

Willow Platt, Hermitage Road, Higham, Rochester, Kent, ME3 7NF.

Proposed new house on the site of the former bungalow.

Introduction

This application is for a replacement dwelling on the site of a former bungalow known as Willow Platt. The bungalow has been largely demolished after planning approval had been granted for a first floor extension and a single storey rear extension. Further information is provided under the heading, Planning.

To the front of the plot and behind and as part of the front boundary wall, there is an existing outbuilding and on the east side of the plot, the existing garage.

Demolition of the bungalow took place after the applicants were given incorrect advice about the status of the planning consents that had been recently granted. The applicants made a mistake in demolishing the bungalow and regret their actions, however, they had taken advice and unfortunately it wasn't correct.

Synergy Planning & Property Consultants Ltd were appointed after most of the bungalow had been demolished. We advised leaving the remaining sections standing which includes the footings, lower courses of brickwork and a full height section that was part of the eastern side of the building.

We undertake a pre-application enquiry with the response to this enquiry, reference PRE20240278 received on 15th February 2025. In summary, the response advised that a two storey house with a floor area equivalent to the previously approved first floor extension and ground floor of the original bungalow would be acceptable. A subsequent meeting was held on the 3rd April at the Civic Centre in Windmill Street between the applicants, Mr & Mrs Gill, J. Bolton from Synergy Planning and Property Consultants and Councillor Atwall with the Head of Planning, Mr S Ghani. This meeting established that the planning department will support an planning application for house comprising the equivalent area of the bungalow on the ground floor, the previously approved first floor extension and previously approved 8 metre deep ground floor rear extension. We hereby submit an application for this level of accommodation.

Planning history.

The planning history details below are taken from the Pre-application enquiry response:

Relevant Planning History Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
20230345	Application for prior approval under	Refused and	Application:

Appeal ref: 2023/00036/REF	Schedule 2, Part 1, Class AA of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for enlargement of a dwelling by construction of additional storey with a maximum height of 7.95 metres.	Allowed at Appeal	24.05.23 Appeal: 14.12.23
20230251	Prior approval application for a single storey rear extension with a depth of 8.00 metres, maximum height of 4.00 metres and eaves height of 2.59 metres.	Prior Approval Not Required	11.04.23
20211339	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the existing use as a residential dwelling without a agricultural condition.	Granted	04.04.2022
19590225 (TH/6/59/216)	Erection of bungalow for agricultural worker	Permitted	04.08.1959

Planning policies

The house is within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The Development Plan documents for Gravesham comprise Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and Policies Map, September 2014, Saved policies from the Local Plan First Review, November 1994 and the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030.

Relevant policies include

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014:

- Core Strategy Policy CS01: Sustainable Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS11: Transport
- Core Strategy Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure
- Core Strategy Policy CS18: Climate Change
- Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles

Saved Policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994:

- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- T1 – Impact of Development on the Highway Network

National Planning Policy Framework 2023:

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development • Section 4 – Decision-making • Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land • Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Other Material Considerations

Supplementary Planning Guidance and other Documents:

The Council has adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) documents, Development Briefs and Conservation Area Appraisals. These elaborate on saved policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review and policies in the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy and are material considerations in determining planning applications.

In addition, the Council has adopted a number of documents that have been produced by Kent County Council also as Supplementary Guidance.

The following documents are relevant to the consideration of this enquiry:

- SPG2 – Residential Layout Guidelines (2020).
- SPG4 – KCC Parking Standards (2006).
- Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide (2021)
- Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard (2015);
- Design for Gravesham (2024)

This site is outside the village boundary for Higham.

We hereby apply for approval for a two storey house sited in the same position as the former bungalow.

The plot is located on the south side of Hermitage Road behind a tall brick wall which is set back from the road existing mature landscaping across the width of the plot behind the wall. The topography of the site results in a slight slope up from Hermitage Road to the plot with the area where the former bungalow was located being fairly level and then the plot slopes down towards the rear. There is an existing drive into the plot with an existing gate which is to be replaced with a wrought iron gate similar to the picture below. The boundaries are defined by existing close boarded fencing to the west side and an existing wall to the east boundary in the area of the proposed house and immediate garden and by established tall hedges to the rear of the plot.

The proposed house will be located in the same position as the former bungalow. The outbuilding at the front and garage on the east side of the plot will be retained.

The house will be built in red facing brickwork with a porch canopy and portico and a plain tiled roof. The design is traditional and well proportioned.

Either side of the application site there are large houses. Hermitage House to the immediate west has been extensively altered and extended and is a substantial house. This property also has a large detached indoor pool house which is located close to the boundary with the application plot together with a range of other outbuildings. To the east is another large dwelling called Hillyfield. This house is set further back from Hermitage Road than the application property and Hermitage House and a very large two storey property with a range of garden storage buildings.

The proposed floor area equates to an increase of about 42% over the original house. This is in line and considerably less than other approved extensions to houses within the parish of Shorne that are also within the Green Belt. By way of examples: Gardeners Cottage, Brewers Road, Shorne. has been extended from the original size of 112.3 square metres to 233.9 square metres, an increase of about 109% (see page 8 of the case officers report on application number 20210663)

Glen Hurst, Pear Tree Lane, Shorne. Application 20221100. Double storey extension, loft conversion and dormers. Approved extension from 84.9 square metres to 126.4 square metres equating to 48.9%.

Crabbles Cottage, Pear Tree Lane. Application 20240017. Two storey side extension, first floor extension and new attached garage. Increased in size from 76.3 square metres to 236.5 square metres equating to 209%.

Red Tiles, Pear Tree Lane, Shorne. Planning approval granted April 2023, planning reference 20230149 for an 82.8% floor area increase.

The above examples are within the Green Belt.

As mentioned, the house and garden are very well screened by hedging, boundary fences and walls which will reduce the visual impact on the neighbours of the alterations proposed.

Ecology survey

The pre-application response requested that an ecology survey is undertaken in order to check whether there might be bats roosting in the remaining sections of the former bungalow. The ecologist checked the site thoroughly and a full report is submitted with this application. The remaining section of the bungalow has no suitable bat roosting areas. The ecologist also considered whether there might be other protected species and has ruled out Great Crested Newts. The report recommends careful demolition and clearance by hand of the remaining walls of the bungalow.

The house is to be occupied as a family home by the applicant so bio-diversity net gain doesn't apply.

Design

The design is an attractive two storey dwelling with traditional facing brick, pitched clay tile roof, stone portico to the front providing cover to the front entrance door and to the rear the flat roof will be covered in a single ply membrane.

This design and the external materials are in keeping with the rural setting.

Access

There is very good public transport to the village of Higham. Higham Railway Station is about 15 minutes walk away and has regular services to London and Kent Coast and all towns in between. There is a regular bus service between Gravesend and the Medway Towns with the nearest bus stop being in Forge Lane by the Post Office. The house can be provided with a level access path and low threshold to the front door and will have reception rooms and toilet facilities on the ground floor.

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