



Delegated Report

Planning Application

Planning Application No: 20211261

Location: Bluebell Wood Lodge Little Rose Farm Gravesend Road Fairseat

Description: Retention of existing mobile home.

Applicant: Mr Darren Chamberlin & Mrs Rosemary Robinson

Site Visit Date: 11 January 2022

Submitted Documents/Plans

Application form;
Drawing no. 4526-PD-04 Rev. A Red/blue line site boundary plan and site plan;
Drawing no. 4526-PD-02 Existing layout and elevations;
Supporting statement 18 September 2021; and
Update to supporting statement 25 January 2022.

Procedural issues

The original red/blue line boundary plan submitted with the application showed the application site in the wrong location and the wrong size. Therefore an amended red/blue line boundary plan was submitted. It is noted that the blue line boundary was unchanged. The amended red line boundary plan was not subject to additional publicity because the alteration did not represent a material change (the position of the mobile home has not altered during the determination period).

It is noted that the applicants are prepared to accept a personal permission, which requires the mobile home to be removed when their occupation of it ceases.

Relevant Planning History

The application site, Bluebell Wood Lodge is part of a wider site known as Little Rose Farm. Various planning and lawful development certificate applications have been determined, which relate to land at Bluebell Wood Lodge and Little Rose Farm;

<u>Application No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Decision</u>
20200969 Little Rose Farm	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the continued permanent occupation of a mobile home for residential purposes, with associated domestic garages and parking.	Refused	06.01.2021
20200587 Little Rose Farm	Application for the approval of conditions 5, 6 and 7 attached to planning permission reference	Approved	17.08.2020

number 20070060 relating to details of external materials, surface treatment to hardstanding areas and fence and means of enclosures.

20200472 Little Rose Farm	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for the continued use of a storage building for equestrian purposes relating to storing materials and relevant equipment	Withdrawn	22.05.2020
20200114 Bluebell Wood Lodge	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of retention of a mobile home as a residential dwelling, with associated domestic garages and parking	Insufficient fee	15.05.2020
20191244 Little Rose Farm	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the continued use of the building workshop for B1(c) Car Repairs.	Certificate refused	21.01.2020
20191056 Little Rose Farm	Application for the approval of conditions 5, 6 and 7 attached to planning permission reference number 20070060 relating to details of external materials, surface treatment to hardstanding areas and fence and means of enclosures.	Refused	31.01.2020
20190909 Little Rose Farm	Application for a Lawful Development Certificate in respect of the continued permanent occupation of a mobile home for residential purposes.	Certificate refused	29.11.2019
20071043 Little Rose Farm	Conversion of part of existing barn into 16 commercial kennels with reception, feed store, wc and installation of cesspool.	Refused	16.01.2008
20070060 Little Rose Farm	Erection of detached single storey replacement dwelling with rooms in the roof space and a detached double garage.	Permitted	03.07.2007
20050900 Little Rose Farm	The applicant has shown beyond all reasonable doubt that the application site has been occupied as a single family dwelling for a period of in excess of four years prior to the date of the application.	Certificate granted	19.01.2006

Application for Lawful Development
Certificate for continued use of the
building as a residential dwelling
house.

19770654	Retention of widened vehicular	Permitted	10.11.1977
Little Rose Farm	access to agricultural land.		

It is noted that the application site is the subject of an ongoing enforcement investigation relating to the residential use of a caravan without planning permission. This application is an attempt to regularise the unauthorised development.

Development Plan

Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014):

- CS01 – Sustainable Development
- CS02 – Scale & Distribution of Development
- CS09 – Culture and Tourism
- CS11 – Transport
- CS12 – Green Infrastructure
- CS18 – Climate Change
- CS19 – Development & Design Principles
- CS20 – Heritage and the Historic Environment

Gravesham Local Plan: First Review (1994)

- T1 – Impact of Development on Highway Network
- P3 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- TC7 – Other Archaeological Sites

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)

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

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 2 - Residential layout guidelines including Housing Standards Policy Statement October 2015 Adopted 1996 – amended June 2020;
- SPG 4 - KCC Parking Standards (2006)

Other documents

- Nationally Described Space Standard 2015
- Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment 2009

Consultations, Publicity and Representations

GBC Highways Officer

Initial response:

This proposal raises a couple of questions.

1. The red line site boundary does not extend to the highway, so despite the access being within the blue line ownership boundary, I am uncertain on whether or not access is included within the application. The current red line does not appear to include the current parking, boundary fence and gate.
2. The caravan can act as a standalone dwelling, therefore adequate parking and cycle parking should be provided. Treating this as a two bedroom house the nearest equivalent in the Kent County Council residential parking guidance which postdates the Gravesham Borough Council guidance and is considered more relevant as maximum standards for residential parking is no longer considered appropriate. The K.C.C. guidance suggests on average 1.5 spaces should be available for a two bedroom house in a rural area, in this case I suggest it should be rounded to 2, one for the occupants and the second for a visitor. In terms of cycle parking secure parking should be made available for two cycles.
3. Whilst not currently a planning requirement, the applicant should ensure that a future electric vehicle charging point can be installed and have the necessary electrical supply to support such an installation.

In terms of traffic generation a single mobile home would be insignificant, although there would be merit in trimming the trees/hedges at the site boundary to ensure they do not overhang highway, which would improve both the sight line at the access and the pedestrian route along the footway.

As presented without any parking, cycle parking or the access contained within the red line, I can only recommend refusal.

Second response:

The red line/site plan now better reflects the requirements to accommodate a couple of cars, it would require a condition to keep the area clear for parking.

That just leaves the question of how foul drainage will be dealt, as no details are given. I can't see the site is large enough to accommodate much, which probably means a vehicle needs to access the site to empty a tank, unless they intend to transport the waste offsite themselves to a discharge point into the utility company's sewage works.

KCC Heritage

The site lies within an area of multi-period archaeological potential. However, I consider it unlikely that the retention of this structure would lead to a significant archaeological impact and have no further comments to make in this case.

Meopham Parish Council

As the decision as to whether the application should be approved, turns on the validity of evidence provided of continuous occupation, the Parish Council does not feel able to comment as it is not in a position to judge the evidence.

Dickens' Country Protection Society

The Society would wish to object to this application on the grounds that the site is in an area within Green Belt Policies apply where new dwellings would not normally be permitted. In the Society's view no evidence has been put forward sufficient to warrant overriding Green Belt Policy.

Neighbouring properties

The application was publicised by a site notice and to two neighbouring properties by letter. No

representations have been received.

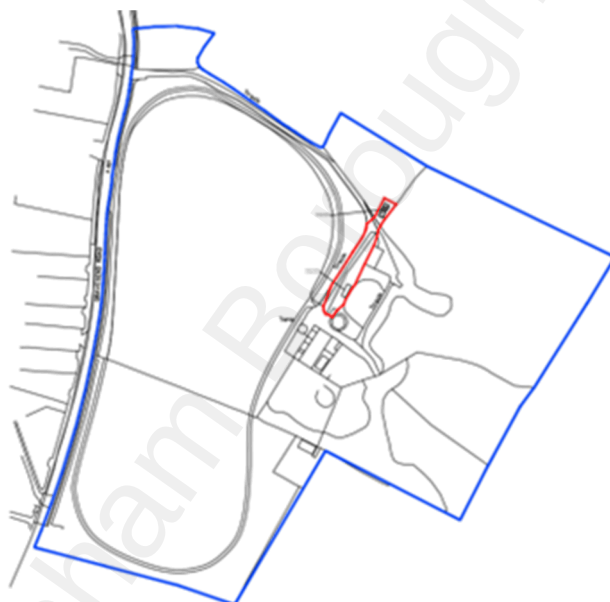
Officer's Analysis

Background

The application site, Bluebell Wood Lodge is part of a wider site known as Little Rose Farm. The mobile home that is the subject of this application, has been on site (without planning permission) since circa April 2015. The main buildings at Little Rose Farm are located some 100 metres to the south west of the application site. Various planning and lawful development certificate applications have been determined which relate to Little Rose Farm, the most relevant of which are outlined below.

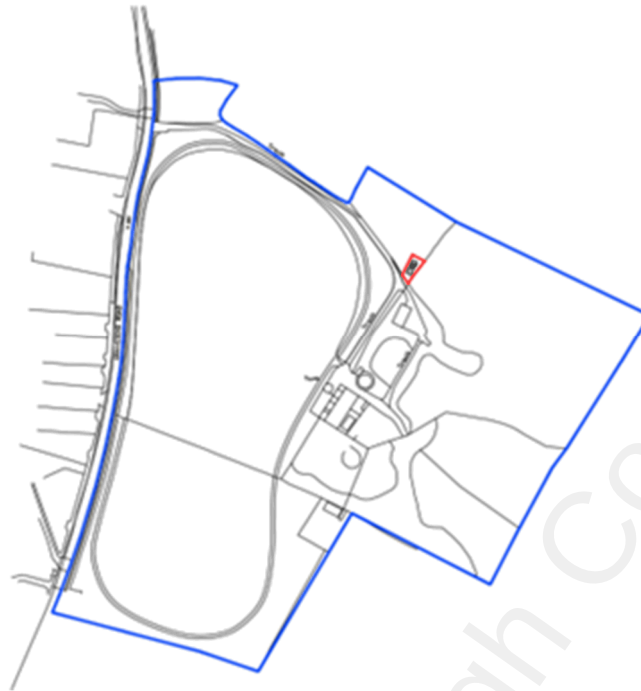
In July 2007, planning permission was granted for a replacement dwelling and detached garage located adjacent to the main buildings at Little Rose Farm (reference 20070060). In August 2020 approval was granted for the details pursuant to conditions 5, 6 and 7 of that permission (reference 20200587).

In January 2021, a Lawful Development Certificate application in respect of the continued permanent occupation of a mobile home for residential purposes, with associated domestic garages and parking at Little Rose Farm was refused (reference 20200969). The following image illustrates the application site (bounded in red);



It would appear that the application site was shown partly incorrectly on this plan because the proposal related to the same mobile home as that referred to in the current application. It should be noted that although the application site was described as Little Rose Farm, the application related to the land known as Bluebell Wood Lodge.

In November 2019, a Lawful Development Certificate application in respect of the continued permanent occupation of a mobile home for residential purposes at Little Rose Farm was refused (reference 20200909). The following image illustrates the application site (bounded in red);



It is noted that the red and blue outlined land is identical to that originally submitted with the current application (which has since found to be inaccurate). Again it should be noted that although the application site was described as Little Rose Farm, the application related to the land known as Bluebell Wood Lodge and the same mobile home as that referred to in the current application.

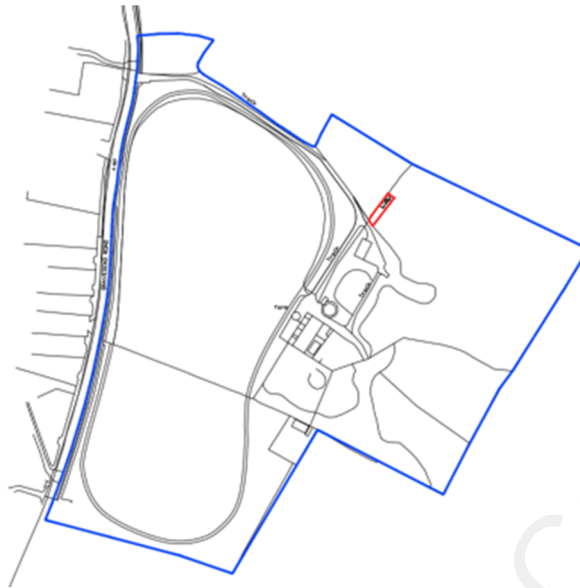
Applications 20200909 and 20200969 were both refused because, on the balance of probabilities, it was considered that insufficient levels of evidence had been submitted to prove that the mobile home had been used for residential purposes continuously for the required ten year period in order to have become immune from enforcement action.

Proposal

The proposed development comprises of the retention of the following two bedroom mobile home;



at the following location;



Principle of the Development

Policy CS01 (Sustainable Development) of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (LPCS) indicates that when considering development proposals, the Borough Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and in the Core Strategy.

Policy CS02 (LPCS) sets out the Borough's objectively assessed need for housing over the Plan period (up to the year 2028) and finds that there is a need for at least 6,170 new dwellings during the period. Evidence now available shows that the Council is not able to demonstrate a five-year housing supply (a 3.27 year supply has most recently been calculated within the statement published [here](#)), and as the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) that required by the Housing Delivery Test, the housing delivery element of Core Strategy Policy CS02 must be regarded to be out of date, as required by the Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF. 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.

In the Gravesham context, the policies referred to in paragraph 11(d)(i) above are those set out in the NPPF at footnote 6 (rather than those in development plans) relating to any of the following:

- Habitats sites (and those sites listed in NPPF paragraph 181)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Green Belt,
- Local Green Space,
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Irreplaceable habitats;
- Designated heritage assets (& other heritage assets of archaeological interest, see NPPF footnote 68); and
- Areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

Whilst in determining applications for planning permission involving housing, the Council will apply a weighted balance in favour of granting planning permission in accordance with relevant case law and guidance, this would not override the application of policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance as in this case the site is within the Green Belt.

Green Belt

Policy CS02 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.

The principle issues in the determination of this application are;

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

Is the proposed development appropriate in the Green Belt?

Paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF 2021) sets out that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence and paragraph 138 lists the five purposes that the Green Belt serves. At the application site, the Green Belt assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF 2021 states that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Local Planning Authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt (paragraph 149 of the NPPF 2021), though there are exceptions to this. Nevertheless, the proposal relates to the change of use of the land for the siting of a mobile home/caravan rather than a built development, and therefore paragraph 149 is not considered relevant in this case.

Paragraph 150 of the NPPF 2021 sets out that material changes in the use of land can be appropriate development in the Green Belt, provided that they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The development comprises the retention of a mobile home used for residential purposes. It is considered that this use of the land introduces a significant man-made structure into this rural location, encroaching over the countryside and adding to the built up nature of the site and causing detriment to the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose that this land is included within it. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal would not be in line with the requirements of paragraph 150, and would therefore amount to inappropriate development, which is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. As such, it would be contrary to Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and to paragraph 150 of the NPPF 2021.

Effect on the openness of the Green Belt

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It also states that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. Paragraph 001 of the Planning Practice Guidance on Green Belts looks to assess the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt by taking into account the spatial and visual aspects of a development, its duration and remediability, and the degree of activity levels generated (Reference ID: 64-001-20190722).

There is no specific definition of "openness" in the NPPF, and the concept of what is considered as openness has only really emerged from case law. Effectively, 'openness' is epitomised by the absence of built development (i.e. land that is not built on) and it follows therefore that any new built development is likely to have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt, but whether that impact is greater or lesser on sites where there is already built development will be dependent on an assessment on a case by case basis. It is a different concept to "visual impact". Although openness may be considered in a visual sense, the visual impact of a development in the Green Belt may be harmful through the siting, design and materials used. The presence of landscaping or screening may serve to mitigate the visual impact of a

development including built development but there might still be an impact on openness.

The development, by its nature, involves a form of inappropriate development at the application site that erodes the openness of the Green Belt. The site was previously a wooded part of Little Rose Farm, with the extent of man-made structures at the site located some distance to the south. The mobile home and its associated paraphernalia results in the site having a much more urban appearance, and clearly affects the spatial and visual amenities of the site. Whilst the site is partially screened by hedging and trees, this does not lessen the overall impact on the openness of the Green Belt from the stationing of a mobile home on this land, which is intended to be located there for a considerable period. On the basis of its long term retention, there would be no opportunity for remediation and returning the land to its original state for many years. There is a marked difference in the activity levels at the site, and the comings and goings associated with its residential occupation in comparison to its previous undeveloped nature. All these factors are considered to significantly and harmfully impact on the openness of the site and the Green Belt within which it sits.

The following images show Little Rose Farm following the stationing of the mobile home in April 2015 and the land in its original state in July 2014. The location of the mobile home is indicated with an arrow.





This proposal is contrary to paragraph 137 of the NPPF 2021 by its impact on openness, and would also conflict with point (c) of paragraph 138 of the NPPF 2021, which seeks to safeguard the countryside from encroachment. Clearly, this proposal would represent an encroachment of development into the countryside, as the site lies outside any settlement boundary. This also conflicts with Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, which only supports development outside settlement boundaries where it is compatible with national and local policies for protecting the Green Belt.

Effect on the character and appearance of the area

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

In this case the mobile home is a use of the land rather than a building and although the structure is man-made, there is not a design objection per se but the use needs to be considered in terms of its impact on the landscape character of the area.

The application site is located in the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area (LCA) and as such, Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 is relevant. This policy states that the overall landscape character of the Borough will be conserved, restored and enhanced and that the Gravesham Landscape Character Assessment will be taken into account in determining applications. In relation to the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area, this document states that the overall condition of the landscape is good and that it has moderate sensitivity. It recommends that the key landscape elements should be conserved and reinforced.

The area surrounding the application site is rural in character with areas of open countryside located to the north and west, woodland to the east and the main buildings comprising Little Rose Farm to the south. The use of the land and the intensification of development has resulted in the loss of trees and the application site having a more urbanised appearance. The mobile home and its associated development is out of character with the immediate natural, rural surroundings.

The development is therefore harmful to the character and appearance of the countryside and the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area and would be contrary to Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Other matters

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The mobile home has a floor area of some 37 square metres, with two bedrooms of 4.3 and 8.7 square metres area respectively. The Nationally Described Space Standards require a two bedroom, three person, single storey residential unit to have a minimum floor area of 61 square metres and a one bedroom, single person, single storey residential unit to be a minimum of 37 square metres. Minimum bedroom areas are 7.5 square metres and 11.5 square metres for singles and doubles respectively. As such, it is considered that the mobile home is significantly below the required standards and the residential amenity of the occupiers would be compromised.

The application site has some 186 square metres of external space, which exceeds the minimum requirement for four or more bedroom residential units set out in the Residential Layout Guidelines. As such there is an excess of amenity space outside of the mobile home.

Overall the mobile home provides adequate or perhaps basic internal living conditions for the occupiers and is a standard size. However externally, good living conditions are provided. Therefore on balance, it is considered that the proposed development would not be significantly detrimental to the living conditions of future occupiers and the proposal would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Neighbouring Amenity

The closest residential properties to the application site are Newlands Farm (located some 80 metres to the north west) and Little Rose Farm (located some 125 metres to the south). Due to the distance between the properties and the mobile home, there would be no adverse overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts to any surrounding occupiers. As such, the proposed development would be in line with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014).

Highways and Parking issues

The proposed development needs to be considered against Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) which states that new developments should mitigate their impact on the public highway and that transport assessments should be provided and implemented to ensure delivery of travel choice and sustainable opportunities for travel. Furthermore, it states that sufficient car parking in new developments will be provided in accordance with adopted standards which will reflect the availability of alternative means of transport accessibility to services and facilities. This approach to development is also supported by Saved Policies T1 and P3 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

At a national level, the NPPF 2021 recognises that transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability objectives. The NPPF 2021 clearly states at Paragraph 109 that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The GBC Highways Officer has set out that a single residential caravan would be an insignificant traffic generator and that due to the lack of detail within the application regarding parking and access he would recommend refusal.

The application site is served by an existing access from Wrotham Road (A227) that also provides vehicular access to the wider Little Rose Farm site. The access is sufficiently wide and provides adequate visibility, such that the retention of the mobile home would not result in material harm to highway safety. However the access is not shown within the red line boundary of the site.

According to the adopted Vehicle Parking Standards, a two bedroom residential unit would require parking for two cars and two bicycles. The application details do not indicate that any parking would be provided at the application site but at the site visit, the case officer noted that one vehicle was parked to the south of the caravan, with space available for further parking. Therefore sufficient space would appear to be available to provide car parking. Details of car and bicycle parking provision could be required by a condition attached to any planning permission granted.

Therefore, provided that adequate car and bicycle parking is provided and retained permanently and that further details of the existing access are provided, it is considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to highway safety and would be in line with Policy CS11 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policies P3 and T1 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

Ecology and biodiversity

Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) requires no net loss of biodiversity in Gravesham and seeks opportunities to enhance, restore, re-create and maintain habitats particularly in Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and within new developments.

At a national level, the NPPF 2021 requires planning decisions to protect and enhance sites of biodiversity value (at paragraph 174(a)) and to minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity (at paragraph 174(d)). Paragraph 180 of the NPPF 2021 states that when determining planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should refuse planning permission if significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

The mobile home has been stationed on land that was formerly wooded and has resulted in the loss of trees and other natural vegetation. As the applicants have not provided any ecological/biodiversity assessments with this application, it is not possible to determine in detail the effects of the proposed development on biodiversity or to outline any measures to mitigate any potential adverse effects. However it is clear that the proposed development has been generally detrimental to biodiversity and as such, it would be contrary to Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and to paragraphs 174 and 180 of the NPPF 2021.

Any Other Material Planning Considerations

The application site is located in an area of multi-period archaeological potential and within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3 but due to the limited amount of groundworks, it is unlikely that the proposal would have a significant adverse groundwater or archaeological impact. It is noted that KCC Heritage have not raised an objection. As such, the proposal would be in line with Policies CS18 and CS20 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (September 2014) and Saved Policy TC7 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review November 1994.

The application details are not consistent in their description of the means for the disposal of foul sewage from the mobile home (the supporting statement refers to it being connected to the main sewer but the application form shows that it is not). The Highways Officer has queried how foul drainage will be dealt with and suggests that it is likely that a vehicle would need to access the site to empty a tank, unless the applicants intend to transport the waste offsite themselves. Clarification of this issue and further details can be required via a planning condition attached to any planning permission granted.

The comments of Meopham Parish Council are noted.

The application has been considered in the light of the Human Rights Act 1998 and it is considered that the analysis of the issues in this case, as set out in this report and recommendation below, is compatible with the Act. Particular regard has been had to the requirements in Article 8 of the Human Rights Act regarding the right to a home and a private and family life.

Very Special Circumstances

Referring to paragraphs 147 and 148 of the NPPF 2021, 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 applicants have identified a number of issues which they consider to amount to very special circumstances. These relate to their personal circumstances and are set out in their supporting statements. However an applicant's personal circumstances are not a material planning consideration unless they are exceptionally and clearly relevant and it is considered that the information submitted, does not give a justification for an exception to be made in this case.

Overall it is considered that the applicants' justifications for the proposal either individually or cumulatively do not amount to the very special circumstances that would set aside the objection to the development on grounds of being inappropriate development.

It is noted that the Dickens' Country Protection Society have objected to the proposed development and state that 'In the Society's view no evidence has been put forward sufficient to warrant overriding Green Belt Policy. Their view adds weight to the Borough Council's position, as set out above.

Conclusion & Balancing Exercise

The above analysis sets out that the proposed development would be detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt and contrary to one of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, namely protecting the countryside from encroachment. The development would urbanise and undermine the character of the site and overall, be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

No very special circumstances have been advanced pursuant to paragraphs 148 and 148 of the NPPF 2021 sufficient to overcome the presumption against such inappropriate development.

The Borough Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply and accordingly, the 'tilted balance' as outlined in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF (2019) is relevant. However as the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in this case the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11(d) does not apply.

Whilst the proposed development would deliver an additional residential unit, the benefits arising from this provision are somewhat limited, given that the proposal is for one unit only. Furthermore, any economic benefits arising from the occupation of the development would be limited by reason of the scale of the proposal and be relatively localised in impact. The proposed development would provide an acceptable standard of living for future occupiers, would not be detrimental to residential amenity or highway safety and would not adversely affect groundwater or archaeology. All of which weigh in support of the proposal.

However the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which would be detrimental to openness and would not be in keeping with the character of the surrounding rural landscape. In addition, it would be detrimental to biodiversity. As such, the proposal would be contrary to sections 13 and 15 of the NPPF 2021 and to Policies CS02, CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014.

On balance, it is considered that the benefits of the proposal are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt, to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and to biodiversity.

Recommendation

Refusal

1. The proposed development would urbanise the application site and erode its open character, which

would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and an encroachment of the countryside. As such, the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which would undermine one of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and would be contrary to Policy CS02 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and to paragraphs 137, 138 and 150 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

2. The proposed development would result in the application site having a more urbanised appearance and being out of character with the natural, rural surroundings. The development would therefore be harmful to the character and appearance of the countryside and the Meopham Downs Landscape Character Area and contrary to Policies CS12 and CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014.

3. Given that the application site is located within woodland, in a rural location, the proposal has the potential to adversely impact upon habitats and species. In the absence of any ecological assessment, it is not possible to determine whether the proposed development would protect biodiversity. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy September 2014 and to paragraphs 174 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

(For detailed informatives, see draft Decision)

Case Officer:	Mrs Kelly Joyce	Team Leader:	Miss Faye Hobbs
Signed:		Signed:	
Dated:	09 March 2022	Dated:	11 March 2022