the concept of a 'Homezone' in urban design. The diagram is divided into two parts. The left part shows a plan view of a residential area with a central green space and surrounding buildings. A text box points to this area, stating: 'Design streets to give home zones a sense of enclosure and privacy for people who live there.' The right part shows a cross-section view of a street with a central green space and surrounding buildings. A text box points to this area, stating: 'Design streets to give home zones a sense of enclosure and privacy for people who live there.' Below the cross-section, a text box states: 'Design streets to give home zones a sense of enclosure and privacy for people who live there.'

Homezone Design

Homezones are residential streets where people come alive, and have priority over cars. The Japanese call 200 metres a highly suitable distance to designate them. They must be designed from the overall 'fit' designation in mind, as specific key characteristics. The benefits of homezones are that they provide additional outdoor leisure space for the associated homes, benefit in terms of being able to provide a more pleasant road environment, contribute to funerals in a good way and encourage social interaction. There are also significant benefits for people with disabilities.

In conversation around it may be possible to allow the vision aspects required as the Homezone operators, for instance, where there is space to the street from the major road, it could be a walking way. Cautions may be taken as it may be considered, since it is small blocks. On no account should the blocks be allowed to become through roads from other parking areas elsewhere. Such an arrangement would involve children in their groups who are not wanted. Car parks are likely to form major areas of hard-surfacing within any scheme and be highly visible. It is not a place where, as an absolute minimum, all street parking should be within the Homezone and the design of the rest of the layout ensuring that such spaces are not permanently occupied by residents' cars. This can be done by ensuring that all residents' parking is close and convenient to homes.

The key design characteristics of a Homezone are:

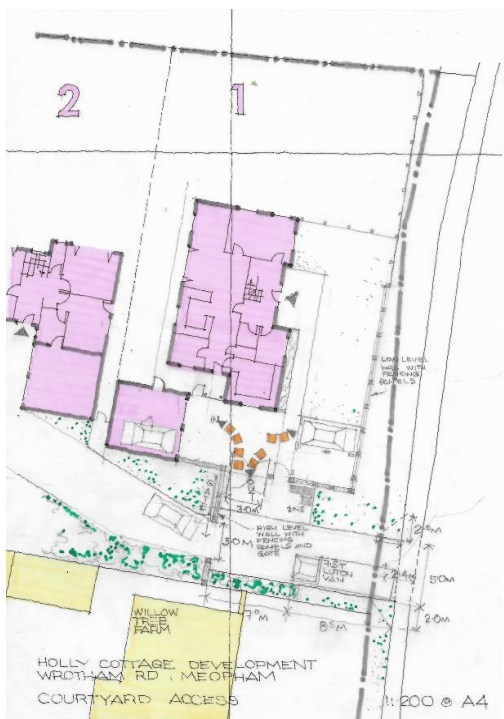
- traffic speeds are restricted to around 10kph;
- high quality road paving;
- strong evidence of public access space;
- minimal front gardens;
- careful planting of areas within the public area; the *Highway Authority* should be consulted first;
- integration within the overall network of streets, making them part of a through route system.

In exceptional circumstances a Homezone can be set up, where it is permitted setting an upper limit of around 25 dwellings, where the Homezone links other residential areas, or is part of a series of linked ones. It can be set through those serving up to 10 dwellings, where the maximum should be to any point within the Homezone from the entrance or exit 400m and the maximum 'traffic flow' in any part of the Homezone should not exceed 100 vehicles per hour. Homezones are given priority over vehicles by virtue of distinctive design, as communal features.

London Avenue Park, Dorset, designed by the City of Dorset
 (Photo: City of Dorset, Dorset Council, Dorset Council)

Further advice on the design of Homezones is contained in homezone design guidelines (Publications of Highway Agency, 2002) and a companion a planning and design handbook (H&L Books, 2004) (see further information).

Green Design Creating the design



Kent County Council Highways have been approached for their initial design consideration, and their response is attached for reference - minor design detail points will be subject to "Conditions", and some points have already been included into the submitted drawings, as opposite - "Courtyard Access"

Buses traffic along Wrotham Road, and there is a (north-bound) purpose-built Bus Stop immediately adjacent to the site entrance. Additionally, there is a further purpose-built Bus Stop some 150 metres south of the site boundary. On the south-bound side of Wrotham Road, again, a purpose-built Bus Stop is located some 50 metres distant from the site boundary. Meopham station (London to Dover mainline route) is approximately 1.2 miles remote - a 5 minute cycle journey, or a 25 minute walk.

Access to local amenities is within easy walking distance -

- 1 Immediately adjacent to the site, are numerous facilities, including the Meopham Medical Centre, Meopham Sports Centre, Meopham School, Meopham Library, and a day-care Nursery.
- 2 Numerous Public Houses and Restaurants are locally available, at Meopham Green, Hook Green, Meopham Station, and also, immediately adjacent, at The George Inn Public House.
- 3 "The Parade" is some 300m to the north of the site, and has a selection of "local" shops serving Meopham. Meopham Primary School is adjacent.
- 4 A Veterinary Surgeon and a Dental Practice are located at Meopham Green, while further shops, including a Post Office, are located close to Meopham Station.

Within the development, access into dwellings will be step-free, while detailing to the hard landscaping from the entrance gates through to each dwelling will rely on construction detailing which does not introduce barriers for wheelchair users, or those with visual impairments