

2.7 Planning Statement

30th August 2021

1 Context

The development proposed utilises the space currently occupied by Holly Cottage, the strip of land immediately to its north, and approximately half of the rear garden to Willow Tree Farm to the south. The total site area is approximately 0.64 hectares. Immediately to the north is the George Inn (Listed Building, in "The Street Conservation Area"), and the rear gardens of several residential properties in Shipley Hills Road. To the west lies the Meopham Sports Centre, and to the south, lies Meopham School. Also in the adjacent "School Site", are Meopham Medical Centre, Meopham Library, and an early learning/day-care centre. Access to the site is surrounded by mature trees and shrubs to the south, west, and to a lesser extent, to the northern boundary. The buildings to the "School Site" are too remote, and too well screened by trees and shrubs to cause any visual concerns, in either direction.

The site is relatively level, but does fall slightly to the north along the western boundary, falling slightly more along the eastern boundary (Wrotham Road towards the George Inn), and at the same time, falls from the western boundary towards Wrotham Road. A dedicated Bus Stop was built some years ago, immediately in front of the site, and some steeper gradients have been incorporated locally, close to the George Inn. Accesses and crossovers exist to both Willow Tree Farm and Holly Cottage, and both go through the Bus Stop onto Wrotham Road.

Existing gardens are extensive to both properties, and as a consequence of limited maintenance over many years, they are now somewhat overgrown, and both trees and bushes to the perimeter have been particularly neglected. There are numerous outbuildings to the rear of Willow Tree Farm which will need to be removed to accommodate the proposed development.

2 Pre-Application : PRE20200168

An application for pre-application advice was submitted to Gravesham Borough Council in 2020. The submission related to a design proposal for the demolition of Holly Cottage, and the erection of 16 no 2 storey 2 bedroom flats, exclusively for the over-55 year age group. The response from GBC was forthcoming on that basis (as attached to the application). In the absence of a fully developed design, the response was comprehensive in its principles, while general in its detail, nevertheless, it did provide a background for subsequent design development, and subsequent revision. Matters considered, and commented upon, are as follows -

2.1 Development appropriate in the Green Belt

The site is in the Green Belt, beyond the village envelope of Meopham Green, and immediately adjacent to the west side of the Conservation Area, "The Street". The current submission follows the form, the layout, and the "style" of the proposals submitted previously, but is now for 8 no 4 bedroom family homes, including a new replacement Holly Cottage facing onto Wrotham Road. The Officer's response previously reported "Taking into consideration the existing dwellings and the current residential site use, together with the recent residential, leisure centre and school developments within the surrounding area, the principle of the proposal is considered acceptable. It is my opinion that the proposed senior residential development would not result in any further detrimental impact on the Green Belt than the existing surrounding developments." The current proposals are not materially different from the earlier submission, so it would not be inappropriate to reach the same conclusion.

2.2 The openness of the Green Belt

Again, the Officer's report, supports the development -

"Having established that the proposal is appropriate development in the Green Belt, it is considered that the location of the proposed residential development, would not extend past the existing site boundary, and would therefore not result in urban sprawl. Therefore, there is no conflict with national or local planning. In addition, the Officer's report acknowledges the site's access to both public transport and local amenities, " ... would therefore be considered a sustainable location"

Also, the Officer's report confirms the impact on both the Green Belt and the adjoining Conservation Area
" ... would have minimal impact"

2.3 Character and Appearance

There was a conscience design decision made at an early point in the design process, to minimise the amount of proposed building facing directly onto Wrotham Road, to lessen the impact of the proposed development on the street frontage. Subsequently, it became evident, that with an entrance road almost central to the site, there would be a streetscape benefit in replicating a "chalet bungalow" (in a matching "style"), to bring some design unity to the street elevation. By re-building a new dwelling no further forward than the retained Willow Tree Farm, there is another opportunity to improve the streetscape from the south of Wrotham Road to the adjoining George Inn public house. In replicating the garden wall style, in a widening splay towards the George Inn, it will be possible to remove the overgrowing vegetation on the site boundary, and open-up, and maintain, an improved vista to the pub, to enhance its position in the local streetscape.

The layout of the proposals, from the outset of the design process, has been arranged around a small cul-de-sac. In order to minimise the build impact on the views into the site, the dwellings along the southern edge sit directly behind the retained Willow Tree Farm, while the dwellings on the northern edge do not project further into the site than the second unit from the front. The access road has a change of direction shortly after entering the site, allowing a planted area to restrict direct views through the site

Materials remain to be confirmed within the "courtyard", but will come from a palette of blocks/kerbs/setts to the hardstanding areas of the entrance road, driveways and paths, from a selection of pastel/light facing bricks (to the elevations), composite pre-finished windows (powder-coated aluminium/timber), and sheet metal roof cladding from a selection of primarily grey shades

The replacement Holly Cottage will have red Rosemary roof tiles, white rendered external walls, white composite powder-coated aluminium/timber windows, all generally , to match the retained Willow Tree Farm

2.4 Space Standards

Internal space standards, external provision, window and garden provision have all been incorporated into the designs for the site as have KCC Highways expectations on vehicle access, turning provision, and parking standards

2.5 Impact on amenity of surrounding properties

The buildings of the "School Site" are too remote, and too well screened by trees and shrubs to cause any visual concerns, in either direction. New garden fences will be installed, and these will ensure privacy to the gardens of the proposed dwellings, and also act as an acoustic barrier to the adjoining George Inn (Listed Building in a Conservation Area) - customers and operational equipment. The scale, size, and location of the dwellings relative to the George Inn and the residential dwellings in Shipley Hills Road, are sufficiently remote, and of limited height, to create any issues with privacy, daylight, and sunlight, again, in either direction

2.6 Highways

A Pre-Planning application has been made to Kent County Council Highways, and the feedback is incorporated elsewhere

2.7 Climate Change

Detail solutions remain to be confirmed with regards to drainage to the site. However, it is intended that foul drainage will fall to the main sewer in Wrotham Road, and connect into that. Surface water drainage from the site is to be re-directed to soakaways within the site boundary, and details will be provided for approval before works commence on site.