



Delegated Report

Householder Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20240026

Location: Woodlands 28 Beechwood Drive Meopham Gravesend

Description: Erection of ground floor front extensions together with roof extension to allow first floor accommodation to include front and rear dormer windows and repositioning/increased height of existing chimney.

Applicant: Mr D Freeman

Site Visit Date: 09 April 2024

Submitted Documents/Plans

Householder Application for Planning Permission form;
Drawing no. 01 Existing block and location plans;
Drawing no. 02 Existing layout;
Drawing no. 03 Existing elevations;
Drawing no. 04 Proposed block plan;
Drawing no. 05 Proposed layouts;
Drawing no. 06 Proposed elevations;
Letter from the agent dated 26 February 2024; and
Planning, Design & Access Statement February 2024.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20220524	Alterations to the roof incorporating and rear dormer extension and a ground floor extension.	Withdrawn	14.11.2022
20171221	Construction of a dormer extension in the rear roof slope and conversion of the roof space into habitable rooms.	Refused	20.07.2018
20120968	Demolition of existing garage and erection of a detached double garage and a replacement front boundary wall.	Permitted	11.01.2013
20000411	Retention of the detached garage at the front.	Permitted	28.07.2000
19930638	Erection of chalet bungalow and detached double garage and installation of septic tank, a propane storage tank and sitting of a mobile home for a temporary period.	Permitted	26.01.1994

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
- C13 – Extensions to dwellings in the countryside
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2023) 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 (2023), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

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)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

GBC Highways Officer

As presented, I consider the application should be refused. The applicant states that standard Marshall's block paving will be used and not their permeable range. Given the sites limitations it is doubtful a soakaway can be installed as it will not be possible to achieve the 5metre separation Building Regulations requires between the highway and a soakaway and the building and a soakaway. This therefore requires a bound porous paving to be used to the front of the property.

I would therefore recommend the applicant either demonstrates how the driveway will be suitably drained or the application is refused until a bound porous system is used, installed as directed by the manufacturer of the paving.

Meopham Parish Council

We object to this application on the grounds of inappropriate development in the greenbelt due to excessive bulk and impact on the street scene.

Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised by a site notice and to seven neighbouring properties by letter. No representations have been received. The overall consultation period expired on 05 April 2024.

Officer's Analysis

The application site lies within the Green Belt outside the village of Culverstone Green, a rural settlement inset from the Green Belt and identified on the Local Plan Core Strategy Policies Map. The site falls within an area known as the Culverstone Valley Area. While this area has always been subject to Green Belt policy, up until 2014 development within the area was considered against a specific area policy, Policy C14 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review. Policy C14 and the associated Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Culverstone Valley Area were withdrawn following the adoption of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, on the recommendation of the Examination Inspector. From this point, development in this area has been considered against national and locally adopted Green Belt policy, in the same way as other areas within the Borough that lie in the Green Belt.

Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) prioritises development in the urban area as a sustainable location for development. In the rural area it states that development will be supported within rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and defined on the Policies Map. Development outside those settlements (which is the case here), will only be supported where it is compatible with national policies for protecting the Green Belt and policies in the Local Plan Core Strategy.

Therefore, the principle issues in the determination of this application are;

- Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?
- Effect on the openness of the Green Belt
- Effect on the character and appearance of the area - including landscape character
- Other matters
- Very Special Circumstances

Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?

Paragraph 142 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF 2023) sets out that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence and paragraph 143 lists the five purposes that the Green Belt serves. At the application site, the Green Belt assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Paragraph 152 of the NPPF 2023 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2023 states that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt but it lists certain exceptions. These exceptions are set out in sub-paragraphs 154(a) to 154(g). Sub-paragraph 154(c) identifies 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.

Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (November 1994) relates to extensions to dwellings in the countryside. It sets out a number of criteria that should be met when considering proposals for domestic extensions. As the policy pre-dates the NPPF 2023, the weight attached to the policy must be considered carefully; with greater weight being given where the approach is consistent with paragraph 154 of the NPPF 2023.

In particular Saved Policy C13 places an overall limit on extensions of one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling unless the increased floor space has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling (criteria (ii)). It also requires the massing, scale and form of any extension to be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting (criteria (vi)). It is considered that these factors are relevant in determining whether the size of an extension is proportionate and as such, these aspects of the policy are broadly in line with the NPPF 2023 and should be afforded weight.

The submitted Planning, Design & Access Statement refers to an appeal decision from November 2022 and states that Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) is out of date. However, in a more recent decision at no. 42 Beechwood Drive (reference APP/K2230/D/23/3326603 dated 13 February 2024), the Inspector stated that;

“The GLPFR pre-dates the Framework’s publication and, through applying restraint upon development in the Green Belt, Saved Policy C13 appears broadly consistent with the Framework and thus should be afforded considerable weight.”

Therefore, it is considered that Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994) is relevant to the determination of this application.

Regard should also be had to an emerging policy in the Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Development Management Policies Document (2020), Proposed Policy GB 5 Extensions, Replacement Buildings and Ancillary Development in the Green Belt. In relation to extensions, this policy reads as follows;

Proposed Policy GB 5 Extensions, Replacement Buildings and Ancillary Development in the Green Belt

Extensions

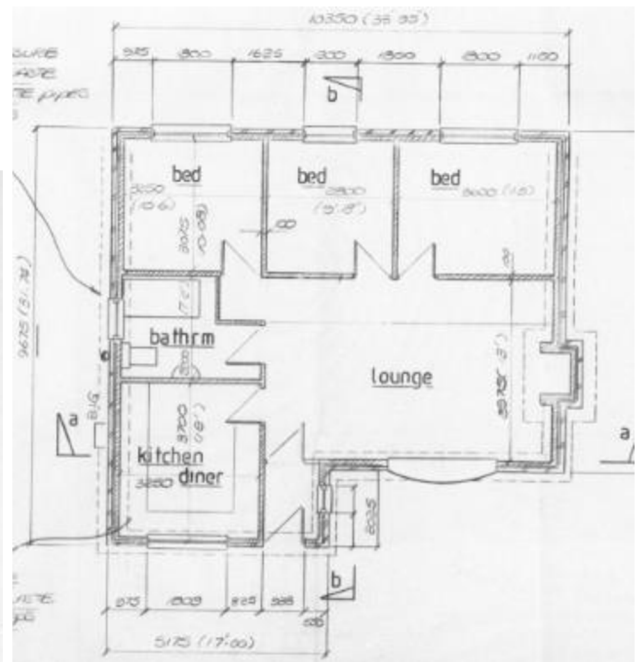
3.6.12. Proposals for the extension of an original buildingⁱ in the Green Belt will only be permitted where the extension will not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building unless justified by very special circumstances that clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm. The following will be taken into account in determining whether the proposal is proportionate:

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

3.6.13. In addition to the above, Core Strategy Policy CS19 will be applied to determine whether the design of any proposed extension is appropriate, having regard to the presence of any existing extensions and outbuildings, prominence and visual impact of the proposal.

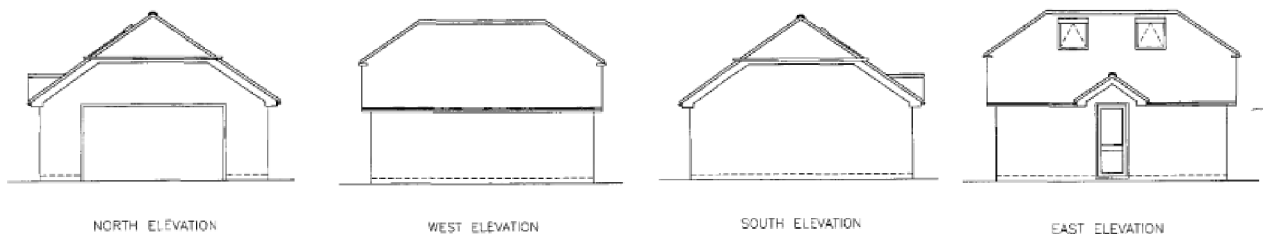
It is noted that as an emerging policy, the weight attached to it is very limited but it does illustrate the Borough Council’s intended approach to the assessment of green belt extensions.

The original building, for the purposes of assessing whether the proposed development is a disproportionate addition or not, was granted planning permission in January 1994 (reference 19930638). The following are images of the approved drawings;

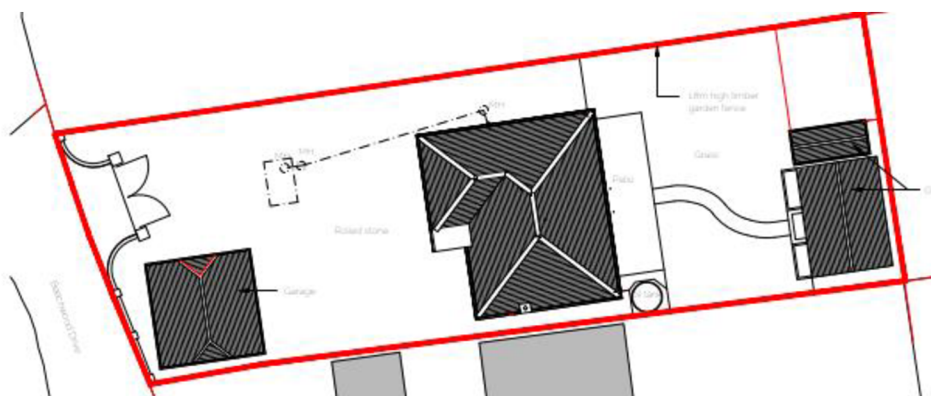


The floor area of the original building was 96 square metres, it had a height of 5.5 metres and was a modest bungalow with a simple hipped roof and L-shaped footprint. It is noted that a front porch (of 2.6 square metres floor area) has since been added to the original building.

In July 2000, planning permission was granted for the retention of a garage at the front of the application site (reference 20000411). Subsequently, that garage was removed and a detached double garage was erected (reference 20120968). The following are images of the approved drawings;



Circa 2011 an outbuilding was erected in the rear garden of the application site and subsequently, a second outbuilding was erected adjacent to it. The submitted block plan illustrates the location of the garage and rear outbuildings;



It should be noted that there is case law (most notably *Sevenoaks District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment and Dawe 1997* and more recently *Warwick DC v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities 2022*) which establishes that a domestic outbuilding may be regarded as an

extension to a dwelling provided that it forms a 'normal domestic adjunct'. In considering whether a proposal is considered to be a normal domestic adjunct, consideration is given to location and use in relation to the main dwelling.

The use of the outbuildings at the application site are currently as a gymnasium/storage (front outbuilding) and a games room/domestic storage (rear outbuildings), which would be incidental to the use of the main dwelling. Both outbuildings have a relatively close physical relationship to the main dwelling. As such, they are considered to be normal domestic adjuncts and constitute extensions to the dwelling at the application site. Therefore, the floorspace of these buildings would be included in the assessment of whether the proposal constitutes a disproportionate addition to the original building.

The garage has a floor area of 37 square metres and the rear outbuildings have a floor area of 39 square metres, which cumulatively amount to a 76 square metre or 79% increase above the original building.

The proposed development would add a new roof to the building, with the existing walls also being raised up by 0.5 metres. The roof would be half hipped and incorporate front and rear dormers. A front extension would extend the front wall forward by 0.5 metres on the northern side and by 2.4 metres on the southern side. A new brick plinth would be constructed around the building footprint and the chimney would be set forward and increased in height. The proposal would result in the building having a total floor area of 193 square metres (ground floor - 108 and first floor - 85) and a height of 7 metres. As such, the increase in floor area above the original building would be 97 square metres or 101%.

When the floor area of the existing outbuildings (which are extensions to the original dwelling) is taken into consideration, the cumulative increase in floor area above the original building would be 173 square metres or 180%.

As a general rule (and in line with Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)), the Borough Council considers that extensions which exceed the overall floor area of an original building by one third (33%) or more, are likely to be disproportionate additions. However, it is acknowledged that floorspace is only one measure of such impact and in coming to a conclusion on this issue, the Council has regard to a range of other factors including footprint, floorspace, volume, scale, mass and height (in line with Proposed Policy GB 5 of the Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Development Management Policies Document (2020)).

Current Floor Area	95.84 m ²
Proposed Ground Floor Area	107.79 m ²
Proposed First Floor Area	85.18 m ²
TOTAL PROPOSED	192.73 m ²
TOTAL INCREASE	97 m²
% INCREASE	101%

The cumulative increase in floor area proposed would be significantly in excess of the one third limit set out in Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994. In terms of bulk and massing, it is considered that the proposed development would add significantly to the appearance of the building. The building would become two storey and the roof would be much taller and bulkier. The building would have an overall height of 7 metres, which when compared to the original roof height of 5.5 metres is a significant increase. Overall, it is considered that the volume, scale, mass and height of the building would all increase significantly.

It should be noted that Meopham Parish Council also considers the proposal to have excessive bulk and to adversely impact on the street scene.

Overall, by virtue of an assessment of floorspace, volume, scale, bulk, massing and design, it is considered that the proposed development would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the

original building. As such, the proposal would be inappropriate development, which would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and contrary to Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review and paragraph 154(c) of the NPPF 2023.

Effect on the openness of the Green Belt

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2023 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.

The development, by its nature, would involve a form of inappropriate development that would erode the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal would result in building which would be significantly larger and bulkier than the original dwelling, consolidating and extending the level of built development at the application site and undermining openness. The proposed building would be widely visible from Beechwood Drive. Therefore, the proposal would be both spatially and visually detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt.

Overall, the proposed development would significantly and harmfully impact upon the openness of the application site and the Green Belt within which it sits. As such, the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2023.

Effect on the character and appearance of the area

The application site is located in the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area (LCA) and as such, Policy CS12 of the Local Plan Core Strategy 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.

According to the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, the Harvel Wooded Downs LCA is characterised by varied topography with steep valley sides and plateaux. Ancient woodland, chestnut coppice and small paddocks and pastures can be found. Views both within and out of the character area are limited because of the combined effect of topography and the heavily wooded character of the landscape.

It is noted that the application site is located in a rural area that has been somewhat urbanised and the residential nature of the application site would be retained. The proposed development would result in a significant increase in the size and bulk of the application property, which would consolidate and extend the level of built development on the plot and in the wider area. However, the proposal would not be harmful to overall landscape quality in the immediate area. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to landscape character and would be in line with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. It should conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment and integrate well with the surrounding local area. In particular, the design of new development should be derived from a robust analysis of local context and character and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area.

The area surrounding the application site has a variety of dwellings in different types and styles and with a variety of external facing materials. Located immediately to the north and south are small bungalows. Further to the south are larger bungalows, with accommodation in their roofs and further to the north, are modest bungalows. Surrounding properties have been subject to numerous extensions and alterations, with the addition of habitable accommodation within roof spaces being relatively commonplace.

The bungalow at the application site has red brick walls and a brown concrete tiled roof and is a modest

bungalow with a simple design. The proposed external facing materials would add interest to the building with the use of painted render and a brick plinth and the proposed brown concrete tiled roof would not be out of place. However, the design of the proposed development would result in a significant increase in the size and bulk of the application property, which would consolidate and extend the level of built development on the plot. The roof design would incorporate both a pitched roofed dormer (with a half hip) and a flat roofed box dormer, which are at odds with each other, especially when viewed from the side. Furthermore, the increase in the height of the building would be excessive and would result in the building being taller than the existing two storey dwellings in the surrounding area.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development, by reason of its design, form and appearance, would result in an excessively bulky building, which would incorporate incongruous features and be detrimental to the appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2023 and Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014.

Other matters

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants and to avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution.

The proposed development would provide good living conditions for future occupiers (with a total floor area and bedroom sizes that comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards 2015) and sufficient garden would be retained to comply with the Borough Council's Residential Layout Guidelines 2020.

In order to prevent a loss of privacy for future occupiers, any proposed bathroom/w.c./en-suite windows should be conditioned to be permanently obscure glazed.

Overall, the proposal would not be detrimental to the residential amenity of future occupiers and would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, the Nationally Described Space Standards 2015 and the Residential Layout Guidelines 2020.

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 requires new development to be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of neighbouring occupiers and to avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air, odour and light pollution.

The closest residential properties to the application site are no. 27 Beechwood Drive (located to the north) and no. 29 Beechwood Drive (located to the south). Nos. 43, 44 and 45 Beechwood Drive are located to the east and nos. 20 and 72 Beechwood Drive are located to the west across the roadway.

Due to the design of the proposed development, to the screening provided by boundary treatments and vegetation and to the location, layout and orientation of the surrounding properties, there would be no adverse overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts to the occupiers of the surrounding dwellings.

In order to prevent any future loss of privacy to neighbours, any planning permission granted should be conditioned to preclude the insertion of any windows or openings at first floor level in the side elevations of the proposed development.

Overall, 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 and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994 require new development to mitigate its impact on the highway and public transport networks and to provide sufficient parking in accordance with adopted parking standards.

The application property has three bedrooms and on-site parking for at least three vehicles (in a frontage parking area). The existing garage is not used for the parking of vehicles at present. The proposed development would provide three or four bedrooms (NB the proposed ground floor study has sufficient space to be used as a bedroom and proposed bedroom two is shown on the layout drawing as being possibly split into two rooms) and would retain the existing frontage parking layout. It is noted that the GBC Highways Officer has not raised an objection to the proposal in relation to parking impacts.

According to the Borough Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards, a three bedroom dwelling should have two vehicle parking spaces and a four bedroom dwelling should have three parking spaces. Therefore, the proposal would provide sufficient parking and if planning permission is granted, a condition should be attached to require the existing frontage parking area to be retained permanently.

The GBC Highways Officer's comments in relation to the surfacing of a proposed driveway are not relevant in this instance, as this proposal does not seek to amend the existing parking area.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would make sufficient provision for the parking of cars within the site in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards and would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, as the proposed development is within the confines of an existing residential garden and only a relatively small amount of groundworks would occur, then it is considered that there would be no adverse impacts to archaeology. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policy CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policy TC7 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Very special circumstances

Referring to paragraphs 152 and 153 of the NPPF 2023, inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The applicant does not consider the proposal to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and as such, has not identified any very special circumstances.

It is noted that in some cases, the fall back position provided by the permitted development rights can be a very special circumstance that justifies inappropriate development. However, at the application site permitted development rights cannot be relied upon, as they were removed by condition 3 of planning permission 19930638 (for the original dwelling). The reason for their removal was to control further built development to protect the openness of the Green Belt and the character of the Culverstone Valley Area.

It is also noted that there have been a number of extensions/alterations to dwellings in the vicinity of the application site. However, every planning application must be judged on its own merits and in its own context. Where other properties have been allowed to raise roofs and to provide habitable accommodation in their roof spaces, their design approaches are not directly comparable to that proposed at the application site. In particular, the excessive height and floor space of the proposed building, the overall bulk and mass and the inclusion of large, mismatched dormers in the design, would result in disproportionate additions to the original building and be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt and visual amenity.

Overall, it is considered that there are no justifications for the proposal, either individually or cumulatively, that amount to the very special circumstances that would set aside the objection to the development on grounds of being inappropriate development.

Conclusion & balancing exercise

The above analysis sets out that the proposed development would be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt. The development would be a disproportionate addition to the building, consolidate and extend the level of built development at the application site to an unacceptable level and be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. No very special circumstances have been advanced pursuant to paragraphs 152 and 153 of the NPPF 2023 sufficient to overcome the presumption against such inappropriate development.

Furthermore, the proposed development would result in an excessively bulky design, which incorporates incongruous features and would be detrimental to the appearance of the surrounding area.

The proposed development would provide a good standard of living for future occupiers, would not be detrimental to the surrounding landscape, residential amenity or highway safety and would not adversely affect archaeology. All of which weigh in support of the proposal.

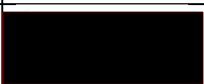
However on balance, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt and the adverse design considerations.

Recommendation

Refusal on the following grounds;

1. The proposal, by virtue of its proposed size, scale, massing and form, would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it would result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling and harm the openness of the Green Belt. In the absence of any very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014, Saved Policy C13 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review and to Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.
2. The proposed development, by reason of its design, form and appearance, would result in an excessively bulky building, which would incorporate incongruous features and be detrimental to the appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2023 and Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014.

(For detailed informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	17th April 2024	Dated:	18 April 2024