

Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20250121

Location: Leasden Rhododendron Avenue Meopham Gravesend

Description: Erection of two bedroom, self-build bungalow, with associated works including hardstanding for two cars and pedestrian access path.

Applicant: Mr Dean Wright

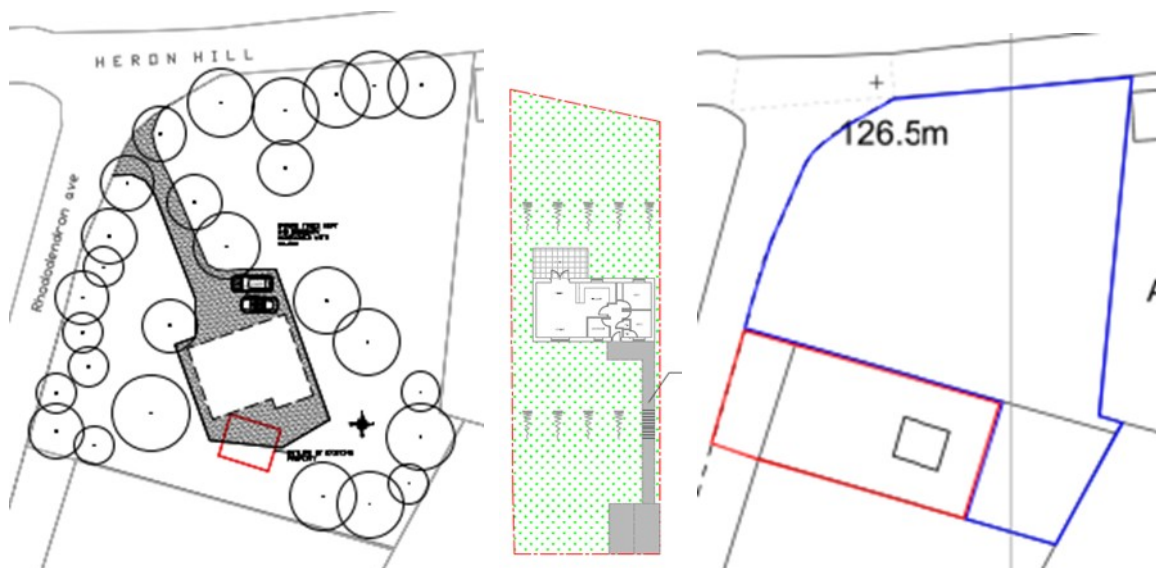
Site Visit Date: 26 September 2025

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application for Planning Permission form;
Drawing no. 7653-P-01 Rev. B Proposed layouts and elevations;
Drawing no. 7653-P-02 Rev. B Proposed site plan, section and photographs;
Drawing no. 7653-P-03 Rev. B Existing and proposed block plans;
Drawing no. 7653-P-04 Rev. A Existing layout and photographs;
Drawing no. 7653-P-05 Rev. A Existing site plan and section;
Drawing no. 7653-P-06 Rev. A Proposed drainage layout;
Red and blue line site boundary plan;
Planning Statement February 2025;
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 03 July 2025
GBC Custom and self-build housing form;
BNG metric
Letter from the agent received 20 August 2025; and
Email from the ecologist received 02 December 2025.

Procedural Issues

It is noted that the applicant owns both the application site and the land to the north and east (as shown with a blue line on the submitted OS plan). Previously, the plot known as Leasden extended across this wider area of land. Indeed, two pre-application enquiries have been submitted in relation to the plot known as Leasden. One in 2022 (PRE20220049) and one in 2024 (PRE20240096), both of which show a larger plot than the current application site. The following are proposed layouts for these enquires and the current land ownership;



PRE20220049

PRE20240096

Current site and land ownership

In 2022, the whole of the land outlined currently in red and blue was the subject of the pre-application enquiry and in 2024, a longer plot (including the area of land to the east of the current red line boundary) was the subject of the enquiry.

Recent land clearance, affecting the wider land owned by the applicant, would indicate that the actual plot is much larger than that which is the subject of this application. It is noted that there is no plot separation on the ground and historically, the land appears to have been a single plot. Therefore, it is considered that the red line boundary for the application site should have included the wider land area.

Following a request for clarification, the applicant provided land registry details, which appear to show two plots and as such, the application was considered valid. But in terms of the use of the land, it is considered that the red and blue line areas are likely to have been used as a single plot.

Therefore, the assessment of the proposed development has considered the planning implications of the development on both the red line application site and, where relevant, the wider area of land (outlined in blue).

It should be noted that the applicant has agreed to the imposition of Southern Water's required pre-commencement drainage conditions on any planning permission granted.

Relevant Planning History

Reference	Description	Decision	Decision Date
19570271	The erection of a chalet for week-end and holiday use	Refused	29.01.1958
19550156	Erection of a chalet for weekend and holiday use	Refused	05.08.1955

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014)

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure

- CS14 – Housing Type and Size
- CS15 – Housing Density
- 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
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF (2024) 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 (2024), the Council will also seek to replace these.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 5 – Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Section 16 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG 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)
- Design for Gravesham – Design Code (2024)
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment (2009)

Other Relevant Guidance

- Kent County Council Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025)
- Gravesham Driveway Dropped Kerb Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)
- Gravesham Front Driveway Design Guidance (Informal Guidance) (2023)
- Kent County Council's Parking Standards (January 2025)

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

GBC Environmental Protection Team (Regulatory Services)

The comments are much the same as for the pre-application advice given for this site in 2024. Whilst there would be no objection should a formal application be submitted, the applicant is advised to consider the following.

Watching Brief - Land Contamination:

Although the site appears to have been in residential use, the previous photos submitted indicate that there may be some dumped rubbish/waste on the site. Although a full contaminated land assessment will not be

required, it is likely that a watching brief condition would be recommended as a condition on any permission, if granted.

Drainage/sewerage:

The foul sewage shall be removed by means of the mains drainage system and not by the use of non-mains sewerage systems, unless connection to the drainage system is not reasonably practicable. If foul sewage is to be removed using non-mains sewerage systems, a sewage treatment plant or septic tank system will be considered in preference to a cesspool. Such a system may require the prior consent of the Environment Agency under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991. Applicants are therefore advised to discuss their requirements with the Environment Agency at the earliest opportunity. It should be ensured that the septic tank or cesspool is of adequate capacity to serve the proposed development and suitable access and hardstanding area shall be maintained to it on site.

Lighting:

Artificial lighting can cause a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. It is important that the applicants are not permitted to install external lighting that illuminate anything other than the ground within the curtilage of the new properties in order to assist in preventing a nuisance from occurring (which would be most likely if the bedrooms on neighbouring properties are illuminated).

KCC Highways & Transportation

Referring to the above description, it would appear that this development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority in accordance with the current consultation protocol arrangements. If there are any material highway safety concerns that you consider should be brought to the attention of the HA, then please contact us again with your specific concerns for our consideration.

It is important to note that Local Planning Authority (LPA) permission does not convey any approval to carry out works on or affecting the public highway.

Any changes to or affecting the public highway in Kent require the formal agreement of the Highway Authority, Kent County Council (KCC), and it should not be assumed that this will be a given because LPA planning permission has been granted.

For this reason, anyone considering works which may affect the public highway, including any highway-owned street furniture or landscape assets such as grass, shrubs and trees, is advised to engage with KCC Highways and Transportation at an early stage in the design process.

Across the county there are pieces of land next to private homes and gardens and near the highway that do not look like roads or pavements but are actually part of the public highway.

Some of this highway land is owned by Kent County Council whilst some is owned by third party owners. Irrespective of the ownership, this land may have 'highway rights' over the topsoil.

Works on private land may also affect the public highway. These include works to cellars, to retaining walls which support the highway or land above the highway, and to balconies, signs or other structures which project over the highway. Such works also require the approval of the Highway Authority.

Kent County Council has now introduced a pre-application advice service in addition to a full formal technical approval process for new or altered highway assets, with the aim of improving future maintainability. Further details are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>.

This process applies to all development works affecting the public highway other than applications for vehicle crossings, which are covered by a separate approval process. Further details on this are available on our website below:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/apply-for-a-dropped-kerb/dropped-kerb-contractor-information>

Once planning approval for any development has been granted by the LPA, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that before development commences, all necessary highway approvals and consents have been obtained, and that the limits of the highway boundary have been clearly established, since failure to do so may result in enforcement action being taken by the Highway Authority.

The applicant must also ensure that the details shown on the approved plans agree in every aspect with those approved under the relevant legislation and common law. It is therefore important for the applicant to contact KCC Highways and Transportation to progress this aspect of the works prior to commencement on site.

Further guidance for applicants, including information about how to clarify the highway boundary and links to application forms for vehicular crossings and other highway matters, may be found on Kent County Council's website:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/highway-permits-and-licences/highways-permissions-and-technical-guidance>.

Alternatively, KCC Highways and Transportation may be contacted by telephone: 03000 418181.

KCC Biodiversity Officer

Response received 24 December 2025:

We advise that sufficient information has been provided to determine the planning application.

Protected/Notable Species:

We have reviewed the submitted ecological information and we advise that sufficient information has been provided to consider the impacts on protected/notable species.

The PEA was carried out following the vegetation clearance and is possible that a breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and/or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) has occurred. This is of particular concern due to the site's connectivity to ancient woodland and other parcels of broadleaved woodland and the potential for nesting birds, roosting bats and dormice to have been impacted.

However due to the works already being carried out we accept that no further ecological surveys are required and any impact in the retained habitats can be avoided through a precautionary mitigation approach. We have taken this view as there is land within the blueline boundary that could be enhanced for protected/notable species.

We recommend that if planning permission is granted an ecological mitigation strategy is submitted. We recommend the following:

No development shall be undertaken (including any ground works, site and/or vegetation clearance) until a construction ecological management plan (CEMP) which contains full details of the ecological mitigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall be based on up-to-date ecological survey information, as advised by a suitably qualified ecologist and include the following:

- Measures to avoid impacts to the retained habitats including identification of a construction exclusion zone (and the use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs);
- Extent and location of proposed construction and mitigation works, shown on appropriate scale maps and plans;
- Specific measures (which may be presented as a series of method statements) to avoid impacts to protected/notable species and a timetable for implementation of the measures;
- Persons responsible for implementing the measures, including times during construction when

- specialist ecologists need to be present on-site;
- The role and responsibilities of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) or similarly competent person(s);
- Contingency plans should a protected species be encountered;

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period in accordance with the approved details.

Priority Habitat:

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland has been cleared from the redline and blue line boundary, this is a priority habitat. The PEA this was conducted post-habitat clearance and the PEA acknowledges that site clearance has taken place 'Historical aerial photos from 1960 show that the site was mainly bare, with a structure, but then became mainly wooded by 1990, then cleared again by 2003 then started to get scrubby/wooded by 2015 once more', The site clearance has resulted in the biodiversity value of the site has been significantly reduced, and that woodland has been present since at least the 1940s in the blue line area and is mapped as priority woodland on MAGIC.

NB the images shown below are repeated here in the actual consultation response.

When we previously commented we highlighted that no attempt at compensation for the loss of this habitat has been made within proposals, other than the proposed installation of a single bird box and the planting of 2 x trees.

The applicant states that proposals are exempt from BNG under the custom/self-build exemption criteria and it is not within our remit to confirm this. Regardless, The NPPF 2024, paragraph 193(d) indicates "... opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."

There is land within the blueline boundary that could be replanted to replace the lost woodland. However a BNG metric has been submitted and it has detailed that to compensate for the loss of the priority woodland 0.2831 woodland biodiversity units could be purchased from an off site provider.

We would encourage the applicant to replant the land within the blueline boundary but accept that the purchasing of off site units is an acceptable approach.

If planning permission is granted we recommend that the following condition is included requiring information to be submitted demonstrating that the units have been purchased. We recommend the following wording:

Prior to works commencing on site a letter must be submitted to the LPA for approval demonstrating that sufficient woodland biodiversity units have been purchased to compensate for the loss of priority woodland on site.

Response received 12 November 2025:

SUMMARY: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED:

We have reviewed the submitted ecological information, and whilst a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA, KB Ecology, July 25) has been completed, this was conducted post-habitat clearance as such the outlined mitigation and enhancement recommendations are inadequate. The PEA acknowledges that site clearance has taken place 'Historical aerial photos from 1960 show that the site was mainly bare, with a structure, but then became mainly wooded by 1990, then cleared again by 2003 then started to get scrubby/wooded by 2015 once more', however it is clear that the biodiversity value of the site has been significantly reduced, and that woodland has been present since at least the 1940s in the blue line area and is mapped as priority woodland on MAGIC.



Fig 1. Habitats onsite and in the wider site prior to (2020) and post-site clearance (2025)

HABITAT DEGRADATION:

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland has been cleared from the redline and blue line boundary, this is a priority habitat. Without an ecological impact assessment having been undertaken, it is possible that a breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and/or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) has occurred. This is of particular concern due to the site's connectivity to ancient woodland and other parcels of broadleaved woodland and the potential for nesting birds and dormice to have been impacted.

Additionally, bat roosts within trees may have been lost without assessment from a suitably qualified ecologist, resulting in an offence. This is in alignment with paragraph 99 of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Circular 06/200519, which states "it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision".

At present, no attempt at compensation for the loss of this habitat has been made within proposals, other than the proposed installation of a single bird box and the planting of 2 x trees.

The applicant states that proposals are exempt from BNG under the custom/self-build exemption criteria and it is not within our remit to confirm this. Regardless, The NPPF 2024, paragraph 193(d) indicates "... opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."

This is generally taken to mean that local planning authorities may reasonably request a 1% biodiversity net gain of applications which are otherwise exempt from statutory BNG, as upheld in previous appeal decisions (APP/Y3940/W/21/3278256, APP/Y3940/Q/21/3278923, APP/Y3940/W/21/3282365) which have clarified that:

- "Paragraph 174 [now 187] of the Framework [encourages applicants to], ... seek a net gain in biodiversity without identifying a specific percentage..."
- The relevant Core Strategy may "...seek a net gain in biodiversity without identifying a specific percentage..."; and
- "A net gain of just 1% would be policy compliant..."

KCC West Kent Public Rights Of Way Officer

Access to the site is via Public Bridleway NS293 (Rhododendron Avenue), which is expected to remain

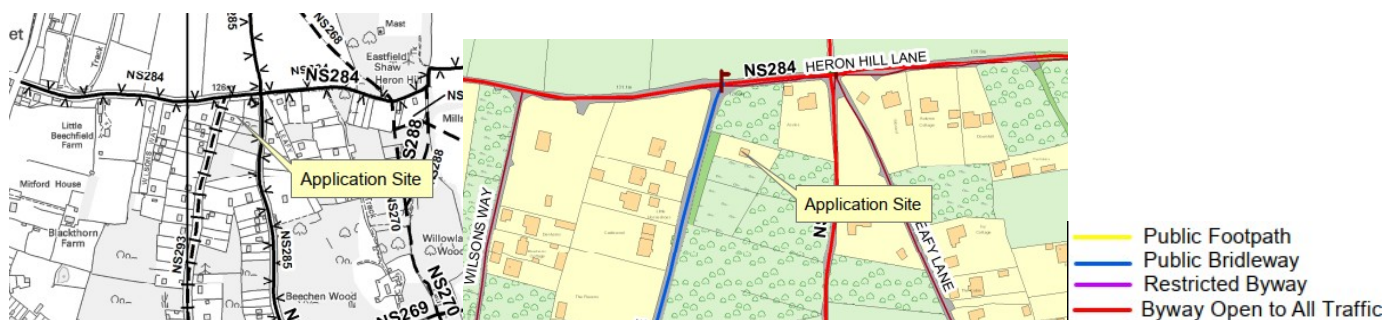


unaffected by the application. Additionally, Byway Open to All Traffic NS284 (Heron Lane) lies to the north and should also remain unaffected. I enclose a copy of the Public Rights of Way network maps showing the line of the path for your information.

The granting of planning permission confers no other permission or consent on the applicant. It is therefore important to advise the applicant that no works can be undertaken on a Public Right of Way without the express consent of the Highways Authority. In cases of doubt the applicant should be advised to contact this office before commencing any works that may affect the Public Right of Way. Should any temporary closures be required to ensure public safety then this office will deal on the basis that:

- The applicant pays for the administration costs.
- The duration of the closure is kept to a minimum.
- Alternative routes will be provided for the duration of the closure.
- A minimum of eight weeks' notice is required to process any applications for temporary closures.

This means that the Public Right of Way must not be stopped up, diverted, obstructed (this includes any building materials or waste generated during any of the construction phases) or the surface disturbed. There must be no encroachment on the current width, at any time now or in future and no furniture or fixtures may be erected on or across Public Rights of Way without consent.



Extracts from attachments to consultation response

Kent Fire & Rescue Service

Upon reviewing the available plans on the Gravesham planning portal, I acknowledge that this is an existing access road. However, with the erection of a bungalow please ensure the overall access route outside of the dwelling is unobstructed by any potential overgrowth of foliage coming into the roadway to allow for 45m hose lay distances to be achieved to the furthest point of the dwelling from a suitably parked position. On this basis, I can confirm that it is in my opinion, that the emergency access requirements under the above act appear to have been met at this stage.

Please be aware that should this proposal be successful it would then be subject to a Building Regulations consultation where the access arrangements would again be examined under section B5 in greater detail.

Fire Service access and facility provisions are a requirement under B5 of the Building Regulations 2010 and must be complied with to the satisfaction of the Building Control Authority. A full plans submission should be made to the relevant building control body who have a statutory obligation to consult with the Fire and Rescue Service.

Southern Water

Insufficient Information provided.

Condition:

Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of foul water drainage disposal have been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Southern Water.



Proposed Soakaways:

The Council's Building Control officers or technical staff should be asked to comment on the adequacy of soakaways to dispose of surface water from the proposed development. No new soakaways should be located within 5 metres of a public or adoptable gravity sewer, rising main or water main.

No Soakaways should be connected to the public surface water sewer.

Hierarchy of Building Regulations H3 for disposal of surface water - not yet provided documentation proving compliance:

If the applicant has not already provided documentation demonstrating compliance with the surface water hierarchy reflected in part H3 of the Building Regulations, as shown below, we will require this to be provided where surface water is being considered for discharge to our network. Whilst reuse does not strictly form part of this hierarchy, Southern Water would encourage the consideration of reuse for new developments.

- Reuse
- Infiltration
- Watercourse
- Storm Sewer
- Combined Sewer

Guidance on Building Regulations is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drainage-and-waste-disposal-approved-document-h>

We would like to engage with you on the design for disposal of surface water for this development at the earliest opportunity and we recommend that civil engineers and landscape architects work together and with Southern Water. In many cases this may negate or reduce the need for network reinforcement and allow earlier completion of the development.

Where a surface water connection to the foul or combined sewer is being considered, this should be agreed by the Lead Local Flood Authority, in consultation with Southern Water.

Condition:

We request that should this application receive planning approval, the following condition is attached to the consent:

Construction of the development shall not commence until details of the proposed means of surface water run off disposal in accordance with Part H3 of Building Regulations hierarchy as well as acceptable discharge points, rates and volumes have been agreed by the Lead Local Flood Authority, in consultation with Southern Water.



Extract from attachment to consultation response

Meopham Parish Council

No objection.

No consultation response received

No response has been received from the GBC - Service Manager (Housing Operations), Natural England, the Kent Police Designing Out Crime Team, the Kent Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised by a site notice and to three neighbouring properties by letter. Five representations have been received (three in support and two objecting) and are summarised as follows;

- An old shack on the site does not warrant a new building.
- There has been a derelict chalet on the site since 1987 so a replacement building is long overdue.
- The clearing of trees and foliage from the plot has had a negative impact on the entrance to Rhododendron Avenue.
- It is an offence to consider this application following the destruction of the land and removal of trees.
- New concrete features e.g. kerbs have been added at the site without permission.
- This land may have been designated 'unauthorised' and a village green.
- The name of the land seems to have changed.
- The site notice was placed on a far corner of the site and did not allow enough time for comments.

Officer's Analysis

Background

The wider application site (red and blue line areas) was investigated by the Planning Enforcement Team in early 2024 in relation to the clearing of vegetation/trees. At that time, it was established that the land was not protected by a TPO, that the Forestry Commission would not be taking any action and that there was no breach of planning control.

The application site (red line area) contains a derelict building/structure and until January 2024, the land was completely overgrown with vegetation and trees. No details of the previous use of the land or building/structure have been provided but the Borough Council's Culverstone Valley Survey information indicates that the wider site (red and blue line areas) has been derelict and abandoned since at least 1983. It is noted that two local residents have described the structure at the application site as 'a derelict chalet' and as 'an old shack' and the applicant describes it (in the submitted Planning Statement) as 'a dilapidated structure that has been abandoned for decades'.

The following images illustrate the application site and the wider site, pre and post the site clearance works;



Google Earth image March 2023



Case officer photograph 14 June 2024

Aerial images of the application site, showing it completely covered in trees and vegetation in 2020 and then cleared in 2025 are set out in the KCC Biodiversity Officer's consultation response above.

The application site is not considered to be previously developed land (PDL) as, prior to the recent clearance works, the existing derelict building/structure had blended into the surrounding landscape. This issue is addressed in further detail in the Green Belt section below.

It is noted that a local resident has suggested that the application site may have been designated 'unauthorised' and a village green. However, the application site is not a designated village green and the reference to an unauthorised plot relates only to the Borough Council's Culverstone Valley Survey records and the previously applied Policy C14 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994). It should be noted that Policy C14 is no longer applicable.

Proposed Amendments to the NPPF 2024

On 16 December 2025, government published a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF 2024) and whilst broad changes are proposed, these could be subject to further amendment and therefore they carry very limited weight at this stage. It is noted that, with regard to the relevant issues in the determination of this application, the proposed amended framework has a broadly consistent approach to that set out in the NPPF 2024 and as such, and due to the limited weight of the amended framework, the proposed development has been assessed with reference to the NPPF 2024 only.

Housing Need

Gravesham is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. Based on data for the period 2022-2027, the Council can only demonstrate a supply of 3 years.

Given the Council's current inability to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, and as the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) that required by the Housing Delivery Test, the housing delivery element of Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) must be regarded as out of date. As required by the Paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024), this requires that in regard to housing development, planning permission should be granted unless:

- (i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

The policies referred to in paragraph 11(d)(i) above are those set out in the NPPF 2024 at footnote 7 relating to any of the following:

- Habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast;
- irreplaceable habitats;
- designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and
- areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

The policies referred to in paragraph 11(d)(ii) above are those set out in the NPPF 2024 at footnote 9 relating to paragraphs 66 and 84 of chapter 5; 91 of chapter 7; 110 and 115 of chapter 9; 129 of chapter 11; and 135 and 139 of chapter 12 of the NPPF 2024.

In determining applications for planning permission involving housing, the Council will therefore apply a weighted balance in favour of granting planning permission in accordance with relevant case law and guidance, having regard to the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals when evaluated against these paragraphs, development plan policy, the relative contribution the proposal makes towards the alleviation of

any shortfall in housing delivery at that time and any other considerations material to the proposed development.

The proposed development for a net increase of one residential unit would offer a minimal contribution towards meeting local housing need and this should be accorded appropriate weight in support of the application. However, this has to be balanced against other requirements of the Development Plan and the NPPF 2024 which require new development to be well designed, to make effective use of land, to create acceptable living conditions for future and existing occupiers, to provide safe and suitable access and to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. These issues will be discussed in detail in the sections below.

Green Belt

The application site is located in the Green Belt and as such, paragraphs 142 and 143 and 153-160 of the NPPF 2024 and Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 are most relevant.

Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (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.

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF 2024 sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 143 lists five purposes that the Green Belt serves.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF 2024 states;

When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness⁵⁵. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Footnote ⁵⁵ reads as follows:

⁵⁵ Other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate.

Therefore, in the following assessment, substantial weight will be given to any harm to the Green Belt (including its openness) unless the development is not inappropriate development.

Paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF 2024 set out the circumstances in which new built development can be considered as not inappropriate in the Green Belt. In this instance, paragraphs 154(d), 154(g) and 155 are most relevant and read as follows;

154(d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

154(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also

not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.

Whether the proposed development complies with the requirements of these paragraphs will be considered below.

Paragraph 154(d)

The application site contains a derelict building/structure which was erected without planning permission but which has since become lawful, through the passage of time. The building/structure is not in a habitable condition and has not been so since at least 1983. Until recently the building/structure and plot were overgrown with trees and vegetation. There do not appear to be any utility connections to the application site (water, electricity, gas or sewage) and the building does not contain all the facilities required for day to day private domestic existence. As such and in light of its unoccupied, derelict and uninhabitable condition, the building/structure cannot be described as a dwellinghouse.

The derelict building/structure at the application site appears to have had an open veranda, which would have not been used for habitable purposes and there was a section at the side, which has been demolished and no longer comprises built form. Therefore, the footprint of the derelict building/structure is significantly smaller than that shown in the submitted details (less than 35 square metres). The proposed dwelling would have a footprint of 74 square metres and as such, it would be materially larger (at least 54% larger) than the existing derelict, built development at the application site.

In light of the above, as a new dwellinghouse, the proposed development would not be a replacement building in the same use as an existing building. Furthermore, the proposed dwelling would be materially larger than the existing derelict, built development at the application site. As such, the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF 2024.

Paragraph 154(g)

Referring back to paragraph 154(g) of the NPPF, this allows for the limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential), which does not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

The original building/structure at the application site, although erected without planning permission, was a permanent feature of the application site. However, its derelict and until recently, overgrown, condition have meant that the remains of the building/structure had blended into the landscape. The following images illustrate the site frontage in February 2009 and 14 June 2024. The same telegraph pole is identified with an arrow in both images.



Google Street View February 2009



Case officer photograph 14 June 2024

As the definition of PDL in the NPPF 2024 excludes land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure have blended into the landscape, it is considered that the application site cannot be considered to be PDL. Therefore paragraph 154(g) is not applicable to the determination of this application.

It should be highlighted that allowing works to clear a site of trees and vegetation, in order to expose derelict built development, which has previously blended into the landscape, to be considered as PDL would set a damaging precedent both in the countryside in general and specifically in the Culverstone Valley Area. In the Culverstone Valley, there are numerous examples of similar plots, which contribute to the wooded landscape that surrounds the sporadic existing residential development. If these plots are considered to be PDL then the adverse impacts of new development on the openness of the Green Belt and to landscape character would be significant.

Without prejudice to the above paragraphs, if a different conclusion regarding the PDL status of the application site were to be reached, the proposed redevelopment would only be considered appropriate if it would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The openness of the Green Belt has both spatial and visual aspects and the Courts have identified a number of factors to be taken into account when assessing the impact of a proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt (PPG Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722), which include both spatial and visual consideration, as well as duration and remediability of the development, and the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic movement. The application is therefore considered against the benchmark of whether the development will cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

In this regard, it should be noted that the proposed development would have a significantly larger footprint, height and bulk when compared to the existing derelict, built development. Furthermore, the proposal would also result in the introduction of a new residential use, the creation of areas of hardstanding, parking and fencing, the introduction of garden furniture, clothes drying equipment, etc and the potential for future extensions and curtilage buildings to an unused plot which was previously densely wooded, as identified earlier in the report.

The site frontage and the northern side boundary are open and would provide views of the proposal from multiple public vantage points. It should be noted that a public bridleway (NS293) runs to the west of the application site and a byway open to all traffic (NS284) runs to the north. The application site forms part of the entrance to Rhododendron Avenue beyond which, to the north, is open countryside, which slopes upwards, providing some long distance views towards the proposal. This is further emphasized by the starkness of the site since its clearance, and the wooded nature of Rhododendron Avenue.

Therefore, in both spatial and visual terms, by reason of the greater built form of the proposed dwelling and the spread of associated domestic paraphernalia and residential activities across the site, and the comparative starkness of the site from how it was prior to clearance, the proposal would result in a substantial loss of openness. As such, the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 154(g) of the NPPF 2024.

Paragraph 155

Grey belt is defined in the NPPF 2024 as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another; or preserving the setting and special character of historic towns (paragraphs 143(a), (b) and (d) of the NPPF 2024).

It is considered that although it is not PDL, the application site meets the definition of grey belt. Whilst the proposal would be contrary to one of the purposes that the Green Belt serves, namely safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, it would not fundamentally undermine all the purposes (as set out in paragraph 143 of the NPPF 2024) when taken together. Furthermore, there is a demonstrable unmet need for new housing in Gravesham. As such, the proposal would be in line with paragraph 155(a) and (b) of the NPPF 2024.

It is noted that paragraph 155(d) of the NPPF 2024 is not applicable because the proposal does not constitute major housing development.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF 2024 sets out that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Paragraph 84 also states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless particular circumstances apply.

The application site is located in the open countryside, outside of the settlement of Culverstone Green, where there are very limited services/infrastructure, including a primary school, petrol station and shop. These facilities are located some 0.6 kilometres, 0.82 kilometres and 0.8 kilometres away (as the crow flies, further when using public rights of way/roadways) respectively.

The application site is accessible from Rhododendron Avenue, a public bridleway (NS293) and Heron Lane, a byway open to all traffic (NS284). These are single track, rural routes with no footpaths and no lighting. Rhododendron Avenue is not hard surfaced and Heron Lane is steeply sloping. As such, these routes are not conducive to walking or cycling.

The nearest bus stop is located some 1.61 kilometres away (on South Street, Wrotham Road via Heron Lane) and the bus service comprises of two daytime routes only, the 308 to Gravesend to Sevenoaks and the 306 Gravesend to Vigo. The 308 service is approximately every 1.5 hours on Mondays to Saturdays and the 306 service is twice daily at school times. There are no bus services on Sundays. Additionally, there are three specific school services that are available on weekdays only, the VIG01 (Gravesend to Vigo) and 223 (Gravesend to Weald of Kent School) 418 (New Ash Green to Wrotham School).

The appeal APP/K2230/W/22/3291577 (appendix 1) for the erection of a detached bungalow within Culverstone valley, the Inspector concluded the nature of the site would result the development being unsustainable for the following reasons;

19. In turn, it is logical to conclude that they would likely travel to larger settlements further afield in order to access a wider range of services and facilities to meet their needs. In this regard, the proposal would offer very limited support to the services and facilities in rural settlements of Vigo and Culverstone Green. As such, the proposal derives little support from Framework Paragraph 79, which outlines that, in rural areas, housing should be located where it would support local services.

20. Whilst the appeal site is not isolated within the terms of Framework Paragraph given its proximity to neighbouring residential development, it is functionally divorced from the aforementioned services and facilities. This is because the routes from the appeal site to these settlements are largely unlit, lack footways and traverse hilly terrain. These are all factors which are likely to discourage walking and cycling, particularly in darker winter months. As a result, future occupiers of the proposed development are likely to rely heavily on the private motor vehicle.

21. In summary, the appeal site offers poor access to services and facilities and the future occupiers would largely depend on the private motor vehicle in this regard. The proposed development would therefore conflict with Framework Paragraph 92, which states in part that decisions should ensure healthy and inclusive places, including through providing access to local shops. It would also conflict with Framework Paragraph 105, which states that significant development should be focused on locations which are, or can be made, sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

A second appeal APP/K2230/W/19/3235446 (appendix 2) for the erection of a chalet style bungalow and detached outbuilding on land between Tara and September Cottage on Ridge Lane in Meopham (application 20190125), the Inspector found that whilst the appeal site was situated away from services and facilities, it was not isolated for the purpose of paragraph 79 (now paragraph 83) of the NPPF. The application site is in fairly close proximity to this application site, and would be considered in a similar vein in terms of its isolation.

The Inspector also determined that the narrow, unlit and enclosed country lanes that made up the local road network would discourage walking and cycling for access to services, and the limited public transport options from the site would mean that it would be highly likely that future occupiers would access services by private car, which may also encourage travel further afield rather than locally. This would not achieve the social and environmental sustainability objectives of the NPPF 2024.

Overall, as there are no pedestrian footways, street lighting or bus stops near to the site, because the available bus services are very limited and because the distance from services and the absence of nearby infrastructure would severely limit travel choice, the occupants of the proposed development would be entirely dependent on use of a private motor vehicle to meet their day-to-day needs. For these reasons, the proposal would not be in a sustainable location and as such, it would be contrary to paragraph 155(c) of the NPPF 2024 and paragraph 83 of the NPPF 2024.

To be considered as appropriate development, all the criteria of paragraph 155 of the NPPF 2024 must be met and therefore, by virtue of its unsustainable location, the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

For the reasons set out above, the proposal would encroach over the countryside, causing substantial harm to both the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt, which would be contrary to section 13 of the NPPF 2024 and Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Very special circumstances

Referring to paragraph 153 of the NPPF 2024, 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 submitted Planning Statement refers to very special circumstances in sections 8 and 9 and the issues raised are summarised as follows;

- The recent changes to the NPPF provide greater flexibility for the redevelopment of previously developed land within the Green Belt.
- The proposal contributes towards meeting Gravesham's current housing shortfall.
- The proposed development would replace a dilapidated structure that has been abandoned for decades and would not be significantly more intrusive than the previous built form.
- The proposal aligns with paragraph 154(g) of the NPPF.
- A sustainable location with access to village amenities and public transport links.
- A design that supports environmental goals through energy efficiency and biodiversity enhancement.



However, it is considered that these issues are policy arguments, which the applicant considers to support the proposal and do not constitute very special circumstances.

Overall, there are no justifications for the proposal, that amount to the very special circumstances that would set aside the objection to the development on the grounds of being inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

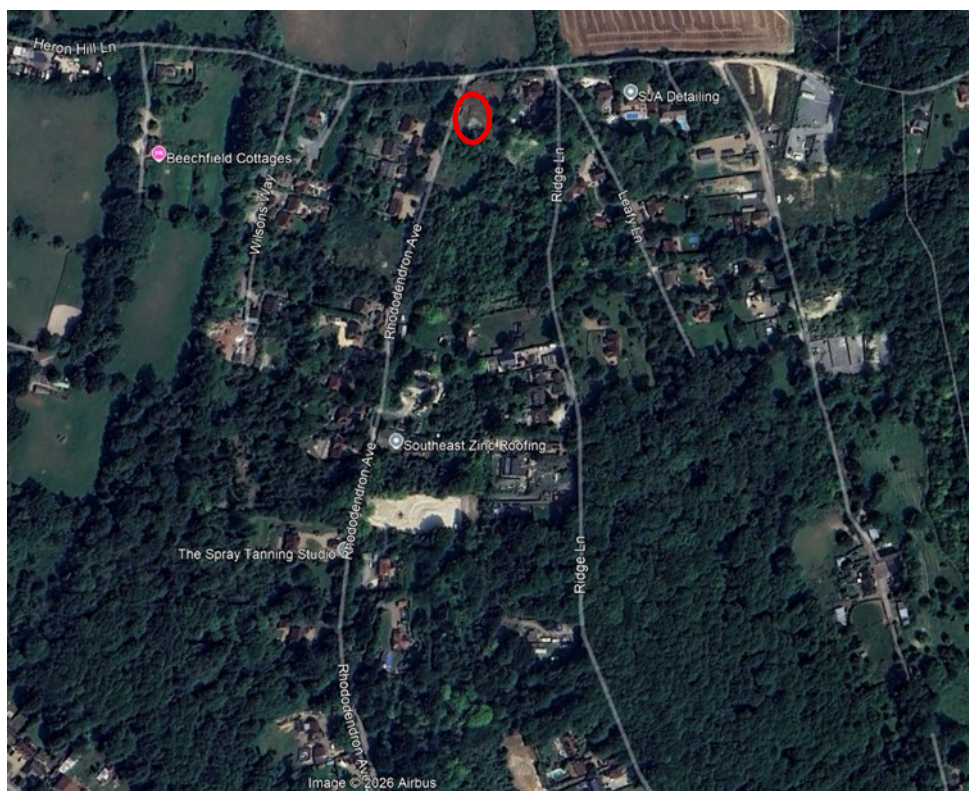
Design, Character and Appearance

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF 2024 sets out that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (amongst other things), protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

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 also 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.

The Harvel Wooded Downs LCA is characterised by varied topography with steep valleys and plateaux, ancient woodland, chestnut coppice and small paddocks and pasture. There is a historic settlement set around a village green with occasional farmsteads and a haphazard mosaic of residential plots set within woodland.

The application site is located in an area where individual residential plots are set within extensive woodland. On the eastern side of Rhododendron Avenue, the land slopes upwards and has a wooded, natural appearance, with sporadic dwellings. Prior to 2024, the application site was highly representative of the landscape of the Harvel Downs LCA. The following image illustrates the extensive woodland in the surrounding landscape (the application site is circled);



Google Earth image 6 August 2025

The application site and the land to the north and east of it, have recently been significantly cleared of vegetation and as a result, the land currently has a harsh and open appearance, contrary to the surrounding woodland landscape. Indeed, a local resident has commented that 'the clearing of trees and

foliage from the plot has had a negative impact on the entrance to Rhododendron Avenue.' Previously the plot was overgrown with trees and vegetation and assimilated well into the surrounding woodland.

Whilst the proposal includes the planting of two trees in the rear garden, no other proposed landscaping details have been provided. Landscaping is an important consideration in assessing development proposals and is referenced both in the NPPF 2024 and the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Paragraph 135(b) of the NPPF 2024 requires developments to be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and paragraph 135(c) requires developments to be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) requires new development to include details of appropriate hard and soft landscaping.

In this instance, due to the significant adverse impacts of the previous site clearance and the proposed introduction of new built development and residential activity onto an otherwise natural, overgrown woodland plot, it is considered that the planting of a significant amount of trees and vegetation would be necessary to mitigate the adverse landscape impacts at the application site.

Overall, it is considered that by virtue of the introduction of new built development, with insufficient soft landscaping, the proposed development would result in the application site losing its undeveloped, natural appearance, undermining the intrinsic character of the landscape, contrary to paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF 2024 and Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

In terms of general design, Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 generally requires new development to be visually attractive, fit for purpose and locally distinctive. 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. Policy CS14 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) requires new housing development to provide a range of dwelling types and sizes, taking account of the existing character of the area and evidence of local need.

The proposed dwelling's design approach (simple rectangular footprint, timber cladding and concrete tiled roof) would be in line with existing buildings and plots in the surrounding area and as such, would not be out of character with the surrounding redeveloped residential plots. In addition, the proposal would provide a two bedroom dwelling, which would be an appropriate dwelling type. Therefore, the design of the proposed dwelling would be in line with Policies CS14 and Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CS19 of Gravesham Core Strategy requires new development to safeguard the amenity, including privacy, daylight and sunlight, of its occupants. The internal layout and garden provision must comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and the Residential Layout Guidelines (RLG) in order to provide a good standard of living for future occupiers.

According to the NDSS, a two bedroom, four person, single storey dwelling should have a minimum internal floor area of 70 square metres, a built in storage area of 2 square metres and at least one double bedroom. Double bedrooms should be a minimum of 11.5 square metres and singles 7.5 square metres of floor area. The proposed dwelling would be of acceptable size overall (75 square metres) and provide two appropriately sized double bedrooms (12.6 and 13.8 square metres respectively), which would provide good living conditions for future occupiers.

According to the RLG, a two bedroom dwelling should have a minimum garden area of 37.2 square metres and a depth of 7.6 metres. The application site would have a garden area of significantly larger size and an appropriate length, which would provide good living conditions for future occupiers.

The proposed refuse storage provision would be acceptable and can be subject to a condition on any planning permission granted.

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 (2014).

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. In this regard, the Borough Council's adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (RLG) are relevant.

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

The GBC Environmental Protection Team (Regulatory Services) have set out that external lighting can adversely impact residential amenity but it is noted that no external lighting is proposed, which can be the subject of a planning condition.

Overall, the proposal would not be detrimental to the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers and be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Parking and Highways

Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (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.

According to the Borough Council's adopted Vehicle Parking Standards, a two bedroom dwelling should have two vehicle parking spaces and two cycle parking spaces. According to the KCC Dropped Kerb Guidance and Self-Assessment (2025) document, parking spaces located perpendicular to the roadway should be a minimum of 2.4 metres (width) by 4.8 or 6 metres (depth). Six metres depth would be required if the space is in front of an access door or garage.

The introduction of one new dwelling would not result in a significant increase in traffic movements and despite the unadopted, unsurfaced nature of Rhododendron Avenue, the site is accessible by vehicle. As such, there would be no adverse traffic impacts.

The proposed cycle and vehicle parking would be sufficient and can be subject to conditions on any planning permission granted. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review (1994).

The general comments from KCC Highways & Transportation can be given to the applicant in an informative on planning permission granted.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Paragraph 193(a) of the NPPF 2024 states that, if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

Paragraph 193(d) of the NPPF 2024 states that opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around

developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) states that there will be no net loss of biodiversity in the Borough and that opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats will be sought, in particular within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and within new development.

In addition, under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications (with a few exemptions) must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG). Where BNG is required, the Defra Statutory Metric must be used to demonstrate that a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain can be achieved and the habitats created/enhanced to achieve BNG must be secured for at least 30 years.

As a self-build development of one dwelling on a site that is no larger than 0.5 hectares, the proposal could be considered as exempt from BNG. However, it should be noted that if the wider application site (red and blue line areas) is considered to comprise the actual planning unit, then the proposed development would not be exempt from BNG (as it would have an area of 5 hectares).

In light of the Green Belt and landscape policy contraventions, the application has been determined as submitted, i.e. as a BNG exemption.

Following a request from the KCC Biodiversity Officer for more information, a BNG metric and a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) have been submitted. It is noted that the proposed site plan illustrates the planting of two trees and the installation of a bird box at the application site, which can be secured by a planning condition(s).

The KCC Biodiversity Officer does not raise an objection to the proposal but notes that the recent site clearance works has resulted in the biodiversity value of the wider site being significantly reduced and that the affected woodland is a priority habitat (lowland mixed deciduous woodland). In order to compensate for the loss of the priority habitat, the KCC Biodiversity Officer encourages the replanting of land within the plot adjacent to the application site, that is owned by the applicant (the blue line area).

The submitted BNG metric, details that 0.2831 woodland biodiversity units could be purchased from an off-site provider to replace the lost woodland. The KCC Biodiversity Officer has indicated that this would be an acceptable approach (albeit not one that she advocates) provided that a planning condition is attached to any planning permission granted, which requires the applicant to demonstrate that the woodland biodiversity units have been purchased prior to any works commencing.

The KCC Biodiversity Officer also requires the submission and approval of a construction ecological management plan prior to the commencement of any works on site.

External lighting can adversely impact upon wildlife but it is noted that no external lighting is proposed, which can be the subject of a planning condition.

Overall, subject to appropriate planning conditions, the proposed development would improve biodiversity at the application site and would be in line with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and paragraphs 193(a) and 193(d) of the NPPF 2024. Were the application to be approved, in order to secure the development as self build housing and exempt from BNG, a planning obligation would need to be entered into as the most appropriate mechanism to secure this, given that it would run with the land, be legally binding and enforceable. However this was not pursued given the application is not to be supported.

It should be noted that, had there not been Green Belt and landscape policy contraventions, the applicant would have been asked to confirm whether or not he would agree to the imposition of pre-commencement biodiversity conditions.

Drainage

Policy CS18 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) seeks to minimise the impacts of drainage from new development on waste water systems, requiring that surface water run off has no greater adverse impact than the existing use and that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are used where technically and financially feasible.

The proposed drainage layout appears incomplete and illustrates mainly above ground pipework and the submitted application form states that the means of foul sewage disposal is unknown and that surface water would be disposed of via a soakaway.

The application site is located in Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3 and as such, it is particularly important to ensure that there is no adverse water contamination impact.

The GBC Environmental Protection Team (Regulatory Services) require foul sewage to be removed by means of the mains drainage system and not by the use of non-mains sewerage systems, unless connection to the drainage system is not reasonably practicable. If a non-mains sewerage system is proposed, a sewage treatment plant or septic tank system should be considered in preference to a cesspool.

Southern Water have set out that insufficient drainage information has been submitted and that the proposed means of foul water drainage and surface water disposal should be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of the development, which can be achieved via a planning condition(s).

Overall, subject to appropriate drainage planning conditions, the proposed development would be in line with Policy CS18 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Climate Change

Policies CS18 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 require new development to take advantage of opportunities to build in resilience to the effects of climate change.

No climate change information has been submitted but it is acknowledged that modern building techniques could be used to deliver renewable energy and reduced energy consumption. As a result, any planning permission granted would include a condition requiring the details of proposed climate change resilience measures to be submitted and approved. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policies CS18 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, as the proposed development would involve only a relatively small amount of groundworks, 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.

The GBC Environmental Protection Team (Regulatory Services) have advised that the application site may contain dumped rubbish/waste and as such, a contamination watching brief planning condition would be attached to any planning permission granted.

Public Right of Way reference NS293, runs along the frontage of the application site and the comments of the KCC West Kent Public Rights of Way Officer are noted. There would be no adverse impacts to the alignment or to the use of the Public Right of Way. Notwithstanding this, any planning permission granted would have an informative attached, which outlines the advice given by KCC in relation to the Public Right of Way.

Kent Fire and Rescue Service state that the emergency access requirements appear to have been met. Their advice in relation to Building Regulations can be given to the applicant in an informative on any planning permission granted.

It is noted that Meopham Parish Council do not object to the proposal. Local residents have raised a number of issues, the majority of which have been covered in the above discussion. Those outstanding are summarised (in italics) and commented on as follows;

- *New concrete features e.g. kerbs have been added at the site without permission* – as a low boundary treatment, the kerbs would have been permitted development and as such, did not require planning permission.
- *The name of the land seems to have changed* – this is not a material planning consideration.
- *The site notice was placed on a far corner of the site and did not allow enough time for comments* – the site notice was located on the site frontage and gave a 21 day response period, which complies with statutory requirements.

Conclusion

The proposal would deliver an appropriate dwelling type and would boost the supply of dwellings in the Borough. This would generate both social and economic benefits, with economic benefits accrued through the construction phase and subsequently, through the reliance of future occupiers on local facilities and services. However, any economic benefits arising from the construction and occupation of the development would be limited by reason of the scale of the proposal and be relatively localised in impact.

The proposed dwelling would be of a design and materials that would match with those in the surrounding area and subject to the submission of additional information would be acceptable in terms of drainage and biodiversity. The proposal would provide sufficient parking provision and opportunities to build in climate change resilience and would not be detrimental to residential amenity, archaeology or surrounding Public Rights of Way.

These benefits cumulatively are attributed moderate weight.

The proposed development, by virtue of the introduction of a new dwelling and residential activity on an unused plot, in an unsustainable location, would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is not justified by any very special circumstances and which would be harmful to openness and be an encroachment over the countryside. Furthermore, the proposal would be significantly detrimental to the intrinsic beauty of the surrounding landscape. As such, the proposed development would be contrary to Policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) and section 13 and paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF 2024.

These harms are attributed significant weight.

On balance, it is considered that the moderate benefits of the proposal are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the significant harms and as such, planning permission should be refused.

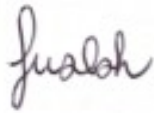
Recommendation

That planning permission be refused on the following grounds;

1. The proposal, by virtue of the introduction of a new dwelling and residential activity on an unused plot, in an unsustainable location, would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which would cause substantial harm to openness and be an encroachment over the countryside. 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 and to Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.
2. The proposal, by virtue of the introduction of new built development, with insufficient soft landscaping would result in the application site losing its undeveloped, natural appearance and undermine the intrinsic character of the surrounding landscape. As such, the proposed development would be contrary to paragraphs 135 and 187 of the National Planning Policy

Framework 2024 and Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014).

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

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Mrs Faye Walsh
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	08 January 2026	Dated:	09 January 2026