



Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20221365

Location: White Horse Farm Equestrian Centre, White Horse Lane, Meopham
DA13 0UE

Description: Application for removal of condition 3 and 4 attached to planning permission reference 20220470 for a retrospective application for the use of land for the siting of a caravan; to remove the need to paint the caravan and landscape surrounding area.

Applicant: Mr M Nuttall

Site Visit Date: Various

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form
Planning Statement

Relevant Planning History

20220470	Retrospective application for the use of land for the siting of a caravan	Permitted	28.06.2022
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Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- Core Strategy Policy CS01: Sustainable Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS02: Scale and Distribution of Development
- Core Strategy Policy CS07: Economy, Employment and Skills
- Core Strategy Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure
- Core Strategy Policy CS18: Climate Change
- Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles
- Core Strategy Policy CS20: Heritage and the Historic Environment
- Core Strategy Policy CS19: Development & Design Principles

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- Policy C17: Horse Riding and Stables
- Policy TC3: Development Affecting Conservation Areas

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2021) 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 (2021), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 – Decision-making
- Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 14 - Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Kent Design Guide (SPG 5 published December 2005, adopted July 2006)
- Adopted Kent Vehicle Parking Standards (SPG 4 published in 2003 and adopted in 2006)
- Kent County Council Supplementary Planning Guidance SPG1: Landscape Character (adopted July 2006)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment, May 2009 (a technical document which underpins Local Plan Core Strategy Policy CS12)
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, Third Revision 2021 to 2026.

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

Consultees

Meopham Parish Council

Following discussion by Meopham Parish Council's Planning Applications Committee; the Council wishes to provide the following response:

- Meopham Parish Council objects to this planning application as it wishes for the conditions to remain in place.

KCC Public Rights of Way Officer

Thank you for the above application. I have looked at the details and I do not believe that the application materially affects the path.

Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit

In respect of the original application, 20220470, the AONB Unit provided the following advice:

'The caravan is well related to the existing buildings and the yard which helps to minimise landscape and visual impacts. Nevertheless, the nature of mobile homes/caravans is such that they rarely meet the key test of conserving and enhancing the scenic and landscape beauty of the AONB. The photographs submitted with the application show that the external materials/colour of the caravan is a pale cream. Should the Council be minded to grant permission, we would welcome consideration of a requirement to paint the caravan an appropriate darker, neutral colour, particularly in view of the proposed permanent stationing of the caravan. (Such a requirement was attached by condition to seasonal workers caravans at Mansfield Farm, Bridge, Canterbury – condition 03 of permission CA/20/02170 – 'Within four months from

commencement of the development, the caravans shall be painted dark green (S 7020- G50Y) or dark brown (S 8010-Y10R) and maintained as such'). The application submission also fails to address the policy implications of the proposal on the AONB. Paragraph 176 of the NPPF requires the AONB to be enhanced as well as conserved. Should the Council be minded to approve the application, we would therefore also request that consideration be given to requiring landscape enhancements across the wider site.'

These requirements are still considered necessary to help mitigate the impacts of the caravan on the Kent Downs AONB and ensure compliance with planning policy requirements to conserve and enhance the AONB. We therefore do not support the removal of conditions 03 and 04.

I hope this is of assistance to you. I would be happy to discuss further if this would be helpful.

Dickens' Country Protection Society

The Society would wish to comment that the need for the conditions would not appear to have diminished.

Neighbouring properties

The application has been advertised by site notice and individual letters to two neighbouring properties. No letters of representation have been received.

Officer's Analysis

Proposal

This application is to remove the following two conditions from planning permission reference 20220470;

3. *Within six months of the date of this permission the existing caravan (mobile home) shall be painted dark green (NCS Colour System S 7020- G50Y) or dark brown (NCS Colour System S 8010-Y10R) and maintained as such.*

Reason: *In the interests of local visual amenity and in order for the mobile to more successfully harmonise with its location set between large agricultural type buildings which externally exude similar dark cladding finishes and having regard to the location of the mobile adjacent to a conservation area and within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AoNB) and where it is policy within the adopted Kent Downs AoNB Management Plan to conserve and enhance the scenic and landscape beauty of the AoNB. This would also accord with paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and policies Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles and CS20: Heritage and the Historic Environment of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).*

4. *Within six months of the date of this permission a landscaping scheme for the wider application site shall be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority and such scheme as may be approved shall be implemented in full within the first planting season following approval and thereafter be maintained to ensure establishment for a period of five years. Any new plantings that die, are damaged, removed or become diseased within five years from the date that the landscaping scheme is fully implemented shall be replaced with plantings of a similar size and species during the next available planting season.*

Reason: *the interests of visual amenity and safeguarding the character and appearance of the area and in accordance with Policy CS12: Green Infrastructure and Policy CS19: Development and Design Principles of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and to accord with policy within the adopted Kent Downs AoNB Management Plan to conserve and enhance the scenic and landscape beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AoNB) in which the site is located.*

Background

This mobile home has been on site since 2015 when temporary planning permission was granted for the continued use of land for siting of a caravan at White Horse Riding Centre. The permission expired in November 2020. A planning condition that was imposed stated:

The occupation of the existing caravan shall be limited solely to Groom(s) employed at White Horse Riding Centre, White Horse Lane, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 0UE and shall be for a limited period expiring on 20 November 2020. On or before that date its use for accommodation shall cease and the caravan shall be permanently removed from the site.

Reason: *The permanent stationing of the caravan on the site would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and in order to comply with Policy CS02 of Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).*

The Council's rural planning consultant commented at the time:

The application relates to a well-established equestrian centre based on some 15 ha of land where there is a fairly large complex of stabling, riding arenas, and associated storage buildings with further extensions approved under 20140902.

The three main elements of the centre comprise riding/schooling lessons, carriage driving lessons, and horse/carriage hire for wedding, funerals and other events.

It is the latter element for which the grooms' accommodation is sought. The centre has recently taken over another business (Drayhorse Shires, formerly based in Ashford) which provides horse and carriage hire for weddings and other events covering London, Kent, Sussex, Essex, Surrey and Hertfordshire, adding a further 12 carriage horses and 10 carriages now based at the Meopham premises.

The two grooms in the caravan have particular responsibilities for the care of these horses, as well as work responsibilities at the site that require attendance very early in the morning, as explained in the application submissions.

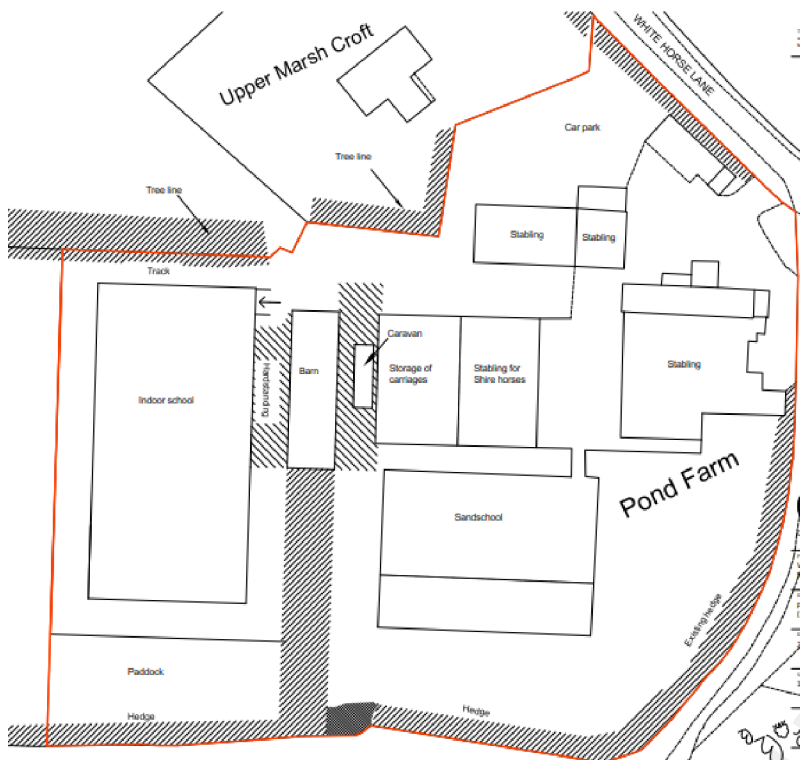
In the circumstances, I suggest the proposal should not be seen as one for a permanent rural worker's dwelling as envisaged in particular under para 55 of the NPPF. Rather, I would suggest that this proposal can be seen as a non-permanent, modest-scale form of operational accommodation, sited completely within its working environment, that meets a particular current requirement at the premises, over and above the general security and attendance for the other elements of equestrian activity at the site that is afforded by the applicant's own permanent dwelling, just to the south of the building complex.

In this context, any consent (relating as it does to the use of land for stationing a caravan) could be subject to a condition requiring its removal as and when it is no longer used for, or required for, this particular purpose.

The 20220470 application sought permission for the permanent retention of the caravan and the above conditions were imposed.

Design, Character and Appearance

A detailed description of the site can be found in the Officer's report 20220470. The application site is shown as being within the Green Belt (Policy CS02) and the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Policy CS12) and is adjacent to a conservation area (policy CS20) in the Gravesham Local Plan Policies Map. The site is close to a local wildlife site (Policy CS12).



The existing caravan is located on an existing hardstanding area between existing buildings as shown on the extract from the applicants proposed block plan as shown opposite.

Its appearance is shown in the case officer photograph below (May 2022)



The previous application concluded that although the caravan was inappropriate development in the Green Belt it did not impact on openness due to being positioned between two large buildings. The report says

'The mobile is not widely visible from public viewpoints being obscured from White Horse Road by the existing dwelling and its outbuildings at White Horse Farmhouse and from the public footpath to the rear (north and east) by screening by hedges. The siting of the mobile and the equestrian operation leaves little scope for any paraphernalia around it associated with the residential occupation.'

Despite this very special circumstances were also considered to exist as there is an identified need for the accommodation for the workers at the shire horse business.

The Council's conservation architect had commented in the previous application that the caravan was concealed by existing buildings and raised no adverse comments in respect of the setting of heritage assets in the vicinity.

The Kent Downs AONB unit were consulted on the previous application and they considered that the

caravan is well related to the existing buildings and the yard which helps to minimise landscape and visual impacts but that the nature of mobile homes/caravans is such that they rarely meet the key test of conserving and enhancing the scenic and landscape beauty of the AONB. They raised no objection but did suggest that if permission was given for the mobile, which currently is a pale cream colour, is painted a more appropriate darker, neutral colour, particularly in view of the proposed permanent stationing of the caravan.

They also commented that the application submission also fails to address the policy implications of the proposal on the AONB. Paragraph 176 of the NPPF requires the AONB to be enhanced as well as conserved. They also requested that consideration be given to requiring landscape enhancements across the wider site.

It was considered within that application that, subject to the controls identified above, development was not considered to be harmful to the character and appearance of the countryside and the Harvel Wooded Downs Landscape Character Area nor contrary to Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy Policies CS12 and CS19 or harmful to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Having considered the applicant's Planning Statement and the previous Officers' report it is clear that the reason for the conditions was because of the impact on the AONB. Whilst it would be preferable to paint the caravan a green or brown colour, due to the position of the caravan between two large buildings within the site, it is not considered to be readily visible from the AONB. The existing colour of the caravan does relate to the adjacent building in part and it is not visible from outside of the site and is located on existing hardstanding. The condition therefore not necessary and fails the six tests outlined in paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021; no objection is raised to its removal.

Increasing the landscaping on the wider site would improve the appearance of the site however, the caravan is located on existing hardstanding where there has not been any net loss to biodiversity caused by its existence. Condition 4 is therefore also not considered necessary.

If the caravan were to be relocated without being painted or a wider landscaping scheme it could be more visible from outside the site. A condition was imposed on the permission to ensure that the caravan is not relocated to a different position and this condition should remain.

On balance, it is considered that conditions 3 and 4 of 20220470 are not required and therefore can be removed whilst still adhering to the objective of policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 and para. 176 and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Amenity

The removal or retention of condition 3 and 4 would have no impact on amenities and therefore no objection is raised.

Parking and Highways

The removal or retention of condition 3 and 4 would have no impact on parking or highway safety and therefore no objection is raised.

Conclusion

The imposed conditions, whilst relevant are, on balance, not considered necessary and therefore the development, without them, is still considered to accord with the above-mentioned policies and is therefore acceptable.

Recommendation:

Approval

(For detailed conditions / reasons for refusal and informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Alison Webster	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	20 February 2023	Dated:	20 February 2023