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Culverstone Green
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Supplementary information, planning submission

Description: Alterations to roof to create usable space, rear dormers, roof light windows to the front, porch and single storey rear extension, change of materials of the existing lean-to

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Introduction

This is the fourth application we have made for planning permission. The first was rightly rejected, yet helped us define the approach to achieving permissions by using recently approved designs in order to avoid unnecessary planning rejections. Our resubmission was approved by Meopham Parish council (MPC), yet Gravesham Planning (LA) raised concerns about the 'bulk' of the rear extension. During the negotiation process, the planning officer confirmed that we had permitted development rights and recommended; a withdrawal of the application and an application under permitted development rights. We followed this direction, with new plans being drawn and the third application submitted. This was then rejected due to the application being invalid, due to permitted development not being available. This error on the part of the Local Authority has led to this, this fourth submission.

With no feedback on the 'permitted development' submission, we are left again with a lack of understanding of the views of the LA in relation to design and layout of the proposal.

One thing we have discovered during this process is that there are areas within the planning decision making which are subjective. This means that any submissions are like taking a shot in the dark, even if trying to work proactively to meet the expectations of MPC and the LA. The general attitude appears to be 'policing' policy, opposed to supporting members of the community in working with the guidance. This approach then has a natural outcome of a lack of transparency. This is disappointing in a time where community and councils need to be working proactively together to ensure our environments are maintained, whilst meeting the changing demands in housing and the current availability of housing stock for first time buyers.

Therefore, we are in the position where we will be resubmitting designs based upon our previous application (approved by MPC), with the recommended amendments from the LA put in place.

Approach

The design for the second submission, and development of the property took into account the five principle issues when determining an application.

- *Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?*
- *The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;*
- *Any very special circumstances?*
- *The effect on the character and appearance of the area;*
- *Other matters; and*
- *Impact on the Landscape*

(delegator report, householder Planning Application, 6 January 2023)

Navigating the guidance and understanding how a '*dominant appearance*' and '*perceptions*' (notification of refusal 6th January 2023) of bulk are determined was challenging, such is the variation in approvals and properties being developed which seemingly contradict guidance provided in the Local Plan Core Strategy; including flat roofs, extensions from the ridge height, increases in wall height and large dormer windows are all features in buildings receiving planning permission.

Properties within the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area vary greatly in design and visual impact. A previous application for the development of Blue Ash adopted a variation of 'approved' elements of design, including flat roof areas and pitched dormer windows, from other properties which had achieved planning permission. The interpretation of these were rejected, which led to a reconsideration of our approach to achieve desired outcomes.

The feedback provided from the rejected planning application was helpful, providing clarity that there is an understanding for the need for increased living space, yet how this is achieved sits within narrow tolerances. In our review of the initial plans, we took guidance from the delegated report, household planning applications (in conjunction with reviewing permitted development of properties in the same situation) as a route to establish a satisfactory planning proposal. This proposed design was approved by MPC, yet the LA still had concerns.

Previous comments

From the 2nd application, developments have been made from the following comments from MPC and the LA

MPC: Concerns regarding the design of the porch.

Meopham Parish Council have no objections to this planning application but has significant reservations about the design of the porch (not dated)

LA: The bulk of the 2 storey rear extension.

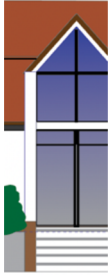
As discussed, the Local Planning Authority will not be looking to support the application as submitted due to concerns with the proposed development. The concerns relate to the two storey rear extension in terms of design, scale and massing, and its impact on the Green Belt. (Planning Officer - 09/05/23)

Amendments to the design

MPC: Concerns regarding the design of the porch.

Front porch:

MPC, despite approving the previous submission, raised 'significant reservations' about the design of the porch. The porch design copied an approved design of a similar property. The comments by MPC are contradictory to 3 previous submissions by the other property, which was never once challenged in terms of its design.



Despite the lack of continuity in feedback; we have taken a proactive stance regarding this, taking into account comments from MPC. We have revised the design to a lower porch roof line.



LA: The bulk of the 2 storey extension

The LA recommended a number of changes in the roofline of the rear extension, which in turn led to a recommendation of following a permitted development submission. As permitted development has now been identified as not available, we have applied the recommendations from the LA planning officer directly to this submission.

- Reduce the rear extension to a single storey
- Introduce a second dormer

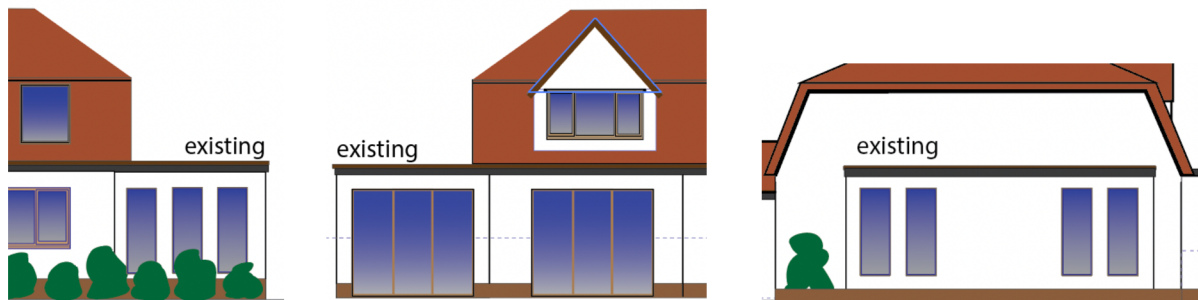
Single Storey: meeting the eave heights of the existing property, flat roof rear extension at 4m deep and 8m wide.

Rear dormers: the ridge height of the dormer has been designed to ensure that it does not dominate the roof line. The width has been reduced to align with the door opening below at a proposed 2.4m. This size and positioning of the ground floor doors mirrors the window at the front of the building, provide further symmetry to the overall development. The dormer will be set back from the roof / rear wall by a minimum of 20cm



Other developments: existing shed and lean to

The existing lean to and shed will change in design to reflect the property as a whole. The footprint will remain as existing. The ridge height will not exceed the current maximum height. The ridge height will match the single storey rear extension.



Is the proposed development appropriate in the green belt?

The extension area follows the guidelines associated with the Saved Policy C13. The increase in footprint being one third (approx.) of the property.

The extension is sited on an existing patio area; impact upon the natural environment is minimised

The extension is a single storey extension with living roof.

Development to a hip barn roof style will not extend beyond the existing ridge height, with existing gable end heights maintained.

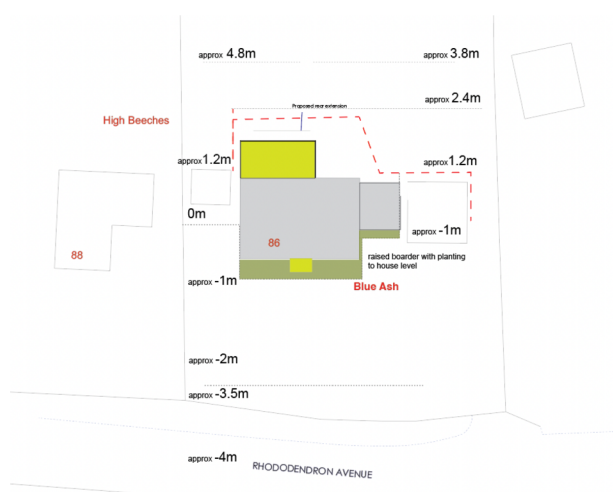
Front porch dimensions are limited to a approx 3m². The ridge line has been reduced in line with comments from MPC.

The dormers are set back from the external walls, with a ridge line below that of the main house. Overhang is reduced. The overall visual impact being subservient and in keeping with the revised hip barn roof style.

Roof line windows at the front of the property ensure that the bulk of the property is not adversely impacted upon by their introduction.

Increases to the ground level with planting to the front of the property will further reduce the overall visual impact of the building.

The extension sits 1.2m below the surrounding/adjoining garden.



Effect of the proposal on the openness of the greenbelt

Much consideration has been given to the elevations and the surrounding ground levels.

Looking East from Rhododendron Ave at the front of the property the ground rises steeply. As such sight lines from the bridleway are mixed from being able to see the full view of the property and height above the driveway, to a much reduced view where only a small segment of the roof can be seen.



Where the property can be seen, the boarder immediately in front of the property is over 60 centimetres lower than the brickwork, exposing block work ordinarily unseen. This effects the overall front face area making the existing property look bulky within its surroundings.



To reduce the visual impact of the property, the level and depth of the border will be increased to 1m high and a depth of approx. 2m. This will increase the ground level immediately in front of the main house to the same level of the fascia brickwork. This will lead to the visual impact of the property being reduced. Planting and shrubs will also be introduced, further allowing the house to sit more comfortably within the landscape. The level of the driveway at the southwest corner of the house will also increase, creating a more gradual increase in height between the surrounding garden and the existing elevated position the property occupies.

Looking South at The North Face of the building the ground level remains below the property at a low point of around 1.2m. This low area extends from the front of the house back as far as the chimney breast. The ground level then continues at the same level as the property to the depth of the existing rear wall. Here an existing wall retains the ground level to approximately 1.2 metres. The ground level then steadily increases as you move further away from the property. As such the proposed extension sits below the surrounding ground level by at least 1.2 metres. By the nature of the landscape, the proposed extension is 'basemented' to such an extent that the visual face area is at a depth of 1.2m.



Looking West at the East face / rear of the property: As the main dwelling is in part dug into the hillside, the proposed rear extension is therefore much lower than its surroundings. At 2m from the rear of the proposed extension is a retaining wall at 1.2 metres high. This height of the ground increases greatly, reaching approximately 2.4m high at 4m. From this aspect the existing property and proposed extension sit well below the eyeline when stood anywhere other than right next to the back of the house.

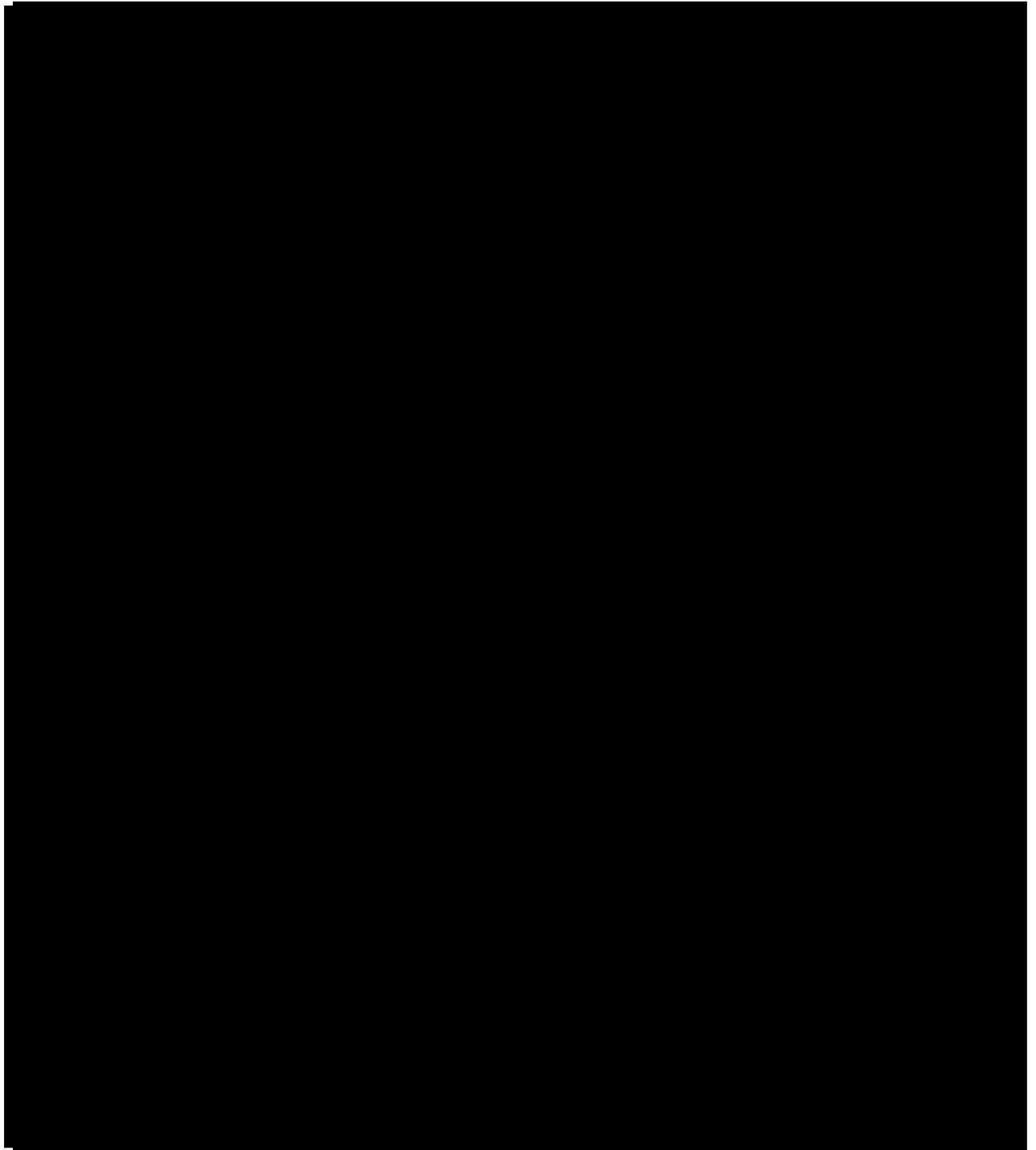


Looking North at the South elevation, the ground level is lower than the existing property by approximately 1.2m where the existing garage is positioned. At the back of the property the ground level increases to approximately 1.2m above the existing property and extension. From the boundary line the property and garden is below the ground level.



Summary: the natural topography dictates that all but the front of the property is nestled into its surroundings. The current disproportionate visual area of the front of the property will be reduced by introducing raised borders and planting. Due to the extension being sited on existing patio area, surrounded by at least a 1.2m increase in ground level; the visual impact of the extension is greatly reduced. Sight lines are unchanged as when stood at the boundary line, or in the garden, the ridge of the extension will be at approx. 1.2m from your ground level at the lowest point.

Very Special circumstances



Effect on the appearance and character of the area

Design is subjective. As such the consideration on the 'character' of the proposed design is going to vary from one individual to another. Therefore, the proposed development design is almost identical to an approved planning application, for a property sitting in an elevated position on a sloping plot.



Example of an approved development

This ensures that our proposed development both compliments and corresponds to the existing character and wider context. The extension does not overwhelm the roof slope and remains demonstrative to the main dwelling, ensuring the design conforms with the Gravesham's design guidance and National Planning guidance.

Other matters

No comments

Impact upon the Landscape

It has already been identified that the extension sits with the hillside and is not visible. The existing roof and porch will be developed in a style that has already been subject to approval, and a common style used in the design of chalet bungalows.

summary

This submission has become necessary due to an error on the part of the LA.

Despite the frustrations, we have still retained a positive and proactive stance. This is reflected in our changes, where amendments have been made which are not essential within the approval process yet have been the preference of MPC. We have directly followed the comments and advice of the LA Planning Officer regarding the preferred design, and size of the rear extension and dormers.

The approach to the proposed development continues to take into account the surrounding environment, the impact upon the openness of the greenbelt and perceptions of added bulk.

The design continues to follow previously approved planning applications.